

**ODU Magazine**

# ICE FISHING

Proven Crappie and  
Bluegill Patterns

*Ice Fishing Lake  
Simcoe*

*Late Ice Carp Tactics  
Ice Trolling For Bass  
Gearing Up for the Ice*

*Hawg Calling  
Walleye*



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One of the craziest fishing adventures that I ever experienced was a few years ago with a long-time friend of mine Ed Harp. The total adventure is a story in its self, so for this note I will give you a very abbreviated version. Karl Kalonka (Extreme Angler) invited both Ed and I to Canada for a little small mouth fishing

before the weather got nasty, and we would have to resort to ice fishing. Ed and I started our adventure by stopping by and touring the "Picasso" manufacturing facility just outside of Indiana, Pa and headed north.

The weather was perfect as we departed for the north. The farther north we drove the more the weather changed and not for the better. We went from a beautiful sunny day to a little sprinkle to the combination rain and snow. When we arrived at our destination, the rain/snow had changed to snow a lite snow but snow, nonetheless. Which was no big deal until we awoke the next morning to about six inches of snow which to say the least we had not anticipated?

However, guess what, fish were still biting in the middle of a snowstorm. Apparently, they are oblivious to what Mother Nature is throwing at us and really don't care. We ended up that day with over 12" of snow on the ground in fishing in one of the earliest and largest snowfalls of the season. We even made the six o'clock news. A local TV crew was waiting at the boat ramp for our return. They just had to interview those crazy fishermen who were out fishing in the first snowstorm of the season. The moral of this story is being prepared and plan ahead. Thank god Ed and I were prepared for this adventure would never have occurred.

Please enjoy the Outdoors and take a kid fishing.

Larry Thornhill  
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Jan 7	VT Sportsman / Dillenbech	Lk. Champlain, VT
Jan 8	NE Ice Tour / Beechwood	Tioga County, PA
Jan 14	Mobridge Walleye Tourney	Mobridge, SD
Jan 8	NAIFC / Pelican	Pelican Lake, MN
Jan 16	NAIFC / Hamlin	Hamlin Lake, MI
Jan 16	NE Ice Tour Event	Tioga County, PA
Jan 20 - 22	River City Expo	Council Bluffs, IA
Jan 20 - 22	NEFGA Refuge Gathering	Valentine, NE
Jan 21- 22	Rifle Gap Ice Tournament	Rifle, CO
Jan 21	Webelos on Fish Lake	Maple Grove, MN
Jan 21	Brainerd Jaycees Pre-Party	Brainerd, MN
Jan 22	Jaycees Ice Extravaganza	Brainerd, MN
Jan 22	NE Ice Tour / Oneida	Oneida, NY
Jan 22	NAIFC / Jarvis	Lake Jarvis, SD
Jan 26	True Ice / Marindahl	South Dakota
Jan 27	Winterfest Ice Bash	Council Bluffs, IA
Jan 28	Girl Scout Ice Fishing	Maple Grove, MN
Jan 28	Big Creek Ice Bash	Des Moines, IA
Jan 29	Big Creek Hardwater Open	Ankeny, IA
Jan 29	NE Ice Tour / Walker	Snyder County
Feb 4	DM Winter Games Ice Bash	Des Moines, IA
Feb 5	DM Winter Games Derby	Des Moines, IA
Feb 4	Lake Thompson Ice Derby	Kingsbury Cnty, SD
Feb 4	Wildlife Club Derby	Chadron, NE
Feb 4	Holes for Heroes	Plymouth, MN
Feb 4	Victor Ice Benefit	Victor, IA
Feb 4	VT Sportsman	Lk Champlain, VT
Feb 5	NAIFC / Hebgen	Hebgen Lake, MT
Feb 5	NE Ice Tour / Kahle Lake	Clarion County, PA
Feb 5	Jakes Youth Ice Derby	Humboldt, SD
Feb 12	NE Ice Tour / Silver Lake	Wyoming Cty, NY
Feb 13	Wissota Winter Classic	Chippewa Falls, WI
Feb 17 - 18	Ice Roads / Lake Trout	Bayfield, WI
Feb 18	Brownies on Fish Lake	Maple Grove MN
Feb 18 (TBD)	Parks & Rec Youth Derby	St. Paul, MN
Feb 18	Woldford Mountain Derby	Kremmling, CO
Feb 19	NAIFC Event / Long Lake	Sioux Falls, SD
Feb 19	Fountain Lake Derby	Albert Lea, MN
Feb 19	NE Ice Tour / Lily Lake	Luzerne Cnty, PA
Feb 25	Jakes Youth Ice Derby	Humboldt, SD
Mar 2-4	Ice Roads School - Panfish	Detroit Lakes, MN
Mar 3	VT Sportsman / Larabees	Lake Champlain, VT
Mar 4	NE Ice Tour / Bomoseen	Castleton, VT
Mar 10th	VT Sportsman - Dillenbech	Lake Champlain, VT

