



DARKHOUSE ANGLER



October 2011

Michigan Darkhouse Angling Association

N5160 County Road 607 - Iron Mountain, MI 49801

The Michigan Darkhouse Angling Association actively works to establish equality of winter spearing and angling among all resident fishermen and to provide sound conservation practices of our sport.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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www.midarkhouse.org

It has been a busy and interesting period since our last Newsletter. A regular newsletter timeframe was not possible due to all the meetings regarding spearing issues. Here is a breakdown of all the meetings and travel done working for your spearing rights.

December 2010 - Coolwater Steering Committee meeting in Lansing.

January 2011 - Upper Peninsula Sportsmen Assn. meeting in Escanaba.

March 2011 - Coolwater Steering Committee meeting Lansing, Ultimate Sports Show, Grand Rapids

May 2011 - (7th) Upper Peninsula Sportsmen Assn. meeting in Escanaba, (17th) Meeting with DNR fisheries at DNR office, Escanaba.

June 2011 - (13th) Meeting with State Rep. McBroom regarding Legislature involvement for spearing rights. (24th-26th) Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) state Convention in Mt. Pleasant .

August 2011 - Coolwater Steering Committee meeting in Lansing.

September 2011 - Minnesota Darkhouse Angling Assn. 25th anniversary banquet. Was asked to make presentation along with the Minnesota DNR Commissioner. Presented Michigan spearing issues.

We have had a relatively productive year in regard to Michigan spearing issues however, dealing with the persistent bias and discrimination of DNR fisheries against winter spearing persists. Our December 2010 and March 2011 meetings were somewhat productive. We were able to reach some common ground. There were 39 lakes on the old Fisheries Order (FO-220), "Closed to spearing". The new Fisheries Order, (FO-219.12) will reduce that total to about 15-20 lakes (where no spearing is allowed). This list does not include Lake St. Clair, Michigan side of the Wisconsin/Michigan Boundary waters, Lake Erie or the Detroit River. Therefore, MDAA opposes FO-219.12 because it still has lakes "closed to spearing" listed.

In August we contacted our Upper Peninsula Legislative delegation to request help with our spearing issues. Information packets were sent to them outlining our ten year struggle dealing with the bias from Fisheries division. FO-219-12 was to be presented to the Natural Resource Commission (NRC) for "information" at the August NRC meeting. Senator Tom Casperson's office sent a letter to DNR Director Stokes and the Natural Resource Commission asking that parts of FO-219.12 that limited spearing in List A - Inland Waters "closed to spearing" not be adopted. In addition, he asked that waters on List B - Great Lakes and Connecting waters, which include Lake St. Clair as well as the Michigan side of the Wisconsin/Michigan, be reopened to spearing. He also stated, "Information provided to the 38th Senate District office as to why these closures have occurred suggests that the restrictions have not been equally applied to all fishing interests. This raises questions as to the reasoning for why these closures were made." The FO-219-12 was withdrawn in August but resubmitted for the October NRC meeting for

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REMINDERS

Membership renewals are due in December of each year. If you have not renewed this past year this will be your last Newsletter.

Photos will be added to your MDAA website. Our Webmaster is working on the website and is changing the format to accommodate new items. So, if you have any photos of great spearing activities, especially with young spearers, send them to me using jpeg. Please don't send me actual photographs, which then need to be scanned to a disc. That makes more work for me.

If you have a local fishing contest in your area, we have shirts and hats that we can donate for prizes. It would be nice if the contest would include a spearing category, also.

WRITERS NEEDED

We need you to write an article for the MDAA Newsletter. People enjoy first hand experiences relating to Darkhouse spearing. How about encouraging your child, friend, or father to write an article? We would also like to see more of your good quality photos. The Newsletter is only as good as you want it to be. Your contribution to its enjoyment is important

Our yearly fundraiser helps pay the bills for the exposure we need to keep MDAA in the sporting public's eyes. Many of you support MDAA with donations of money when you send in your yearly memberships. We thank you for this support.

