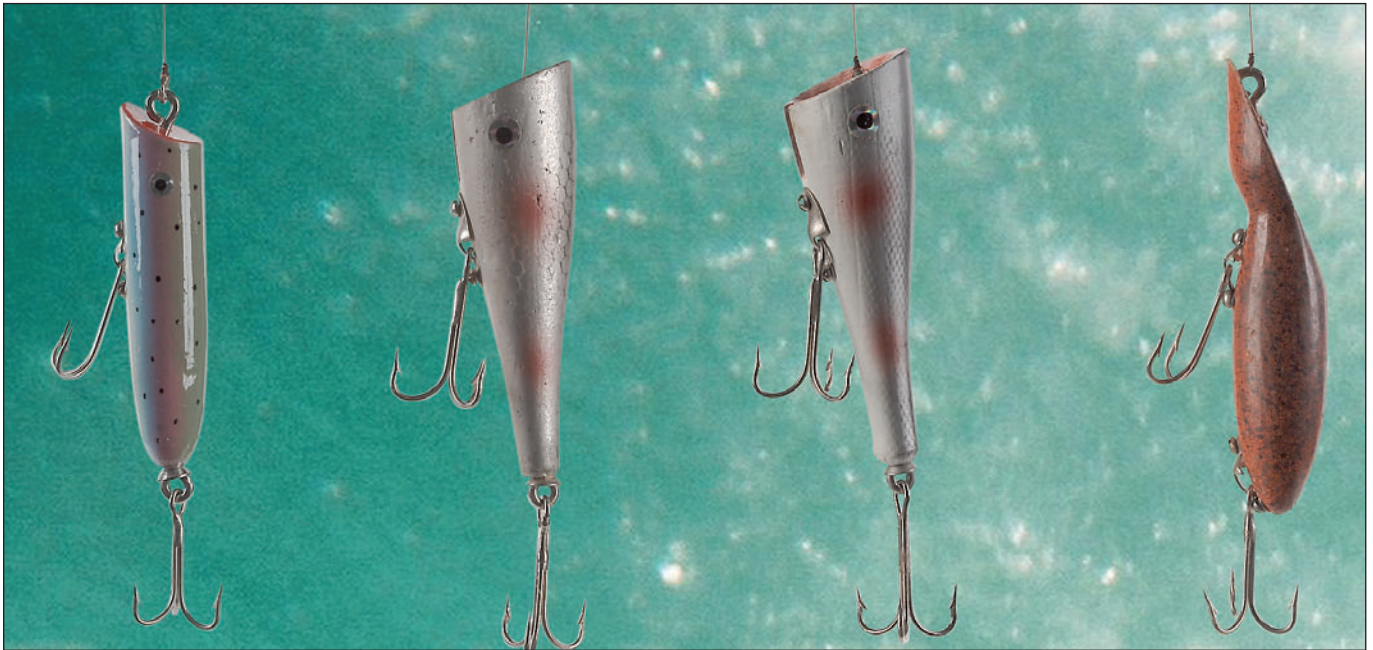


WOODWORKER'S JOURNAL

downloadable plans:
"America's leading woodworking authority"™

Turned Fishing Lures



In this plan you will be getting:

- Step by Step construction instruction.
- A complete bill of materials.
- Exploded view and elevation drawings.
- How-to photos with instructive captions.
- Tips to help you complete the project and become a better woodworker.



To download these plans, you will need **Adobe Reader** installed on your computer. If you want to get a free copy, visit: <http://adobe.com/reader>.

Having trouble downloading the plans?