Schedule subject to change. For an up-to-date schedule including even more ice fishing events please visit [www.RecycledFish.org/OnIce](http://www.RecycledFish.org/OnIce)



# The Spot Off The Spot

By Bob Bohland



I have always been a big proponent of finding your own spots to fish on a lake. The advantages of exploring new ground are numerous; including being able to fish unpressured fish, finding new secret spots, and having a little bit of privacy on the lake. There are, however, some occasions where it is beneficial to fish near the crowd. On many smaller lakes there really isn't any way to get around fishing near the crowd, and even on some of the bigger lakes, there may only be a few small pieces of structure available that will hold fish. So when you can't get away from the crowd, use the crowd to your advantage.

The first step to take when you find yourself stuck near a crowd of "sheeple" (so named because they seem to enjoy herding up onto small areas on a lake), is to look at a good lake map. Crowds generally set up over deep holes where inactive fish will suspend thinking that a lot of fish on their

flasher means they are going to catch a lot of fish. The problem with this is that when you are stacked up with a large group of people, fish get wise to seeing the same lures presented the same way and often get turned off by the commotion caused by the sheeple above them.

The trick to catching fish near these groups is to use bait that is totally different than what the other anglers are fishing. I generally upsize in these instances, but just going from a wax worm to a minnow is not enough. Grab a big aggressive search bait like the Lindy Darter, the flash from the holographic bait fish patterns will give the fish a totally different look than they are seeing from the masses drowning wax worms on small teardrop jigs. The internal rattles on the bait will also call the aggressive fish in from a distance, something a wax worm just can't seem to do.

Often times these groups will be set up on basins that have very good mid-depth flats near them that often remain overlooked. When you can find one of these mid-depth flats that has a fair amount of green weeds it will hold a lot more active fish than the schools the crowds are parked over. The reason for this is two-fold.







One, the fish will be pushed onto these flats by the commotion caused by the crowds; and two, the green

weeds on these flats will hold baitfish and aquatic insects. When I talk about baitfish, I am not only talking about small minnows in the lake. Many anglers don't seem to understand how much panfish, especially big crappies, will feed on young of the year bluegills and perch, so two of my favorite colors are the chartreuse perch and bluegill patterns of the Darter.

Another very effective way to fish crowds is to 'edge' the group. Edging involves drilling holes around large groups of fisherman. It works because the commotion caused by the group, everything from generators to pickup trucks to people just out there to party will push the fish out from underneath the crowd. There really isn't a set distance for doing this, and it can vary from 10 feet from the crowd to 100 yards, so don't be afraid to drill a lot of holes. A good auger is a must, and it can often mean the difference between a bad day on the ice and actually finding active fish. The Strikemaster Solo is my first pick; it will out drill anything else on the market and is light enough to make a day of drilling holes nothing but a minor affair. I often get a little overboard with mine because it makes drilling holes actually fun. I like to consider groups of fish houses as another form of structure. If you use the crowds properly, you can look at a group and be able to tell which way the fish will move due to the commotion. Next time you head out on the ice don't automatically shy away from the crowds, there can be some great fishing to be had in those areas.





## **Ice Fishing Lake Simcoe .... an introduction to Canada's premier Ice Fishery**

**By Wil Wegman**

As we headed out for the umpteenth time to fish the frozen waters of Lake Simcoe, the excitement was still just as infectious as it was at the start of the season. "Hey dad ... Do you think they're gonna be closer to bottom with this cold front or still suspended and chasing minnows up higher", my son Izaak asks as we walk out that cold and frigid morning. "Likely near bottom but let's watch our Ice Machine's carefully to see if any are up higher. Maybe we'll get another 14 pounder that way like the one you got last week." I reply. We both smile in anticipation and quicken our pace. Twenty minutes later or a mile or so out from shore, we're ready to set up.



Twenty minutes later or a mile or so out from shore, we're ready to set up.

### **Ice Fishing Capital of Canada**

When you have confidence or even reasonable expectations that your outing will be a success, then getting pumped for another day on the hard water is never an issue ... Of course reaching that confidence level comes with experience and a willingness to adapt and keep learning ... for those fortunate enough to live close to Lake Simcoe, one hour north of Toronto Ontario, the opportunities are exceptional because of the phenomenal wintry



fishery that this giant lake provides. For thousands of others however, Simcoe has become a go-to destination several times every winter. This, my first article for the magazine, I am proud to introduce you to my Home Lake and hope the following overview helps entice you to give it a try this winter.

