



# On the Water

Volume 11, Issue 6

JUNE 2008

## Vet's Home Fishing Opener 2008

from Juris Ozols

Maybe only a small miracle occurred, but the weather for our annual Vets Home Fishing Opener on May 3rd turned out to be great. The forecasts the week before promised all kinds of rain, sleet, temperatures barely into the 50's, winds, all of that kind of thing. As it happened the day dawned sunny and mild, and the Vets came down to fish our trout pond in great numbers.

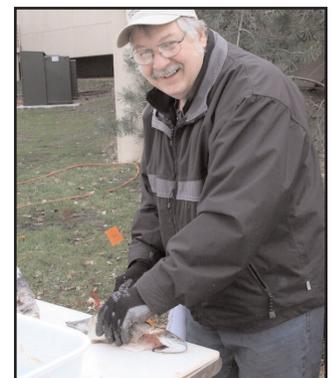
For those of you who have never been, here's how it works. A pond, complete with trout for the catching, is set up early in the morning at the MN Veterans Home. Residents of the home come catch trout and MI volunteers clean the fish, fry them up and serve a "shore lunch" compete with fried potatoes and beans.

Shirley Peterson, the Vets Home coordinator estimated that we had over 200 of the Vets Home residents try their luck this year. Like can happen with all fishing, the trout were fickle and didn't bite all that fast. But still, the vets caught enough fish to provide over 700 meals for themselves, their relatives, and the VFW and American Legion sponsors who were on hand.

For the second year now, master chef Tom Lund cranked up his new fish fryers and put out some awesomely tasty trout "shore lunches." And of course our longtime regular Muskie Inc-ers, as well as some newcomers, were there to fry the potatoes and beans, bait the hooks, net the fish, and filet the catch.

This event goes amazingly smoothly. Terry Hagstrom and his crew have the process down pat after some two decades of Vets Fishing Openers. The fish get caught and netted, the meals get made, and the Vets get treated to what has to be one of the best moments of their year.

I started attending these events in the year 2000, so I'm a veteran myself now of nine years of photo-shoots. It's one of the highlights of my fishing year. I hope we continue to bring joy into the life of those old warriors as long as Muskie's Inc. endures.



# From Our President SHAWN KELLETT

*Ahhhhhhh... Summer's finally here! We've got a bunch of things going on this summer that I want to pass along.*

*June's meeting is going to feature some of our fine DNR personal to talk about the new Long Range Esox Management Plan that the MN DNR, George Selke, myself, and many others in the muskie, pike and general fishing public have put effort into. This is definitely a meeting you won't want to miss.*

*We're going to try a couple new things this summer in an effort to get on the water a little more. First, Jody Dahms (the guy who caught the slob with Steve Jonesie) is organizing a league this year. It's meant to be low-key/pressure outings that will give us all excuses to get out more with different people and hopefully on new lakes. We are also coordinating one of the dates with our July meeting. Instead of coming*

*to the Knights of Columbus in July, plans are for fishing on Lake Minnetonka and then meet-up at Maynards for a few mugs of suds.*

*In an effort to control costs and direct more of our funds to Youth, Fisheries and Research, our club is going to revamp how we manage the newsletter. It is going to be an "opt in" for the printed paper copy. We realize that there are many people out there that don't have access to computers, but we also realize that most people do and would be just as happy getting an email as a letter.*

*There are many opportunities to participate in club functions this summer – youth events, picnics, parades, etc. that everyone is invited to. Be sure to keep an eye on the newsletter and our website (<http://www.twincitiesmuskiesinc.org/>) for activities.*

*Good fishing!*

## MN DNR Long Range Plans

The Minnesota DNR recently released its 82-page report on long-range plans for fish management during the next twelve years. Currently the state has 115 lakes and rivers – 35% of available lake acreage – that are managed for muskie: 44 lakes and 7 rivers that are native waters, 43 waters where muskie were introduced and are managed through stocking, and 21 metro areas that are managed for hybrids. The plan does not address specific bodies of water or identify specific waters to stock or manage.

The plan was developed with input from angling interests including workshops, two roundtables, and public comment through the website. It includes specific goals, objective, strategies and actions for managing trophy muskie populations statewide. A summary of the recommendations:

- Increase muskie opportunities by eight additional waters for a total of 101 pure strain waters statewide by the year 2020. Candidate lakes will be geographically distributed, approximately two per DNR

administrative region, based on ecological criteria and social considerations developed through a public participation process.

