

Confessions of a spoon fetishist . . .

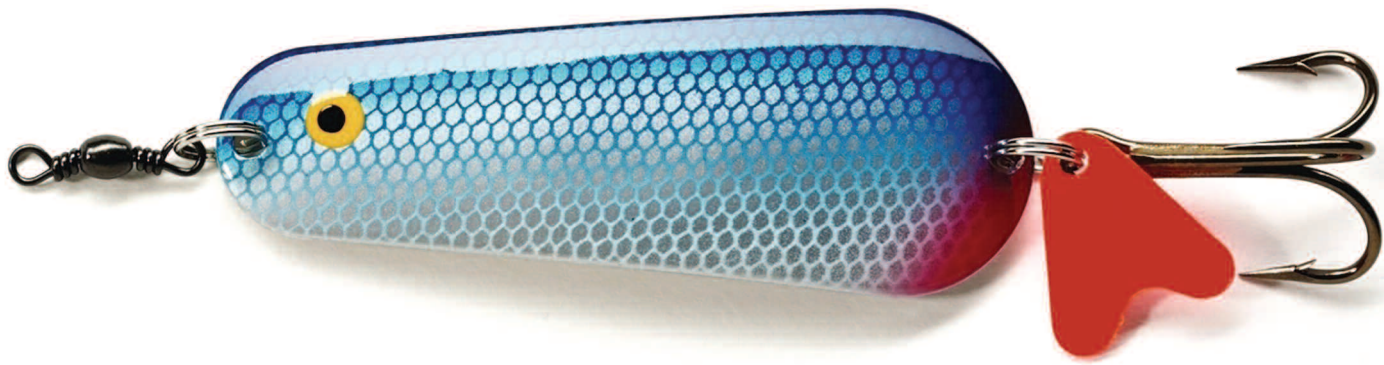
Hans van der Pauw

My wife is a psychologist. She has always encouraged me to express my feelings. This can be fun at times, but there's a darker side to everything. She knows about my large collection of spoons, fishing spoons that is. And she knows about my secret fascination for these small metal objects. One day she took me aside and carefully explained to me about fetishism: the attribution of inherent value or powers to an object. Sometimes even supernatural powers. Fetishists worship such objects, they may even get all excited about them. And yes, there I began to recognise my problem: it was all about my affection for spoons.

I felt like driftwood. At a loss about what to do. My wife urged me to get things off my chest. "Talk about it darling, or write it down if you find talking too difficult or embarrassing." At that point *Waterlog* came to my mind, the quarterly for which I had already written several articles. Even one about spoons, actually.

And I also remembered how I started that article: 'I must confess that I find most spoons intriguing and almost magical things, even without fishing them. They are simple and solid objects and yet they possess a hidden power for catching fish.' My sincere apologies for quoting myself, but it serves to clarify the problem. After that intro I quickly directed the article to the safe realm of the historical and technical treatise. But now I had to come out of the closet.

Firstly, there are the physical qualities of spoons: the 'simple and solid objects' with their charming curves that endow them with a built in 'hidden power for catching fish'. I'm no fan of extravagant shapes and colours, it's the simple designs and a plain metal finish or delicate shades of paint that attract me - and I can only hope the fish feel the same. But not knowing what pleases them most, I might as well please myself. An excellent example of a simple and solid spoon



The ABU-Garcia Utö spoon.

would be the Scandinavian Utö. The model dates back at least to the 1880s, when the old firm of Leidesdorff, in Stockholm, started producing its spoon Nr. L.151, but it may be much older. This model became very popular - and rightly so, because it has a powerful and steady swing to it - and as there was no patent on it, many other firms took the same model into production. The name Utö (meaning 'outer island', the name of an island in the Baltic Sea) seems to have been given to it in the early 1950s, possibly by the firm of Paul Bergström in Göteborg. The spoon of that name was made famous by the Bete lure factory in the 1960s and 1970s and as a result of its commercial success, the well-known Swedish company ABU decided, in 1974, to include the Utö in its own lure programme. The largest model especially, 92mm at 35 grammes, is a superb pike spoon. Just take it in your hand and tell me what you feel . . .

Yes, the Utö is a comparatively heavy spoon. This makes it well suited for long casting and for deeper waters, say 5 feet or deeper. But being rather broad it has a good 'lift' to it, which makes it possible to use it in shallower waters as well, even with a moderately slow retrieve. I know the ABU Atom is a more famous pike spoon. It's made in exactly the same sizes and weights as the ABU Utö but with a different, corrugated profile. Yet I prefer the strong and more regular action of the Utö to the drunken fluttering of the Atom. But who am I? Not a pike, that's for sure. And I'm sure the 'fell tyrants of the liquid plain' don't care about my preferences at all.