Donated items for auction, such as fish decoys, fish spears, lures and almost any sporting collectible, old or new, are very appreciated. All items are put up for auction on E-Bay, which has been very successful in the past. Please ship items to Mike Holmes, and he will handle putting the items on E-Bay. This is YOUR organization, the support you give MDAA helps all.

"information review" unchanged. As of this writing, DNR Director Stokes, DNR fisheries division, nor any members of the (NRC) Natural Resource Commission have given Senator Casperson the courtesy of responding to his letter.

Just to give you an example of the lack of credibility within the fisheries division, I have an email dated December 08, 2010 written by Christian Lesage, DNR fisheries division biologist. The email in part states; "Waters on this list should be on here to protect populations from spearing". In part, cont.; "The question is should the population be protected from spearing harvest or should the water be open for spearing opportunities?"

Then answering a question from Senator Casperson's office dated August 11, 2011 Christian Lesage, DNR fisheries biologist writes in answer #9. In part; "...and why that data proves Darkhouse angling to more detrimental to the resource than hook-and-line fishing? Lesage answer, in part; "...The department has not stated that spearing is more detrimental than hook-and-line fishing. If the Department believed that, then all waters would be closed to spearing."


Why would you have to protect fish populations from spearing if the fish managers believe spearing isn't any more detrimental to the resource than hook-and-line fishing. Why then are we burdened with "spearing closures". There is no justification, just bias and discrimination.

Discrimination behavior takes many forms, but they all involve some form of exclusion or rejection. Discrimination involves the actual behavior towards groups such as excluding or restricting members of one group from opportunities that are available to another group. Discrimination is even more grievous when it comes from government agencies.

Moving along, at our Coolwater Steering Committee meeting in August it was decided the name be changed to Warmwater Steering Committee. Dave Pawlak and I attended. It was a long meeting with intensive, creative discussion about how northern pike will be managed in the future. There were a number of proposals in size structure harvest including, No MSL (minimum size limit), 20" MSL, 24" MSL, 30" MSL and 24"-34" PSL (Protected slot limit). After several hours of discussing these proposals, the one MDAA have always held fast to was, no slot limits. They don't work. The research from Minn. has proven a failure and biased and put a hardship on anglers wanting a fish to eat. The committee reached a concessions, taking slot limits off the table. After a lot of discussion, it was felt that maybe we don't need to change most of the management practices regarding northern pike. But, we will see how all this holds up at our next meeting in December. We briefly discussed Lake St. Clair and muskies. It was stated by one of the musky proponents that most musky fishermen catch-and-release muskies on Lake St. Clair. MDAA Board Member Dave Pawlak, who lives near Lake St. Clair, prior to attending the meeting, contacted three taxidermy shops on Lake St. Clair and found that between the three shops they had just over 100+ muskies being mounted. I guess it's not all musky fishermen that catch-and-release, is it.

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TOM RICHARDS OBITUARY

On a sad note, we lost one of Michigan's great supporters of Darkhouse angling, Tom Richards. Tom was one of my best friends and was a MDAA Board member. Tom died of a heart attack on Tuesday, January 4, 2011. He was born in Highland Park, Mich. on May 31, 1945. He served in the U.S Navy during Vietnam. He lived the past 38 years in Meauwataka, Mich. Tom is survived by his wife Debora of 42 years, and his sons Jeffrey Richards, Tony Richards and daughter Kimberley Richards and grandchildren, Drew, Nicholas, Fox and Jack. Tom was one of the premier fish spear makers in the U.S. He made hundreds of fish decoys and took many ribbons at the Great Lakes Fish Decoy show and the National Fish Decoy show in Perham, Minn. Tom and I presented the argument before the Michigan Senate Conservation Committee to extend the Michigan spearing season. He was active in spearing outings for kids around the Cadillac, Mich. area. He will be missed by all who knew him. God Bless You, Tom.

Mike Holmes

CONGRATULATIONS CADILLAC! HURRAH! EXCELLENT! WONDERFUL! AWESOME!

