

Baby Pond Bassin'

By J.R. Warnet

During the summer months fishing can be hard when the sun feels like it's an inch from your face. Many times during July and August I have put poles back in the shed if the heat is just too much to handle. Of course, the fishing is best down the shore when it's very hot, but who can really fish in 90-degree weather in the hot sun? When this time of year hits the area, I reach for one item other than a glass of lemonade; I grab a freshwater rod.

A few months back, I called up my buddy John who lives about 20 minutes from me. We chatted for a bit about the same old stuff pals talk about, but when the conversation got onto fishing it was game time. He told me about a secret little spot outside of Allentown where a few private property ponds were holding some massive fish. His dad is friends with the guy who owns a farm and always lets them fish on it whenever they please. So I told him to call the guy up and see if we could cruise down for an hour or two after it cooled off a bit. So he did and the guy said we could pop in after 5:00 pm when he got home. It was already 2:00 pm when he called, so we decided to hit the Manasquan Reservoir to see what was going on there.

"Geez, man. Look at the water level. It's so low and dried out," said John as we pulled up to the park. We walked down to the rocky area and threw out a surface frog popper and a bunch of weedless worms. We didn't have a single hit the whole time we were there. It might have been the low water level or even the water temperature; whatever it was we couldn't even hook a sunny. So we headed back to the bait shop and picked up two dozen shiners; candy to big-mouthed bass. I usually try to use them as a last resort, but desperate times call for desperate measures. John and I headed back to the shoreline and rigged up a few floats with shiners. All we could see was our bobbers swimming back and forth with no fish under them. It was like there wasn't a single bass for miles in this huge reservoir.

"I'm tellin' you. We gotta head to this guy's house and fish his pond. It's loaded with bass, dude." John played around with his pole the whole time we were there; like a little kid who lost interest in his new toy. "He's got three- and four-pounders!"

"How big is this place?" I asked as I tried to wiggle my hook free from some weeds.

"Not big at all. Like five feet deep."

"What?" My line snapped as I pulled back. John started to reel his line in as we started to pack our gear up.

"Yeah. It's not big at all. You could wade through it, but it's got a ton of bass in it."

I didn't really think he was serious. I was hoping this place was more of a lake than a pond, but I was wrong. We drove up to his friend's house and let him know we were there. He waved us through and we drove down around the sides of his property with mud kicking up from the path. It was mud down the whole road; that kind of reddish mud that never washes completely off! I had to put the truck into 4WD just to get back to the pond. We came around the last bend to the clearing and parked onto the only bit of grass in the field.

I can't even really start to call it a pond. It was more like an overflowing kiddie pool that doubled as a pond. Since it was close to the farm property, I guessed it was more of a run-off pond used for excess water during the stormy season. We grabbed our poles again and set up along the side of the tiny watering hole. I was tying on a small Rapala lure when John cast out to the center. It was a short cast, maybe about 40 feet, if that. I heard his reel click over as I turned my head back down to finish my clinch knot. Out of the corner of my eye I saw him jerk back his rod and hook into something, on the first cast no less! So, needless to say, I stopped tying my knot and walked over to get a better view. John pulled in a small baby bass, probably about a year or two old. It was a little bit bigger than a dollar bill, but it put up a nice fight for such a small fish. I looked at him and gave him that simple smirk only a friend would get. "See? There's fish here I'm tellin' you." John unhooked the little guy and threw out his Silver Rapala again.

"What about these massive fish you told me



Author shows with his large thumb why his just-caught bass is known as a large-mouth.

about? They are all babies here!" I went back to tying my knot, but I didn't make it all the way back to the truck. John's drag made that all too familiar sound again. This time it sounded a little louder than before. He pulled in another largemouth bass; this time a little bigger and with even more fight to it. I had a crazy feeling he was starting to tell the truth about those monster bass in a small private pond. Each cast he had a nice hit or a hook into decent bass. Most of them were a little lean and thin and were probably starving with not much to feed on in a small pond. Each fish was hitting the Rapalas like they never ate before!

We had a field day for about an hour. The mosquitoes started to come out in droves and the sun was starting to set at this point. It was a nice relief to have the sun go down, but I didn't want to leave this tiny pond. We caught about 10 fish each with four of them being well over 4 pounds. I didn't know how this pond could have so many nice fish in one area. Maybe the owner stocked the pond with big fish he caught somewhere else? In all likelihood it started out as a drainage pond and a few geese or ducks came in to take a dip. It's common to have fish eggs stuck to goose feathers as they travel from pond to pond. Most small ponds usually have fish in them and are on private property, like this one. It gives more meaning to the old term "Where there's water, there's fish..."



Nautical Trivia by Ginny Hauff



1. Did you know that adding a length of chain between the anchor rode and the anchor increases holding power and reduces bottom chafe? Generally, the chain should be the boat's length plus five feet.

2. Did you know that to determine the required horse power of an engine for your inflatable tender, to achieve a max speed of 25 knots, you should divide the loaded boat's weight by 40. "e.g." 500/40 = 12.5 h.p.?

3. Did you know when winterizing an outboard the gear case oil should be changed each fall? If water has entered the oil it will look milky; it could freeze and expand, damaging seals or crack the case itself.

4. Did you know that the inward curving on the topsides, above the waterline, of your boat is referred to as tumblehome?

5. Did you know to get another year out of your boat cover, when the grommets have torn out, is to take an old golf ball against the inside of the cover, secure the inside with a clove hitch followed by half-hitches?

6. Did you know that when strong wind, waves, or wakes are banging your boat against the dock, set an anchor amidships, rig a bridle from the bow and stern and "kedg" her away from the dock?

Did you know that following the rules of navigation the burdened vessel does not have the right away but must give way?