Lake Simcoe has long been recognized as one of the finest winter fisheries in all of North America. It is the most intensively fished Inland Lake in the province but at 280 square miles, she is also the sixth largest (out of ¼ million lakes) we have outside of the Great Lakes. Ironically enough she sees more anglers enjoying her splendor during the winter than all other seasons combined. During a good old-fashioned winter there can be 3-4,000 ice huts on the lake; many of which are parts of commercial operations run by local businesses. In recent years many anglers prefer to fish on their own-without a permanent hut; opting for a portable or even open ice experience instead.



Simcoe attracts visiting anglers from across south-central Ontario and many neighboring states like Michigan and New York. Visitor and day-trip anglers spend millions of dollars in our local communities every year and are an integral component of local economies. Regardless of where they live, hard-core ice anglers return to Lake Simcoe for the quality and quantity of fish available, year after year. The lake also played host to the World Ice Fishing Championships in 1992 and has since been the site of the Canadian Ice fishing Championships and many other hard water events.

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target these deepwater fish. The good news is that there are increasing numbers of natural or wild Lakers, and whities present for hardwater enthusiasts- which speaks volumes for the lake's health and productivity.

Lakers's average 4-7 lbs and can be caught with a variety of lures.... the large HT Quiver Spoon and a white Trigger X tube jig combos. However, are two of my top choices. Whitefish came in at 4-5-pound range, but many bigger ones exist. The lake record is just a tad shy of the all-time world record – a 14.77 pounder caught from nearby Wiarton Harbour in Lake Huron. Whities are often in the same deep waters as Lakers, but closer to bottom and a Rapala Jigging Rap or HT Chatter spoon can get these tasty fish going.

The prolific yellow perch definitely doesn't require any stocking and are still the most sought-after species during the hard water season on Simcoe. And, it's no wonder; as the lake offers both quantity and quality perch. The lake record is just a touch under the provincial record of 2.42 lbs. A few years ago In Fisherman magazine declared Simcoe as the only real-world class perch fishery remaining in North

America! Top producing lures include HT's Marmoska or alien jigs tipped with a small Trigger X Minnow or their new biodegradable maggots. Of tipping your favorite jigs or small spoons with the real thing also works wonders.

Hard fighting northern pike reproduce on their own as well but are more elusive and a little more difficult to catch during the winter. I usually fish for them near my favorite perch grounds – fishing for perch with an ultra-light rod and setting up HT's polar or windlass tip ups nearby with a live or dead sucker or chub near the bottom in another hole.

Walleye is not as common as large trophy sized specimens (over 10 pounds) do show up



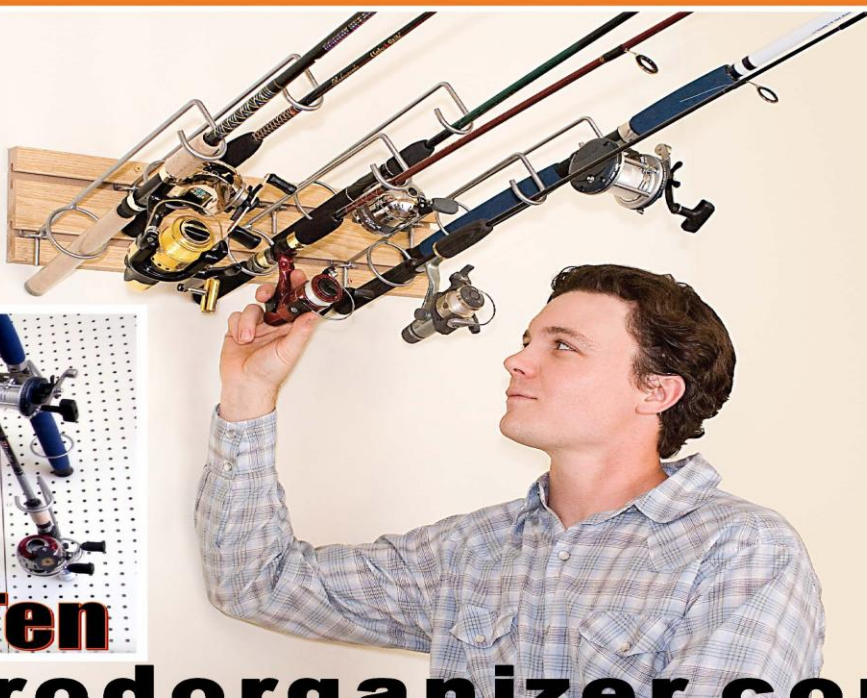




periodically as an bonus below anglers' holes while fishing for one of the other more popular species in the lake.