- Manage muskie populations for "trophy" opportunities through stocking, size regulations, season closures, existing spearing bans and promoting voluntary catch and release.
- Conduct spring population assessments that include mark and recapture populationa estimated to evaluate stocking effectiveness and population status. Continue to monitor estimates the associated fish communities through standard and special sampling.
- Evaluate the capacity of public and private production to meet management needs. Identify additional capacity if necessary to maintain program objectives.
- Evaluate the number of lakes managed with tiger muskellunge and potential to substitute pure strain muskie in select metro area lakes.
- Increase public awareness of the role of muskie within fish communities.

## TC Chapter Summr Fishing League

The Twin Cities Chapter Muskie Fishing League is informal and encourages everyone to participate in as many outings as they would like. We also encourage members without boats to attend as we will find space for you to fish. This will be a great opportunity to meet others that muskie fish, learn about lakes, and possibly learn some new techniques to put fish in the boat.

Contact Jody Dahms at [jdahms@aquali.com](mailto:jdahms@aquali.com) or 952-356-6047 with questions regarding the league. Anglers without boats, please confirm attendance to insure that we arrange boat space for you.

The league schedule for June and July is as follows. Complete schedule is at the website: [www.twincitiesmuskiesinc.org](http://www.twincitiesmuskiesinc.org).

- Thursday June 12  
Lake Independence 6 - 10 pm
- Saturday June 28  
Forest Lake 6 am - 12 pm
- Tuesday July 8  
Minnetonka Gray's Bay Landing 6 - 10 pm
- Wednesday July 30  
Minnetonka Gray's Bay Landing 6 - 10 pm

## ***Kids Fishing Contest***

**H**ave fun, go fishing with a kid and help them learn about the different species of fish. Children who are members or have a parent or guardian who is a member of the Twin Cities Chapter and are age 12 or younger as of January 1, 2008 are eligible to participate in the chapter Kids Fishing Contest. The rules are simple. All fish must be caught by using legal means and the fish must be witnessed by a parent or another adult.

An award will be given to every child who catches a panfish, catfish, carp, bass, walleye, or pike of any size. Special note will be made for catches of: 5 or more bluegills, perch and/or sunfish in one day; a catfish, bullhead or carp; or a small-mouth bass, largemouth bass, walleye or sauger of 12 inches or more or a northern pike of 18 inches or more. Muskies 30 inches or more caught by anglers age 12 years or under will qualify for the Junior Division of the Members Only Contest. Muskies less than 30 inches don't qualify for any contest.

An award will be given to each and every child who satisfies the criteria for at least one of the ten categories. All awards will be made at the 2009 Awards Night.

One entry per child should be submitted for the entire 2008 fishing season. Be sure to keep track of your child's catches all on one form. Include anything special about a fish or a trip (1st fish, biggest fish or most fish in one day, Grandpa's secret spot, caught more than Dad, etc.).

## ***Capable Partners Outing***

**S**hare your love for the pursuit of muskies with a fellow outdoorsman. Join us for an outing with physically challenged members of Capable Partners. We will need 15 boats. About one-half of the participants will need space for wheelchairs, but any size boat can be matched with one of the partners.

We'll be gathering at 6:30 am on Sunday, June 15 at Baker Park Reserve on Lake Independence and fishing until around 1:00 pm. You don't have to be an expert angler or familiar with the lake to participate. Organizer Paul Hartman will gladly go over lure selection and the "hot spots" with anyone. A "shore lunch" will end the day and anyone who wants to continue fishing in the afternoon is welcome. Please call Paul Hartman at 763-786-6031 to sign up.

## ***Watch for Your Rearing Fund Raffle Tickets***

**T**he chapter's annual Rearing Fund and Project Raffle is our way to stocking and rearing projects. Every dollar raised by the raffle is dedicated to the muskie resource. Over the years our chapter has stocked thousands of muskies in metro area waters with funds raised by this annual raffle.

Raffle tickets will be mailed to members this month. We are asking each chapter member to sell at least 30 tickets. After all, the muskie stocking benefits each and every one of us. Even with the great deal we got from Triton Boats and Frankies Marine, the first place prize cost us a significant amount. That means all of us need to step up and sell even more tickets.

Raffle tickets are \$2.00 each. We must sell a minimum of 15,000 raffle tickets.

As in previous years, we will be offering monthly incentive prizes for selling. We will also be offering great prizes to the top sellers including great fishing trips.

A boat-motor-trailer package – a 17-foot Triton Frontier-T and trailer powered by a 60 hp Mercury – is the first place prize. The second place prize is a \$300 shopping spree at Thorne Bros. Custom Rod & Tackle, third prize is a \$200 shopping spree at Blue Ribbon Tackle, and fourth prize is a Benelli Super Nova Shotgun from Joe's Sporting Goods. The drawing will be held at the September general meeting.

