

# Kid's & Fishing

*by Tom Hjelmberg*

Springtime is finally here. The waters around us are starting to warm up. Remember, not only adults get "Cabin Fever". It is known to strike "KIDS", too. The only way to preserve the sport we call fishing, is to pass it down to the next generation. Even if you do not fish, it is important to expose children to the sport and all of the positive qualities that it brings.

Last year while working at Shabbona's Lakeside Bait, Tackle & Boat Rental, located on the Shores of Shabbona Lake, a Grandfather, Son and Grandson came into the Bait Shop. Now this is nothing out of the ordinary, but what happened next was! You see the two adults had never been fishing before in their lifetime!

The little grandson had found an old pole that his dad had gotten for a present years ago. The dad had never used the pole. It was still in the original package. The boy asked his dad to take him fishing, with that special pole. Dad said it was about time to use the pole!

Dad and Grandpa asked me if I could help them. Of course, by this time, I was "hooked" also by the little boy's requests. After finding someone to cover the bait shop counter, I helped them get started. Within a short time, I had new line on the reel and a special little jig picked out for him. Out the door went the three of them, talking about catching the "Big One". The look on the little boy's face I will never forget!

In my experience with fishing with kids, it is best to plan on not fishing yourself. Remember you are trying to make their experience enjoyable. Trust me, it will be easier if you don't fish. Start out fishing for Bluegills. They are the easiest to catch and they can be readily be caught from shore. Use redworms, leafworms or small pieces of nightcrawlers as bait. You can also use jigs. Kids will go through a lot of bait, until they learn how to set the hook.

One secret I learned in fishing is to use a piece of folded up tin foil on the hook on the end of a small hook. The fish will not be able to get the tin foil off of the hook as easily as live bait. Kids have a tendency to not be able to hold a rod still, when they are learning how to fish. With the foil, this tendency actually helps attract fish, as the foil reflects in the sunlight as it is moved around.

In the beginning, stand on the shore, between the child and the water. Hold on to the end of the rod with your hand. When you see a bite, set the hook yourself, until they get the hang of it. Let them reel the fish in. By wearing a pair of polarized glasses, you will be able to see into the water and know when the fish is going to bite.

Plan on fishing for a couple of hours. Kids tend to have short attention spans. When you see them getting bored, you can either take a break or head home. Bring a camera with you. Kids like praise. Taking a picture home of them holding their fish is a great way for

them to "brag". If they catch a really big one, bring them to the bait shop to get their picture displayed on the counter.

At Shabbona lake there are a lot of good places to fish from shore for Bluegills. Fish the cove behind the handicap pier or any of the other coves in the lake. Another good spot is along the shores of the No Motor Zone, next to the tree stumps.

When you take a kid fishing remember: If there is a tree around, they will get hung up in it. If there is a snag in the water, they will hook it. Hey, they may even hook you, if you are not careful. Know these things ahead of time. So when they happen, and they will, you can just shrug them off.

The fastest way to turn a kid off on fishing, is to lose your temper with them. You are their teacher. You would not want their teacher in school to lose his or her temper with your child, would you?

Make the trip fun for your child. Even if they do not catch a fish, they will want to go again. If there is something you do not know about fishing, do not be afraid to ask. All of us in the fishing business know we have to pass our knowledge on. We, at Lakeside Bait, Tackle & Boat Rental, practice that concept faithfully. If you are camping at Shabbona Lake, check out our free kid's fishing pole loaner program available at The Camp Store.

Take the time! Pass on the knowledge!!! Experience that look in your child's face when he or she "GOES FISHING"! Neither of you will forget it!