Have a great ice fishing season everyone and remember ... safety first! Always check with a local ice hut operator for ice thickness if you aren't sure and when in doubt – stay off! For more details on accommodations, licenses, bait and tackle shops, ice hut operators and more, check out the Simcoe section of [www.luresandtours.com](http://www.luresandtours.com).

Wil Wegman is a prolific hard water angler and outdoor writer from Bradford Ontario Canada. He hosts seminars on ice fishing across Ontario and enjoys competing in tournaments each winter. You can reach Wil through his Focus On Fishing. website at [www.wilwegman.com](http://www.wilwegman.com)



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# The Tuition of Cameras

By Jason Mitchell



The education we get from being able to watch our presentation and watching how fish respond is invaluable. Having the mental picture of how the presentation or lure looks in the water, how the fish approach the lure and what actions caused particular reactions from the fish sets some anglers apart. Anglers who have this education have a huge advantage. There are several ways to get this education. When I was a kid, I would lay on the ice with my jacket pulled over my head, so I could look

down the hole. I would lie on the ice mesmerized until I was so wet and cold that my body started to have a tingly burning sensation.

On some water, the visibility is such where anglers can look down the hole and watch fish, watch the presentation. Spear houses, dark houses and even portable Fish Traps with dark enough fabric to block out light enable anglers to peer into the underwater world below. Many kids who grew up in northern Minnesota, for example, can recall staring in wonder down a spear hole as fish swam by. Spending this time staring underwater no doubt makes an angler more adept at how fish behave. Having the mental picture helps us put all the pieces together regarding location, bottom compositions, weed varieties, fish movements and finally, how fish approach and react to a presentation.

There are many fisheries and parts of the Country where good visibility allows for anglers to “sight fish.” By using a dark house, anglers can look down the hole and watch fish. Fishing



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successfully in ultra clear water takes a few adjustments, for example, many anglers will wear dark clothing so that they blend in with the inside of their dark houses, so they aren't as likely to spook fish. Some anglers also leave some slush in the hole to mask movement. Some anglers like to drill larger holes, specifically for sight fishing so that they can see to the sides much further. While anglers typically watch the fish, many anglers will still use a Vexilar as an early warning as fish will often

show up on the Vexilar before you can see them below the hole. The real beauty of sight fishing, however, is the education regarding the nuts and bolts of your presentation.

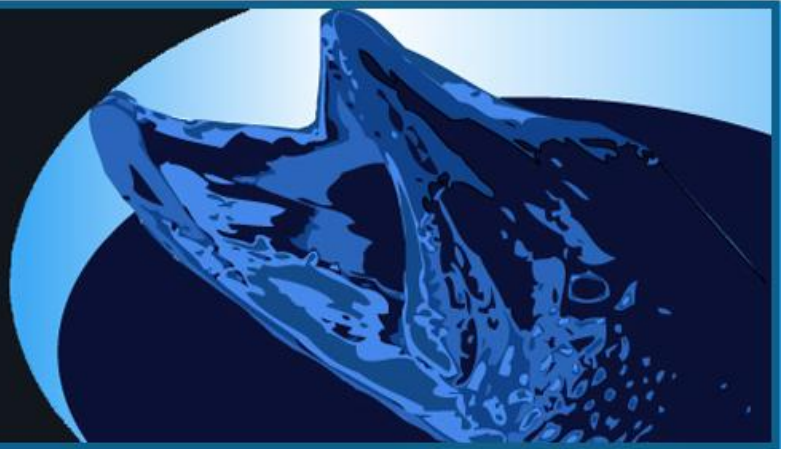
Line twist, memory and the wrong jigging motion can keep finicky panfish from sucking in a jig. By being able to watch the motion or rocking on the jig that is necessary to eliminate lure spin and being able to watch how fish respond, positioning themselves inches from the hook and ultimately eating the jig. This education serves anglers very well. In fact, I dare say that this education has created some of the best panfish ice anglers I have ever met or fished with. What an underwater camera does is allow you to buy this education. What you will learn about how fish eat and how a fish move by using an underwater camera is invaluable. I believe this information can make you a better angler. There is a lot of bad information.

However, about how to use underwater cameras effectively. There has also been a negative stereotype regarding the durability of underwater cameras. To be fair, many of the





# 2012 LVVA ICE FISHING DERBY



underwater cameras on the market have been low quality price point cameras. In a nutshell, the ice-fishing industry took monitors and lenses from other industries and tried to package these components into a waterproof housing at the cheapest possible price point. The result was equipment that seldom lasted more than a year or two. The underwater cameras that are available today from Vexilar are a horse of a different color in that they are dependable and are of much higher quality for today's demanding ice angler. In fact, the Vexilar Scout is the only camera specifically designed for underwater use where the focal point on the lens has been adjusted for the distortion of water, thus the picture quality is greatly enhanced.

