

LOCAL WOOD

DOG-WALKING FOR FALL COWS

LOCAL PLUG BUILDERS ARE RINGING IN A NEW ERA FOR THE TRIED-AND-TRUE "SPOOK"-STYLE PLUG. By Andy Dear

It's a marriage that top-water striper fanatics have spoken of for decades – the action and fish-taking abilities of the Heddon Zara Spook combined with the joys of big, wooden plugs. If you're one who, like me, drools over large, metal-lipped plugs, daydream about the dance of big pencil poppers, and worship "antique" plugs by Atom and Goo-Goo Eyes (no longer commercially available), there is a new type of lure being produced to fuel the big-wood addiction.

A number of enterprising lure manufacturers have developed their own hybrid of big, wooden spook-style lures that stripers love. The Sea Dog by Tattoo's Lures, the Spookster and Fatboy Slider by Afterhours Custom Plugs and the StriperSniper by Neil Allen are three lines of lures that fans need to check out. These New England-made lures range from 6 to 7 inches in length and weigh up to and over 3 ounces. Their action is sexy, and their fish-catching ability incredible.

My first exposure to them was October last year down on the Rhody Coast during the Tri-State Tournament. While on a breakfast break from fishing, a member of an opposing team pulled out a box of Tattoo's Sea Dogs and I almost flipped. He smiled wryly and told the group of us that we needed to get these plugs. I rushed down the street to Capt. Don's Bait & Tackle only to find the collection of Tattoo's and Habs – Habs doesn't make the big spook-style lures but is a popular wooden lure manufacturer out of Rhode Island – gone from earlier that day. I knew I had to get my hands on some.

Since that time, I have been fortunate to use these plugs with great success and to connect with the makers of these lures to get some of their thoughts on making and using them. And while all of these lures look relatively the same, with the exception of the Afterhours Fatboy Slider, they all work and react differently to different rods.

There are a number of similarities among these manufacturers, both as anglers and entrepreneurs. Each of these guys has a love of fishing with topwater plugs, especially the Zara Spook, and each wanted to make a lure that fit his specific

This 12-pound striper fell to an Afterhours Spookster worked in classic "walk-the-dog" fashion near Wilderness Point, Fishers Island in August. [Below] A StriperSniper ready for action.

