Casting Around with IMTT President Howard Chambliss:

Let’s try it again...  Mother Nature had her way with our first tournament. She decided to keep the ice cover a little longer this year. As of March 17th there was still ice on part of Spring Lake North. So we have moved the Spring Lake North Tournament to April 19th. Hope everyone will be able to attend it in April. The weather will be warmer, and we may have a few more weeds to deal with, but I think it will be a great tournament!

The Trail will begin at Lake Kinkaid on March 29th and 30th. Walt has worked hard to get things ready for the Spring Classic. There is still plenty of time to get registered, so if you have not registered yet please contact Walt to get in line. Just a reminder of some of two of our programs we will be pushing again this year - the IMTT Scholarship and Youth Trail - are great programs we need to support. Information for both will be available at the tournaments and on the Illinois Muskie Tournament Trail web page. These programs are both important to the future of the Muskie Fishery in Illinois. Let’s talk them up and have another great year for both programs. There is a lot of great information in this months’ newsletter, please take time to read through it. I would like to thank everyone for their hard work putting it together. The ice is gone, the water is warming up and the days are getting longer. Seems like it’s time to head to the lake. Hope to see everyone at the Spring Classic on the 29th.

See YOU on the water............................................

Howard Chambliss
President - IMTT

Please Do Not Miss…..
1. Ralph Stanley sharing his expertise in fishing Lake Shelbyville and the Shelbyville spillway with us. As most of you know, Ralph is the “Master of the Spillway” and has recorded over 1200+ Muskies - all in Illinois!
2. Lucas Kroening, our Youth Ambassador, experienced some interesting conversations and beliefs while posting posters regarding the Kinkaid Tournament. Don’t miss his article, and the related comments in “Yes Virginia there is a Santa Claus”.
3. Walt Krause continues to support the efforts of your Newsletter with a great article entitled, “Playing the Percentages”. Certainly a “must read” if you fish Kinkaid or Shelbyville.
4. Dan Stephenson (IDNR) re-emphasizes the importance of the “Green Cards” program. Sure hope you have some in your tackle box and that you will need them!

And away we go, really hope you enjoy this issue of your Illinois Muskie Tournament Trail newsletter. Hope you keep us in mind and let us know how we can improve!!
“Jake Wolf Memorial Tournament a HUGE Success”

This was to be “THE” headline for the April issue of the Illinois Muskie Tournament Trail newsletter. I will say that with almost 40+ years of fishing some type of tournament, I’ve never seen anyone work as hard as Bob Taylor had to make the above headline a reality. But in the end, no matter how big, mean and tough Bob is, let’s face it folks, you can’t mess with Mother Nature. Now the focus falls to March 29 and 30 with the Spring Classic on Lake Kinkaid. If you haven’t been on Lake Kinkaid, you are sure in for a fantastic treat. Often mentioned as “my favorite Illinois Muskie Lake”, this is an awesome time to witness first hand this special venue.

As you now know, the Jake Wolf Memorial Tournament has been rescheduled for Saturday, April 19th. Cash prizes, trophies, a chance to get a head start on the Tournament Trail points, and maybe even an Easter Egg for your boat!! If you aren’t already entered, what a great time to bring a youngster on board, more than likely no school on the Friday (Good Friday) before the tournament.

FIRST AID IDEAS… It takes more than a new lure to assure a safe and great new fishing season. Nothing like having to end a fishing outing early due to a lack of preparation. A small, well thought out, first aid kit will go a long ways in assuring you being ready for most any emergency. Bob Hill of St. Mary’s Hospital Athletic Care Division suggests the following list of common medicines to have on your boat. Be sure and note the expiration dates on all medications and sun screens.