Speaking about preferences, one cold but lucky February day my friend Henk caught a very nice pike. It was fat and just under a metre long. It took a 4½-inch Kuusamo Professor spoon in the colour BLU/Li/O-C. Just forget about the code, but believe

The mother of all spoons.

me, it was a really weird colour: from orange to lilac to blue. As happens so often, happy Henk drew a rock-solid conclusion on the basis of this memorable - but only single - event: the 4½-inch Professor in BLU/Li/O-C was a deadly spoon, a real pike killer! From now on he would only ... etc. In a world with only few certainties it's tempting to reason that way. But unfortunately I'm a born sceptic. I do believe in spoons, but my belief in colours doesn't go much further than hesitantly recognising a possible difference in attractiveness between bright & shiny versus dark & dull - that is, on some days, perhaps, and under circumstances that I'm not even sure of. And between us: who knows, maybe, in capable hands, a 4- or 5-inch orange carrot in an Archer flight might have fooled that pike as well, when of about the same size, retrieved with small jerks at about the same depth and with about the same speed. I am serious.

Another spoon I'm fond of is my old and faithful table spoon. In over more than fifty years it must have fed me, my parents and other members of the family literally tonnes of potatoes, beans, rice, sauerkraut and whatever else we are made of. But finally it had to submit to being laid on the workbench, having its handle cut off and a couple of holes drilled through it and being made to look silly, adorned with split rings, a swivel and a treble hook attached to it. Has it caught many pike for me? I'm afraid not. And the trouble is, it spins instead of nicely wobbling from side to side, and thereby it twists the line, unless an anti-kink device be used, which I find cumbersome. But as a true and faithful spoon fisherman I have felt morally obliged to fish with this mother of all spoons - if only occasionally.

I also cherish the spoons I use for catching garfish in Denmark. This kind of fishing, in quiet and beautiful surroundings and with the hooked garfish occasionally leaping out of the water like small marlin, is nothing less than pure delight. If conditions

permit - wind and distance that is - I use light tackle: a spinning rod casting up to $\frac{1}{4}$ oz and 7g ABU Toby spoons. When a headwind and/or the need to make long casts prevent me from fishing this light outfit, I use a slightly heavier rod, casting up to $\frac{3}{8}$ oz. The spoons I choose will then be either 10g ABU Toby's

or the long and slim 12g Jensen Tobis. These latter spoons are said to imitate a sand eel (in Danish: *tobis* or *sandgrævling*). The essential trick, when fishing for garfish with spoons, is to remove the treble from the spoon and replace it by two to three inches of nylon line to which a fine and very sharp size 6 treble is



From left to right: five ABU Toby spoons in 7 and 10g (the sizes are the same, the 10g spoons are just a little thicker) and two Jensen Tobis spoons in 12g, one equipped with a treble on nylon, for catching garfish.

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Sluk from Norway. In this case the warm silver shine of thick 18g Solvrokken Favorit spoons.



attached. If you use the spoon with the treble attached directly to it, you'll fail to hook most of the garfish that grab the spoon, because their slim and hard beak offers very little hook hold. But what happens with the adapted set-up, is that you'll strike the spoon out of the beak of the garfish - just as with the normal spoon - but now the nylon slides between its fine teeth and the sharp light treble will then hook it, most of the time, either inside or just outside of the mouth, in the scissors.

Finally, one last confession. I find there's also something attractive about the names for spoons in some languages. The English word 'spoon' doesn't sound impressive, but at least better than here in Holland, where a spoon is called a '*lepel*', pronounced 'laypl', which is too silly to talk about. But still it's not as bad as the German word for an anti-weed spoon: *Krautlöffel!* Let the *rrrr* roll and you have a first class swear word. The Danish, however, call a spoon '*blink*', which, apart from referring to a spoon's often blinking appearance, has a happy metallic sound to it. But the word I like best is the Norwegian '*sluk*', as you can almost hear the spoon being sucked in by a lunker fish.

Those were some of my more or less embarrassing feelings for spoons. I'm glad I've got it off my chest. Thanks to my wife's encouragement. But between us, she really can't say too much about my peculiar affinity for spoons. After all - and I'm honestly not making this up - she once confiscated a shiny blue 10 gr ABU Lill Øringen spoon from my lure box, took off the swivel and the lower split ring with the treble, put a leather string through the upper split ring and wore it as a necklace for quite some time. After she finally returned it to me, it still caught me some fine perch. Next time: pheromones! ■



The ABU Lill Øringen spoon, once my wife's flashy pendant.