

Notes Afield:

Torpedoes for Fish

by Dave Mull

Trolling is boring when you don't catch fish, and on this warm, windy Saturday morning while seeking Lake Michigan silver fish, trolling was starting to be mind-numbing. Thunderstorms had delayed the start of our little club tournament out of New Buffalo, Michigan by two hours, so the 17 boats' shotgun start had been at 8 a.m. Now it was nearly 11, and in three hours, not one of our nine rods had rattled.

Trollers fight boredom by changing lures, and we'd just changed a second round, switching colors and sizes of spoons and adding a flasher-fly on seven of our rods. One rod that had not changed was a Northern King NK 28 model spoon in the black and green pattern called Die Hard. This was on a wire-line rod, taken down with a 13-ounce Torpedo weight. Taking out the Torpedo depth chart for this heaviest of four sizes, I noted that with 108 feet of line out with our trolling speed of 2.4 mph, the lure would be running 55 feet deep. On a whim—really just to make myself feel like I was working at catching a fish—I let out an additional 20 feet of wire, which the chart said, would drop the lure another five feet deeper.

Within just a few minutes, my buddy Kenny, a Chicago camera operator whose arm was in a sling from a work-related fall and surgery, hollered "Fish on!" Ignoring doctor's orders to not use his surgically repaired arm, Ken pulled the wire rod out of the holder and started reeling. He assured me he wasn't putting any stress on his shoulder and we soon netted a 3-pound king salmon. Finally! The skunk, as they say, was out of the box. I reset the rod and within five minutes, another king hit the same lure behind the same Torpedo. This one, fought to net by my other club tournament partner Scott, weighed about 8 pounds.

We soon turned to troll back through where those two kings hit, but that was the wrong move. We didn't have another bite for another couple of hours, and sometimes the right direction is the key to getting bites. With just a half-hour left to fish, we turned around to the direction of our earlier productive troll and caught three steelhead, three fish on at once, with just 15 minutes left in the tournament. These didn't hit the Torpedo rod, rather eating three different spoons taken deep behind various lengths of



BROCK ZOLMAN holds the Torpedo and his dad Nate holds the steelhead that hit a spoon taken down behind the super-efficient weight out of New Buffalo, Michigan last year.

leadcore line. We had our five-fish weigh-in limit and ended up in tenth place, good for a \$25 gas card.

Without the two fish that hit the spoon behind the Torpedo, though, we would have finished last.

Basically, Torpedoes are super-efficient weights that take lures down with very little water resistance. The Torpedo Diver is the brainchild of Matthew Sawrie, an engineer and fish-head from London, Ontario. Basically, Sawrie modeled weights after the hydrodynamically efficient torpedo that submarines shoot. Because the fishing Torpedoes come through the water with so little drag, they can take your lures to specific depths depending on how much line you let out and how fast your boat is moving. Sawrie spent many days on Lake Erie, painstakingly charting exactly how deep his weights were running, and charts come with each weight. I've been using them since last summer and have been pleased with how easy they are to use—and how well they help catch fish.

The weights come in four sizes, with names for each: The smallest is the 2 1/2-ounce Snapper, followed by the 5-ounce Shark, the 8-ounce Musky and the 13-ounce Cuda. In a typical trolling spread for salmon, a Torpedo can be used instead of a downrigger



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or a diver disk, such as a Dipsy.

Inland trollers targeting suspended fish will like them, too—they just clip to your line as far ahead of your lure as you want it. When a fish hits, just reel in the Torpedo, unclip it, and fight the fish unhindered the rest of the way to the boat.

Definitely a nice little tool to add to the fishing arsenal. For more info, check out torpedodivers.com.