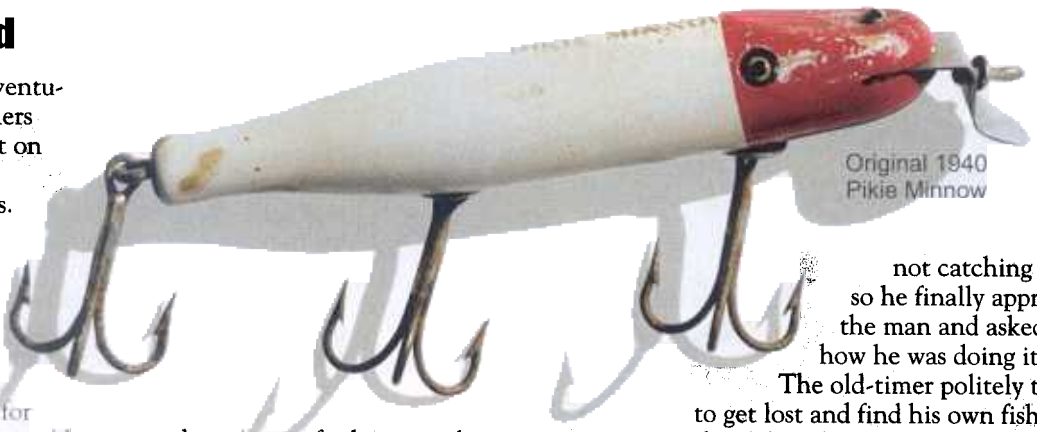


Big on Wood

and big seatrout. Eventually, Northeast anglers put them to the test on stripers and blues with glowing results.

On Cape Cod, Massachusetts, the "musky-size" Creek Chub Pikie Minnow swimmer became so popular that they were sold for whatever the owner could command along the beach. Famous lure maker and inventor Bob Pond, who formed the Atom Manufacturing Lure Company in the late 1940s, fashioned his Atom-40 swimmer after a Creek Chub Pikie with a few modifications for salt-water fishing. Bob told his story to me one evening at a dinner given in his



honor for his contribution to sport fishing and conservation. He was also the founder of Strippers Unlimited, a conservation group that worked tirelessly for striped bass management.

While fishing the Cape Cod Canal in the late 40s, he witnessed an old gent catching striper after striper night after night just before dark. Bob was

not catching a thing so he finally approached the man and asked him how he was doing it.

The old-timer politely told him to get lost and find his own fish! In those days, let's just say that old salts were extremely secretive.

Two nights later, Bob beat the old-timer to the set of rocks he'd been casting from two nights earlier. On his third cast or forth cast with an Upperman bucktail, Bob snagged some Dacron squidding line that was floating next to the rocks. As he pulled in the line, he felt weight, and then the line began shaking violently. When he finally got to the end of the line, to his amazement, there was a tired 18-pound striper with a big Creek Chub Pikie Minnow lodged firmly in its jaw! The strong line had held the bass in the rocks for who knows how long. Minutes later, along came the old gent, only to find Bob standing on "his rock" holding his lure and his lost fish from the previous night. He told Bob the lure was his and he wanted it back, but Bob could certainly keep the attached striper.

Casting an Upperman bucktail, Bob snagged some Dacron line to which was attached a tired, 18-pound striper with a big Creek Chub Pikie Minnow in its jaw!

Tackle and Rigging



Back goes a big girl that could not resist a big meal.

To fish big swimmers weighing two to five ounces, or more, you need heavy casting outfits. Personally, I prefer baitcasting gear and load my reels with a premium monofilament. For boat fishing, a 7- to 7½-foot rod is adequate but casting from the beach or shore calls for a 9- to 10½-foot heavy-action rod. If you prefer spinning tackle, choose rods of similar lengths.

In either scenario, spool up with 20-pound line. Tie on a length of 50-pound-test fluorocarbon shock to prevent a lot of "snap-offs" when casting these heavy plugs. Big swimmers should be attached to a leader with either a strong Duo-Lock snap swivel, or, as I prefer, with a strong non-slip loop knot. The swivel can open up if the fish gets the right leverage and angle. Both will allow the swimmer to move freely, unimpeded and add even more lifelike motion to the lure than tying to it directly.

—J.W.

Bob smiled and replied, "Thanks, but you can have the bass and I'll keep the plug. Under Maritime Law anything found along the beach is considered salvage."

The old man left in a huff, and Bob had his plug, which became the model for the development of Bob's now famous Atom-40 and the Atom Junior, which eventually accounted for tens of thousands of striped bass and is still catching them to this day.

Many more wooden swimmers came along shortly thereafter. Among them were Gibb's Castalures, the Rinehart Jinx, Palomine, Jerry Sylvester's Flap-Tail, the MasterLure Series and Charlie