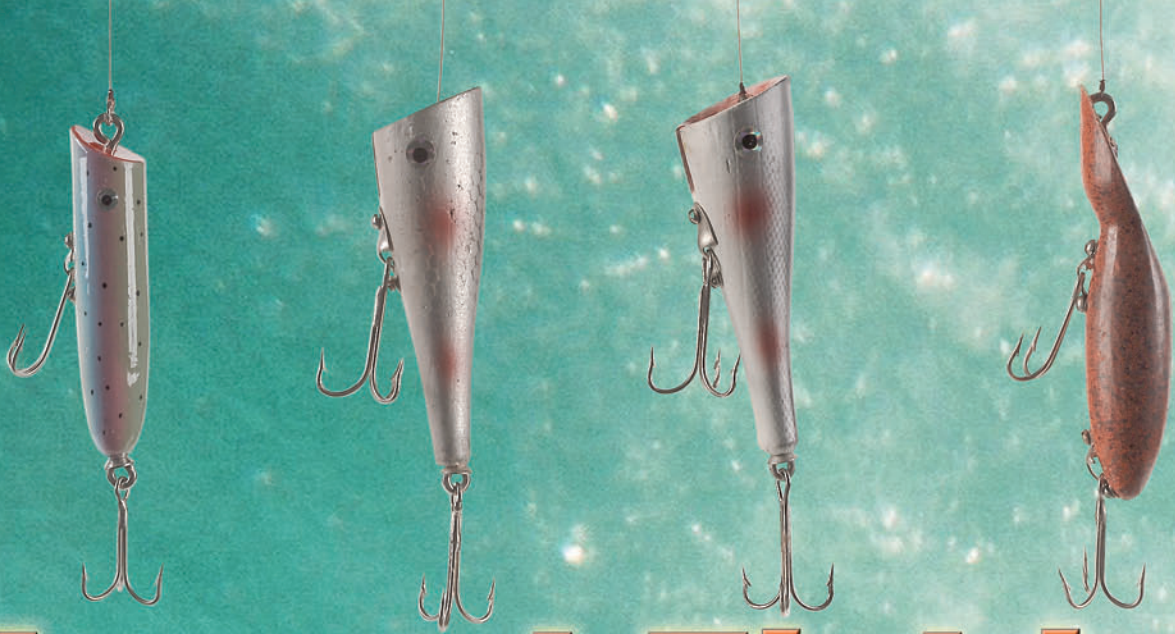
Right click on the download link and select "Save Target As..." or "Save Link As..." (depending on the web browser you are using) to download to your local drive.

\$7.95

WJ159

www.woodworkersjournal.com

Copyright Woodworker's Journal © 2011



Turned Fishing

By Louis Bignami

Prior to World War II, most fishing plugs were wood, and even today most consider the wooden Rapala the world's most effective lure. But could an average woodworker make wooden lures and thus combine two hobbies? The answer is yes: with minimal turning skills and an eye on design, you can make your own topwater, floating and sinking plugs at pennies on the dollar and in sizes from 1/2" fly rod plugs and poppers up to 10" surf and saltwater or even muskie plugs. Add to those advantages that your finely crafted plugs can be hand tuned and tested to maximize your catch. (And I've found that my lures will fetch \$5 and more each at craft sales!)

Shape and Design Factors

Check your local tackle shops for one of the two massive volumes of *Fishing Lure Collectibles* by Beany and Dudley Murphy, and you'll see that there are few new plug shapes. For that reason, you'll need to decide which lures suit your fishing needs best. Short, subsurface plugs with wiggling scoops oscillate faster than long, skinny plugs; streamlined long minnow plugs create less surface





Lures

noise and splash than blunt-nose models. Note that lure size is often the most critical factor where gamefish prey on schools of bait. Remember to vary lure length to match the growth of baitfish over the season.

Spindle Turning Practice

Plugs offer excellent spindle turning practice. To get going, square up your material, cut it to $2\frac{1}{2}$ times the plug length, mount it on the lathe, and shape it at high speed with a small gouge or even a scraper. Eliminate the cylinder stage and turn plugs two at a time for faster results. Poppers and most other shapes can be turned as a single unit and split after shaping

on the band saw — see the upper *Drawing* on the next page.

While templates produce consistent shapes, it's more fun, and better practice, to turn freehand. Just leave the square section in the chuck until the first plug tail is shaped. The hole from the tailstock will provide both support for the nail used as a handle when finishing and a centered starter hole for the rear hook eye. So advance the tailstock after the first plug is parted off. It's possible to drill these holes on the lathe, too.

Finish the shaping by sanding the body down to 400 grit and part off the head. Leave a small flat nose section that can be easily drilled, (sand the nose to shape later). Repeat on the second plug. When

splitting dished plugs, cut diagonally and then use a spindle sander to shape the lip. Belt or other sanders can also be used to flatten the sides of minnow plugs for a more realistic minnow shape on plugs that imitate shad and shuck.

Then drill any remaining holes for the nose eyes or hook hangers and remove the plug for finishing.

