RUMMAGING THROUGH GRANDFATHER’S ATTIC, YOU FIND A BOX OF OLD LURES. YOU EXAMINE EACH BAIT, WONDERING, “WHAT’S IT WORTH?”

In most cases, the answer is, “Not much.” But occasionally, someone uncovers a lure worth thousands of dollars. That possibility fuels a nationwide obsession with collecting antique lures and other tackle.

Noted expert Karl White, Bassmaster’s consultant on antique tackle, has been collecting and studying antique lures for more than half a century. White recently donated his entire collection — worth $4 million — to the Oklahoma Aquarium for public viewing. He also has released a three-volume set of books evaluating and identifying various types of fishing tackle.

White says an antique lure’s value depends on a variety of factors, including the rarity, demand, age, beauty and condition of the lure. As long as you can prove the lure is an original, says White, finding a buyer shouldn’t be too hard. In addition, a lure’s box is often valuable, sometimes worth more than the lure.

Following is a list of the 35 most valuable antique fishing lures, accord-
**Shakespeare Revolution Wood Bait**

This 3 3/4-inch jointed plug, built in 1897, was the first wooden bait. It came equipped with three treble hooks and a propeller. It has a cousin, worth $4,000, that was built in 1898 and is 4 inches long.

**Pflueger Flying Hellgrammite**

This lure was built in 1885 by E.F. Pflueger, president of Enterprise Manufacturing Co. in Akron, Ohio, which later became Pflueger Tackle Co. This lure is the one that got Pflueger in trouble with Harry Comstock. The specific lure in the picture is the one that was examined by the judge in the lawsuit.

**Friend-Pardee Kent Minnow**

Made in Ohio in 1900, this lure has a propeller at the front and rear, treble hooks and yellow eyes. Two versions of this lure are worth $10,000 today: the 3-Hook Minnow and the 5-Hook Minnow.

**Haskell Fish Hook**

This lure was the first plug-type bass bait in America. Made in 1859 by Riley Haskell of Ohio, it has a metal body with scales and detailed fins, a revolving tail, and dual upturned hooks at its rear. It is 4 1/2 inches long. A smaller model of the Haskell Fish Hook sold for $22,500 in the early 1990s, but more have been found since then, reducing the value.

**Krantz & Smith Chautauqua Minnow**

This valuable antique was the first lure in America advertised as weedless. Krantz & Smith of New York made it in 1908. It is 3 1/2 inches long and has red painted eyes. “Generally speaking,” says Karl White, “a plug that did not work — in other words, did not catch fish — naturally was lower manufactured, and therefore is rarer and worth more.” The Chautauqua Minnow, says White, “didn’t catch fish, but, boy, is it a rare one.”

**Comstock Flying Hellgrammite**

This lure was made by Harry Comstock of New York in 1883. This 3-inch sinking lure became famous when Comstock sued E.F. Pflueger — and won — for design infringement because Pflueger’s lure was too similar to his. Pflueger even named his product the same thing: Flying Hellgrammite.

**Heddon Night Radiant**

This lure, a Heddon creation of 1912, is a topwater plug with a bloated head and a slender rear. It was finished with luminous paint, and it has a black stripe from nose to tail. Two double hooks dangle from its head, and a treble hook is in the rear. An all-ivory version of this lure — no stripe — with 4 trebles is worth about $5,000.

**Moonlight 1913 Special**

The 1913 was made in — you guessed it — 1913. It has a distinctive half-red, half-white body design, a propeller at its front, and two treble hooks. Two sizes, regular and “baby,” are each worth about $10,000.

**Pflueger Trory Minnow**

Produced from 1900 to about 1907, this Pflueger model has five treble hooks, and propellers fore and aft. The wooden plug was made in luminous and nonluminous versions.
**Pflueger Decoy** $10,000
Another Pflueger creation, this model began production in 1908. It’s a 5-inch minnow with a movable tail and a line tie at top.

**Heddon Dowagiac Minnow** $10,000
Several versions of this lure are available — at least 15 versions still exist today — ranging in current value from $75 to $10,000. Most models have three or five treble hooks. The Dowagiac Minnow was introduced around 1904 and produced until at least 1930. Heddon named the bait after Dowagiac, Mich., where he lived and made fishing tackle. An original Dowagiac Minnow box can be worth up to $1,500. One version, a Dowagiac Minnow #150, listed in White’s newest book as worth $10,000, actually brought White $48,500 once. The model he had was still in its box and in flawless condition.

**Heddon Bob** $7,000
Made in 1903, the 2-inch Bob has two single hooks at its rear, covered with bucktail. It’s a rare version of Heddon’s Underwater Expert.

**Friend-Pardee Kent Frog** $6,000
This flat frog bait has protruding yellow eyes, three small treble hooks, and propellers fore and aft. It was made in Ohio in 1907.