THE CADILLAC CHAPTER OF THE MICHIGAN DARKHOUSE ANGLING ASSOCIATION

Great news! We have a new MDAA Chapter. The Cadillac Chapter has organized in September in Cadillac, Michigan. From the efforts of Gary Swiger, Cadillac, they have created our first state Chapter. It is very fitting that our first MDAA Chapter comes from the home of Michigan's Master Carver, Oscar W. Peterson, 1887-1951. Oscar Peterson fish decoys and wood carvings are the some of the most highly prized by collectors. Gary Swiger is a retired school teacher and was a good friend of the late Tom Richards. If you are live in the Cadillac area, please join their Chapter.

A DAY WE WILL NEVER FORGET... By: Mike Kitt



January 14th, 2011 – a day my son and I will never forget! I asked my 25 yr. old son Josh if he wanted to go up to Bay De Noc to spear. He has been spearing since he was 10 yrs. old and loves the sport, but he has never seen anything over 30", and had never been to Bay De Noc, despite hearing Dad's stories of big fish. Josh said yes without hesitation.

Rather than cutting in a new hole and setting up a tent, I asked "Hizhonor, Mr. President" (Mike Holmes) if we could use his shanty that was already set up. Mike was in Minnesota for the "Whitefish Open", and said we were welcome to use the shack. I asked Mike if the shanty had the same lock on it (which I had a key for). "Yep, same lock", was Mike's reply. We made plans for the following morning.

I was up at 4:30 am raring to go. I packed up the truck by myself, so Josh could have a little extra sleep. Now "Murphy" and I have had a long-time understanding. I respect him and plan accordingly, and he lets me off with minimum collateral damage. So when that little voice went off inside my head to "take the tent just in case". I listened.

We arrived at our spot at around 7:20 am and walked out to the shack. As I grabbed the lock I immediately knew something was wrong. The lock had a different key hole than the key in my hand. I called up "Hizhonor", who was just getting out on the ice in Minnesota and asked him if he switched locks. Mike denied it emphatically. I then recalled that Mike had 2 identical shacks so he could spear 2 different locations. I asked Mike if he switched shacks. There was a long pause, followed by, "well I might have". I advised him of our predicament, and Mike apologized and advised that we should just knock the lock off. I told him I could not do that in good consciousness, but thanked him for the offer. I advised him that I had my tent with me just in case and would go over to my personal favorite spot about ½ mile away.

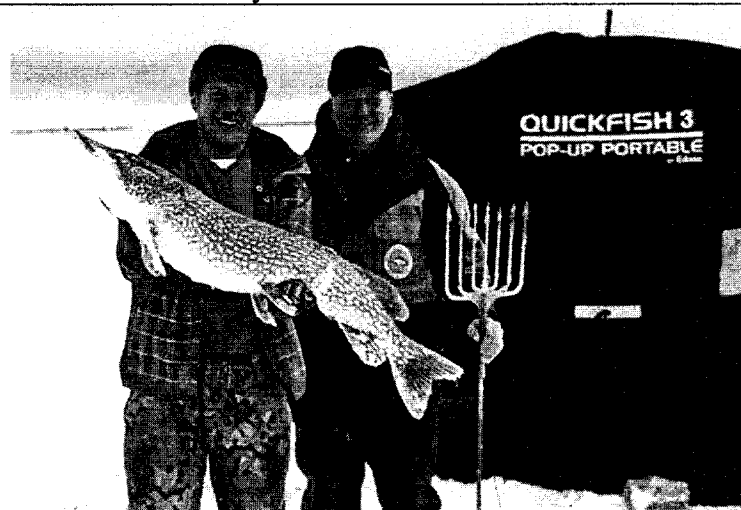
As luck would have it, I happened to bring my ice saw and spud along with my tent. I did not have an auger, so I hoped that the ice was not too thick. We got out in a mere 45 minutes late, and began the vigil. Within minutes Josh said, "Dad, there's a fish"! I looked down and saw a big fish about 15 ft. deep below the decoy. We were in deep water (20 ft.), which makes spear throws very difficult. I could tell the fish was big – maybe 40 inches. I tickled the decoy, but she would have none of it and swam off slowly. I began jiggling the decoy frantically and within 30 seconds another pike slammed the decoy. I could see this fish was smaller, but a nice fish none the less (about 30"). Josh threw the spear and hit this fish in the tail. I forgot to tell him about leading the fish in this deeper water. As he pulled up, I could see it had only one tine in it. Soon the fish began struggling, and pulled out with a rain of scales. I could tell Josh was feeling bad about losing a fish. I told him that with only one tine in her, she would probably be fine. He seemed to cheer up a little.

