

Now that we are deep into the fall and the cold weather seems to have settled in, it's time to hang up the fishing poles for the year and devote all of our spare time for hunting. Hardly!

I like hunting, but if you can spare time from your duck blind or bow stand, this is one of the best times of the year to catch big fish. Sure, fishing in the late fall can mean having cold hands and dealing with windy conditions. However, the payoff can be a trophy fish.

That is why I couldn't turn down an offer from guide Doug Kloet to join him for a muskie outing this last week.

Kloet guides for muskie on Silver Lake here in Kenosha County and Fox Chain in Illinois. While he is a multi-species guide the rest of the open water season, during the fall he exclusively goes after muskie.

I started out the morning casting a lure that called a Slid'n Shad which is actually personally built by Kloet himself for his lure company. He was tossing a lure called a Big Joe which is a heavy soft plastic lure. I eventually switched over to another of Kloet's lures called a Slippery Slider which has been a successful pike lure for me this year.

We also had several large suckers hanging over the side of the boat which is a common fall tactic. Kloet had rigged up the suckers with what is called a quick-strike rig. It is so named as it allows the angler to set the hook right away instead of waiting for the fish to turn the sucker in its mouth as with a standard rig.

We went a few hours without seeing a fish. Okay, that's not entirely true. I did have a musky not much bigger than my lure take a swipe at the bait, but that was the only fish we had seen during that time. The muskie often earns its reputation as a fish of 10,000 casts and it felt like we were maybe having one those days.

About 10am, the boat had drifted a little too shallow and I decided to cast out toward deeper water. About 20 feet from the boat I saw a large shape following my lure. That large shape turned out to be a muskie that we estimated to be about 45 inches and it looked intent on eating my bait. Unfortunately, that serious look did not translate into a bite and the fish disappeared underneath the boat where we hoped it would go after one of the suckers.

We waited about 30 seconds, but apparently the fish had moved on. However, just as we started casting, one of the bait clickers (which is an audible indicator on a fishing reel) sounded and we saw one of the bobbers being pulled under the water.

Kloet handed me the rod and when he gave me the word, I reeled up the slack line and yanked back hard on the rod to make sure I set the hook into fish's bony mouth.

A short fight ensued, but I was able to quickly gain control of the fish and lead it into Kloet's waiting net.

We immediately could tell that the fish was not the one that a short time before had followed my lure to the boat. It was definitely shorter than the other fish though at 41 inches in length it could hardly be considered small. We took a couple quick photos with my camera phone (don't ask!), and sent the fish on its way.

We resumed our fishing and it was only a matter of minutes before we had a follow from another fish.

Indeed, over the next couple of hours we would contact a total of 6 more muskies. That included me catching a small 20 inch fish and 3 that took the suckers but either got off or dropped the bait before we could set the hook.

That meant by the end of our outing we had seen 7 muskies which is by any standard is a lot for what is a very wary fish. As good as it was, Kloet has had days of catching multiple fish over 40 inches and seeing 10 fish in an outing. I would like to have one of those kinds of days myself.

Doug Kloet, of Doug Kloet Guide Service, guides clients for muskie on Silver Lake in Kenosha County and the Fox Chain of Lakes in Illinois. He can be contacted by phone at 262-605-8247 or email at [dkloet@muskytackle.com](mailto:dkloet@muskytackle.com).

Terry Bitz