

The following story illuminates a point. The culture of fishing for a particular species deeply influences the behavior of people.

A friend of mine went to a local spot where people drive up to the water and walk in to do their fishing. While readying his gear at the truck, he encountered another angler, who offered advice to him.

"Hey man, how are you?" the guy asked. He wore a knowing smile on his face, and held something long and slender in his hand. "I was here yesterday, and the bite was hot," the man continued. "We caught a ton of fish, up to about six pounds, all on these." He brought his arm upward toward my friend, offering him one of the lures.

My compadre could see it was a soft plastic, kind of like a Slug-O.

"You rig it without a jighead, just on a worm hook," the other advised. "Don't really have to do much with it in terms of presentation. Just throw it out there, let it settle in the water and reel it in super slow. The fish can't resist it."

Though he sensed the sincerity of the other man's effort to help him, my buddy refused to take the lure he offered. "That's alright, man," he said. "I've got what I need."

The two began fishing close together, working their way down a long, sandy point which projects out into the water. Both of them began catching fish, my friend on a chugging topwater, the other man on his worm. The other was catching fish faster, by a rate of at least two to one.

At the end of the sandy spit, a group of five anglers were sitting and fishing from lawn chairs. Their gear and the manner in which they fished suggested to my friend they were novice anglers at best. When he and the man with the magic worm neared the group, the man stopped fishing and walked over to the group.

My friend could tell he was offering them some of the worms. Moreover, he began tying them onto the ends of their lines and gave them a demonstration of how to use them. To my buddy's surprise, all the men began catching fish on the worms immediately, despite having tackle ill-suited to the effort, poor casting skills and obviously minimal experience fishing with lures.

"They just started whacking the fish," he told me. "Most of the time, at least three rods were bent at once. In fact, one of the guys broke a rod, then borrowed one, then broke it too. They were hooting and hollering. I could tell they had never caught fish like this before. After they had caught at least 50, I began to wonder how many fish were out in front of us. It was amazing to see."

When this particular friend recounts a tale of this sort, he usually does so to make a point. I began to contemplate what his point might be before he stated it. The events seem to suggest something about the relative values of lures at a given moment, also about how it might be difficult at times to tell how many fish are within casting reach when lure fishing. Pick the "wrong" plug, or work it the "wrong" way, and you might miss the mother lode.

He continued. "Most of the fish were two or three pounders, but I saw them bring in a couple that looked like six or seven pounders. They took pictures of those and released 'em. In fact, they didn't keep any fish at all. That was what really got me thinking the most. Here you had a bunch of inexperienced fishermen catching a bunch of fish for the first time, and

they didn't take a single one home. It seemed like the idea never crossed their minds."

The story I offer above is true. I leave you with a simple question, loyal reader of my blogs. The question is this:

In the tale narrated above, the targeted species was:

- a. black bass
- b. speckled trout