The next 2 hours proved to be pretty slow. Two smaller fish came in between 25" and 26", and gave us a great show, when both of them bit the decoy (we normally don't throw at anything under 30" in this area because of its potential). For the next hour we were again lulled into boredom with no activity.

I put on a home-made perch decoy tuned to swim tight and lay over on its side with a quick snap. I swam it for about five minutes when it happened! A fish came in hard and fast from right to left and bit down hard on the decoy. We both gasped at the size of the fish. Even though it was 7 ft. deep the fish looked huge. She shook the decoy in her mouth back and forth for a second and let go swimming off to our left. The fish was already underneath the ice on my side when I saw Josh throw. My heart sank as I thought he had missed, but I knew he made the right decision to throw because this fish was not going to come back. He slowly began to pull back on the line. My mind wasn't registering the fact that the line was straight out to the side, and not straight down. My despair was soon broken when Josh blurted out, Dad, I've got him"! Soon I saw the tail coming backwards from underneath the ice. Soon Josh began to hyperventilate and all he could squeak out was, "oh, my God – oh, my God – oh, my God"! I could see that the fish had 2 tines in her just in front of the dorsal fin. Before I could tell him not to bring the fish up on the ice before I got the gaff, he slipped the unusually quiet fish up onto the ice inside the tent. Now, at this point I must tell you that our tent is about 7 ft. wide filled with 2 slightly above average humans and a dog.

Soon our prize begins to thrash around, and the dog attempts to protect us from the invader of our sanctity. I grab onto the fish's spade-like snout while my son struggles to get the tent zipper open. Soon he has the door open and begins to pull his prize out of the tent with me in tow. I look down frantically to see what is happening, only to see one tine of his spear now lodged firmly in my pants leg in the ensuing excitement. So now I have a spear, a behemoth of a fish, a chair, and a snapping dog - all attached to me! I yell at my son to stop pulling so that I might free myself of the melee. With the dexterity of Charles Woodson (Green Bay Packers) I quickly free myself, and Josh whisks the fish out onto the ice. I manage to get the decoy free of the spear line, and myself and the dog out of the tent. When Josh turned around his eyes looked like the headlights on a Jeep. "What did you just do?", I blurted out. All he could say was, "oh, my God"!

We grabbed each other, and flung ourselves to the ground, screaming and rolling around in the snow like a couple of school children. Soon a fisherman walked over from a nearby shanty. "I thought I better come over and see what all the fuss was about", he laughed. We showed him our good fortune and asked him to take our picture. We then measured the fish and found her to tape out at 42". We did not have a scale, but judging by her girth we estimated her at around 25 lbs. We decided there was no point in going back into the tent, so we broke it down and went immediately to a local social gathering emporium to have a "celebratory" toast. From there we headed straight to the taxidermist to preserve one of the greatest Father/Son moments anyone could ever have!



Josh and Mike Kitt

A FIRST SPEARING EXPERIENCE
BY
GARY SWIGER

Traditionally, my daughter and I plan a spearing day shortly after first ice, usually around Christmas, but our last trip was quite different from others we have taken.

In the quiet of the darkhouse, we reconnect and catch-up on our busy family lives. Our last trip was different because my daughter brought her nine year old son, Andy, along for his first spearing experience.

To accommodate the three of us comfortably, I set up my 5'x8 Shappell portable. I enlarged the original jigging hole to allow an ample spearing area to view the action I hoped would develop.

