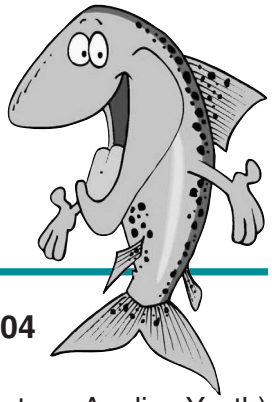
M·A·Y Club

MONTANA ANGLING YOUTH



Fall 2004

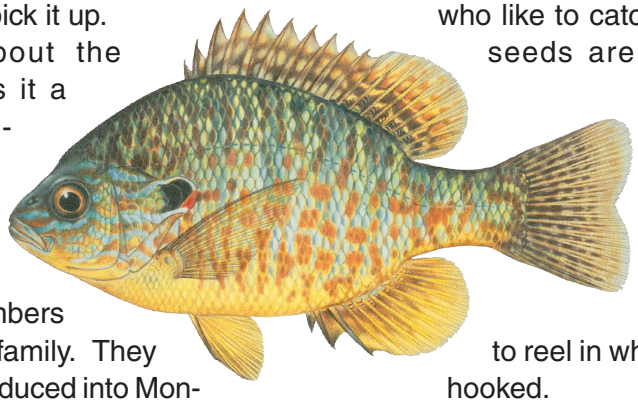
You are now one of **4,000** M·A·Y Club Members!!

Welcome back to another issue of the MAY Club (Montana Angling Youth) newsletter and Hooked on Fishing Program. We want to welcome the new schools, students, and classrooms in the Hooked on Fishing Program across Montana. We now have about 200 classrooms with over 3,500 students in the program! The MAY Club newsletter is our means of sharing information among young anglers in Montana. We can always use more articles authored by students: please send us your fishing stories!

Feature Fish - Pumpkinseed

Sometimes fish names can tell you a lot about a fish. A golden trout can be a very gold color. A paddlefish has a heck of a big paddle for a nose. And a slimy sculpin might just be a little slimy if you pick it up.

But what about the pumpkinseed? Is it a fish, or is it a vegetable? With a name like that, it's hard to tell.



Pumpkinseeds are members of the sunfish family. They have been introduced into Montana from lakes in the eastern part of the United States, so they are not **native** to Montana. But they have become very popular here. The Flathead Valley of Northwest Montana is probably the best place to find them, although they are found in other parts of the state, especially the southeast.

As a member of the sunfish family, pumpkinseeds are closely related to bluegills and green sunfish, and look very much like them. They have a body that is shaped like a small plate, flat and mostly round. People who study fish think pumpkinseeds are shaped that way because it allows them to tip their mouth up or down very quickly to find their food. People who like to catch pumpkinseeds are glad their bodies are shaped that way because it makes a pumpkinseed hard to reel in when they are hooked.

Although Montana has many colorful fish, the pumpkinseed is one of the brightest. With wavy blue lines on their cheeks, a yellowish-orange belly, and a flap on their gills colored bright red and orange, some pumpkinseeds look more like fish that should live on a tropical reef than in a cold Montana pond.

Most pumpkinseeds are not very big, only five or six inches long. If you are lucky enough to catch a pumpkinseed over eight inches long you might want to

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Look Here!

1 Colorful Pumpkinseed

2 Sharpen Your Hooks!

3 Are you hooked?

3 What do spoons, spinners, jigs, and minnows have in common?

4 Join the Club

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

M·A·Y Club

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Photos on these pages are of Happy Hooked on Fishing students from Edgerton School showing off their catches at a recent fishing trip to Snappys Pond in Kalispell.

Outdoors just for kids: Make sure your hooks are sharp

By Mark Henckel, Gazette Outdoor editor

How sharp are the hooks that you use when you're fishing?

Sharp hooks are a little thing that many people take for granted. Yet it can be very important when you're out on the stream or fishing a lake or reservoir.

Hooks take a beating. They get bounced off rocks as you reel them in. They get snagged on logs and branches. They often get put away wet and gather a little rust. They also get bent shut or pulled straight.

All of these things can make a hook dull or less-than-perfectly effective when it comes to hooking fish. And, in truth, some hooks aren't all that sharp when you buy them.

Making sure that your hooks are sharp can help in the catch

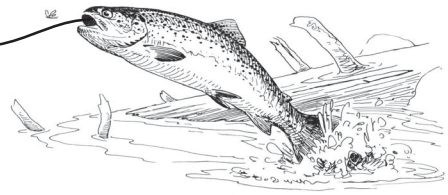
These two netted a whopper!

