

Solunar Theory

WHAT IS THE SOLUNAR THEORY?

In 1926 John Alden Knight postulated some folk lore he picked up in Florida and proceeded to attempt a refinement, giving it the name Solunar (Sol for sun and Lunar for moon). Knight compiled a list of 33 factors which influence or control day-to-day behavior of fresh and salt-water fish. Everything was taken into account that could possibly have any bearing on the matter.

One by one the factors were examined and rejected. Three of them, however, merited further examination. They were sun, moon and tides.

Surely the sun could have no effect since its cycle was the same day after day, whereas the observed activity periods of fish were apt to be present at most any time of the day or night. The moon had already been weighed and found wanting. Tides? Surely there could be no tidal movement in a trout stream. But the fact remained, however, that the tides had always guided salt-water fishermen to good fishing. Could it be that the prompting stimulus lay in the influence of the sun and moon which cause the ocean tides, rather than the actual tidal stages or flow?

When the original research was being done only the approximate time of moon up - moon down were considered. Gradually, it became evident that there were also intermediate periods of activity that occurred midway between the two major periods. Thus the more evident periods were called MAJOR PERIODS and the two intermediate periods, shorter in length, were called MINOR PERIODS. Knight first published his Solunar Tables in 1936. Then, and today, one must calculate the precise times from each table taking into account the geographic location (east or west) of a base point (Time Zone), and adjusted for Daylight Savings Time when appropriate. The tables are rounded to the nearest 10 minutes.

An example of the deviation in time in a particular state would be Texas here the times from El Paso on the western border and Hemphill on the eastern border is 51 minutes (Hemphill is 51 minutes earlier than El Paso).

PROVING THE THEORY

To substantiate the Solunar Theory, insofar as fish are concerned, John Alden Knight attempted a systematic inquiry to acquire complete details surrounding the capture of record catches. Both individual large fish ... and large numbers. He examined approximately 200 of these catches. Over 90 percent were made during the dark of the moon (new moon) when the effects of the Solunar Periods appear to be greatest, and, more important, they were made during the actual times of the Solunar Periods.

Initially, only the behavior of fish was considered. During 1935 to 1939 Knight made extensive studies of game birds and animals. As had been suspected, these also responded to the prompting stimulus of the Solunar Periods.

PEAK DAYS

It is now known that the sun and moon are the two major sources of the astral energies that daily bombard the Earth and all her life forms. The closer they are to you at any given moment, the stronger the influence. The day of a NEW or FULL MOON will provide the strongest influence in each month.

PEAK MONTH

June always has more combined sun-moon influence than any other month. During a FULL MOON the sun and moon are nearly opposite each other and very few minutes pass without one or the other being in our sky. During a NEW MOON, both bodies are in near-perfect rhythm traveling the skies together with their forces combined. Because of the interaction between the many lunar and solar cycles, no two days, months or years are identical.

PEAK TIMES

When a Solunar Period falls within 30 minutes to an hour of sunrise or sunset you can anticipate great action! When you have a moonrise or moonset during that period the action will be even greater. And, finally, when the above times occur during a NEW or FULL MOON, you can expect the best action of the season!

LENGTH OF PERIODS

Every fisherman knows that fish do not feed all the time. He knows, also, that for some reason fish often go on the feed and take most any offering, be it live bait or artificial. This sort of thing happens, according to John Alden Knight (the originator of the theory) during a Solunar Period. To be sure, fish usually feed actively at sunrise and sunset, but generally, the real fishing of the day is at the "odd hour" feeding periods. If the weather and feeding conditions are favorable the fish will be active for one to two hours.

BEST FISHING DAYS

For those fishermen who enjoy fishing at sunrise and sunset here are the absolute best dates to be on the water at your favorite spot. These are the Major or Minor Solunar Periods that fall near the times of Sunrise or Sunset during a Full or New Moon.

It has been documented that when this condition exists fish will bite on anything they see or smell. Limits are almost guaranteed provided there are fish in the vicinity. It's no secret that fish and game tend to feed during dawn and dusk (sunrise and sunset). What amplifies the activity is the effect of a moonrise or moonset plus the specific monthly periods of New (dark) and Full (light) Moons. When the times coincide with a moon-rise or a moon-set the action can be spectacular.

