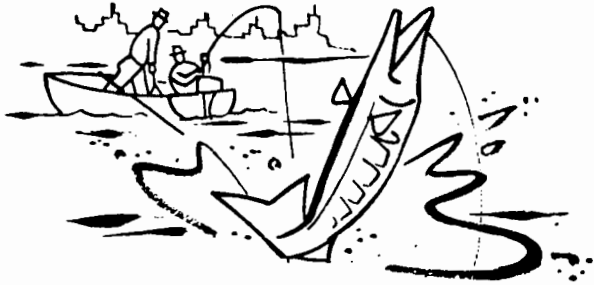


7/2/77

Natural History Notes



MIKE DOMBECK grew up in the Moose Lake area and graduated from Hayward High School and the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. He has a B.S. degree in Biology and an M.S. degree in Aquatic Biology. He has taught Zoology at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and is presently a staff member of the University of Minnesota's Bell Museum of Natural History. Mike has also been an area fishing guide since his high school days.



ANY ACTION TODAY?

An amateur fisherman listening to the results of the day's fishing success of muskellunge or northern pike fishermen is often confused. He may be told of the fantastic luck they had in the day's fishing but yet sees no fish in the bag. Instead he may hear, "we raised 3 lunkers today," "we had 2 strikes," "we lost a dandy," or "we had several followups." In the mind of the amateur, no fish in the bag may seem like an unsuccessful day's outing. Not so for the true sportsman, where each opportunity to be out on the water is a gratifying experience and any fishing action he has is an added reward.

We are all aware of the thoughts that flow through the mind of the fisherman when he experiences a strike or a follow-up, but did you ever consider what is happening in the nervous system of the fish when bait or food is presented to it? Why did that musky follow up? Why did it roll by the plug? Why didn't it hit the bait? Or, why did it strike and not get hooked? Fishermen have been trying to answer these questions for decades and, lucky for the fish, all the answers haven't been found. The ultimate decision of whether or not to strike is up to the fish. Neither the fisherman nor the scientist will be able to make this decision.

However, we can analyze the prey-catching behavior of a fish and sequence the events and movements fish utilize in feeding. Let's consider the prey-catching behavior or the muskellunge or northern pike. Both species are predators which as adults feed basically on other fish of various sizes.

These predators are well equipped for their mode of feeding. They have an acute sense of sight and a well-developed lateral line system sensitive to sound and vibrations made by their prey. Their swimming ability, coordination and formidable set of teeth is superseded by few other

freshwater fish. How does a pike utilize these adaptations while feeding?

Once the prey is spotted, the predator turns its eyes toward it. Next the head is turned in the direction of the prey, followed by deliberate body movement toward it, which is called stalking. During this entire chain of events the predator is constantly faced with the decision to attack or not to attack, partially determined by its hunger. If the pike decides to continue his pursuit, he rapidly closes in on the prey by leaping in the water or in the air and snapping or striking at the prey. Based on input from its senses, the pike again must decide to eat or not to eat, to proceed or retreat. If it decides to devour the prey, it must be turned head forward in preparation for swallowing. By using their teeth and well developed tongue (as compared to other fish) members of the pike family, with little difficulty, can turn the prey head forward in preparation for swallowing. Swallowing concludes this chain of events, followed by a yawn-like movement called a gape. The predator may now be satiated and rest, or search for more food in response to its carnivorous appetite.

In light of these feeding activities the follow up you had or the raise or boil you witnessed, the fish you were after may have sensed your presence, that your plug wasn't food, wasn't hungry enough or simply decided the effort needed to get your bait is just too much. Think of the many fish that watch your bait pass by and simply ignore it!

As frustrating as all this 'no catching' may be, remember a true sportsman enjoys the fishing as much as the catching... What a way to spend a day!

On Main Street - Downtown Hayward
Scheer's *Open Evenings
Sundays to 3 p.m.*
NORTHWOODS SPORTS
Dick Scheer • Phone 634-8550

- FISHING TACKLE • FISH LOCATORS
- GUNS - AMMUNITION • ARCHERY
- ELECTRIC TROLLING MOTORS
- REEL PARTS & BULK LINE
- CYPRESS GARDEN WATER SKIS AND ACCESSORIES • HERMAN BOOTS

The Largest Display of Mepps and Mr. Twister Baits in the North

One Stop Shopping for the Sportsman