**Heddon**

**Muskallonge Minnow** $8,000
Made in 1899 by C.R. Harris of Manistee, Mich., this 3 1/2-inch jointed minnow has a hair tail. Harris published one of the first catalogs for handmade fishing equipment.

**Moonlight Dreadnought** $5,000
This lure, made in 1918 by Moonlight Bait Co., has a half-red, half-white body with five treble hooks, and propellers at the head and rear. It was named after a type of early 1900s British battleship.

**Shakespeare New Albany Bait** $10,000
Made in 1913 in Michigan, this lure is 5 1/2 inches long and has five treble hooks. The front of the body is painted red and the rest is white.

**Heddon Underwater Expert** $9,000
This Heddon lure was made in 1890. It is 4 1/4 inches long and has five treble hooks, and a propeller in the front. Its cousin (shown), worth $7,000, was made in 1904. It’s 2 1/2 inches long, is bright white with gold trim, and has three treble hooks, and a propeller in front.

**Hardy Interchangeable Minnow** $5,000
Made in 1907 by W.A. Hardy in Indiana, this lure was America’s first bass bait to come with extra bodies so the angler could change the color of the lure without having to change the entire lure. It has glass eyes, three treble hooks, propellers, and a release harness around the center for changing bodies. Its original box is worth up to $3,000.

**Heddon**

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**Muskallonge Minnow** $8,000
The Muskallonge Minnow by Heddon has five treble hooks, and propellers at the head and rear. A sale over the Internet about three years ago yielded $25,000 for this lure.

**South Bend Decoy** $5,000
Made by South Bend Bait Co. in 1913, this 5-inch lure has protruding yellow eyes, a red head and a silver body.
Union Springs Specialty Miller’s Reversible Minnow
This peculiar lure, made of red cedar, has two multiple-arm spinners that rotate in opposite directions, placed between segments of the body. It was made in 1916 by W.H. Miller of Union Springs, N.Y., near Cayuga Lake.

Davis Jersey Expert
This 3 1/2-inch lure, made by William E. Davis of New Jersey, has two single hooks on the body, one treble hook at the rear, and a rear propeller. It was made in 1909.

Pflueger Muskallonge Minnow
Made by Pflueger in 1892, this 7-inch soft rubber lure has realistic scale finishing, metal side wings, a single hook on each side and a dressed treble hook at its tail. It was made in luminous and nonluminous versions. The lure was designed for catching muskie but was also used for bass fishing.

Heddon Black Sucker
Another Heddon creation, this underwater minnow-shaped plug, made in 1911, is 5 3/4 inches, weighs 2 1/2 ounces, and has three treble hooks and a front propeller.

Burgess Bait
One of America’s first wooden lures, this 2 1/2-inch lure was made in 1898 by Burgess Weedless Hook Co. of Michigan. It has weedguards in front of its three single hooks, propellers at the head and tail, and a spotted design on the body.

Heddon Near Surface Wiggler
The 3-inch “baby” version, built in 1917, has a pink head, white body, and two treble hooks. The regular-size version of the Near Surface Wiggler is only worth a tenth of the baby’s value.

Gaide Bait
Possibly the first floating plug, the Gaide Bait was made in 1896 by Carl J.W. Gaide of Fort Wayne, Ind. It’s a wooden lure with a front spinner, two treble hooks, and a double hook at the rear, hidden by bucktail hair.

Harris Manistee Minnow
This two-piece wooden topwater lure was made in 1909 by C.R. Harris of Michigan. It has a metal propeller behind the head, and three treble hooks.

Henkenius/Kane Bait
This 4 1/2-inch lure was made by J. Henkenius and Peter Kane of Indiana in 1900. It has a propeller behind its head, and three treble hooks.

Moonlight The Bug
The Bug, made by Moonlight Bait Co. of Paw Paw, Mich., is a 3-inch, 3/4-ounce wooden lure used as a floater or a shallow runner. It was created in 1916, just over a decade before Moonlight merged with Paw Paw Bait Co., around 1929.

Pflueger Rubber Decoy
Made in 1892, this 7-inch lure has red spots painted on its belly and at its gills to resemble a bleeding minnow. It has movable side fins and a fin on top.

South Bend Truck-Oreno
One of many of South Bend’s Orenos, the Truck-Oreno was made in 1939. It is a topwater plug with an unusually large wooden spinner at its nose. It has a metal spinner at its rear, glass eyes, and two treble hooks, and bucktail covers a rear treble that has weedguards.

To order Karl White’s new boxed set of books, *Fishing Tackle Antiques & Collectibles*, send a check or money order for $104.85 plus $10 shipping and handling to Karl White, Fishing Tackle Antiques & Collectibles, P.O. Box 190, Luther, OK 73054. To order each volume separately, send $34.95 plus $5 shipping and handling to the same address. Individual volumes are *Volume One: Plugs; Volume Two: Reels, Spoons & Spinners, Hooks & Harnesses;* and *Volume Three: Flyrod Baits, Rods & Miscellaneous.*