There are, however, many myths about underwater cameras. For cameras to work, you still have to have good water visibility and a combination of good natural light. Most cameras have lights on the lens but for actual fishing applications, I see fewer fish (walleye, pike, perch, panfish) when the lights are on. Murky, turbid or stained water also makes underwater cameras ineffective. The most notable example of stained water not being conducive for underwater cameras is Lake of the Woods. Even shallow water that is turbid is not very good conditions for cameras. Now there are situations where you might be able to see a foot or two underwater but typically, you need better visibility preferably seven to twenty feet for cameras to shine. Why do you need such good visibility? Because the further away you can put your lens from your presentation, the more functional cameras become.

For panfish, down viewing where the lens is pointed straight down and fished down the same hole in which you are fishing is a very effective and functional technique. This down viewing technique shines with panfish because panfish can be reeled right up the cord. With heavier fish, down viewing is not as effective because they tangle up the cord so if you are targeting walleyes or larger fish, you will have to drill a second hole and point the camera lens at your presentation.

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The advantage of down viewing is efficiency. You can fish with one hole, and you can almost immediately find your lure as you don't have to twist or turn the camera lens. The higher you can hang the camera lens above the zone where you are fishing, the better as you can see a much wider or larger area below. Optimum height above your jigging area is five to seven feet. What I have found when I have to drop the lens closer to the bottom is that the area I am looking at shrinks but also as the lens gets closer to the bottom, many fish become hesitant to swim right below the lens. They will swim up and peck at it but it becomes difficult to get fish to swim right below.

This phenomenon becomes really apparent as the sun gets low and visibility drops, and the camera lens has to get inched closer to the bottom in order to see your jig as the water darkens.



With walleyes in particular, it is important to hang the lens far enough away where you don't tangle with the cord. For horsing fish up or away from the cord, I like to use a braided line like Northland's Bionic Braid, and we often use a fluorocarbon leader. This



combination is tough and effective. For viewing, cameras often work best if they are used inside a shelter or at least shaded somehow from the sun. For fishing outside, what often works the best is to use the black-and-white mode and turning up the contrast.

One of the biggest lesson's cameras will teach you is that fish often hit the wrong end of a jig or spoon, and that you can actually turn the hook towards the fish as they approach. You can also swing at fish that suck in the jig but don't move a spring bobber or signal any type of strike. On really tough bites, anglers using cameras can pick off fish when nobody else is catching. Cameras also enable you to sort through the size of fish where you can play keep away with smaller fish.

No doubt there is a time and place for hunkering down over fish, rolling up your sleeves and using the detail a camera can show you to figure out difficult fish. Obviously, not every fishing situation is conducive for underwater cameras, but I do believe that when you don't or can't use a camera, the lessons learned will continue to serve you well. Underwater cameras can really compliment modern sonar systems like the Vexilar flashers.

The author, Jason Mitchell is credited with pioneering many modern ice fishing methods and techniques and earned a renowned reputation as an ice-fishing guide before hosting the television show, [Jason Mitchell Outdoors](#) which airs on Fox Sports Net North at 9:30 am Sunday mornings and Fox Sports Net Midwest at 8:30 am Saturday morning





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# Hook Set Tip Up

## FLAG UP...FISH ON!!!

**You Already Missed The Best Time To Set The Hook!**

**By Ben Scherg**

If you want to start an argument between ice-fishermen who use tip-ups, all you have to do is ask one simple question.

“When is the best time to set the hook?”

I asked this question in a bar last season and started a debate that lasted about an hour and got so heated at one point that two guys needed to be separated, and a few others left the bar. I didn't want it to go quite that far, but it did help me illustrate a point. Everyone out on the ice thinks they are fishing the best way and setting the hook at the best possible time

When you use tip-ups, regardless of the species and regardless of the techniques you use, one thing is for certain, you are going to miss a lot of fish. If you truly keep track of every single flag that goes up, and every single fish that comes through the hole, you may be amazed to find that the best of us are around 33 to 40% successful. That's right; you will typically catch about 2 out of every 5 fish that set off your flags at best! I've had people tell me they are better, but nobody has ever been able to prove it consistently. The best I've seen in one full day is 60% and the worst I've seen is a big goose egg.

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I'm about to make a bold statement that I will then prove is absolutely true beyond any argument. Nobody who uses conventional tip-ups sets the hook at the best possible time. Not the people that get there and set it when the reel starts spinning and not the people that wait 5 or 10 minutes and then set it after the bait is swallowed. Nobody who uses conventional tip-ups sets the hook at the best time. That one fact is the reason why the best you will achieve is 33 to 40% regardless of whether you use the top of the line big company tip-ups or the \$2.99 wood disposables we all used as kids.

