



Quality fishing is just a short trip away

by Jim Zegar
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SPECIAL TO THE NEWS-SUN Has the price of gas put a crimp in your fishing this year? Did the trip to Canada or Minocqua get cancelled simply because it would cost too much to drive there? If so, there is an excellent alternative within an hour's drive of northern Lake County. It is a multi-species gem.

My brother, John Zegar of Waukegan, good pal Tom Parker of the Lake Geneva area, and I launched Tom's Ranger boat into the waters of this gem in late August. It was afternoon, nearly 3PM, when we first put baits into the water. Tom positioned the boat for a drift along a 15-foot weed edge where we knew big bass, big bluegills, and decent northern pike hung out.

It wasn't five minutes before the clicker on my dead stick rod started screaming. I grabbed it from the rod holder on the boat and felt the thump of a fish.... a bass or a pike, I thought. I cranked on the reel, brought the fish to the boat, where it was deftly netted by John. A pike. Not a big one, but a fish right away, and it was released to swim again.

As we drifted along, I had two rods out using Lindy rigs and suckers for bait because I was after bass and pike. John and Tom each had one similar rig and also one bluegill rod because they wanted a bunch of slab bluegills. And this gem of a lake has some real slabs.



Then the action really got hot.

The clicker on Tom's reel went nuts. As he grabbed the rod, John grabbed the net and moved to the bow of the boat to net the fish. Two seconds later, the clicker on my dead stick started screaming. We both had big largemouth bass on! Tom's was a bruiser, putting up a good fight and a big ruckus as it came to the net. Meanwhile, I got my big bass to the stern of the boat, waited for the net man, who was still preoccupied with Tom's fish.

You can figure this one out, right? Tom's gets landed; mine gets off the hook before John could get back to me. Oh, well. It was kinda crazy but I wasn't unhappy because I knew we'd catch more.

And catch more, we did.

We fished this gem of a lake for a little over four hours and ended up with 34 fish: about 22 big bluegills, one walleye, four northern pike, six nice largemouth bass, and a 13½ inch crappie. And where were we? Lake Delavan, Walworth County, Wisconsin, adjacent to Lake Geneva. An hour's drive from here.

As we enter September and the water begins to cool, the fishing will get better. Here's what you need to know to be successful on Lake Delavan.

If you want a guide, call Walt Koch of Lindenhurst. He owns and operates Red Rock Guiding Service. If you want fishing lessons, want to take kids, or just want to catch a mess of fish, this is the guy. I know him personally and highly recommend him. He can be reached at 847-356-7654 or on the web at www.redrockguidingservice.com.

If you want to go it alone, here are some basics. Get a Fishing Hot Spots map of Delavan, about \$6. Concentrate on the outside weed edges of the steep breaklines which will put you in about 15 feet of water.

For pike and bass, use Lindy rigs, circle hooks, and suckers four to seven inches long, lip hooked. Generally speaking, a ½ oz. walking sinker will be sufficient, but on windy days you might need more weight. Fish where the wind is blowing in,



both on the weed edges and right on top of the weeds.

A dead stick is a long, limber rod that bends easily. Use a casting rod and a casting reel that has a clicker. When you drop the sucker and Lindy rig, let out enough line so the angle of descent is about 45 degrees as the boat moves along. Disengage the clutch so the reel is in free spool, but put the clicker on. The clicker prevents line from needlessly peeling off the reel, and signals you when a fish grabs the sucker and heads for the dinner table. Place the dead stick in a rod holder and let it sit there. The clicker will tell you what to do.

If the wind is right, drift along the weed edge. If not, use a trolling motor to stay on the breakline. Backtrolling is also an effective way to keep your boat in the fish zone.



For bluegills, a light action spinning rod with four to six pound test will work. A small hook and a split shot is all you need. I like Tru-Turn hooks which have a nice cam action and a long shank, making hook removal from the mouth of a 'gill easier. Use $\frac{1}{3}$ of a nightcrawler. Small leeches and small plastics also work.

To help sustain this good fishing, keep a few of the pan fish to eat but release most of the game fish.

Lake Delavan is a major success story for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. In the 1980s it was in awful shape. In 1989, the lake was closed for three years and completely rehabilitated, resulting in an excellent lake close to Lake County. It is, in fact, a multi-species gem with some big fish that are very catchable. The best fishing of the year starts now. Don't miss out on it.

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