**CREEKS PROVIDING GOOD FISHING IN TRANQUIL SETTING Luke Clayton**

**As I sloshed along the muddy trail leading to the secluded section of creek I planned to fish, I found myself stopping occasionally not only for a short ‘breather’ but also to admire the sights and smells of early spring. Buds were swelling on the trees, tiny leaves were beginning to appear. Birds were voicing their joy that they had survived yet another winter and it was time to go about their work of procreating.**

**I was spending a couple of days solo at my good friend’s ranch situated on the upper end of Lake Fork. While I am a social critter and enjoy spending time with friends in the outdoors, it’s good to occasionally spend time alone. This was my first time this spring to check the creek for spawning white bass and with all the current created from recent rainfall, I was pretty sure I would find the fish. The rain that I hoped had pushed the white bass up the creek was now hampering my attempt at fishing. It simply would not stop! When the downpour diminished to a sprinkle, I decided to put on my rain gear and rubber boots and make the trek through the woods to the creek. There are some deeper holes situated around sharp bends that I was anxious to fish. Because of the long walk, I was traveling light. A light spinning rod and reel and a pocket full of yellow and chartreuse Beetle Spins, needle nose pliers to remove the hooks and a pocket knife to fashion a fish ‘stringer’ from a green Bois D Arc branch. But this was all I needed for a few hours fishing a backwoods creek.**

**When I finally reached the creek, I was pleased to find the water clarity to be pretty good. While it’s possible to enjoy good creek fishing for white bass in muddy water, the action is usually much better in more clear water. I had tied on a Beetle Spin with yellow soft plastic body earlier. Through the years, I have caught lots of spawning white bass on this color pattern. The creek bank was carpeted with a fresh growth of wild rye grass with patches of woods oats. I stopped for a five minute break to ‘take in’ the natural world around me. A couple of owls were talking to each other back in the bottoms and a woodpecker somewhere across the creek was drumming away, up in a dead oak tree. As I rounded the bend, nearing the ‘hole’ I planned to fish first, a heron took wing which I considered to be a good omen. These birds have to catch fish in order to eat and I had just moved in on this old birds private waters!**

**My first cast was a long one, below the overhanging canopy of tree limbs and across the bend and down the length of the creek. Because of the bend in the creek bed and the angle of my cast, I was able to work the bait parallel to the bank, out three or four feet. All sorts of fish like to hang out around the exposed tree roots along the bank and just as I was about to pull my bait out and make another cast, something whacked my little Beetle Spin, hard! The spinning reel’s drag began to buzz as line was stripped away. At first I thought maybe I had hooked a big Grinnell and I simply held on and tried to keep the fish out of tree roots and in the middle of the creek. After a battle that lasted a couple minutes, I discovered that I had ‘foul hooked’ a 3 pound channel catfish. The fish had obviously made an attempt to grab the little bait and the sharp hook had stuck in its side rather that it its mouth. A foul hooked 3 pound fish fights like one much larger, especially on light tackle. My dinner was flopping on the creek bank.**

**After a few more casts, I discovered the white bass were indeed still in the creek. I would get a strike on about every tenth cast, yes, I was keeping count! A spawning white bass weighing 1 to 2 pounds that has been fighting current puts up quite a fight and for the next couple of hours, I had an absolute ball. Several tasty yellow bass and even a crappie nailed my little bait. The pattern was to move along the creek, fishing areas where the shoreline brush and overhanging limbs allowed casting. I would pull two or three fish from most of the areas I fished. As I moved along, I placed my catch in little patches of grass, in an inch or two of standing water. My plan was to walk the creek several hundred yards and collect the fish on my makeshift ‘stringer’ on the way out. My goal was to catch enough fish for my dinner and enough to freeze for my friends so that they would have a fish fry waiting when they next visited their place. A couple hundred yards down the creek from where I started, the ‘sprinkle’ of rain turned into a thunderstorm. Here I found my Bois d Arc tree and cut a four foot piece of green, ‘springy’ limb, just below another limb that would keep the fish from slipping off my makeshift stringer.**

**I backtracked my route, stopping at each of my fishing spots to pick up the fish I had previously landed and place them on the stringer. I took my time walking back to camp through the woods. The rain was falling steadily now but I had managed to remain dry in my rain gear. Back at camp, after a couple cups of fresh brewed coffee, I fillet my catch, placing most of the fillets in a freezer bag filled with water. But, I reserved plenty for my evening meal of fresh fried fillets straight out of the creek. I can’t remember fish ever tasting any better!**

**Contact outdoors writer Luke Clayton via his website** [**www.catfishradio.org**](http://www.catfishradio.org)