## ***Newsletter Delivery Changes***

**T**he executive committee has been challenged with what to do with our monthly newsletter for many years now. Over time the costs have been increasing dramatically. At the same time technology and the people who are familiar with it has grown. The board has decided to make the printed paper version of the newsletter an "opt in" choice. We realize that many people do not have easy access to email, but we know that most of us do.

Currently, the cost to print and mail the newsletter runs the club somewhere in the \$6000-\$7000 range annually. Since our chapter doesn't receive a penny from annual dues, we have to come up with this money from fundraisers such as the banquet and tournament. To put this in perspective, we netted just under \$5000 for the banquet and around \$10,000 for the tournament last year. That's a lot of work just to cover the cost of producing and mailing a newsletter. On the other hand, \$6000-\$7000 would buy roughly 600-700 muskie fingerlings or 200-300 2 year old fish for stocking.

Every member/family of the club will be receiving a postcard asking whether they want a paper version or if they would choose to be emailed a pdf version of the newsletter. The format will be the same. It will just come as an attachment on an email.

Those that do not respond will not receive anything. So be sure to send your postcard back or an email response. There is talk that we may make an internet option available for your response as well but that is not up and running as of when I write this. The proposed implementation date would be the September newsletter.

Please support us in this cost controlling measure that will help us better fund projects related to Youth, Fisheries and Research.

## Josh Stevenson and Blue Ribbon Bait & Tackle

**B**lue Ribbon Bait & Tackle shop, tucked away on Century Avenue in Oakdale, Minnesota, doesn't look like an institution of higher education. Nor does its modest facade and cozy interior seem like the trappings from which lifetime dreams arise.

For Josh Stevenson it was both, and much more.

"I remember drawing pictures of bait shops when I was in Middle School," Stevenson recalled. "They always were of this little building with a door and two windows. When I was 10 or 11 we lived in Lake Elmo and my Mom started driving me to get bait. The first time we went to Blue Ribbon Bait and Tackle I realized it was the picture that I'd been drawing in school."

From that point Stevenson became a regular at Blue Ribbon, riding his bike there on almost a daily basis when weather permitted. He was offered a job at age 13, but the law required a person to be 14 before they could work. On his 14th birthday he went to work at Blue Ribbon Bait and Tackle. Now he's the owner.

When you listen to Josh Stevenson's life story you get the feeling that his path of life was predetermined. Here is a man who was meant to be in the fishing industry.

His first memory is of wading in Tanner's Lake while his mother sunbathed on the shore. "There were these sunfish swimming around my feet," he remembered. "I became obsessed with catching them. My Mom bought me a little rod and reel, but I really didn't know how to use it or anything about fishing."

But he learned.

By age 9 he bicycled with friends to the various lakes around Lake Elmo and Oakdale during the summer to swim and play...but mostly to fish. It was during this time period that Stevenson found "the pipe". It was a pipe that connected Lake Elmo and Tartan Park Pond. In the spring very large fish would migrate between the two bodies of water, passing through the pipe.

"There was about 5 to 6 feet of water at that time and we'd stand on the pipe and catch these fish as they came through. We thought they were northerns," Stevenson stated. "We'd catch 10, 15, 20 a day. They averaged about 30 to 35 inches. We didn't think there was anything unusual about it." It was somewhat later, from his new-found friends and mentors at Blue Ribbon, that he learned that the fish he was catching were hybrid muskies.

"I remember, after I learned that they were muskies, telling the guys at Blue Ribbon Bait about catching 27 muskies in one day. I knew they thought I was lying," said Stevenson. "But it was the truth. For five or six years we had it pretty much to ourselves, but then someone placed a grate over the pipe and stopped our fun."

While "the pipe" may have spawned life-long muskie mania in Stevenson, he credits his cousin, Tom Knutson, with

teaching him the basics of fishing. Knutson was six years older than Stevenson. When he was 16 and Josh was 10, he would regularly take Josh fishing at lakes farther from home. After all, Knutson had that one valuable item that all aspiring, worldly fishermen needed – a driver's license.

"He taught me the basics," Stevenson declared. "I really owe more to him than any other person because he fed my passion for fishing by teaching me and taking me places I couldn't have otherwise gone."

It was the regular trips to Blue Ribbon Bait & Tackle, however, that really immersed Stevenson in the world of fishing and took him to a higher level of knowledge and expertise. Blue Ribbon owner, Mike Bonn, and veteran guides Dick "The Griz" Grzywinski and Ed Philpot took the likeable, enthusiastic youngster under their wing.

