

# Cal Johnson's 1947 world record musky creates a new splash...

## A Rebuttal from Muskie Historian Larry Ramsell

This link is to the titled (in black) article.

<http://www.haywardwi.com/articles/2009/12/16/news/doc4b2963814dfa7818738825.txt>

# Cal Johnson's 1947 world record musky creates a new splash (actually it was 1949...LR)

*Status attacked, defended*

by Terrell Boettcher News Editor

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I will excerpt the pertinent parts of this article with my rebuttal to follow each part: TB article: "...The WRMA bases its assertions on the science of photogrammetry, as practiced by DCM Technical Services of Toronto, Ontario. DCM analyzes old photographs of fish to determine how large the fish actually are. In its report, the WRMA claims that DCM's analyses of three old photos shows the Johnson fish to be no longer than 52 inches."

LR rebuttal: First of all, DCM is not in the business of analyzing old fish photographs. The primary business is one of accident reconstruction and DCM's Dan Mills is the foremost north American expert in the field of photogrammetry, which IS admissible in a Court of Law. Secondly, the WRMA report concluded that the Johnson fish's length was a "...maximum possible length of 54 inches (when lower jaw measurement is utilized)..."

NOTE: the WRMA's "Johnson Summary Report can be found at:

[www.worldrecordmuskiealliance.org](http://www.worldrecordmuskiealliance.org) TB article: "...Earlier this year, the IGFA rejected the WRMA's effort to get the IGFA to disqualify the Cal Johnson muskellunge world record. In a letter to WRMA president Rich Delaney, the IGFA's conservation director, Jason Schratwieser, said, "We simply do not feel that the photogrammetry analysis is sufficient for us to rescind this record. I do appreciate the time and passion that your organization has put forth on this, but we are resolute on this matter.'""

LR rebuttal: Following is another quote from IGFA's Schratweiser: "...Our main rationale for not agreeing with your report's results is we do not believe that you can accurately determine the weight of a three dimensional object, such as a fish, from two dimensional picture. ..." If this is indeed the case, why then does the IGFA have the Lawton fish in "set-aside" status? They claimed to me that the question of the photo was the reason, but in the Johnson case, they switch horses and make the above comment. They cannot have it both ways and be fair. TB article: "...Hall of Fame statement "Emmitt (sic) Brown, executive director of the Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame in Hayward, said the claims presented by the WRMA "have been floating around for a while now." He said the WRMA report "is the usual drivel from the usual suspects touting the usual flawed and self-serving logic and science as fact. The fact is, Cal Johnson's 1949 record muskellunge is on public display at the Moccasin Bar in Hayward. It's the original fish in its original form. It is, unquestionably, a 60-inch fish."

LR rebuttal: That the Hall refuses to acknowledge photogrammetry as "science" is but a lame excuse, especially when they merely used Dettloff's "amateur" photo analysis to disqualify the Lawton record. And another thing most folks seem to be missing here...the WRMA's report SUPPORTS that the Johnson mount is in the ball park claimed!!! If DCM acknowledges that and then uses the mount to PROVE that the fish shown in the fresh fish pictures is NOT as big as claimed! Brown continues: "Documenting that fact "is that when you look closely at the scales that run lengthwise on the fish (mount displayed at the Moccasin Bar), they are all perfectly intact," Brown said. "There's not one disruption of the scale lines running back and forth. They quite conclusively prove that that fish was not augmented. There is no 'filler' put in to make it 60 inches. It's actually 60 1/4 inches. I've talked to several taxidermists about this. They say that even using today's technology, there's no way you could augment a fish and not disturb that scale line, much less (likely) that it was augmented 60-some years ago in 1949. Both lines and scales are absolutely undisturbed from the tail to the head of the fish."

LR rebuttal: This is just simply NOT TRUE and I have shown same to the author of this article! There IS an interruption in the lateral scales and it doesn't take the fish being out of the case or a magnifying glass to see it directly above the rear paired fins, obviously where the mount was augmented and there is a crack. The taxidermist was a world class museum taxidermist, having worked 25 years for the Field Museum in Chicago. He knew how to make an animal look realistic or even enhanced. Working with wax was known in those days and it would have been a simple matter for him to replicate the original scales. TB article: "Moreover, a photo of Johnson and his fish and fishing rod, never before published until this issue

of the Sawyer County Record, shows conclusively that the fish is as long as listed, according to the Johnson family and to musky fishing historian John Dettloff.

LR rebuttal: This just simply is NOT true! First of all, the affidavit submitted by Johnson to Field & Stream did NOT say what the rod was that was used (see affidavit photo in the article or in "A Compendium of Muskie Angling History" Volume I, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, page 219). And even if the rod used was identified elsewhere by Johnson there is absolutely NO PROOF that the rod in that photograph is indeed the one Johnson was using that day!!

NONE. Dettloff continued: ""Our history is important, and it must be accurate," Dettloff said. "This is a very famous piece of outdoor history for Hayward. It's something Hayward should be proud of. There's a little clique of people trying to shoot it down. I'm sure it's based on jealousy.""

