

**Newsletter for**

**October 2013**



# the **CRAYFISH TALE**

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## CRAYFISH CATCH GALORE

**The crayfish trap was coming up slowly to the side of the boat. It felt heavy. Maybe it was stuck on some debris on the lake bottom. But this lake seldom has bottom debris, so maybe, just maybe, it came up so slow because the trap was actually full of crayfish.**

**For years I have had his strange premonition of how empty my crayfish trap might be as I pull it up from some lake. I recall so well when, many years ago, when my crayfish catching experience was meager, and I had decided to experiment by placing my traps in a new area of the lake. Early the next morning I rowed out to this new place and started pulling traps. Then my pessimistic premonitions turned instead into ecstasy as an overnight trap came up, as I thought at the time, full of crayfish. That was my first crayfish catch of more than 40 crays in one Jackpot trap. At that time, that was a record catch.**

**But now here I was, many years later and after extensive experience in pulling up crayfish traps with variable amounts of crays in them. Now my catch record was considerably higher.**

**A couple of years earlier I had set a new record in this productive lake with enormous amounts of crayfish in it. I had pulled up a trap – my own Jumbo design – with no less than 80 large crayfish in it after an overnight session.**

**My son, Peter, and I had returned to this lake for a two nighter camping session, and we had already pulled up a trot line with one remarkably filled trap. One of the Jumbo traps came up with no less than 90 crayfish in it. I had to use both hands to heft that trap into our little aluminum boat, and later checking verified that we had a new record. This time it was indeed 90 crays in one Jumbo trap for the new record. We returned to our camp up by the lone juniper tree, and I started culling the catch for crays that were too small to keep**

**We had planned to place the trot line with its ten traps one more time the next morning before breaking camp for home. But we changed our minds and decided to instead try for a daytime session of just four or five hour soaking. That way we would not have to bother with pulling traps the**

**same morning we were breaking camp to go home.**

**So in broad daylight, which is somewhat against most crayfishing advice, we placed our ten traps on the trot line along the lake's shore. But this time we placed the traps a little bit deeper than during the first attempt. Maybe somewhere between five and ten feet deep. I had a feeling that the first catch had too many small crays in it because we had placed the traps a bit too close to the shallow shore line.**

**All the traps were baited with one fishy cat food can – white fish and tuna - each punched with four holes in the lid. But some of the traps, four of them, also had an added enticement of a two inch piece of a pike that another fisherman had donated to us the day before. And Peter and I knew nothing about cleaning or filleting a pike, so the gift ended up as additional pieces of crayfish bait.**

**The traps now had been soaking for a full five hours which usually is a productive time period for catching crayfish. We slowly rowed down to the end of the trot line with its inconspicuous floating marker. Soon the first trap was coming up by the side of the boat. It felt heavy, but I also remembered that I had placed the heaviest traps as the first and last trap in the trot line series of traps. That way they would help anchor the whole trot line and keep it in place.**

**The first trap was coming up slowly and, as usual, I thought this must be because it had caught on some bottom debris. Well, no. It came up with a very respectable amount of crayfish in it as well as an empty cat food can. Maybe not 90 this time, but nothing to sneeze at. We were both satisfied.**

**But then came the next Jumbo. This trap was not of the heavy steel mesh construction, but simply one of my standard Jumbos with  $\frac{1}{2}$ " mesh of hardware cloth and net funnels. But this trap was different. It was completely filled with crayfish! I have never seen a trap so full of crayfish, and for a while I lost my grip on the heavy trap. As it was so heavy I feared that maybe the plastic clip attached to the trap would be pushed to its limits. So I grabbed the trap in each end before it dove back down in the lake. For a moment the trap slid out of my grasp again, but Peter lunged forward and grabbed the other end of the trap and saved it.**

**Together we were able to lift it over the railing and into the boat, and now we could see that this really was a sensationally filled crayfish trap. I don't believe there was even a fraction of an inch of space left for one more crayfish to squeeze in. It was filled from top of the trap to the bottom, from one end funnel to the other. Both of us chose some favorite expletives to express our delight, and into the boat**

**we finally managed to lift the heavy trap. This trap also had some remnants of a piece of pike bait! But the little plastic quick clip was damaged beyond recognition and torn into a weird copy of what it used to look like. It had simply given in to the excessive weight of all the crayfish. And anyone who has fished these productive Jumbos knows how many crayfish there is space for in one of these roomy traps.**

**After some oh-ing and ah-ing over this unusually filled crayfish trap, we pulled up the rest of the trot line. There were several well filled traps among the rest, but none as completely filled as the previous Jumbo.**

**Strangely, one of the trot line traps came up with only the clip remaining on the line. For some reason, I must have hooked it on incorrectly and thus lost the trap. But by now we were so excited about the previous prizewinner, that we simply ignored the loss and rowed back to camp.**

**First thing I did now was to select the extra well filled trap and carefully count the contents. We realized that this would be a prize winner, so it had to be counted accurately.**

**I opened the side opening with the bungee cord and started counting**

**as the crays crawled out and dropped into a bucket. Yes, this was an exceptionally filled trap. And the catch was mostly big crayfish which this lake is famous for. As I neared the magic number of 90 crays in the trap, I knew we really had a winner as there was still a bunch left in the trap I was counting. The count came up to and went past 90 – a new record. I continued past 100 and there were still crays left in the trap. I went on and counted until we both wowed at the new prize winning count – 121 crayfish in one Jumbo trap. Three times as many in this Jumbo trap as in my ‘great’ catch of forty crays so many years ago.**

**Needless to say, we took some pictures of the prize winner trap, and we decided to call it a day which we celebrated at our camp by the lonely juniper with a glass of Southern Comfort.**



## **Greetings**

### **Trapper Arne, Sr.**

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