- Pain relievers like Tylenol, anti-inflammatories like aspirin, Motrin and Aleve.
- Gastric meds like Tums, Rolaid’s, Pepto-Bismol, and anti-histamines and anti-itch medicines like Benadryl.
- If you wear contacts, always be sure to have solution with you.
- Insect repellent and lip balm which contains sunscreen. (Remember to shake sun screen before using.)
- Wound cleaner (not hydrogen peroxide or rubbing alcohol) and first aid cream.
- Bite stick or other application for insect bites and stings.
- Assortment of band aids, gauze pads, include some feminine hygiene products for bleeding control along with one or two elastic wraps.
- Medical tape and yes, duct or gorilla tape will work to secure dressings.
- Tweezers, a needle, a small magnifying glass, scissors and a good pair of wire cutters along with the directions on hook removal.
- Chemical ice packs or ice with extra baggies.
- Always have some clean water in the boat with either bar or liquid soap for wound washing or cleaning your hands before eating. Clean water can also be used for eye irrigation."

Editor’s note: I would also encourage you to share personal medical concerns or issues that might arise during an outing with the person you are fishing with. Most of my fishing partners know I carry a bottle of nitro-glycerin in my pocket due to heart issues. I’ve never had to use it, but like your life jacket - if needed, it better be handy.

Upcoming Events

March 29 & 30  IMTT Spring Classic Tournament on Kinkaid Lake
April 19      Rescheduled Jake Wolf Memorial Tournament on Spring Lake North
May 3 & 4     Shawnee Spring Fling Tournament on Lake Kinkaid
May 17       Fox River Valley “Challunge on the Chain” on Fox Chain of Lakes
Muskie Fishing in Illinois Seminar

The Illinois Muskie Tournament Trail, in cooperation with SCHEELS, will be hosting a Muskie Fishing Seminar on Saturday, April 26, 2014 at the SCHEELS store in Springfield, Illinois. The seminar will begin at 1:00 PM and end at approximately 3:00 PM. The Illini Muskies Alliance will also be having a meeting at 10:00 that morning at the SCHEELS facility. Seminar topics will include specific information on the how, when and where of Muskie fishing in Illinois, with emphasis on Lake Shelbyville, Prairie Lake, Lake Evergreen, Spring Lake North, McMasters and Lake Kinkaid.

The presenters will include Howard Chambliss, President of IMTT and past tournament winner; Bob Taylor, Vice President IMTT, member of Shawnee Muskie Hunters and Lake Shelbyville Muskie Club, past Trail Champion and past Illinois State Champion; Bob Jeffries, Board of Director IMTT, Member IMA, tournament winner and past Illinois State Champion; Steve Pallo, Retired Director of Fisheries for IDNR, and Bob Kerans, Founder of IMTT, Vice Chairman IMA, member Shawnee Muskie Hunters and Lake Shelbyville Muskie Club, tournament winner and IMTT Newsletter Editor. The current Illinois State Record Muskie will be on display during the seminar. There is no admission fee to attend the seminar and no registration required. The event will be held in the SCHEELS Training Center on the 2nd floor of the store located at 3801 South MacArthur Blvd. in Springfield. Inquiries regarding the seminar should be directed to Bob Kerans at Robert_Kerans_559@comcast.net or (217)414-0093.

Illinois Muskie Tournament Trail Participates in SCHEELS FISH FEST

The IMTT enjoyed a booth at SCHEELS FISH FEST on March 1st. Even with the threat of a winter storm rapidly approaching the event was well attended. We were able to hand out over 125 packets concerning the Illinois Muskie Tournament Trail and its’ activities, goals, etc. Two Muskie fishermen were on hand to help set up and tear down the booth, Will Wright and Mark Egan - both of Springfield, certainly helped to make it possible. Probably (personal opinion) the most popular draw of the Fish Fest was the IMTT booth displaying the current Illinois State Record Muskie. Special thanks to IMTT member Roy Schodtler for designing, building and donating a suitable display stand for the Muskie.

Will Wright and Mark Egan with the Illinois State Record Muskie

Caught April 20, 2002 by Matt Carmean
Weight - 38 lbs. 8 oz
Length - 50.75”
Girth (after mounted) – 26.50”
Caught in the Shelbyville Spillway
JOHN RAK:  John lives in Chicago and has been fishing for Muskies for 36 years.  John got started by going fishing with friends on the Chippewa Flowage. His favorite Illinois Muskie lake is Kinkaid, and favorite Muskie lake is the Chippewa River.  John’s favorite lures are topwaters.  He also fishes for walleye, is a boater and a member of the Southside Muskie Hawks.