Before we dropped the first decoy, we discussed and practiced what to do should a legal pike present itself. Andy felt confident he could do what he had to do if a pike came through. As we sipped our steamy hot chocolate, we dreamed of a monster hog drifting into the hole.

The first two hours were somewhat uneventful with only a few panfish and one small pike checking out our decoy. Andy was getting a little antsy, but I told him. "The prime time is from 11:00 to 1:00." He was very patient and hoped his grandpa was right and so was I.

The action began around 11:10 with a full speed attack on our decoy and left us just as fast. Although spearing wasn't possible, the excitement ran high and was well worth the wait. Within the next hour, two undersize and two legal swam thru, but both attempts were misses. At 12:15, a 28 incher appeared and nosed our decoy. Andy dropped the hammer with great contact behind the head and lifted his first pike through the hole and onto the ice.

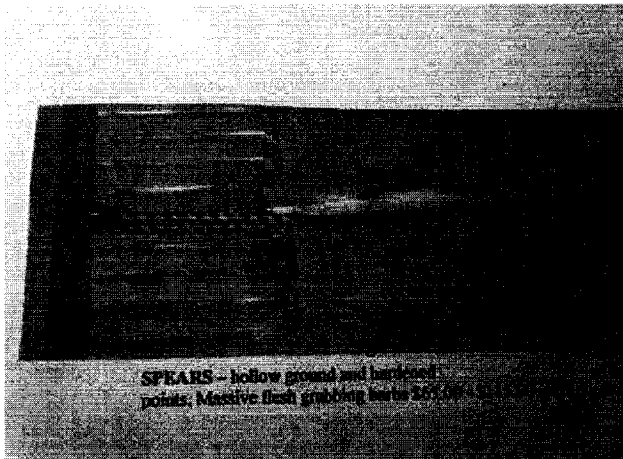
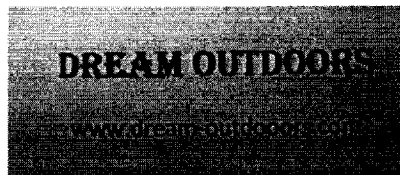
I knew by the level of excitement that a new spear fisherman was born to help continue the heritage and passion of our great sport.

When Andy went back to school after Christmas break, he had to write about something he did over break for his third grade English class. When he showed it to me, a big, proud smile crossed my face and I knew he was hooked.

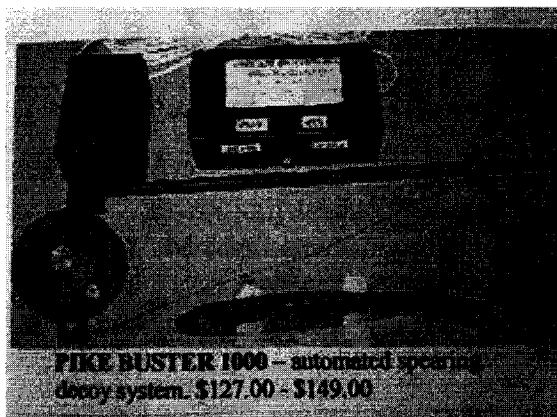
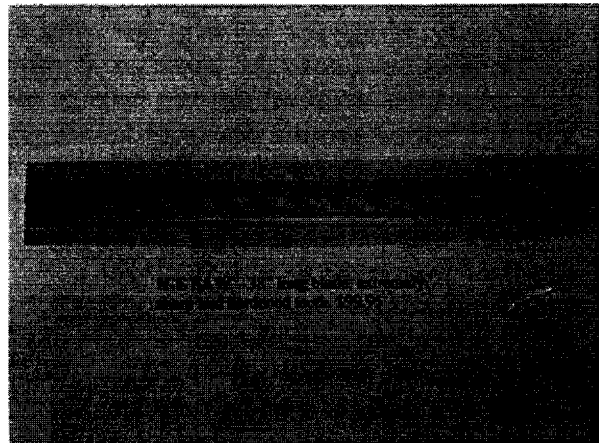
Below is Andy Lobbezoo's English assignment entitled "Spear Fishing".

