

Program:

Our next meeting is Wednesday, October 2, 2013.
The September salmon trip was cancelled.

Check out our web site: www.great-lakes.org/vpsc.

You are just a click away from pictures of Salmon and Walleye trips, previous news letters and more about our Villa Park Sportsmen's Club. You may also send information to be posted on the web site to rjames@yahoo.com

BYOB Fishing

Where's your favorite fishing hole? Call and we'll set up a meet; Joe Nutt (630)961-1513 or Gary Buehre (630)279-0696 or Adolph Janke (630)843-7193.

Future Programs and Scheduled Events

November 6 – Regular Meeting.

December 4 – This will be our Christmas Party. Bring a dish to share. The Club will supply ham, sodas, and coffee.

From the 'Midwest Outdoors' web site. <http://midwestoutdoors.com/magazine>

“Nightcrawler Secrets” Revisited

By Ted Pilgram

Co-authored with Tom Neustrom

"Never before have I asked you, or anyone, to keep an angling secret. I'm going to break this rule now and ask you point-blank NOT to pass on this information. It is much too deadly, it took many years to accumulate, and it's worth too much to just give out willy-nilly... This method is so deadly that I debated for several years about publishing it at all. But I finally decided to do it because there are just too darn many big fish that don't get caught. They grow old, grow big, and die of old age-wasted!" (-Bill Binkelman, from Nightcrawler Secrets, circa 1965)

Drifting back to a time when fishing sages still clenched corncob pipes, a man named Bill Binkelman was starting something big. Inspired by the writings of the great Buck Perry, Binkelman, a Milwaukee, Wis., sporting goods store manager, began work on a new breed of fishing how-to, which eventually became Fishing Facts magazine. Meanwhile, Binkelman wrote Nightcrawler Secrets, a short work that was the acknowledged "good book" on live bait fishing for walleye, bass and pretty much everything else that sported fins. The information espoused in his writings was so thought provoking, so revolutionary for the time that it created an entire generation of disciples. Among them were Al and Ron Lindner, Spence Petros, Tom Neustrom, and many other notables. Binkelman popularized modern structure theory and the depth finder, jig fishing, floating jig heads, fluorescent colors, even drop-shotting. Clearly, his contributions to fishing stand alone.

But if Bill were alive today, it's bait he'd want to talk about-simple, beautiful bait. The Nightcrawler Secrets method, as it became known, featured finesse tackle and precision boat control on exact spots-on-spots-concepts unheard of at the time. He used ultra-fine #8 bronze Aberdeen hooks, four-pound test monofilament, and only the fattest, healthiest, wildest nightcrawlers he could get. "Super-Crawlers" he called them. Stored at optimal temperature, then specially conditioned, regular crawlers became super-crawlers-baits that virtually jumped out of your hand.

Given the volume of recent media coverage advocating artificial lures over live bait, you'd be tempted to believe that baits like the super-crawler have become obsolete-that the good ol' nightcrawler "ain't" what it used to be. Nonsense. In reality, few anglers today have ever fished, let alone seen a true super-crawler. They're that good, that special.

Live bait artists like Tom Neustrom know the difference. "A well-conditioned crawler is about as good as it gets for walleye, especially once water warms into the low 60s," says Neustrom, a Freshwater Fishing Hall-of-Fame fishing guide from Deer River, Minn. "Even in fall, a time when everyone else is rigging with big redbtail chubs, I like to show fish a nice big crawler. That's a trick not a lot of people try, but oftentimes, crawlers score over chubs by a wide margin."

Like Binkelman's finesse approach, Neustrom subscribes to his own crawler rigging program. "Rather than hooking the worm once through the head, I like to thread it lightly through the tip," he says, "Pull the hook out about an inch from the nose. Almost like you'd rig a plastic grub on a jighead. You want to position the crawler to trail as straight as possible.

Neustrom continues: "Most people want to inject the tail of the crawler with air, but you'll get much better action in your bait if you add air to the collar. I've experimented with many different rigging styles, but this approach makes the crawler shimmy in a seductive way that really triggers big fish. A lot of people today think crawlers are a beginner's bait, which is ridiculous. Precision crawler fishing is an art, just like Binkelman told us back then."

MAKING SUPER-CRAWLERS

"If you think all nightcrawlers are alike, you've got a big surprise coming," Binkelman wrote in his 1965 live bait manifesto. "Super-crawlers make ordinary crawlers look sick. I'm not selling them. In fact, you can't even buy them-but you can make your own."

For Binkelman, the super-crawler conditioning process began with a sizeable cache of worms. He'd buy bulk boxes of 12 dozen or so at a time. (Today, choice bait outlets like Vados-www.vadosbait.com-offer bulk packs for about \$30 per gross.) From there, he'd begin sorting by grade: select jumbos in one group, so-sos in another, and feeble "culls," which went into the garden. In a high-quality gross, roughly a third of the crawlers typically qualify for the "select" grade.

For long-term storage, place your stash of "selects" into a big Styrofoam cooler, such as a Frabill Habitat V, filled with Super-Gro bedding, which keeps crawlers cool and happy. A refrigerator with temperature control (set at 45 to 55-degrees) - or even the corner of your basement-provides an optimal climate.

Over many years, bait dealers have tried every conceivable type of bedding-leaves, moss, manure, topsoil, newspaper, etc. In his day, Binkelman preferred a common brand of commercial bedding. Frabill's Super-Gro is better still-a specially formulated blend of ingredients, odorless and chemical free, that make average crawlers super. This bedding is clean, easy to use, and even contains a built-in food source-another key to growing super-crawlers.

Before adding crawlers to the Super-Gro bedding, dampen it slightly with non-chlorinated water. The bedding should be moist but not wet. Gather mounds of bedding into your hands, and squeeze until it's drip free. With excess water removed from all bedding, return it to the Habitat cooler to about half-full. Let the bedding chill until temperature drops to approximately 50-degrees (use a meat thermometer.) Finally, add your select jumbo crawlers (the Habitat storage cooler holds up to twelve dozen baits). Check your baits every few days-dead or weak ones rise to the surface. Remove them immediately. Otherwise, once the habitat is established, handle crawlers and bedding as little as possible. This is important.

The quickest path to great crawlers is to use Frabill's complete crawler care kit, the Habitat Deluxe Worm Kit- a Habitat V cooler, smaller Fisherman's Worm Tote, Super-Gro bedding and a tub of special Fat N Sassy crawler food. These are the products bait dealers use most.

A day before leaving for a fishing trip is when Binkelman would put the finishing touches on his super-crawlers. Atop two to three inches of bedding, he'd place a couple dozen crawlers into each of several smaller transport coolers, like a Fisherman's Worm Tote. Between layers of damp newspapers he'd place a few ice cubes. He would use enough newspaper with the lid in place, to create slight pressure on the bedding. This forces crawlers to absorb excess moisture and balloon up.

The final step-one that's been used by anglers like Gary Roach and Neustrom for decades-is to fill small cups with non-chlorinated water and a bit of ice. Just minutes before fishing, drop a couple crawlers into a water cup. This makes crawlers really balloon up and jump.

As Binkelman liked to say: "Walleye and all game-fish love nightcrawlers!"

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We meet the first Wednesday of each month (except July and August) at 7:30 PM at the North Terrace Pond Clubhouse on Westmont and Terrace (approximately 6 blocks south of North Avenue and 3 blocks west of Addison) in Villa Park. Annual dues are \$30. Visitors or prospective new members are welcome - a \$3 fee is requested. If you are interested in attending or becoming a member please contact: Marty Kapolczynski at (630) 932-1923.