Now for the explanation. The best time to set the hook involves 3 factors.

- #1 The fish has the bait in its mouth.
- #2 The line is perfectly tight.
- #3 The fish is swimming directly away from the force of the pull when you set the hook.

Those three factors all together at once make for the best possible moment to

set the hook. The problem is, the only time those three factors are ever present, is at the first moment when the fish secures your bait, pulls out line and swims away from your hole. Once they are gone from that spot, they can change direction, spit the bait, let the line go slack, wrap it around weeds, swim back toward the hole when you pull, or any other combination of things that leave you hoping rather than hooking and cursing rather than catching.

So when should an ice-fisherman set the hook on a tip-up? They should set the hook immediately when the flag goes up!

I know, I know, I know. It's impossible. There's no way you can be there exactly when the flag goes up to pull back on the line and set the hook. After





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all, most states allow more than one line and simple reaction time and distance make that impossible. Impossible that is, unless the tip-up can do it for you!

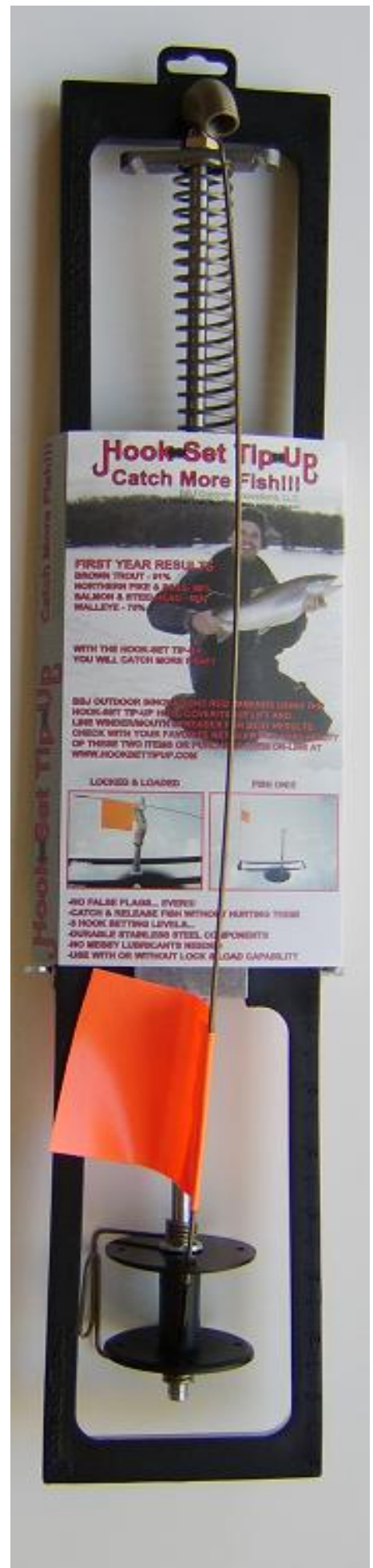
My name is Ben Scherg and I invented the Hook-Set Tip-Up. For 4 years now, the Hook-Set Tip-Up has been on the market. The first year it came out, I received a lot of phone calls from people that told me it wouldn't work. Most of them came in from the guys that believe you have to let the fish swallow the bait and give them time before setting the hook. So I fished with many of them. And at the end of those trips, the best of them was successful only half as often as I was, or I should say, only half as often as the Hook-Set Tip-Up was.

Let me say this, I'm no better at ice fishing than any of you. I came up with this idea on a day when I went 2 for 20! That's right! 20 flags in one day and only two fish on the ice. I knew something had to work better. There had to be a way to catch those fish that bite and drop it, or even those that get spooked when you get to the hole and try to spit your bait before you set the hook. I decided that I just wasn't going to give them the option or the time to spit that hook. Once they pull, they're hooked and that's all there is to it.

After years of testing the Hook-Set Tip-Up myself I handed it over to the public. It only took 2 years for the calls to all but stop from those people who don't believe it works. The calls I get now are mostly from people that can't believe how well it works! Remember the 33 to 40% that you can expect as your best season with all the other tip-ups on the market? 60% is the worst day I've ever experienced with mine and a typical season or trip on the ice is closer to 80 and even 90%! That's right 8 or 9 out of 10 fish come through the hole. It doesn't matter if you're going for Walleye, Salmon, Brown Trout, Northern or Bass. One of the best things about this tip-up is that it simply doesn't allow most fish to swallow the bait so you can catch and release fish and allow them to bite and fight another day rather than killing them with a treble hook to the gullet!