Buoyant Wood Choice

The more buoyant the wood, the faster the action, so balsa is tough to beat for fat plugs ... if you finish your



Shop Tools and Tackle Suppliers

This is a great mini-lathe project, requiring a minimum of turning tools ... just a small gouge or even a scraper. I use an oscillating spindle sander to shape the ends of my poppers, but you could carve those shapes using chisels and a shaped sanding block just as easily.

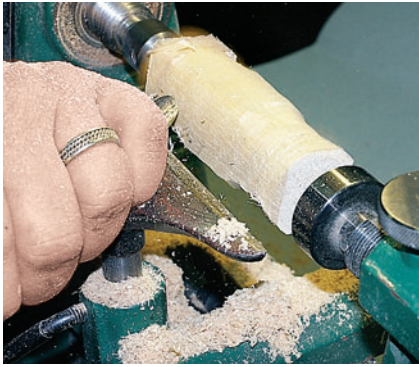
Optional but important supplies include plastic skirts of various colors, wiggling scoops and lead weights. Epoxy and super glues are very helpful and, more importantly ... waterproof. Painting the lures will require dipping containers, hobby paints, small brushes and waterproof sealers. An airbrush is really useful, but optional.

Sources for lure parts and paints:

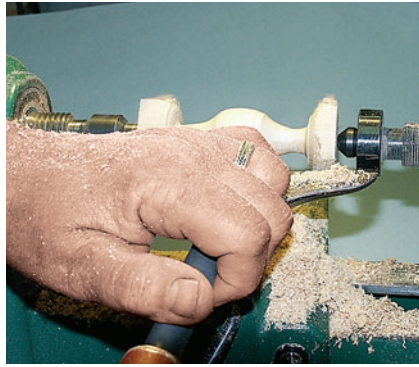
Jann's Netcraft:
(www.jannsnecraft.com)
free catalog, 800-638-2723

Barlow's Tackle:
(www.barlowstackle.com)
free catalog, 800-707-0208

Lure Components:
(www.lurecomponents.com)
Box 66, Mendon, IL 62351



Begin with an appropriate blank between centers. Use the pattern below to get started.



Turn at high speed to shape the blank. Here the author is using a skew to shape the plug.



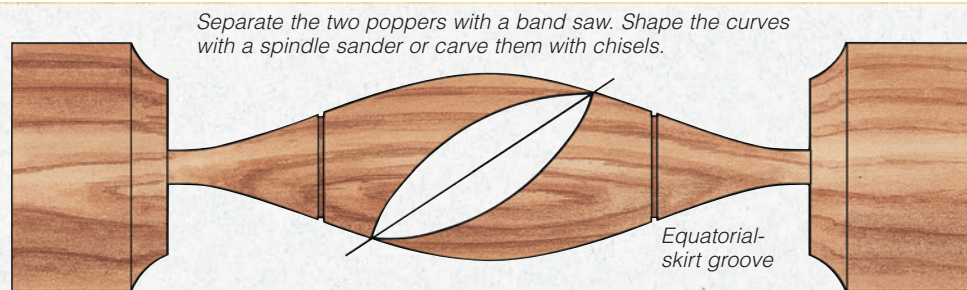
To make painting easier, sand the plugs all the way up to 400-grit sandpaper.

beat for fat plugs ... if you finish your plugs in durable epoxy and use sharp tools with a light touch. Otherwise, pine, cedar and easy-to-turn woods with reasonably tight grain are your best choices. For "one-off" designs, shop scraps do the job, so keep an eye out for wood with contrasting heartwood and sapwood, as lures with natural lighter bellies are effective with only a clear sealer and top coats. Basswood is wonderful if you plan to carve details such as gills. Note that dense woods improve casting distance and stand up to pike and other "toothy" species. They also sink faster when weighted.

Hooks, Hangers and Screw Eyes

If you live in an area where "single barbless hooks" are the law of the land, I would go with Siwash open eye single hooks. (And by the way, in "side-by-side" trolling tests, they produce the same strike to hookup ratios.) Just remember to use a single that's two sizes larger than the usual treble. Double hooks are an easy to add or change alternative worth considering on some designs. Quality treble hooks from Gamatsu, Mustad or Eagle Claw sized to match the hooks on commercial plugs work, too.

