



MUGWUMP MAYHEM

Well, I thought I found it! I mean to tell you, I was really fooled! As much as I hate to admit it, I guess I've gotta chalk one up for old mugwump! Cunning rascal, he is! It was in early April, when a tourist reported seeing a spawning bed big enough to hold a Volkswagen in the very back of a little fished cove down on Table Rock Lake that I decided to see if there could be any truth to the rumor. As old as that critter is getting, I thought possibly he was getting a little careless, letting a tourist see his lair, so the following week, my older friend (the one with the heart condition) and I loaded up and headed out! We got there about 6:30 in the morning, and conditions were perfect. We dumped the boat in the lake, and headed for the cove, and we started fishing the structure around the places where the cove branched off back into little feeder creeks. We thought old muggy probably fathered about a trillion bass, and then moved back out somewhere where he could snack on a few pounds of shad without too much difficulty. There were several boats in the vicinity, and a couple of old boys were running a line off jugs in the same little off cove that we were going into. I started tossing my 5" green kalin's grub, and was bringing it off a ledge, when darned if I didn't get nailed, and I got a 3 pounder! Good sign, I thought. Went a little farther, and I hooked another one, but he got off. Then within the next 20 yards or so, I caught about 3 more decent fish. Then the breeze died down, and things got real still. Even the birds got quiet, and the squirrels stopped making noise. The lake became like glass, and it was just really eerie.... A person could tell that something was about to happen. And boy, did it! I had worked that grub till it was just about under the boat in about 25 ft. of water, when something hit that thing like a rocket powered truck! I almost lost my rod, it hit so hard! It was a good thing my drag was set correctly, cause that fish took off like a scalded hound for some timber that was close by, and I was losing line so fast that you'd have thought I had hooked a train! Well, the first thing that Larry does, is grab his chest and start to turn pale, so with one hand I grabbed him and shoved him down his seat so he wouldn't fall in the lake. I told him to get a grip, and grab the special net that we keep in the boat for mugwump. By this time that fish had made it to the timber, and managed to get my line wrapped around a submerged cedar limb one time. I'd rare back and pull, and I'd gain about 5 ft. on him, then he'd take off and get it all back. It was a major standoff, and he was starting to attract some attention from the other boats in the area. They started edging over to see what all the action was. All this time, I was beginning to think that possibly I'd gotten a hook into old muggie, and I was a little worried about my line breaking. But it held, and after 5 minutes, he came out from around the branch, and headed for the middle of the cove. He had so much power that he actually turned the boat, and we slowly began to follow him. Wasn't a thing I could do other than hold on! And believe me, I was! This was one time that I was glad that I'd spent the money on a Team Daiwa reel! I just kept praying that he wouldn't jump! After about 3 or 4 minutes of him pulling the boat along, I could tell he was getting tired, cause he started swimming around under the boat. But I couldn't raise him a foot! By this time several boats were crowded around watching, and folks were down from their homes on the lake shore with binoculars, and a helicopter was hovering over head with what looked like some guy with a news camera hanging out the door! Larry was regaining his composure, and all of a sudden, I got that darned fish to come up about 2 ft. Course, he went right back down, but it did give me hope! We endured this standoff for probably another 10 minutes, and I actually gained about 3 ft. on him! About this time I see an emergency vehicle come down the lake road that led to the point in the cove on the main lake. They started putting their water rescue boat in, and they headed out our way! I thought maybe they were coming for Larry, but when they got out close to us, they just started hollering encouragement, and offering net service, and just making a fool of themselves in general. Word sure travels fast these days. Cell phones y'know! Anyway, by this time, the banks were lined with onlookers, kids with their dogs were running up and down the shoreline, and some guy was walking among the crowds trying to sell mugwump ball caps! I couldn't believe it! All this time I was gaining ground on that fish tho, and Larry was all pale, but he was poised over the edge with the net! Just when I thought we would be getting a look

at him, that fish took one last long old run that darned near ran me out of line. But he ran out of steam and I knew that I had a pretty good chance of getting him in. Slow but sure, I had him coming to the boat, and then, as he was coming up from the depths, we all got to see a mouth on this fish that could have eaten a 4 pound carp. And probably had at one time or another, cause it turned out that I'd hooked a 20 pound flathead catfish! He had sucked that grub of mine in so hard that it went out his gills and got hooked in his underside! No way he could have gotten off. Needless to say, all the folks around didn't waste much time hitting the trail! Just as well, I thought to myself. I'm not sure I could have pulled old mugwump from the lake anyway. The emotional strain would have just been too much! Now, I do get a little excited in the telling of things like this, so it is possible, however remotely, that there could be a little bit of exaggeration here....