LR rebuttal: Muskellunge history IS important, not just the Hayward muskellunge history and Mr. Dettloff has lost sight of that fact. He simply refuses to apply the same standards and methodologies that he used to derail the Lawton record to the Spray and Johnson records, otherwise he would concur with the WRMA's findings and not oppose them. TB article: "Dettloff bought an identical South Bender 411 rod on E-Bay. It measures 58 3/4 inches. The photo of rod and fish shows that the WRMA's claim that the fish is 52 inches long is "totally absurd," Dettloff said. "Their preconceived goal is to make the fish smaller than it is. The WRMA report is done with a lot of slants and innuendo," he said. (Editor's note: The WRMA report is available on the Internet at [www.worldrecordmuskiealliance.org](http://www.worldrecordmuskiealliance.org).)

Again, there is NO PROOF that this is indeed the rod in the photograph (unless Dettloff wrote it on the photo as he likely did with his Lawton "smoking gun" photo) and I'm not buying that. And again, the WRMA report concluded the Johnson fish was 54 inches, not 52 as stated above. It is NOT the WRMA's goal to make the fish smaller, it is Mr. Dettloff's goal to make the Johnson fish bigger than it really was, pure and simple and good for business. There are no 'slants or innuendo' in the WRMA report, just Dettloff's wish for readers to believe so. Dettloff continued: "Looking at the camera angle and distance of the photographer from Johnson and his fish, "the rod is in the same plane as the fish," Dettloff said. "The fish is longer than the rod. It's in the ball park of 60 inches." Johnson himself stood 5-foot-9 inches. The fish's tail is about one foot above the ground and its head is two-three inches above the top of his head. There's minimal distortion.""

LR rebuttal: Again, this rod is a moot point as it cannot be proven what rod is in the photo. As for Johnson's height, in 2006 Dettloff claimed "...Johnson was 5-feet-seven-inches tall. I'm the only one that knows and has that

information and if anybody else tells you anything different they don't know what they are talking about." (A Compendium of Muskie Angling History, Volume I, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition). Well, obviously Dettloff doesn't know what he is talking about since now in 2009 he has Johnson growing 2 inches!!! Come on John, you tried the same BS with Spray and it didn't work and no one should buy this change either. Dettloff continued: "Looking at the WRMA report (which is available on the Internet at [www.wrma.org](http://www.wrma.org)), I am so glad we have the "rod photo" of Cal with his fish and the rod next to his fish." I feel this photo is critical in further verifying his record catch as it gives a simple and very accurate length corroboration to his musky's reported length of 60 1/4 inches. I want to stress that, because the rod and the object it is measuring (the fish) are more or less the same length, it gives a much more accurate calculation than when merely using a much shorter line segment (such as the eye to upper jaw distance) as a known distance."

As previously discussed, the rod is a moot point as it cannot be proven to be the rod used and simply could not be anymore accurate than the measurements in the WRMA report which were done with a computer. Dettloff continued: "Back in July 1949, Johnson's fish was weighed on two certified scales. The certification was sent to Field and Stream magazine. Two days after receiving a letter from Johnson, the magazine certified the musky as the world record. They requested an affidavit attesting to the accuracy of the scales, and the names of two to three additional witnesses to the weighing and measuring. Field and Stream "treated this fish with the full scrutiny that a world record deserves," Dettloff added."

LR rebuttal: Here again, Dettloff puts up a "smoke-screen" CLAIMING that the two scales used to weigh the Johnson fish were certified. HOWEVER, there is NO EXISTING DOCUMENTATION that either scale was "certified"! The affidavit witnesses all signed one document when in fact not all witnessed the weighing on both scales. And Field & Stream certainly did NOT give Johnson's fish full scrutiny, despite what Dettloff would have you believe...I have seen the Field & Stream files and I know better!!! Dettloff continued: "...In an article on his catch, Cal Johnson said the new world record muskellunge's "stomach was empty. Its body did not have a blemish. It is planned to display this great fish at many sportsmen's shows, but its permanent home will be in Hayward Wisconsin, near the waters where it grew to such prodigious size.""

LR rebuttal: I challenge the newspaper (or anyone for that matter) to conduct a survey of ten dozen muskie anglers that routinely catch numbers of large muskies. I doubt that any will agree that a July fish that was "empty" would ever approach the weight claimed unless "extremely" obese,

which Johnson's fish was not. TB article: "...As far as the mount at the Moccasin Bar is concerned, Dettloff said "it's hard to measure, because it has minor curves and mounts do shrink." The mount "is in the five-foot ball park. There's nothing glaring against it being a five-foot fish."

LR comment: As I have noted previously, the WRMA report concedes that the "MOUNT" of the Johnson fish is in the ball park of the length claimed. Where the rub comes is that the fresh fish just does NOT measure up to the mount. If one compares the distance between the two sets of paired fins vs. the distance between the rear paired fins on the fresh fish and then does the same exercise with the mount, it immediately becomes clear "where" the mount was enhanced to make it come up to the "claimed" length. TB article: "The skin mount was produced by taxidermist Karl Kahmann in 24 days, much less than the usual time frame, Dettloff said. "It's a beautiful work of art. But they (WRMA) are calling Kahmann, the family and the witnesses liars."