If you haven't tried one yet, visit my website at [www.hooksettipup.com](http://www.hooksettipup.com) and read more about what you've been missing. Then visit your favorite retailer and become one of the thousands of people out there that have experienced the difference. Hook-Set Tip-Up...Flag Up...Fish On!!!

Good luck on the ice.





# Hawg Calling

By Craig Stapon



In Canada, specifically here in Manitoba, we call it "Hawg Calling". About 6 years ago I found some pretty good-looking fishing lures on line called Live Target. I brought them in and was the first to sell them in Winnipeg. We really like the color of a couple of the lipless baits and decided to give them a short ice fishing on Lake Winnipeg. Between a few of my friend, we began to experiment using the baits...To our surprise the big walleye would appear out of know where and smash our baits. As we got better, we figured out how to use them in all conditions.

Soon, the word was spreading like wild fire, and many of the locals were using the lipless shad with great success on the lake. Sales of all bass Rattlers went through the roof, and soon retailers had none as they were not prepared for the increased demand for that type of lure.

Refinement was the key and with experimentation, we found that sometimes the bait would produce better when tipped with a minnow. So we would put the head of the minnow on the front treble and the tail on the rear.....Wow did this ever work well!

As time went on, we found out, we could literally call in the big walleyes by rippin the bait as aggressively as we could, in fact, we would often let the bait smash on the bottom, and few times then continue to rip it up! The walleye would hear the noise and come in order to investigate. Then they would smash the rattler or go and suspend by the dead stick with a jig and a minnow presentation. Up here on Lake Winnipeg is doesn't seem to matter if you use live minnows or plain salties as we call them. In fact, the old salties often will out produce a live



bait presentation.



So here we figured out that the walleyes will smack this unconventional method of ripping the bait tipped with a minnow. We took it a step farther...We started to use Pro-Cure scent on our baits. We would cover the rattle

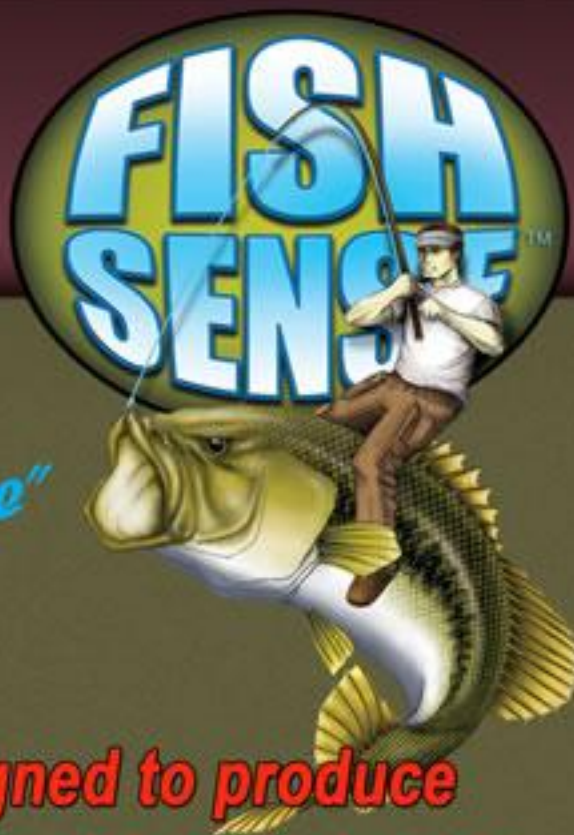
traps with Pro-Cure and soon discovered that the catch ratio and success rate went through the roof. Our groups of dedicated ice anglers were catching more fish than anyone on the Lake. Even on slow days we were out fishing most parties! We knew that we were on something special. Just as a secret spot becomes a community spot it did not take long for the tactics to spread like wild fire. We brought a group of hard core anglers up from Fargo/Moorhead and caught 1,000 walleye in a two-day period. The technique was being used by all with everyone enjoying great success.


Soon, we had several different TV shows calling us wanting some guidance on how to fish the lake. We opened our arms and shared with the world the new method of Lake Winnipeg Hawg calling! Between the internet and the TV shows, there is not an angler who does not





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use this method...All I can say is try it on your local body of water, and you will be surprised at the results.

For those of you, that fish with braid, tie a floro leader of about 2 feet. Most of our fishing is done from 6-20 feet on the lake. As I said earlier, always set up a dead stick as there are some days you will call the in but they prefer the motionless saltie! Watch your locator as the big red bands will appear from nowhere! Sometimes you have to work them on the flasher in order to get the strike, but this will come through trial and error.

This method is something new that has not been tried on all lakes, so you could be the first in your area to call a Hawg in.



