

Why Go Fishing?

- Bill Walker, Tournament Director of the Keowee Anglers

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Why do you go fishing? Are you hoping to feel the tugging of a monster fish on your line battling to get free as you pull it in? Do you like the taste of fish and want to do the hunter thing of putting food on the table? Or is there really some other reason?

I certainly enjoy pulling in big fish, and I love putting tasty, healthy, fresh fish on the table, but this article is about something else. If you're looking for monster fish or trying to put food on the table, you won't find any tips for doing that in this article. If you want that kind of information, go to www.keoweefolks.org, click on **Lakeside** in the top bar, then click on the **FISHING** picture. Then, for seasonal Lake Keowee fishing information, you can check out various fishing articles there including "Feb 2014 Early Spring Bass" and "Feb 2015 Ready for Spring Bass".

I really go fishing for other reasons. It all started when I was a little boy fishing with my father. He always used to say, "He who goes fishing and complains that he didn't catch any fish forgot why he went." I still treasure my fond memories of spending special alone-time with my dad out on the water, or spending time with him and my brother. Our mother joined us sometimes, too! Those special bonding experiences brought us close together as a family, and that closeness flowed over into all aspects of our lives together.

When I grew up and had my own children, I took them fishing. Again fishing helped to build the family bonds that have lasted a lifetime. I don't have any grandchildren yet, but when and if that happens, I hope I'm still able to take them fishing!

If fact, any time I go fishing with anyone, we invariably spend time talking about ourselves while we share the experiences of fishing, boating, and all the Nature around us. And through it all we become closer friends.

Another reason I go fishing is the calming meditation of it. I see it like archery or target shooting. All the thoughts of the real world fall away as I turn off my cell phone and fill my mind with the process of fishing. I find tremendous freedom from the thoughts and demands of the busy world to be able to focus my mind on just one thing, casting the lure to exactly where I want it to go. I derive great satisfaction out of being able to look at a specific spot on the water, next to a clump of grass where a bass might be lurking, next to a big rock at the shoreline, or next to the barely-visible branches of a fallen tree in the water, and then casting my lure to that exact spot. I take time to appreciate my cast as I pull in my lure and cast it again to next target spot, adjusting my movement to make that next cast just a little bit better. And when I repeat this with the peaceful dawn colors lighting the sky in the east ... my state of mind doesn't get any better than that ... unless perhaps if I get the bonus of a fish striking my lure.

I wasn't always that good at casting, but having done a lot of it over the years I can now pretty much look at a place and drop the lure there! But I'm not perfect yet, and I keep getting better with every outing! You could, too, with practice, if you can't already. And practicing is part of the meditation.

I've recently discovered a similar meditation in trolling. I can put my boat at the lowest possible speed for the main engine, then toss out a diving lure on each side of the boat with its respective rod and reel in a rod holder on the gunnel on each side. Then I can focus on the depth contours going by on the GPS depth finder, trying to keep the lures reasonably close to shore, but still in deep enough water so my lures won't hit the bottom. Again, when I'm focusing that, all thoughts of my busy life drop away, and I'm free to relax with the sights and sounds around me.

Don't get me wrong, catching a fish does make the experience even better, but I see it as a bonus, not as the main reason I go fishing.

One day I met socially a man named Ernie, who became my friend. Eventually we began talking about our hobbies, and he mentioned that he really liked fishing.

"Oh!" I replied with extra energy at the thought of a fishing conversation. "But you're not a member of the Keowee Anglers. Have you thought about joining?"

"No," Ernie answered dismissively, "You wouldn't want me."

"How can you say that?" I insisted. "The Keowee Anglers has members at all levels of skill, and we really focus on camaraderie and sharing fishing skills and information."

"Well, let me tell you how I fish."

"Okay."

"I load into the boat my tackle box and fishing rod and a six-pack of beer in a cooler. Then I head out into a quiet spot on the lake where I can be alone most of the time. When I get there, I toss out my lure or bait, put the rod in the rod holder, pull out a beer and sit back in my seat and relax and enjoy watching the scenery and feeling the boat bobbing lightly up and down in the water. Usually no matter where I go on Lake Keowee, eventually a fishing boat comes by. When they do, I ask them if they're having any luck. And if they say yes, I ask them what the fish are biting on. When they tell me what they're catching fish on, if that's what I have on, I take it off and put on something else. That way I don't have to be bothered taking the hook out of a fish."

"You're right," I agreed, "Maybe the Keowee Anglers isn't for you. You just keep having fun doing what your doing."

Now, admittedly, Ernie was an extreme case. But fishing has been a symbolic method of shedding the cares of civilization ever since Huck Finn stuck his cane pole in the mud of the river bank and lay back in the grass with his hands behind his head, one barefooted leg propped over the other knee, straw hat pulled down over his eyes, and a corn-cob pipe in his mouth. Huck surely didn't want Aunt Sally to "sivilize" him.

So if the world is too much with you, and you're looking for a nice quiet time away from it all, or maybe you'd like to build a bond with a friend or child, think about going fishin'. As a bonus, you might even catch somethin'.