

The Tittabawassee River

Of all the water quality and revived fishery success stories to come along in recent years, the Tittabawassee River might well take top trophy for her turn-around if one was offered. But unlike her sister rivers, the Bad, Flint, Shiawassee, Cass and Chippewa (that drain literally thousands of square miles of West central Michigan, and in turn all flow into the Saginaw River at her headwaters) her simplistic charm and natural beauty has never left her, even when the river turned out nothing but Un-eatable fish during the 60's, 70's and early 80's. But now, she welcomes and nurtures thousands of spawning walleyes every late winter into spring, as well as their offspring after they hatch. Her twisting wooded shorelines, sand and occasional gravel strewn bottom is perfect habitat for river run Walleyes, White Bass, Pike, some Largemouth and many Huge Smallmouth bass. Virtually every fresh water species know to the Great Lakes can be found in varying numbers during certain seasons up in the Tittabawassee River.

The only true downside to this gem is her unfriendly attitude towards any boats larger than 17 feet and sporting motors with long shafts. The Tittabawassee by nature is very shallow and dangerous even during medium and high water intervals. Long stretches of water 1 foot deep is not uncommon. Many hazards from ancient bridges that were abandoned from the old days are still there. And with many of the new structures erected both up and down river from the old existing ones, all the old cement supports, pier heads, pilings and (in some cases) super structures themselves, are abandon but still standing.

There is also very few launches on the 28 miles of river I like to fish from it's convergence with the Saginaw River, up-stream to the Dow Spillway Dam in Midland. Most of these launches fill in with sand during the spring floods or stay to shallow in general to safely launch a decent sized boat. I knew long ago if I wanted to fish and charter on this river exclusively, I better purchased a Boat for the job. So I bought a flat bottom river boat with a Yamaha Jet Drive outboard. But even I have had a few un-seen bumps along the way these last 18 years of fishing the Tittabawassee.

As far as techniques go, nothing beats a Jig and Minnow cast while anchored or hopped while slipping the current, for every species of fish swimming in the river. I've caught everything from fall salmon and steelheads to spring White bass and catfish on this type offering and technique. The key is finding and recognizing the preferred holding areas of each species during each season or in each fluctuation of the water table. Holes, slots, deep runs or wing dams all hold fish at some point. It's when the water fluctuates that some of these spots get better or worse during certain intervals, during wet or winter thaw periods or when the Sandford Dam is releasing or holding water back from Sandford Lake, well upriver of the Dow Spillway. Once one has a handle on the tricky nature of this great river, it can supply you with some real fishing memories.