JUDD STOVER:  Judd lives in Lexington, just north of Bloomington, and has been Muskie fishing for about 35 years. He got started as a kid on the family’s annual summer vacation trip to Hayward Wisconsin, where his Dad fished for Muskies.  Judd’s favorite Illinois Muskie lake is Lake Evergreen, and his favorite Muskie lake is Chippewa Flowage in Hayward, Wisconsin.  His go to lure is the Marabou Bucktail.  Judd also fishes for bass and walleye, and is a boater.

RICH GALLAGHER:  Rich lives in Elgin (NW Chicago suburb),and his nickname is “Big Goomba”.  Rich has been Muskie fishing for 30+ years.  He got started while in college when he went to Canada with his good friend Frank Bottiglier, and has been Muskie fishing ever since.  Rich’s favorite Illinois lake is the Fox Chain, and his favorite Muskie lake is Lake of the Woods.  His go-to lure is the Phantom Soft Tail Glider.  Rich also fishes for large and smallmouth bass, crappie and walleye.  He is a boater, and belongs to the Fox River Valley Chapter.  (Ed. Note:  Rich is the FRV Chapter President, and a long time good one!)

JERRY FORD:  Jerry has been Muskie fishing since 9:00 AM, March 2nd, 2003 – with his first fish coming around 2 PM on March 16, 2003.  Living in O’Fallon, Illinois, Jerry credits Jim Beaty with really getting him hooked. Jerry targets Muskies about 95% of the time when fishing.  His favorite Illinois lake is Kinkaid, and his other favorite waters include Sabaskong Bay (Lake of the Woods) ON, Leach Lake in Minnesota (home of his first 50”+ inch fish), and Lake St. Clair in Michigan.  Jerry’s favorite go-to lures include Suick, Rapala Super Shad Rap, Depth Raider, Simm’s Hatchet Shad and Bondy Baits.  Jerry and wife Cheryl work out of an older 1986 runabout that they have modified to be a solid fishing and boating machine.  Jerry is the President of the Shawnee Muskie Hunters and (Ed. Comment – a doggone good one!!!)

TIM GUASTAFERRO:  Tim lives in West Dundee, Illinois (west of Chicago) and has been Muskie fishing 7 years.  Once he caught that first Muskie (at Cave Run in Kentucky) he was hooked.  Tim’s favorite Illinois lake is Sterling Lake.  Tim hopes to learn about more Illinois muskie lakes through his participation in IMTT.  Tim’s go-to lures area Black/Black Orange bucktails, Depth Raiders and Top Raiders.  Tim also fishes for walleye, sauger and smallmouth, and is a boater.

BOB TAYLOR:  IMTT Member #4 (Current IMTT Vice President), Bob lives in Lafayette, Indiana.  Bob has been Muskie fishing for 13 years.  Bob got started while bass fishing – he caught 3 Muskies in one week at Lake Evergreen in central Illinois and has been hooked ever since.  Bob’s favorite Illinois Muskie lake is Lake McMaster, and his favorite lake is Lake St. Claire.  Bob’s go-to lures are 10’ Jakes, Medussas, Big Games and Super Stalkers.  Other targeted fish are largemouth bass, smallmouth bass and Bluegill (for lunch).  Bob is a boater and belongs to Lake Shelbyville Muskie Club.
FRV’s 19th ANNUAL CHALLUNGE ON THE CHAIN