"Spear Fishing" by Andy Lobbezo 3rd Grade

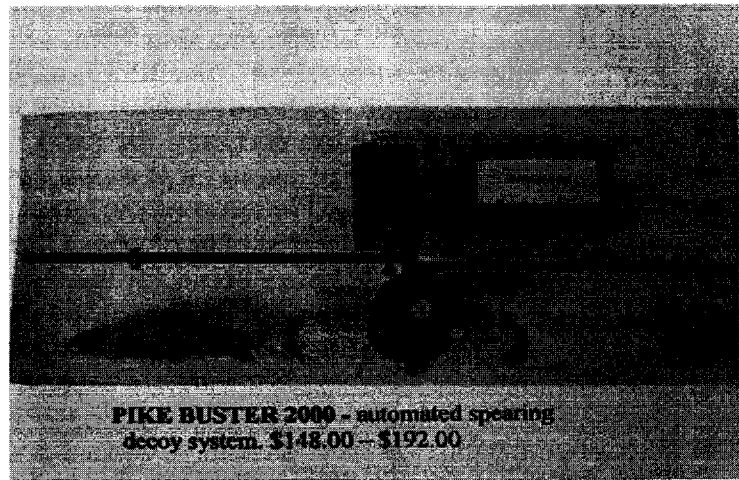
Shh Shh
you pull the jet sled
Pound Pound
you put up the shanty
Jiggle Jiggle
you hear the decoys
Splash Splash
the spear hits the water
Grab Grab
you grab the rope
Squirm Squirm
you kill the fish
Smack Smack
the tip-ups go up



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Join the Minnesota DAA

Support for Darkhouse angling comes from many sources and locations, such as our sister club the Minnesota DAA. You can support Darkhouse angling by joining their great organization. Because their organization has been in existence longer than our MDA, that have more members with 17 chapters throughout Minnesota. They feature a bi-monthly newspaper style newsletter that is full of information pertaining to Darkhouse angling. Dues are \$10/year. We have many MN Darkhouse anglers that are supporting members of our MDA. They support our fundraiser with donated items even though many never spear in Michigan.

I urge you to support the Minnesota organization by checking out their website at: www.mndarkhouse.org or sending \$10 to:

Minnesota Darkhouse & Angling Association
 PO Box 1875
 Burnsville, MN 55337
 (952) 895-1774



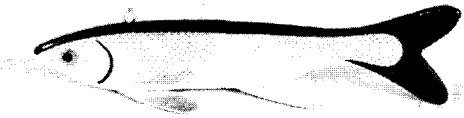
9" silver or golden shiner



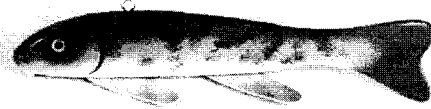
8" perch



8" red & white



9" Sucker



9" Cisco

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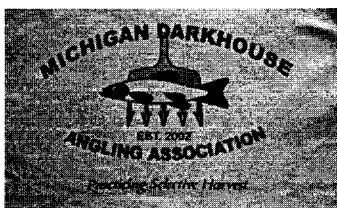
Bumper sticker
 11"x4" \$5.50



Window Decal
 5"x5 1/2" \$5.50



Jacket Patch
 \$6.75



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License Plate
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MDAA Membership Application

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Web Site URL: _____

Home Page Web Listing on MDAA site is free to paid members.

MEMBERSHIP LEVEL (Please check appropriate box)

1 Year youth membership (16 and under)

Birthdate: _____ \$5.00

1 Year adult membership \$20.00

Renewal \$20.00

MEMBER PRIDE

License Plate \$18.00 Jacket Patch \$6.75 Bumper Sticker \$5.50 Window Decal \$5.50 T-shirt \$15.00

Baseball Cap \$10.50 Stocking Cap \$10.50

Contribution \$ _____

Check Number: _____

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