Finally, a change in the local weather coinciding with the periods will further enhance the activity.

WATCH THE WEATHER

For best results the tables must be used intelligently. Every day will not show a clear-cut reaction to a Solunar Period. In the case of fish, barometric fluctuations, particularly when the trend is down, often ruin fishing. All wildlife knows what to expect of the weather, and any bird, animal or fish can sense the approach of a storm. Cold fronts moving through drive all fish deeper and render them inactive.

Adverse temperature, abnormal water conditions, all sorts of things will offset the effects of Solunar Periods. However, every sportsman knows that it is beyond all reason to expect good fishing or hunting every day. The Solunar Theory will point the way to the best in sport that each day has to offer, but in no sense is it a guarantee.

WATCH THE BAROMETER

Intensity of activity also varies from day to day, according to conditions in general. If the barometer happens to be steady or rising, if the temperature is favorable (15 degrees higher than water temp) then long and active response to a Solunar Period can be expected.

WATCH THE MOON

Another thing to remember in dealing with Solunar Periods is that solunar influence will vary in intensity according to the position of the moon. The times of new moon (the dark of the moon), and there is no moon in the sky, is the time of maximum intensity. Ocean tides reflect this intensity in their magnitude. This maximum will last about three days, and wildlife respond with maximum activity. Thereafter the degree of intensity tapers off until it is at its minimum during the third quarter phase of the moon.

CALCULATING SOLUNAR TIMES

The key to accurate Solunar Times is the ability to chart the relative solar and lunar positions with respect to a particular location. The major periods coincide with the upper and lower meridian passage of the resultant gravitational (tidal) force.

The minor periods occur when these forces are rising or setting on either horizon, i.e., the right ascension of the resultant force and the local sidereal time vary by 90 or 270 degrees. The major periods occur when these forces are at 0 and 180 degrees apart.

AREA COVERED BY SOLUNAR TIMES

The times produced are known as GRAVITATIONAL TIDE TIMES, i.e., the times of low and high tides if the Earth were completely covered by water. Our program calculates the solar and lunar positions with an accuracy of .25 degrees allowing accuracy to be within 1 minute in time. The times will change one minute for each 12 miles east or west of the base point.

There is one day each month (near the last quarter of the moon) on which there is no moonrise. This is normal and occurs because the moon's average period between two rises and sets is approximately 24 hours and 50 minutes. Thus there will always be a day on which a moonrise (and a Solunar Time) will not fit. Note also that moonrise can occur at any time during the day or night.

CONCLUSION

It goes without saying that if there are no fish or game present, you will not be successful. Plan your days on the water or in the field so that you are where the game is most likely to be during the Solunar Periods.

We hope that we have been able to improve your understanding of the Solunar Theory - and how you can use it to improve your angling success.

But always remember ... the BEST time to go fishin' ... is whenever you can and always practice catch and release.

Solunar Services

<http://www.solunar.com>

Solunar Table Index

Solunar Tables - How should they affect your fishing?

By Buck Davidson

The existence of “solunar periods” - those times when the Earth, Moon and Sun form particular alignments in relation to each other - is a scientifically accepted fact. How the so-called major and minor periods affect the behavior of Earth’s life forms, though, is the subject of much speculation. Opinions range from little or no influence to the belief that these periods comprise the biological clock by which Mother Nature lives. Whichever theory you subscribe to, the first question which leaps into the mind of the salt-water sportsfisherman is “Can these things help me catch fish?” Quite a number of highly-skilled fishermen and outdoorsmen answer that question with a definitive “yes.” We have recruited the services of one such expert to relate his opinions, observations and theories regarding the effect of solunar periods on fish behavior and sportfishing. Let’s meet him now.

