

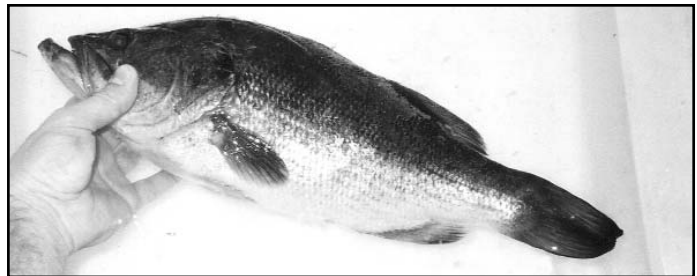
BY DAN RINEHART

# CUSTOM SCALE ROLLERS

## Fix damaged scale patches, back seams, belly seams, flashing seams on reproductions – SUPER EASY, QUICK AND INEXPENSIVE

An old master woodworker once told me that the best cabinet makers are the craftsmen that can finish and hide their mistakes the best. I believe that the same can be said for fish taxidermists. We all cut holes and makes mistakes once in awhile. But proper repair and finishing work can rectify our mistakes and make us master fish taxidermists. Proper repair work depends on your individual ability and the tools used.

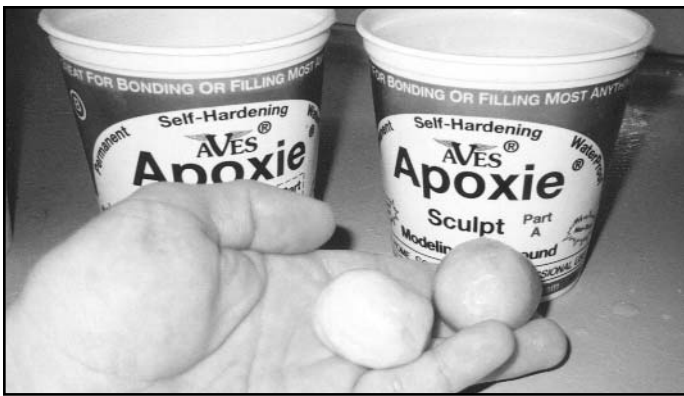
Traveling around the country and performing seminars for taxidermists allows me to hear and learn many different techniques and ideas. When I give a seminar, I usually learn as much as I teach. Taxidermy is such a wide and varied field, there is always something to learn and then incorporate into your work and make your taxidermy better. It was during my fish mounting seminar at the 2001 NTA that I learned of a very interesting scaling tool and technique. A gentleman in the front row of my seminar explained a process in which he custom-made scale rollers. His idea and technique was so simple, yet very useful. **He used a plastic 35mm film canister and Apoxie Sculpt to create custom scale rollers.** Unfortunately, I did not get the name of the gentleman or I would be glad to mention him. However, I thought the tool sounded very useful so I made some for my taxidermy studio. I'd like to share with you how I used simple and affordable materials to make my own custom scale rollers. Here's how I did it!



We will be taking an imprint of the side scales of the fish. Therefore, you will need to use a specimen with a nice scale pattern along the side. You should not use a scale pattern that has been damaged. Also, it is important that the inside of the fish remain frozen. The inside of the fish needs to remain frozen so that we can press our material against the scale pattern and achieve an imprint. If the fish is completely unfrozen, the surface skin will indent and sag as we press against the scales of the fish. The result would be an inaccurate contour on the surface of the scale roller.

The protecting slime layer of a fish makes the surface of the fish smooth and without scale definition. All slime and mucus must be removed from the area of the fish to be imprinted. Removing the protective slime layer allows use to reach and obtain an accurate impression of the scale surface.





The sculpturing material that I prefer to use is Apoxie Sculpt. This epoxy sculpturing product offers excellent impression/recreation characteristics and is easy to use. Apoxie Sculpt is mixed 50/50 by volume. Take equal amounts of part A and B.



Dip the Apoxie into warm water and start hand-mixing. The water acts as a lubricant throughout the mixing process. The material is the consistency of Play Dough and is easily mixed. However, it is very important to mix this material thoroughly as the parts will not catalyze if not mixed completely. You will know when they are mixed thoroughly as the color will become uniform (without striation) and you will notice a little warming in the material.



We will be placing the Apoxie Sculpt on clear flexible plastic in preparation for rolling it onto the 35mm film canister.



Splash some water onto the plastic to act as a release agent for the Apoxie Sculpt.

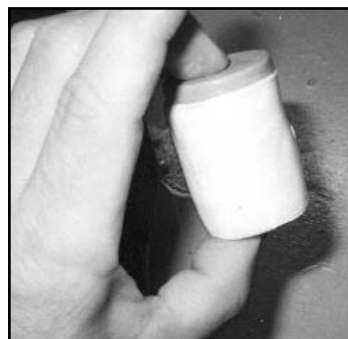
Now take the mixed Apoxie Sculpt and form an elongated strip of sculpturing material approximately 1/8-in. thick. Note: there is water between the plastic and Apoxie Sculpt that will enable us to roll the Apoxie onto the plastic 35mm film canister.