The FOX RIVER VALLEY CHAPTER OF MUSKIES, INC. will once again host their annual “Challunge on the Chain” tournament on Saturday, May 17th, 2014, on the Fox Chain of Lakes in Antioch, Illinois. This is their 19th consecutive year running the spring Muskie tournament, and this event is billed as the longest running and largest Muskie tournament in Illinois! Payouts will exceed $13,000.00 based on a full field of 100 boats. Participants will be able to launch from any location on the Chain, but the tournament will start at Steltz’s Resort on Bluff Lake and all anglers must leave from this location in numerical order at 7:00 AM. The tournament will end at 4:00 PM and all anglers will meet at the VFW hall in Antioch for the “paper” weigh in which will determine winners and payouts. The entry fee is $200.00 a team before May 1, 2014. All entries after May 1st will be $220.00 team, and if anglers wait to “walk-in” the day of the event, the entry fee will be $230.00/team. Entry fee includes a dinner. This is a great one-day event with cash and prizes totaling in excess of $20,000.00! Entry forms and rules and regulations are available off the Fox River Valley Chapter website: www.frvmuskie.com. Grab a friend and join us for a great one-day event!

Submitted by Rich Gallagher

GREEN CARDS

Thanks Bob for the opportunity to discuss the importance of Green Cards. As I explained at the IMA quarterly meeting a couple of weeks ago, “creel cards are absolutely critical to the needs our biologists have in managing this trophy species”. Our fish population surveys can give us an idea of the numbers in the lakes and their growth rates, but we don’t really know what percentage of the fish are getting to the anglers. Creel cards tell us that. In addition, our surveys are not always good barometers of the Fishery. As an example, I managed Prairie Lake until recently, when I assumed a new role in the division, and I helped Jeff Pontnack with the Otter lake Muskie surveys for 30+ years. I have had years on Prairie where I only collected 6 fish in three days of surveys. That doesn’t tell me much, but I had no additional days to spend on that water. We have had surveys on Otter where we collected 70+ fish, and other years where we collected less than 20. You never know what you are going to get. So the creel cards are a valuable tool, helping fill the holes we may have in our surveys. We really need anglers to take the time to fill out the cards and return them. They can go online to ifishillinois.org, or fill out the written form and drop them in the mail.

Submitted by Dan Stephenson, IDNR
“O.K. Bob, here we go… I started fishing for Muskies in the 2000 Director’s tournament. Steve (my son, not Steve Rustenburg) had been fishing for them for 3 or 4 years at Pana and Shelbyville. He had been fishing the Directors’ with Dave Lucas. I decided to give it a try. I had fished all my life, but never for Muskies. That year we caught two and lost three or four others on Saturday. Sunday was the big fog, and although we were near the front of the list for starting, I had to go slow to keep the shore in sight. Some of the bigger boats (I guess those with GPS) passed us at high speed. We finally got to our spot and there were five boats already there. One of them caught the biggest Muskie of the tournament that year - a 43.5”. Needless to say, this left me with a bad impression of tournament fishing. We went North of the Findlay bridge and never raised a fish on Sunday. We finished in 4th place. We fished the same area (which we call split rock) the next weekend, and had five or six Muskies on bucktails.

I have fished and hunted all my life, although I quit hunting in 1976. My other hobbies were: bowling, archery (bow hunting and tournaments), tennis, judo, trap shooting, canoeing, collecting Hot Wheels and full size cars which we showed or went to cruises with. The lion’s share of my Muskies came from the Spillway or Lake Shelbyville, although I have caught them on Otter and Pana lakes.

My three best years were: 2003 (168), 2004 (189), and 2007 (121). I didn’t keep track in 2000 and 2001 but started keeping track in June of 2002 after two great weekends on Shelbyville. From the last weekend in June until the end of 2002 I had 87. I have had several outings that stand out in my mind. As stated earlier, the last weekend in June and the first weekend in July, my son Steve and I boated 60 Muskies. The lake was 15 or 16 feet above normal and we were throwing bucktails in the back of what we call “Superman Cove”. Another that comes to mind on the Lake was when we were coming out of McQuillin and I was throwing a spinnerbait on the bank. I had four Muskies in five casts in 30 minutes. Below the dam, my best day was when Steve Rusteburg and I boated 23 and we also had a double. My best day from the shore was 12. One spring I had a 46” and a 47” on back-to-back casts using a 9” Wildeye Shad. Another memorable day was one fall when the club was averaging the best 10 Muskies of the year. I had removed myself from the competition, but Lee Bartolini was down and I put him on the wall. He ended up boating 13 that day, and I had 7 throwing out of the back of the boat into the corner and getting ones that had followed and went under the boat.
Master of the Spillway, Continued

My best lure has been the Storm” 6” Wildeye Shad. I have probably had 80% of my Muskies on them. Mainly the “croaker” color, which was discontinued several years back. All colors work at different times though.

