

So hot, the fish sweat

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It was coming.

Smothering, roasting, oppressive heat and humidity. But not just yet.

Rose streaks just beginning to show in the east. It is cool now, less than 90 but not much. Birds are starting to lift off the rookery. I have no idea where they are going. The fish are probably sweating. I know I am and I am sure Alan Clemmons is, too. Alan use to do something with some major bass tournaments. Now he is an editor for a big, deer-hunting magazine. He knows how to fish, too. He takes it too seriously but that is his business. He fishes a lot with heavy jigs and crankbaits. That too, is his business. I'm just here to fish.

I have never been known to take a back seat to a fancy boy, tournament angler. Since we are in my boat, sorta, I am running the trolling motor. I will keep him just out of position. I get the first cast in.

I let the worm sink to the bottom and work it slowly over a sunken log. It falls on the other side and I feel a slight pressure. I set the hook. Not a big fish but healthy. The score is one to naught but who is counting?

Somehow, Alan, who I have known for a couple hundred years, got some time off to try out some new jig-type lures. I felt as though if I waited until it was 100-degrees at night, he would politely decline the invitation to come fish. I forgot, he does not decline invitations to fish. As a result, I am about to sweat to death somewhere outside Tuskegee, Alabama.

I work a big ole long plastic worm, some red wine looking color over an entire sunken forest. We are fishing 18-feet deep and working slowly. Heat equals deeper and slower when bass fishing.

More birds lift off and the sky is getting lighter. Alan makes the boat shake with a hook set (he could lose a few pounds).

He lands the fish tournament style skidding it across the water like a water skater-no play involved. No net so all the fish are lipped. He fishes one of the reels with the handle on the right side and a rod like a broomstick and throws a big jig-looking thing his dad makes. He promised to send me a couple but never has.

These tournament guys!

It goes on for a while, this deep water, slow retrieve fishing and we catch fish, nothing big, six-pounds tops but quite a few of them. Then it gets hot, the sun comes boiling up and I do not say a word. I just take the boat to the bank and get out. Alan gets the idea.

Back at the lodge, I down a bottle of water in three swallows. We eat some good groceries and a piece or two of pie and then it rains. I mean it flat rains. One of those brief torrential afternoon showers, you know the kind. They are usually described in a sentence involving a cow and flat rock. As a result, the water runs off the roof in a torrent. It looks to me like a perfect shower for a hot boy such as I. Therefore, I commence to go stand under it. Man that felt good. Dry shirt feels good, too. Steam rises in tendrils from the ground. I believe we are fishing the River Styx.

As happens every day, afternoon slowly slides into early evening. The sun heads for California and the birds slowly file back.

I don't have a clue where they spent the day. We are back on the lake and Alan ties on another big jig looking thing his father made and we start down a bank. It is slow, just a fish here and there. Since we had a dollar bet on the first fish and I won that, we felt it was only fair to bet a dollar on the last fish.

The sun has flat sunk but there is still light left, just enough to paint the western sky a lovely rose color.

Alan takes careful aim and lets a cast fly. I wipe the sweat out of my eyes and get ready to cast when he sets the hook. This time he surprises me by taking his time and actually playing the fish.

We have no net so he has to kneel and lip the fish. That is not so bad with a one-hook jig. I hate to do it with a crankbait. He does the job well and we call it a day.

We did not keep count but I figure we caught and released about 30 bass from 2-6 pounds. They were deep and not very hungry.

We used the same tactics I would use around here. It is a matter of knowing where the underwater structure is and how deep it is. It is hot work but it was a fun day, a nice break for us. I had to come back and prepare to keep the pool at the Floyd in order and he had to go edit some poor outdoor writer's story.

However, we proved you can catch fish even when it is hot...so hot the fish sweat.

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