Capt. Robert McCue has spent much of his life enjoying the outdoors, and has continued that interest in pursuing his career as a professional fishing guide on the west coast of Florida. Unlike many guides, however, McCue takes a keen interest in the whole environment - delving into the questions of why a fish was at a given place at a given time, and what made that fish strike. Water conditions, current weather and tide are all factored to try to better understand and predict fish behavior. During periods of clear water conditions, McCue will sometimes simply observe fish movements as the tide and climatic conditions change - watching intently without offering a bait. In this way, he gains insight into how fish behavior is “steered” by the changes occurring constantly throughout the day. McCue takes a particular interest in the influence solunar periods and moon phases have upon fish, and believes their effect is profound. We hope that the advice he has to offer leads you to more and bigger fish, but also helps you to better understand nature’s cyclical and ancient way of marking time.

First - a quick overview of what solunar periods are and when they occur. Generally speaking, there are four solunar periods each day - 2 major periods and 2 minor periods. Major periods refer to those times when the moon is directly overhead, or when it is directly “under” your position on the earth. What we mean by “under” is this: Let’s say Peking, China is 180 degrees (directly opposite) from your hometown on the globe. When the moon was directly overhead in your hometown, it would be directly “under” Peking. Both you and Peking would be in a major solunar period. Yours would be a “moon-over” major, theirs would be a “moon-under” major. Got it? Twelve hours later, of course, the roles would be reversed - since the moon has traveled around the earth and is now overhead in Peking.

Minor solunar periods are easier to conceptualize. The two minor periods occur when the moon is perched on the horizon - whether rising or setting. Since it takes the moon 24 hours to orbit the earth, it may easily be seen that the “moon-over” major occurs about 6 hours after moonrise, while the “moon-under” major happens 6 hours after moonset - 12 hours after the moon-over major. Each major period lasts from 2 to 2.5 hours, while minors are of shorter duration: 1 to 1.5 hours. Even if you don’t have a solunar table chart, it’s easy enough to calculate the major periods - as long as you know what time the moon rises. Add 6 hours to the time and bingo... you know the moon-over major time. It won’t be exactly right, but will sure put you in the ballpark.

Okay, fabulous - we now know how to calculate when the majors, minors, moon over/unders are for where we live and for Peking. Question becomes - why worry about all this? For the answer to that we consult the voice of experience - Captain Robert McCue: “There is no question that fish, especially harder to catch species like tarpon and snook, will

feed more freely and strike a bait more readily during a major solunar period.”, he states. “I’ve also noticed that baitfish become more active and respond better to chumming during these times. When the water is cooler, baitfish often don’t chum up well. If I know a major period is coming up soon, I’ll net enough bait to start fishing with, then return to the spot just after the major begins. I can usually catch plenty of bait immediately, and we still have time to fish the major period.” McCue goes on to explain that, while the theory is not 100 percent accurate, very often the hottest action of the day occurs during a major period.

Another time of fine fishing is during the minor period, with the moon hugging the horizon. While the fish are not “on the feed” like they are during the major, McCue reports better than normal results during the minor period. There are days, of course, when the fish simply refuse to bite - or they bite all day. It’s the in-between days when the solunar periods come into play most heavily. Some fishing trips, of course, have both a major and minor period in them - usually signaling an excellent chance for greater-than normal fishing success.

A few parting words from Capt. Robert McCue: “If a major solunar period coincides with a tide change, with sunrise or sunset - be on your favorite fishing spot when it happens. Fish the major during the full or new moon - fishing’s likely to be very good. When a customer contacts me about a charter and asks me to recommend the best day during a certain month, I check the moon phases and the solunar tables. I’ll try to schedule the trip on a day with a daytime major during a full moon - I feel that this will give us our best chance to really have a great day of fishing.”

When an experienced outdoorsman such as Capt. Robert McCue speaks with such conviction about a topic, his words certainly bear weight. Watch those solunar periods and moon phases, and start keeping track of when you’re catching fish. The truly great guides can tell you an awful lot about the conditions they caught each of their fish under. Why? They take the time to notice, and they take the time to learn.

Elsewhere on the website - we’ve got a lot more from Capt. Robert McCue about moon phases and their tidal effect. Check out Moon phases and what they mean to fishermen. Use your new knowledge to plan your next fishing vacation - fish the favorable solunars and moon phases, and tell us how you do.