

# Spring Fishing On the Fox River

## Walleyes and Hot Fudge Sundaes

Terry Bitz of Outdoor Convergence

Finally, the day arrived.

Last Saturday, I joined Doug Kloet and Bill Pocius to fish for walleye on the Fox River near De Pere. For the last 3 years, this trip has served as the kickoff for our open water fishing season.

We arrived at the boat launch at 7am. It was busy with fisherman from all over the state looking to get in on the action, and to try and catch the big walleye that inhabit the river at this time of year.

We launched the boat and headed out onto the cold river. It was nice to hear the rumble of the motor and the sloshing of waves against a boat hull.

Doug guided the blue fiberglass Ranger upriver and shut down the motor a short distance from the dam, which had minimal water flowing through it. We started fishing, eagerly anticipating landing the first fish of the season.

Our fishing gear consisted of spinning rods spooled with six to eight pound test monofilament.



We each had different colored jig heads tied to our lines; this in an effort to figure out what color or color combination would produce the best action. Each jig was baited with a large fathead minnow. The jigs weighed 3/8 and 1/2 ounce. If the current was faster we would consider moving up to heavier weights.

The Fox River near De Pere is popular springtime location for anglers.

An hour later we were still waiting for the first fish to be brought into the net. It was clear the walleyes were not yet active. The other anglers nearby were having the same struggle as we saw few fish being pulled out of the brown stained water, but it was still early in the day.

Bill and Doug are certainly not discouraged by a slow bite. These experienced anglers and fishing guides are also fanatical muskie anglers. This means they have nerves of steel and I am convinced, slightly warped personalities.

All kidding aside, these guys work hard to catch fish. They are always thinking of different



locations and experimenting with different presentations to attract a bite. I am fortunate that I get to fish with such good fisherman.

Doug finally managed to land a couple walleyes in quick succession, each measuring around the twenty inch mark. Bill soon followed suit. I remained fishless until I changed to a jig color closer to the fluorescent orange that Doug was using. I got on the board with an extremely fat walleye that measured 22 inches long.

We continued to work the river channel, the channel edges as well as the shallows. We caught the occasional walleye plus a few catfish. At one point, Bill was fishing with two rods when a catfish grabbed onto one of his jigs. While he reeled in that fish, something grabbed the jig on his second rod. He had me take the second rod to reel in the fish. It was another catfish.

Doug Kloet of Kenosha holding a nice walleye caught on the Fox River.

“I am glad it was you who landed that catfish;” said Bill. “If I caught two at once, I would have never heard the end of it.”

He was referring to the fact that he tends to catch both the largest and the most catfish every year on this trip; hence his nickname, Whiskers Pocius.

Just before noon, I landed a walleye measuring close to 23 inches. I should mention that a hot fudge sundae would be awarded whoever caught the longest walleye of the day. Last year Bill was the winner.

I had the lead but it did not last long. About an hour later, ol' Whiskers caught a walleye that stretched the tape to 23  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches.

After working various parts of the upper river, we decided to explore areas downriver. We surmised that the fish were still moving up from the bay. As predicted, we found a few walleye hanging out near the channel break just upriver from a bridge. Some catfish were there too.

During this period, we all latched on to some big fish that we never got a look at. Doug for example, hooked into something that took off like a rocket, peeling line and causing his drag to sing. The fish was on his line for less than 10 seconds. We surmised it was either a muskie or a nice sized northern pike the way the fish took off at a high rate of speed.

Late in the day, we went back up the river near the dam to see if the bite had improved in that location. We started our drift in almost the exact same spot that we started the day in, at the head of deep hole.

About an hour before sunset, we finally got into a flurry of action with each of us landing walleyes in quick order. It was the hottest action of the day, but it was short lived. Just when we thought we might run out of minnows, the bite died along with Doug's and my hopes for besting Bill's big fish mark.

With the light fading and the cold beginning to settle back in, we decided to call it a day. Bill was winner of the sundae for the second year in a row. Doug and I vowed to end that streak next year.