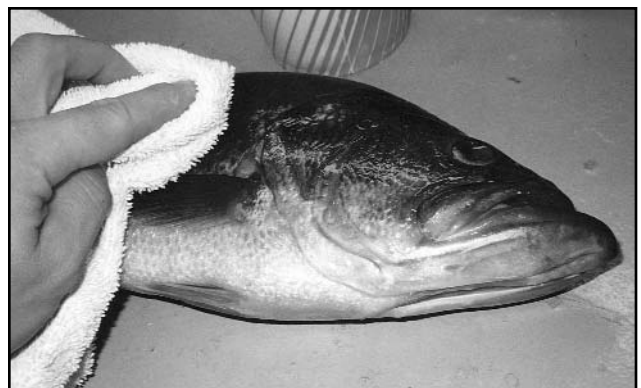
Make sure that your film canister is dry. The Apoxie will stick to the plastic better if the surface is dry. If the plastic surface is wet, the Apoxie will slip off the canister. Start rolling the Apoxie onto the canister.



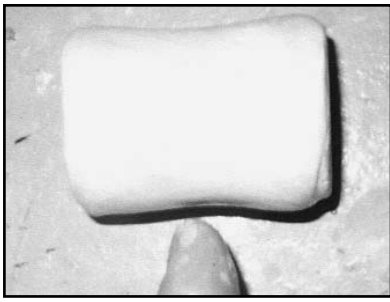
Continue rolling until you reach the point where the plastic canister is completely coated. Cut the Apoxie at the point where it meets the beginning.



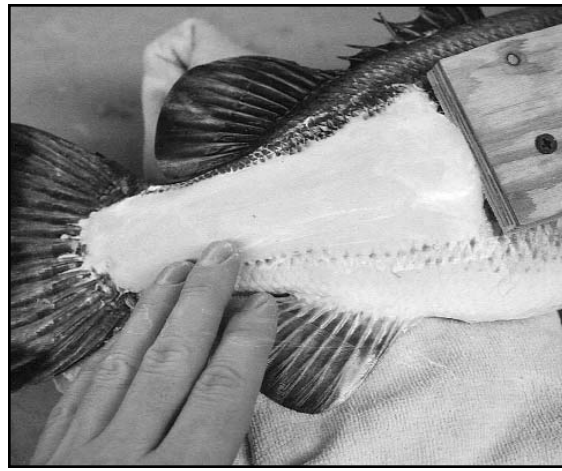
I put the cover back on the film canister so that it is easier to handle.



Now we are ready to imprint the scale texture onto the Apoxie. Wipe the fish with a towel to remove any excess moisture. Excessive moisture will decrease the detail of the scale impression. The little moisture that is naturally in the scales will act as a release agent preventing the Apoxie from sticking.



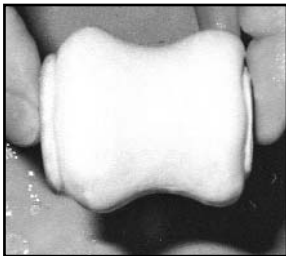
Prior to imprinting the scales on the Apoxie, I form the contour of the roller to match the curve of the side of the fish where we will be making our impression.



Let's take a look at the usefulness of our new tool. Here I have smoothed the back seam of a largemouth bass with Apoxie Sculpt. I can now use our custom scale roller to press a natural scale texture onto the Apoxie covered seam. Simply use even and constant pressure to imprint the texture from the custom roller onto the Apoxie.



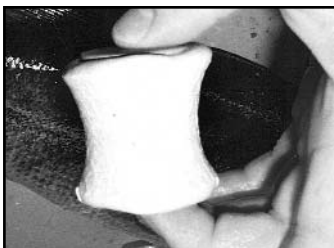
Finally, I carefully roll the Apoxie roller over the side of the fish. You must be even with your pressure and prevent the Apoxie roller from slipping while you are rolling. Roll until scale detail covers the entire surface of the Apoxie. Note: Scales on fish such as smallmouth bass and largemouth bass do not have an extremely profound texture and profile. Therefore, the impression of the scale surface will be subtle. This is perfectly acceptable as scales do not protrude excessively from the body.



If you are making scale impressions along a more curved surface such as the belly of a fish, you will need to increase the curve-profile of your Apoxie. Here I have the Apoxie formed to capture the scale texture of the belly of a Largemouth Bass.



Again, roll the Apoxie roller with even and continuous pressure. Stop when you have reached where your impressions started.



And here it is! A customized scale roller for the belly of a largemouth bass. Let the Apoxie harden and then you will be able to start using your new tool.

Making your own customer scale rollers to texture Apoxied areas will increase the quality of your work and decrease the time needed to finish your fish. I suggest that it would be useful to make many different scale rollers for various sized fish and scale textures. Making your own customer scale rollers is cheap and provides a natural scale texture. I hope you have found this article to be informative and useful. Until next time, enjoy your taxidermy work and keep it accurate and profitable! •