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New Web site sinks its hook into the rod-and-reel crowd

By COLLEEN STEFFEN

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There's one thing avid fishermen might like just as much as the mingled excitement and relaxation of fishing.

That's telling other avid fishermen about the gigantic fish they just caught.

Now along comes a clever Canadian entrepreneur to bring those two sides of a beloved hobby together — the peaceful enjoying-solitude-in-nature part and the bragging-to-good-ol'-fishing buddies part.

Richard Shafter launched BountyFishing.com three months ago with forums for fishermen to discuss their favorite tackle; blogs and articles on everything from proper catch-and-release techniques to kooky fish you're not likely to see in the White River; space to post photos from your latest fishing adventure; and more.

But perhaps the biggest draw: a unique ongoing fishing tournament that allows fishermen to compete against one another from any body of water — and for cash prizes. Hundreds have taken part in the tournament so far, and 2,600 people have become site members.

“(Fishing) is primal. It's therapeutic. It's been around forever. It triggers something within us,” says Shafter. “I love to fish, but compared to the people taking part ...”

Well, the people taking part really love to fish — one has only to peruse the gallery of classic fisherman-with-fish photos on the Web site, where the fish are different types and sizes, but the smiles on the catchers' faces are pretty much the same. Lucky for the former real-estate developer based in Montreal, Shafter recognized those guys for what they are — an enthusiastic, underserved group that has turned his site into a full-time job and a major enterprise in less than a year.

“It can be looked at as the Facebook of fishing,” says Shafter. And that doesn't seem like a total fish tale.