LR rebuttal: Why is it all right for Dettloff to call the Lawton witnesses liars but professes outrage when the same is done with another bogus fish?? In fact, most of the Lawton witnesses in recent years produced a second set of affidavits upholding the size of the Lawton muskie, but it fell on deaf ears and blind eyes re: Dettloff and the Hall of Fame! Talk about the pot calling the kettle black. Dettloff continued: ""Keep in mind that even having the WRMA's eye to upper jaw calculation be off only one-half inch and it will skew their total length calculation by five inches," Dettloff added. "I measured Cal Johnson's mount with a laser measuring device and did indeed find the WRMA's eye-to-upper-jaw calculation of 5.669 inches to be off by 9/16 of an inch. The actual measurement proved to be 6.25 inches when measured with lasers. This error alone is very significant and skews their result by five inches.

LR rebuttal: Here again Dettloff tries to sway opinion with "smoke and mirrors" and an outright lie!! Just one week prior to this article being published, Dettloff contacted Dan Mills at DCM and asked for clarification of the measuring points in the WRMA report...he did NOT know! Mills didn't tell him and referred him to the WRMA. He never contacted them, yet here he is one-week later with bogus calculation (likely "back-calculated") to arrive at a figure needed to make the Johnson fish "appear" to be as long as originally claimed. SHAME ON YOU JOHN DETTLOFF!!!! I don't know how you sleep at night. Here is part of what his email asked of Mills: "...**Can you tell me to what part of the eye this distance was measured to?** Was it from the tip of the lower jaw to: 1) the forward edge (the edge closer to the jaw) of the eye socket or 2) the centerline of the eyeball, or 3) the back edge

(the edge closer to the tail of the fish) of the eye socket? Because the eye socket is close to an inch wide (from edge to edge), it is an important piece of information to know when doing this calculation.”

He did NOT know, but still “manufactured” some bogus measurements. Out and out fraud...Sheesh! I won't even respond to Dettloff's next comment as it is so far off base. TB article: "...A conservation pioneer “The sad thing (about the WRMA's attack on Johnson) is that Cal did so much in his lifetime to set the stage for so many of us to make a living” in the fishing and tourism industry, Dettloff said. “He opened the door. He was a pioneer. He championed conservation and environmental issues when it wasn't popular in the 1920s and '30s. He wanted to save the sport for future generations. He saw the bigger picture: sportsmanship, ethics, conservation, size limits. This (world record musky catch) was something he accomplished toward the end of his life. His doctor told him three years previously that he had three to six months to live, with a heart condition and rheumatic fever. When he caught this fish, he knew it might be his last day. He was an outstanding citizen in our sport.”

LR rebuttal: Once again Dettloff tries to make the angler a hero to garner support for him, regardless of what the scientific evidence says. No one would ever argue against Johnson's career and that he did many great things...and personally, I feel that since Johnson knew he was dying he wanted to do one last great thing for Hayward tourism, which was at a low ebb after WWII. Why else would he “give away” a world record mount that is now privately owned? TB article: “Louie Spray fish”

No need to rehash this here other than to state that again only what the Hall and Dettloff wanted known got made public. The Hall did and has steadfastly REFUSED to hire their own photogrammetrist as was RECOMMENDED TO THEM BY THE MATH PROFESSOR'S who were unhappy with how the Hall interpreted their work on the Spray fish although they used that work to uphold the bogus Spray fish! Have they no shame at the Hall of Fame??? It was NOT “poor science” as Hall director Brown claimed. Why is the Hall reluctant to have their own Photogrammatic experts hired? Are they afraid of the results? In fact, I'll wager that the WRMA would PAY for THEIR expert to review and comment on Dan Mills DCM peer-reviewed report!!

LR conclusion: Mr. Boettcher then proceeded to drag another questionable fish, the Malo muskie, into the mix even though it had nothing to do with the current issue AND it was highly inaccurate and outdated...poor research at best! Perhaps it was merely a shot at me for not supporting the bogus Hayward “records”! He also wrote that the Hall “lists” the Malo fish in their record book, when in FACT, Mr. Dettloff and Mr. Brown conveniently

removed that fish several years ago so "Louie" would appear to have no contenders!! A SHAM OF EPIC PROPORTIONS!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Dettloff will likely be displaying the Johnson mount again at the Chicago Musky Show. If so and you attend, take the time to look CLOSE at the mount, the crack above the rear paired fins and the "added" distance between those paired fins and the anal fin and compare that to the fresh photo that he will also have there...it will be eye opening for you!

In the meantime, have fun with these photo's:



Cal Johnson 5 foot 7 inches in 2006 forever. If Johnson's Cal Johnson 5 foot 9 inches in 2009 Lawton's is 64 1/2 !



Art Lawton 5 foot 8 inches fish is 60 1/4 inches, then

Muskie regards,  
Larry Ramsell  
Muskellunge Historian