While commercial plugs use hook hangers, good lure design, which spaces hooks far enough apart so they can't snag each other, allows screw eyes superglued into place at big savings. Open screw eyes let you crimp hooks on "point



Full-size Equatorial-skirted Vertical Popper Pattern

This blank makes two poppers. See the photo sequence above

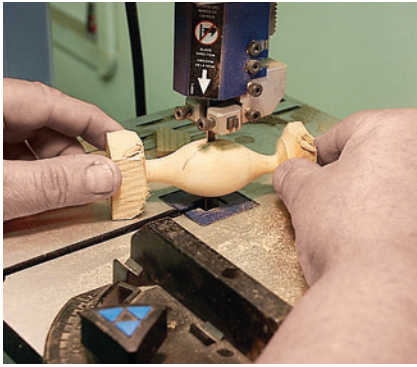


Full-size Topwater Minnow Pattern

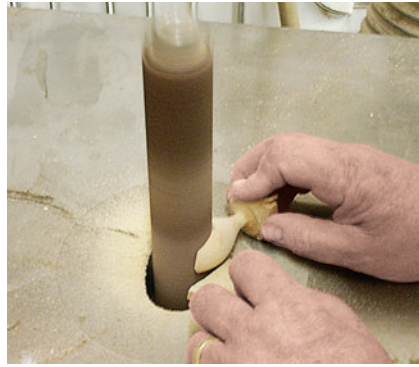
Use these patterns as a starting point. Be creative and develop your own "secret" lure.



If you plan to use your lure in salt water, stainless steel hardware is a must.



Cut the popper blanks apart on the diagonal using a band saw or scroll saw.



The author uses his spindle sander to shape the front scooped curve of the poppers.



Painting creates the details that catch the fish's and the fisherman's eyes! One easy trick is to use a mesh material to create a "scale pattern".



down" for general use or "point up" for weedy fishing spots.

Some folks attach hooks to eyes with split ring hook holders. I prefer a direct connection with a smaller than usual screw eye for less hook swing and fewer line snags. Moving the screw eye towards the plug top makes lures run deeper; moving it down on a flat or slanted face popping plug increases noise.

Wiggling Scoops, Hardware and Skirts

A variety of wiggling scoops can be screwed into wooden lures and then bent to change the plug action. Sometimes, however, it's cheaper and faster to just cut a slot and epoxy in a flat scoop (clear acrylic, polycarbonate, metal or wooden) for subsurface action. Tongue depressors or plastic sheets from the model shop work well. Just remember: waterproof glue is a must.

Surface lures generally do not require scoops. Action is provided by their design and/or rod manipulation. The classic "vertical popper" (*Drawing* at left) uses an "equatorial" rubber skirt and sits and pops in place tempting bass and other species.

You can also dress rear hooks with skirts, add propeller or spinner blades fore and aft, or, for superior spins, add a bead. Rubber skirts and tails or soft "jewelry box" plush

skins on mouse-type lures will improve craft fair sales, too.

Small strips of lead glued to the lure bottom create "zero buoyancy" so lures will suspend when you stop a retrieve — tank test in the bathtub.

Paint, Eyes and Other Oddments

A coat of waterproof sealer or white waterproof finish thinned 20% is basic. Hold lures by a nail jammed into the back of the lure and dip or spray before the screw eyes are installed. Dry lures by inserting the nails into holes on a block of wood. Two base coats are recommended.

Color coats offer contrasting heads and bodies. For example, dip lures in white paint and, after drying, dip red heads. You can also dip a second, darker coat on the lure back or add a red gill stripe, etc. Paint kits with one ounce bottles will increase your color options. Spraying through mesh (top right) adds fish-scale details, increasing fish and sales appeal.

Spraying allows the use of tulle and other materials to produce desirable patterns. As a rule, dark backs and light bottoms are typical of baitfish that fall broadly into silver and gold divisions.

Adding eyes will also improve your luck.

To apply painted eyes, cut the point off a large diameter nail and use it to apply a white or yellow spot on each side of the head. After this dries, use a smaller nail to add a black pupil. Like most procedures, this is best done a dozen lures at a time.

Finally, add two clear coats for protection and eye appeal. Epoxy outer coats will foil pike for a bit, too.

Finish up with a "tank test" at a full tub. Tie the lure to a short stick with a couple of feet of four-pound test. Add strips of very light lead to the hooks for fore-and-aft balance. Take notice of the most effective speed for top action lures, and if it runs off-line bend the forward eye sideways to adjust. Note: offline lures are effective under docks and weed beds.

Louis Bignami is a turner based in Oregon who also writes about travel and fishing.

