

Whitenose Notropis ????

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Received a phone call from my creek stomping buddy, Jim Doan, "Let's make a trip up country to Little River in the morning to do some collecting". I wasn't able to break away for the entire day, so we decided on a shorter trip to Miller's Park which is located here in Mobile county.

I loaded my equipment in the ole' Ford van and set the alarm for five. The next morning the sun rose at 5:36 AM. It was about 5:45 when I left home and the fog was so darned thick that a person couldn't see more than twenty feet ahead. Met Jim down the road and we headed for the creek. By the time we arrived at the park the fog was beginning to lift. It lifted just enough to reveal all those ugly trash heaps which some of our inconsiderate brothers have discarded all along the side of the dirt road which led into the park.

On this particular trip we were searching for some flagfin and broadstripe shiners for myself and some rockbass for Jim. Put the wadders on, grabbed the dip nets and plastic bags and headed for the water. Look! There's a small tail sticking out of a clump of grass and waving with the current. Jim made a pass with his dip net and captured a Southern brook lamprey. First time I've seen lamprey in this particular creek which I have been observing for the past ten years or so. We caught a few more of these fellas. Normally we work upstream, but on this particular morning we decided to start by working downstream. The shiners could be seen swimming upstream in small groups of about 10 to 20 and for the most part included; flagfin, broadstripe, and cherryfins. The water was getting rather deep in some of the holes we had been wadding through. Jim ran into a submerged board from an old washed out footbridge and gave me a warning about the slippery footing he had been encountering whenWhoosh! forward he stumbled into that cold, cold water. Oooee! Wow! Well, we kept on dipping and caught what we needed in the way of shiners. Working our way back upstream to our point of entry and walked out. Good grief! Jim's wadders were just a-bulging and a-sloshing. He mumbled a few words and pulled out a package of water soaked cigarettes from his chest wadder pocket. Boy! That coffee sure would taste good about now. We broke out the thermos of coffee and took a break. I sorted our catch, changed water and bagged em up. This stream is typical of those found in this area with its' fast flowing, cool, clear water. We headed upstream as the sun was brilliantly shining through the dew drenched oaks, pine, and magnolias. The scent of honeysuckle was heavy in the air, and the mocking birds were excitedly commenting on the dawning of a new day.

The technique for capturing rockbass is entirely different than that which we were using to collect shiners. Since these fish usually hide in the undergrowth on the edges of the creek we worked our dip nets through this area while slowly advancing upstream. We caught a few young redbfin pickerel, a couple of pygmy banded sunfish and quite a few madtomms. As we were working the banks I ran into some slippery footing and Whoosh! down I went with my legs still going as fast as they could go with that chilly water pouring into my britches. Jim chuckled, "That sure made me feel better". Well, again it was time to be moving on. We loaded our vehicles and since it was still pretty early we decided to try another creek which is about five miles from my home. I'm ashamed to say that I've been down the road several hundred miles, but until this time I had not even tried this creek. To make matters worse I cross it twice a working day. Arriving at our destination we pulled off the road and walked back to the concrete bridge we had just crossed. Looking down into that sparkling clear water with a bright sun over our head we could easily recognize some exceptionally large flagfins swimming in the current. Hey! What are those fish playing near the bank among a thicket of american cryptocoryne? There were only two fish visible which appeared to be a pair. The one we surmised to be the male had a noticeably large dorsal with a splash of black. Both had irredescent white visible on their pelvics. Mabe it was one of the species of dace common to this area. We walked back to our vehicles and readied ourselves for another trek into the "puckerbrush". We managed to struggle through some mighty tough undergrowth and muck to the point where we had spotted those fish from above. There they are! Jim went downstream and approached from under the bridge while I went upstream just a bit remaining out of the creek easing my net into the water. We closed in on the pair catching the one we figured to be the male. The elusive female kept just out of range and outlasted our efforts at capture. Hey! This fella is really different. It appears to be a typical Notropis specie having the same basic shape as the Notropis maculatus, the tail light shiner with the pretty red nose. The dominant features are the high dorsal and extra large pelvics with an irredescent white on the leading edge of these pelvics and the anal fin. A band of this irredescent white extends accross the snout which suggests the possibility of it being called the Whitenose Notropis. Unsuccessful in our attempt to catch the mate we headed home with plans to return soon.
