



Fishing History

Keith Bell

Heddon Firetail Sonic



Heddon Firetail Sonic 1958 catalog insert advertisement.

If you have ever fished with Dad or Grandpa's tacklebox, you have probably fished or at least seen a Heddon Sonic before. The small bait was a huge hit for Heddon and sold in the tens of millions, in almost every color imaginable. To this day, fishermen and collectors search for these baits to take back out on the water or add to their collections. One could probably write an entire book on all the color variations on the Heddon Sonic made throughout the years. It came in three sizes, small (Ultra Sonic), normal (Sonic) and large (Super Sonic). While the normal size Sonic was the best seller, all were very popular. Have you ever seen a Firetail Sonic, though?

Firetail Sonic

In 1956, Heddon came out with two new lures called the "Sonic" (#385) and the "Super Sonic" (#9385). The lures were so called because of a "vibrator fin" which,



Firetail Sonic in Shad color with box.

according to Heddon, "controlled the frequency of vibration," thereby creating a "sound" that fish would respond to. They were, "The lures that broke the sound

barrier!" Two years later, in 1958, the next of the Sonic series of baits was released: the Firetail Sonic, Heddon series #395.

The Firetail Sonic is a sinking lure weighing 3/8-ounce, a length of 3 1/4 inches, and two treble hooks—one on the body below the lip, and the other at the end of the "firetail." The body is the same as the #385 Sonic, only with a tail attached.

Besides having the same "vibrator fin" as the other Sonics, the Firetail had a transparent, red plastic tail attached at the back which Heddon referred to as being made of "Flame-Glo Tenite." The claim was that this material had the property of being able to, "...convert invisible ultraviolet rays into visible rays. This can be seen by fish at amazing distances." Hard to believe such a claim would be allowed today.

The 1958 Firetail Sonic advertisement shown with this article was a card insert in the catalog, not part of the regular catalog pages.

While never nearly as popular as the rest of the Sonic line, the Firetail Sonic hung around through 1976. By 1977, only its cousins, the Sonic, Super Sonic and Ultra Sonic remained in production.

One interesting fact about the "firetail" was that in 1981, five years after production of the Firetail Sonic ceased, Heddon again used that very same tail on a Tadpolly, calling it a Jointed Tadpolly, series #9015. It was produced for only three years, as it was last cataloged in 1984. Based on the slow sales of the Firetail Sonic, along with personal experience fishing Tadpollies and Jointed Tadpollies, I assume it was an attempt to recycle extra factory parts more than anything.

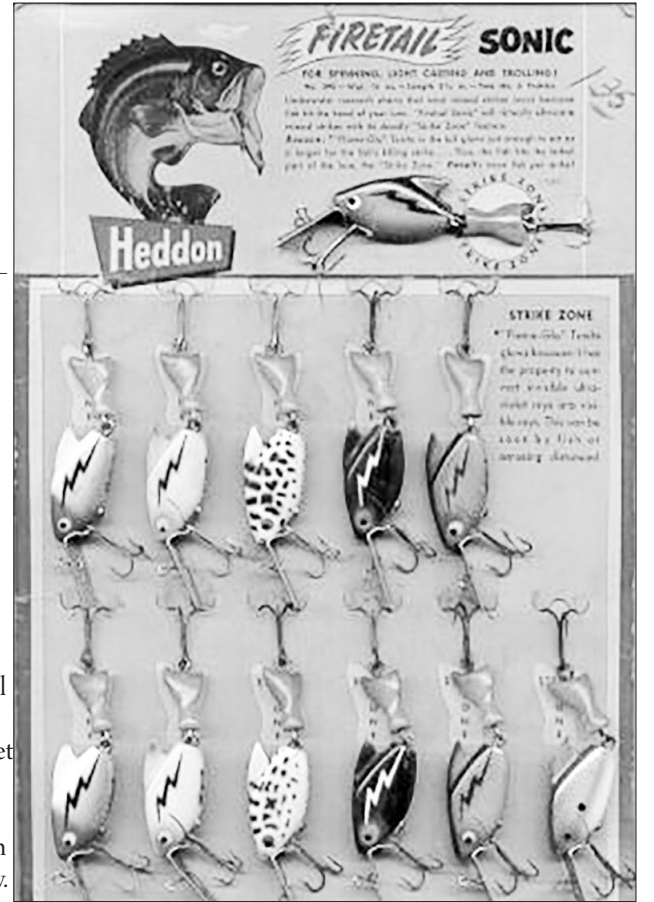
As with other Heddon lures, the Firetail Sonic was copied by other manufacturers, most notably Atlantic Lures of Providence, Rhode Island. They made a copy called the Flashtail, series #830. In their 1969 catalog, Atlantic Lures advertised it as the "Arch Foe of Tackle Busters. For thrilling excitement beyond reason, 'Flashtail,' with its famous 'Fire-Glo' teasing tail, is the lure for the trophy hunter!" Atlantic also had another lure listed in the 1969 catalog with this same tail called the "Flat-Tail" series #877 (spinning size) and #878 (spin-cast size).

Colors and packaging

The Firetail Sonic is marked on the bottom "HEDDON FIRETAIL SONIC." It was initially made in six colors: Black (B), Coach Dog (CD), Perch (L), White, Red Head (RH), Shad (SD) and Yellow (Y). They originally had gold or yellow eyes. In 1962, when the company became Daisy-Heddon, the eye color changed to white, creating a new line of variation for the color collector.

One of the interesting notes to the Firetail Sonic is that the colors it was made in never changed throughout most of its manufacturing life, and it wasn't until the early 1970s that any changes were made. At this time, two colors were eliminated (Black and Coach Dog). Strangely, perhaps, the other Sonic lures were made in a wide variety of colors during the same period. Due to this, collectors should be aware that fraudulent Firetail Sonics have been found which are actually regular Sonics with the firetail attached. Collectors should confirm that the belly printing reads "HEDDON FIRETAIL SONIC."

The only four, confirmed known



Heddon dealer display of Firetail Sonics.



A 1958 ad for Heddon Firetail Sonic.

uncatalogued colors to date are Yellow Coach Dog (series #395YCD), Spotted Orange (series #395SO), Crystal Rainbow (series #395SCR) and Gold Spot (series #395GLDS). Surely there are more, though.

Collector's value

A Heddon Firetail Sonic in excellent condition without the box sells for about \$10 to \$15. With the matching box, in excellent condition, the price jumps to around \$20 to \$30. It's still a reasonable vintage bait to get you started on a nice collection. Uncatalogued colors would be around double these prices—maybe a little more.

MWO

Keith Bell and his family live in Neenah, Wisconsin but spend a lot of time fishing northern Wisconsin. Keith has been an avid angler and outdoorsman his entire life. His passion for fishing is matched only by his passion for fishing history and preservation. He is the founder and owner of MyBaitShop.com, the world's largest online vintage tackle and history website. You can reach Keith at his website or at keith.bell@mybaitshop.com



Firetail Sonic in Yellow color.

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