



# Fast Worm

JEFF GUTHRIE gets hooked on catching a wily bass

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*I chanted, “I am a fast worm and you can’t catch me,” over and over again.*

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**N**o one would call me an angler. In fact, you might call me a bungler when it comes to fishing. Nevertheless, I have fished most of my life and taken great pleasure in doing so. I have fond memories of fishing off a pier with my father when I was young. I also remember when my uncle took me to fish in a local river at age 10. I certainly learned some colorful

language that day.

At age 13, I discovered the wonderful world of bobber fishing. I think the fish caught with a bobber were referred to as pumpkinseed fish. How was I to know you couldn’t cook and eat a fish that was only as long as your finger? It did not matter as long as I caught something.

In high school, fishing consisted of going to the lake with a group of friends, a large cooler of beer or other frosty libation,

and fishing poles with random bait on them, and imbibing as much of the beverage of choice as possible.

As I grew older, I probably didn't fish for at least five years, maybe more. Now, I know all you anglers out there are saying, "That's a crime" or, "How can you go that long without fishing?" My only response is that I did not know what I was missing.

Then, the miracle of all miracles happened. I met and married a wonderful woman who enjoyed fishing as much as I do. I was in heaven. My wife and I spent the next ten years searching for fishing holes, bushwhacking through jungles, getting chased off people's property, and suffering all varieties of bug bites and rashes. We finally found a local water reservoir that had a narrow inlet where the creek used to run before it was dammed. There was a rickety, old, telephone-pole bridge across it that was perfect for fishing up the creek or out into the main pond. We started fishing all the time. We even went so far as to purchase fishing licenses and start using lures. We never caught anything with the lures, but we were bordering on becoming true anglers.

One fine day, we were back on the bridge, wobbling back and forth, fishing with live bait, when, from under the bridge, a huge (well, not that huge) bass swam lazily up to the mouth of the creek. Wow! We quickly changed our hooks for lures. I chose a purple worm and my wife chose a popper. Very carefully, we cast up towards the creek's mouth and slowly reeled in. The bass only took a passing interest in our lures and continued to swim in lazy circles. We tried to catch him for probably three hours that day, but he never even nibbled. The worst part was that we could see him as plain as day.

We started fishing almost every other day in the vain hope of catching that bass. We would fish on the way home from work. We saw the bass almost every time.



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*Jeff Guthrie, a long-time resident of Raleigh, now lives in Youngsville with his beautiful wife and their 17-month-old baby. By day, he works in Raleigh as a sales analyst; by night, he can be found playing with his son, brainstorming for a new story or waiting tables at Applebee's. His story "My Friend the Deer" was published in the October 2003 Urban Hiker.*

We would fish, he would swim, and life would go on. I think always seeing the bass started driving me crazy. My wife finally stopped trying to catch him and went back to fishing with live bait. I, however, started trying things like casting but not looking as I reeled in. I tried being both quiet and noisy. I even tried different lures and dangled live worms from the hook.

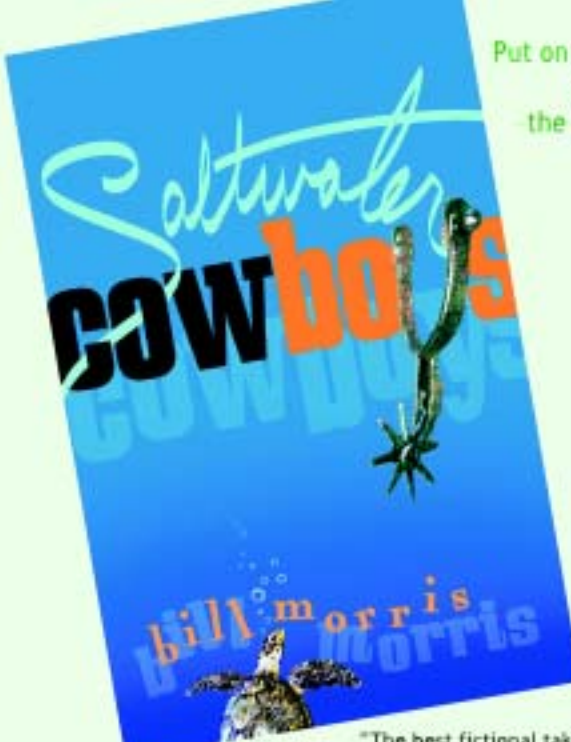
Finally, I started chanting an ancient fisherman's mantra. I chanted, "I am a fast worm and you can't catch me," over and over again. It became my motto. My wife got so tickled she started calling me the Fast Worm.

I would get down to the rickety bridge, hook up my rig, and plop that purple worm in the water. Sure enough, the bass would come out and swim in lazy circles while I held my worm just under the water and swung it from side to side, chanting, "I am a fast worm, you cannot catch me." I think the bass started to laugh at me along with my wife. I could tell when he turned back towards me and looked at me with those beady eyes. He was taunting me!

This went on for several months; I was even starting to lose sleep. My wife and I finally made a pact to stop trying to catch the bass and just fish to have fun, but that bass had stirred my ire.

About a year ago, I accepted a new job. I took one day off, a Friday, between jobs. I decided that this day would be my last day to try and catch the bass.

It decided to rain as I headed out to the reservoir. I laid out my gear, hooked up my not-so-faith-



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ful purple worm, and started fishing. On my third cast, out of the blue, I got a strike, and — lo and behold — there was that sarcastic bass hooked on my line. I was so surprised I almost fell into the water. I slowly reeled him in and still could not believe that I caught him. I filled my bucket with water and reverently placed him in it.

After that, I called my wife on the cell phone and told her that the Fast Worm had finally paid off. She couldn't believe it herself. I was so happy that I did the Fast-Worm Dance while I was talking to her on the phone. I quickly told her to let me get back to fishing since my Fast Worm was really working.

My nemesis the taunting bass was about a pound but he looked like a ten-pounder to me. I had never caught a bass, much less a fish this large. So, with the King Kong of fish in my bucket, I approached the water with renewed confidence. I decided to change my lure from the worm to the popper just to see what would happen. Within the hour, casting out into the lake instead of up towards the creek mouth, I hooked another bass. This one was about four inches longer than the first. I was so happy I did the Fast-Worm Dance, called my wife and told her, and did the Fast-Worm Dance again. I could not believe that I had caught two huge bass in one day. I rode over to my wife's office just to show her my catch. She was very proud of me and could not believe how big the fish were. I took pictures just so I could show all the non-believers.

To this day, I have not caught another bass, and I do not care. I can pull out my picture, do a little Fast-Worm Dance, and remember that day vividly. I'll never forget the unbelievable happiness I experienced just by catching a couple of fish. Those of you who have experienced it know what I mean. For those who have not and have no interest, you will never know what you missed. •

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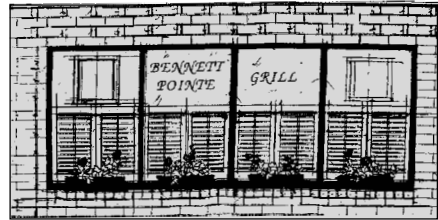
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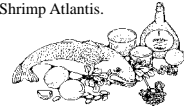
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