All it takes is a few seconds of work with a hook hone or a sharpening stone to make a dull hook sharp again. That little bit of work might mean the difference in hooking a fish and keeping it on that hook.

Put a hook hone in your tackle box. Keep an extra in your boat. Or get one small enough that you can put it in the pocket of your fishing vest.

Then check your hooks from time to time throughout your fishing day. It just might make a difference when a big fish hits and the fight is on.

Hooked ON FISHING



What is Hooked on Fishing?

The "Hooked on Fishing, Not Drugs" Program emphasizes aquatic biology, fishing, habitat, and safety, and application of these topics in math, science, and writing. Most students in the program are 4th Graders. The program offers students opportunities to learn about the environment in their own area, and to succeed at a positive family activity.

Outdoors for Kids: Lures fall into 4 categories

Beginning fishermen often wonder what spinning lures they should buy to catch fish. Generally, they fall into four basic categories - spoons, spinners, minnow imitations and jigs - with a lot of variables thrown in.

Spoons are a piece of bent metal, usually with one treble hook. They're made so that they wobble in the water when you retrieve them.

Spinners have just that - a metal blade that spins - with a single treble hook. Sometimes they're painted different colors and may have hooks that are tied with feathers or deer hair wrapped around them.

Minnow imitations are typically made of plastic or wood that are carved or formed into the shape of a minnow. They usually have two treble hooks - one on the back and the other halfway down the body. You can buy them with all kinds of different paints and patterns on them.

Jigs are a single hook with a lead ball molded around them to form a head. You can put bait on the hook, or find them with hair or feathers tied around the hook or put a plastic twister tail on them.

The important thing is to buy lures that cast well with your particular rod and reel. Often, that's more important than just the size alone. I've had little trout hit lures that were half their own size. I've had little northern pike hit lures that were as big as they were.

As to what colors might work best, that seems to vary in different waters. It's best to ask an experienced fisherman, bait shop owner or store clerk to help you with your selections. Then go out and fish them yourself to see if they work.

Which lure do you think he used?

Success!

Join M•A•Y Club

MONTANA ANGLING YOUTH

- Anyone preschool through elementary can join!
- No meetings to attend, just get great stuff by mail!
- Receive fun newsletters at your home filled with information, tips, & games!
- Get cool fishing tackle and outdoor items you can use right away!
- Learn about fishing and the water environment!
- Write us and share your fishing tips, fishing photos, and fish stories with kids around Montana. (Please write and draw **in pen or in VERY DARK pencil.**

Mail or drop off your letters or registration to:

M•A•Y Club
MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks
490 North Meridian Road
Kalispell, Montana 59901

KIDS:
If you are getting this newsletter, you are already a member, so share this registration form with a friend who might want to join!

Registration Form

Name_____ Age _____

Address _____

Town_____ State_____ Zip Code _____

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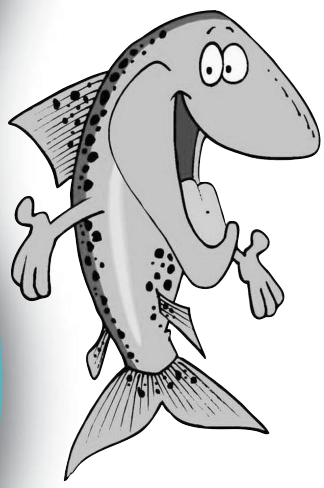

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Pumpkinseed

Continued from cover

take a picture of it. The biggest pumpkinseed ever caught in Montana weighed just a tiny bit less than one pound, and was caught in Milnor Lake in 1985.

Spring is one of the best times to catch pumpkinseeds, although they can be caught all year long. In the spring, as the shallow water is warmed by the sun, pumpkinseeds clear out an area and build a nest on the bottom. The eggs are laid in the nest, and the adult pumpkinseeds stay nearby guarding the eggs from predators.

Like most other sunfish, pumpkinseeds love to eat worms, and a small piece of a worm or nightcrawler is great bait. Use a small hook, a little weight and tiny bobber, and you can catch all the pumpkinseeds you want. And don't forget to pay attention and enjoy the color of the fish you catch. Even though it has a name that might be a little strange, a pumpkinseed is a beautiful fish.