"For the first time I met grown men who loved to fish, who talked fishing and who lived fishing," said Stevenson. For a young boy growing up without a father in his life, these men became his mentors and role models. Blue Ribbon Bait and Tackle became his home away from home; the place where fishing knowledge and life experiences were taught and learned.

When Stevenson turned 16 and he earned his own driver's license, his fishing horizons started to expand. Not only did it make more, and more distant, lakes assessable, but it opened up the world of guiding. Stevenson related how it started: "The Griz" told me to take a guy out and catch a muskie for him. The guy was a writer for 'Outdoor News' and he caught a 42 or 43-inch muskie. I was thrilled that I actually put a guy on that fish. It felt so natural to do it. I didn't feel any pressure at all. From that moment on I was hooked on guiding." By age 22 Stevenson was juggling time as a part-time guide and as a full-time college student.



*Josh's Minnesota state record tiger muskie.*

His whole world was turned on its head on July 7, 1999.

"It was a special year. This fishing was terrific and it kept building and building," recalled Stevenson. "We'd had about two straight weeks of hot, muggy weather in late June and early July. The water conditions were perfect. I was fishing on Lake Elmo with Joe Radunz when it happened. The fish nailed my lure and all talking stopped. We knew it was huge. When I got it to the boat the first time Joe tried to net it but our net wasn't big enough. It was like having an alligator on your line. I can remember the fear of losing the fish was so strong after we couldn't net it."

But it didn't get away. Stevenson and Radunz managed to hand land the fish, and today it hangs on the wall of Blue Ribbon Bait & Tackle. It was then, and still is today, the Minnesota state record Tiger Muskie: 52 inches long and 34 pounds, 12 ounces.

"After that my guide business just snowballed," Stevenson said. "I had to balance being a full time guide and a full time student."

It took five more years to get his college degree. Finally, in the spring of 2004, Stevenson graduated from the University of Minnesota with a degree in communications and sociology. In November of the same year, at age 28, he bought his "other alma mater", Blue Ribbon Bait and Tackle.

"I always felt that the record fish was a sign from God to stay in the fishing industry," Stevenson stated. "The logical

thing to do after I graduated was to buy Blue Ribbon."

The development of Blue Ribbon from a neighborhood bait shop to one of the premier muskie shops in the state didn't come without worry, though. It did, however, come with a lot of help from those people who had always been important in Stevenson's life. Tom Knutson (yes, the same cousin who used to take Josh fishing when he wasn't old enough to drive) spent countless hours applying his carpentry expertise to the remodeling of the store. Phil Meers, a friend and a pipe fitter, was also instrumental in making Blue Ribbon's transition to a modern-day retail facility.

"It was all done with volunteer help," Stevenson says. "Without that it couldn't have happened. And I've also got to give credit to 'The Griz'. He's like a professor of the fishing world, my ultimate mentor. His advice kept me going through this."

While volunteer help and good advice got the business off the ground, it is the customers who will keep it going. "It's getting better all the time. Muskie fishing is strong and growing, and we're doing a lot to get young kids interested," said Stevenson. "But it's long, hard work."

"Some times I get up in the morning and just want to go fishing. I'd like to call in sick, but there's no one to call," Stevenson chuckled. "About that time 'The Griz' seems to always show up and tell me it will be OK. Then I know it's all worth it.

"And I know it will be OK."

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*A big thank you to all the manufacturers, retailers and resorts that have helped the Twin Cities chapter in the past year by donating merchandise and trips used for incentives and prizes for our fundraising events as well as the prizes for the Winter Picnic and the welcome table at each meeting.*

*Please make every effort to support these sponsors so they have an incentive to keep on supporting us. Without them this chapter could not do what it does for the resource and its members.*

*If you're looking for a new bait, keep in mind that manufacturers of some of the most productive baits ever designed are among our sponsors. And remember to buy them from sponsoring retailers. If you want a muskie trip this season, keep the sponsoring resorts in mind.*

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next  
meeting

JUNE 10

**SPEAKER:  
MINNESOTA DNR  
REPRESENTATIVES**

*Members of the Minnesota DNR will share information about the long-range plan for muskies (see page 2).*

**COMING IN JULY:** Meet at Gray's Bay Landing, Lake Minnetonka at 6:00 pm for a muskie-fishing evening. Contact Jody Dahms at [jdahms@aquali.com](mailto:jdahms@aquali.com) or 952-356-6047 if you need to arrange boat space.

*Muskies Inc. Twin Cities Chapter General Meetings are held at 7:00 pm the second Tuesday of every month at the Knights of Columbus Hall, 1114 American Boulevard West, Bloomington, MN (just off I-494 & Lyndale Ave.).*



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U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Minneapolis, MN  
Permit No. 621