To fish the spillway I would suggest the following lures:
Storm Wildeye Shad, Top Raider, or Safety pin Spinner lures.
Next choice would be a good glide bait (Hellhound) or one like it.

The water temperature in the spillway does get over 80 degrees. Especially if the oxygen level gets low, and they start letting out over the top gates. I still fish it, but you must land the fish quickly and don’t take it out of the water. I usually fish farther down the river then.

The most concerning change I have seen in fishing Lake Shelbyville is the number of Muskies being caught. I really believe that the 2007 Muskie kill we had below the dam also affected the fish in the lake. With the stocking numbers that have been released, it amazes me that the lake catches are so low.

My favorite technique (although the Wildeyes are my best) would be topwater. It is still the most spectacular as far as explosive bites and follows. I mainly cast. I have trolled some with friends who want to and I mainly operate the boat. I have caught a few when we had a double, or my buddy was on the phone or otherwise busy, but I don’t count trolled fish. I also won’t use live bait or fish at night, so I guess I’ll never be on Musky Hunter television show. When I first started fishing for Muskies I read a lot of articles about them.... I have found two things I do not agree with! The books say to use big slow figure 8’s because a 40” Muskie cannot turn fast. I have found that the faster you go, the fish gets in a frenzy and you cannot keep him from getting the lure. The other thing is they say Muskies never look down. Wrong! I fish the Wildeyes on the bottom as slow as possible, and Muskies suspend at a 45 degree angle watching the bottom for crayfish or nightcrawlers. This brings me to another technique that I found out about and tried, but hesitate to use. One day when waiting to launch at Lithia I talked to a couple of bass fishermen. They had caught six Muskies on artificial night crawlers. Also, one weekend below the dam a couple was fishing with Muskie lures on the west wall, and their young son (about 6) was using live night crawlers behind them. He had all the Muskie action. I tried it and after a night time rain near the boat ramps or on the concrete below the dam a lot of night crawlers get washed in. A plastic natural-colored night crawler with a slip sinker can be deadly. The reason I don’t use this technique is that they inhale and swallow them. A circle hook may be the answer to this problem. It will work in the back of coves with a muddy bottom instead of clay or gravel.

If a buddy were to come to fish the spillway with me, the best advice I could give him would be to just enjoy the day. You may not get a Muskie every time - or you may have the best day you’ve ever had. That’s Muskie fishing!

Ralph Stanley

Ed. Note: “PLEASE DO NOT REPRINT WITHOUT EDITOR OR AUTHOR PERMISSION!”
One of the things that we would really like to do (with YOUR participation) is to start some dialogue whether or not YOU would keep a Muskie that you feel is probably a new Illinois state record.

WALT KRAUSE: “In regard to keeping a state record, I can tell you I would not keep a state record and the guides on Kinkaid would not keep a state record. But we have a unique situation on Kinkaid. Shawn Hirst has a certified scale that he keeps certified with his own money. We tested this system a few years ago when Chad Cain caught a very big Muskie (49 5/8”, and only 1 lb. 2 oz. short of the state record). How we know it was that close was that I called Shawn and he met us on the lake where he weighed and measured the Muskie. Our goal was to have the fish certified and then released back into the water. We wanted to be the first to catch a state record and have it released back in the water alive. All state record fish are killed due to trying to find a certified scale and a state witness. We fell short of the record but we did release it back into the Lake alive. That day Chad called Scot Donovan to see if he had Shawn’s number, Scott called me and I had Shawn’s cell number and called him. Chad, Scott and I had a party of six fishermen, and we all gathered to witness this event.”

