



In response to Teresa Foster
Not to be Eaten

Don't Scare the Fish

I once caught a sunfish in a Minnesota lake. There was a reason the fish was named after the sun—its shining scales glowed gold and yellow. As it flipped and struggled on the hook, my father gathered it up, ripped the hook out of its mouth, and threw it back into the water. “Too small,” he said, and gave me another worm.

The worm struggled too, small, slimy, and bloody, it went into the water on the hook to deceive another fish. I hoped none would take the bait. But my father caught a dozen and I ate the sunfish caught, gutted, scales scraped away, head removed, fried in the pan. I devoured the fish greedily and expected there to always be sunfish in this lake.

I was wrong. Fifty years later such lakes were overrun with motor boats, jet skis, boom boxes, rafts, and too many people on the shores and in the water. The sunfish struggled in the water muddy with the churning of machines and people. Nobody sat quietly with a fishing pole, hooks, and worms. Nobody said, “Quiet, you’ll scare the fish.”

In the early morning when the sunfish searched for minnows, mosquito larvae, and frogs their food supply had vanished. Instead, the sunfish ate decaying French fries and inhaled stale beer through their gills. These poisoned fish are not to be eaten.

Patricia A. Murphy
Roaming Writers



Teresa Foster, *Not to be Eaten*, encaustic, 12 x 14 inches