

Dear friends--

This is normally about the time I would be reporting our latest exploits on the tarpon flats or the mangrove tangles for snook. Well, not this time. While it might have made for some spectacular footage for Tim Landwehr's latest DVD, the prospect of myself falling overboard and, tangled in slack fly line, being towed to Bermuda waving like Captain Ahab and the White Whale just didn't make the cut. (The previous sentence shows how tangled up I can get.)

So I have been fishing for jumbo bluegills in the little lake we now call home. Some of the effects of last summer's misdiagnosis (two herniated disks, not bursitis) have lingered, and coupled with the effects of Parkinson's disease, made a mess of my medications. These problems have forced me to look at other opportunities, as they say in the human resources office. Happily, I have been able to find an opportunity 35 paces from the back door of our condominium. In the spring big bluegills move into the shallows looking to spawn but also to eat. My best fly so far has been the venerable Wisconsin pattern, the Pass Lake (mallard flank tail, black chenille body, brown hackle, white calf tail wing, tied on a light wire hook to allow it to sink more slowly). Size matters--nothing larger than #8, more often #10 or #12. Late evening is the best time. I have not had as much action with the Mackey Bug, which has been my best bluegill fly in recent years. I have been using a four-weight fly rod and a 4X tippet,. I also have a four-wheel walker with a folding seat--it should have come with racing stripes, but slow is better than fast. It's not tarpon fishing, to be sure, but it is fishing.

The lake has produced three bluegills for me in the 12 inch range--huge by normal standards, including several more around ten inches. OK, OK, before you have a fit, all of them were caught in a private lake, Lake Largo, that has several condos but few anglers and no gas motors, no water skiers, etc. It was stocked once in its 20-plus years with largemouth bass, bluegills, yellow perch, and walleyes, plus fathead minnows as a forage species.

I've also been busying myself with a Japanese fly rod--12 feet long, 3 oz., and no reel. It is being evaluated for sale in the USA by TenakaUSA. The rod telescopes into a case/butt section only 20 inches long. It was designed for the swift mountain streams of northern Japan, where short casts are the rule, but I have done fairly well by casting near the dropoffs, which are very visible, letting a little fly sink and swing toward me. Mostly there is no response to a barrage of short casts, but occasionally a real thumper comes along. One big fish broke me off (5X tippet), probably a big bass. So far I have caught and released 21 walleyes

(most of them small, but one was about 3 1/2 pounds). My biggest bass thus far was 2 1/2 pounds, and one yellow perch just under 14 inches. I tried it out in one of the southwestern spring creeks and it proved to be very functional--not a stunt rod at all. Wind was the only real problem. I could place a good number of drifts without spooking the fish, which more than I could say for my standard four-weight. In some places it was almost like dapping, but most of the time I had to make a little cast, get a good little drift and Bang! You can imagine the power of a decent trout, say 12 or 13 inches, heading for a hidey-hole with all engines wide open.

Well, that's it for now. I hope it hasn't been too much of a burden to read all this stuff--one of my favorite pastimes is listening to the sound of my own voice.

Very best regards,

-- Don Larmouth