RICH GALLAGHER: “Personally I would not thump a state record fish. I would get the girth and length measurement prior to releasing it. I would run the formula and if it happened to be a state record I would be happy knowing she’s back swimming in the water and someone could get the opportunity to wrestle with her in the future.”

HOWARD CHAMBLISS: “This is a hard question to answer. There are a lot of facts that come into play when we have this discussion. A lot of fishermen say that if the fish is of legal size for the water it is caught on, it is theirs to keep, as long as it is caught by legal methods. Others say that if you get lucky to catch a state record fish you might as well keep it due to the fact it is most likely old and near the end of its’ natural life and will die soon anyway. There are also a lot of trophy hunters out there that are looking for a new wall decoration and do not even think a thing about killing record fish they have caught, again it is their fish to keep. Then you have the fishermen that fish for the total enjoyment of the challenge of the catch. These sportsmen are usually the ones that never keep a fish, and have the best time on the water. Don’t get me wrong, there is nothing better than a fish fry after a great day on the water. But I don’t think you need to keep a state record to eat or hang on the wall and someone could get the opportunity to wrestle with her in the future.”

Your Opinion…

“Keeping an Illinois State Record”

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HOWARD CHAMBLISS: “This is a hard question to answer. There are a lot of facts that come into play when we have this discussion. A lot of fishermen say that if the fish is of legal size for the water it is caught on, it is theirs to keep, as long as it is caught by legal methods. Others say that if you get lucky to catch a state record fish you might as well keep it due to the fact it is most likely old and near the end of its’ natural life and will die soon anyway. There are also a lot of trophy hunters out there that are looking for a new wall decoration and do not even think a thing about killing record fish they have caught, again it is their fish to keep. Then you have the fishermen that fish for the total enjoyment of the challenge of the catch. These sportsmen are usually the ones that never keep a fish, and have the best time on the water. Don’t get me wrong, there is nothing better than a fish fry after a great day on the water. But I don’t think you need to keep a state record to eat or hang on the wall. I feel these record - or near record - fish should be released in hopes that it may be able to continue to breed and pass on the genes that allowed it to get as big as it did. Also there is a chance that several other fishermen may get the enjoyment of catching it again. I feel the best answer to this old question is to use the technology available to have a realistic replica made. With the digital cameras in use today, and a few good measurements, there are a lot of great taxidermists that can produce a life-like mount. I feel that educating all fishermen on the importance of catch and release is the best practice. I believe a lot more fishermen have had the opportunity to catch big fish, because someone else caught it and released it at least once before. This holds true for Muskie, bass, catfish or any other species. With that said, I personally would not harvest a great catch just to have the bragging rights to say I caught it. I would rather have a nice replica or photo on the wall, and give myself or someone else the chance to enjoy the challenge of the fight another day. If we continue the practice of catch and release, we help insure our children and grandchildren will also be able to one day have the opportunity to catch that once-in-a-life time fish.”
I know that every day you’re here, you have a 20% chance of rain, or the Cubs have 1 in 10,000 of beating the Cardinals for the division championship or making it to the World Series. But have you ever used percentages to up your odds for catching Muskies? That’s right, percentages. In this article I will be talking about fishing Lake Kinkaid and Shelbyville, and increasing your chance of catching a Muskie on these bodies of water.

The first thing you must know to be a better fisherman is know what the main forage is in the lake you fish and their seasonal movement. Find the bait and you will find the Muskies. In Kinkaid and Shelbyville the main forage is shad. Kinkaid has both the thread fin and gizzard shad. Shad are roamers and spend a lot of time in open water, both in the summer and winter. In the spring and fall they will move into the bays to feed on plankton. Of course the Muskies will follow the shad as they are never far from dinner. The Muskies are also roamers in these lakes. They move, and move a lot! Transmitters placed in Muskies on Kinkaid proved just how much they did move in the two years that they held the study. They also move in loose packs. I have found throughout the years that fish in one cove today may not be there tomorrow. When fishing on Lake Shelbyville most of the tournaments are won by picking a cove and staying there all day - and sometimes both days - waiting for the fish to chase shad in the cove they are fishing. This is rolling the dice and hope you picked the right cove. I have done this with good success, and I know of a couple of other teams that do this with good success also. I have been in coves on Shelbyville and have seen large schools of shad shoot under the boat and then catch up to five and six Muskies in a short amount of time as they tear into the shad that they trapped in the cove.

Kinkaid is a little easier to fish with the diverse structure that Shelbyville does not have. It has large weed beds, timber coves, rocks and open water. Muskies can be in anyone of these areas on any given day. If shad are in the deep timber, the Muskies will be there. If the shad are in open water as in the summer and winter, the Muskies will be there. Find the shad and you will find the Muskies!

In the spring and fall the shad will move into the creeks. I have found the best bays and coves for fishing for Muskies have creeks running into them. If it has a creek and shad are there, you will find Muskies. As in the title, you want to fish in places where there is the most concentration of Muskies in any given day. Muskies do not have to eat every day. If you want to increase your chances/percentage of catching one, find the bait and good luck.

Walt is a full-time guide on Lake Kinkaid and other southern Illinois lakes.

Phone Number Correction: Its’ been brought to our attention that the phone number for Director Garry Brookman was wrong on both the website and in prior newsletters. Please note, Garry’s correct phone numbers are: Home (573)475-8123 and Cell (573)258-9860. Why not give Garry a call and tell him you have his correct number (chuckle, chuckle).
Thoughts from Youth Ambassador

LUCAS KROENING

This past month I have been thinking a lot about Musky fishing and wondering when will the ice go away! Ever hear of a Muskie myth or story? These traditional stories which have been handed down about our favorite pastime without a real explanation (or validation) behind them. I heard a few this past week while handing out posters for the upcoming IMTT tournament. Surprisingly, not everyone shares the same enjoyment for Muskie fishing. While everyone was open to helping out our event and posting the flyers, I did have some interesting conversations concerning the Muskie as a predator and Muskie fishermen in general.

I was prepared for the topic Muskie impacting game fish in the area. After all many of the area sport shops are dedicated to these other game fish. The conversation that I didn’t expect was that while several of the shop keepers appreciated the effort, they felt it was an uphill battle at best, to generate interest in the sport of Muskie fishing. I found it interesting that several believe that this is strictly a “northern” sport, and is representative of the guys from the north coming to town to fish. While we talked the conversation kept coming around to myths, the cost, and the perceived lack of participation by local guys. So it made me think about all the myths and how to spread the word of the good the IMTT does. The good news is that everyone was willing to help, and there is real interest in learning more about the IMTT. I just thought I’d share some of the conversations I had, and I do look forward to seeing everyone at the Kinkaid IMTT Tournament.

Darn Tootin……Lucas

“YES, VIRGINIA THERE IS A SANTA CLAUS”

Lucas’s recent experiences reminded me of this quote that first showed up on September 21, 1897, when a small girl (8 years old) wrote a letter to the New York Sun. The letter was to become the most widely read letter ever written to a newspaper. Newsman Francis Pharcellus Church wrote the Sun’s response… “Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus”.

Lucas deserves an “attaboy” and a thank you for sharing his experiences with us. His sharing should once again remind all of us that we still have work to do. “Yes, Muskie Fishermen, there are folks in Illinois who believe that the Muskie is not and should not be an Illinois fish”. And you know, we need to respect their right to their opinion. But that should not hinder us from an all out education program to put the falsehoods surrounding the Muskie to rest. Our booklet (with over 8,000 printed) “What’s On The Menu” is a good first step. How many copies have YOU shared with the fishermen in your area?????? As we’ve mentioned before, it doesn’t do any good for Muskie fishermen alone to read it; we need to get others to read it as well! Confronting the “negatives” with educational “positives” (as I believe Lucas did) seems to me to be the best plan of action. Trust all are mature and professional enough to do so on a positive level. Editor: Bob Kerans

Contact Information for Illinois Muskie Tournament Trail

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<td>Bob Kerans</td>
<td>(217)414-0093</td>
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