Lake Winnipeg is a Walleye factory that has exploded in population in the last few years. Several big fish in the teen are reported every year with the lake “peaking in the last two weeks of March. We call them Greenback because of the emerald color. With the explosion of the rainbow smelt, the walleye move and follow the bait gouging all year. Open water fishing can be as good as ice fishing with Pine Falls and the Red River truly establishing themselves as world-class fisheries. Perhaps the best TV footage on the lake was done by Adventures North a local Manitoba film production. He captured the Lakes majestic quality and really showed how to ice some “eyes”. Folks if you have not fished this body of water, you need to. Get a hold of me and we can arrange a trip. Until next time....”keep your lines tight”.



# ANNUAL NEW YORK STATE CRAPPIE DERBY

## Almost-Annual New York State Crappie Derby

The New York State Crappie Derby was founded in 1974 and has been conducted almost every year since. There have been a total of eight years that we did not have the derby due to insufficient ice to support a safe event for our many participants. We have had as many as eight thousand people in attendance in the past and have averaged over four thousand in our more recent years. Our total purse is in the thousands of dollars in cash, merchandise and gift certificates. The purse has exceeded \$10,000 six of the last seven years. The purse (\$14,500+ in 2011) is all donated by local, regional and national sponsors. ALL of the donations are awarded at the derby each year.

The event is primarily an ice fishing event but in actuality is more like a party on the ice. The entire purse is awarded over the course of one day. A substantial portion of the purse is set aside for the kids. The event is broken up into 28 individual 15 minute 'derbies'. The largest crappie brought to the judge's booth in each fifteen minute segment is awarded a substantial prize. In addition, prizes are awarded in many other fishing and non-fishing categories during the day. This includes door prizes which do not require catching a fish. The premier event is the awarding of the first, second and third largest crappie over the entire day. This occurs at about 3:00 PM. The competition is vigorous yet friendly. It is not unusual for a youngster to be in this elite group.

We target kids and family primarily for our event. We try to have a large number of prize winners. Participation is free for those 12 and under. We have derby staff that patrols the ice seeking kids who are cold, tired or bored and find a reason to give them a prize. A substantial part of the purse is set aside for this. The last few years, we had pro staffs who were assigned by major outdoors equipment manufacturers conducting seminars for the youngsters. They also assisted families unacquainted with ice fishing by getting them setup, holes drilled, etc. Club members also assist in this effort.



The event is conducted by the Whitney Point Sportsmens Association Inc and the Broome

County Department of Parks and Recreation at Dorchester Park (a Broome County park) located on Whitney Point Lake. The WPSA plans and conducts the derby and the Parks



Department provides parking and security. The planning is well organized but the event is extremely informal for the many people who attend to enjoy the carnival atmosphere. We have, in addition to the Pro Staff seminars, the Ross Park Zoo with their “critter du Jour”, the Finch Hollow Conservation Center with exhibits and displays, the National Weather Service with a real time weather station, the Broome County Underwater Rescue Team puts on an underwater dive exhibit. Many unique events have been tried over the years. We expect a return of Ice Skating (sponsored by the

local Rotary club) with free rental skates. This year, a “polar bear plunge” is also under consideration. We have Porta Johns all over the ice for your convenience and a concession stand with plenty of chili, chowder, dogs and burgers to keep you warm and contented. The coffee and hot chocolate are just right. It is a busy environment.

I encourage you to visit our website (<http://www.crappiederby.com/>) to get a feel for our event. The website is the main source of information for the event. We receive well over 10,000 visits to our site each year even though it is typically only active in December, January and February. In 2010-11, we had over 15,000 visits. We give credit to our sponsors though the website, event signage and event announcements. This year we are looking for a sponsor for a Lifetime NYS Fishing License to an attending youngster. The sponsor will play a major role in awarding this prize. We draw participants from the majority of NYS counties and several surrounding states. We invite you to be part of the premier ice fishing event in the Northeast.

Dave Hughes, Coordinator  
[NYSCRAPPIEDERBY@AOL.COM](mailto:NYSCRAPPIEDERBY@AOL.COM),  
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# Ice Trolling For Bass

By Robert Booth

The Northeast bass fishermen is forced to hang up his tackle come late November as Ice consumes most small ponds and lakes, but just because the boat is fogged and stored for winter doesn't mean that the fish or the fishing is put on hold. Bass, especially Largemouth can be quite predictable during the ice fishing season, as a matter of fact, the fishing in terms of quality sized fish actually may even improve.

Over the past few years I have been fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to befriend and spend a lot of time fishing with James Vladyka (Fish Hounds Outdoors Guide Service). Most of our time spent together was spent focusing on patterning and catching hefty Pan fish. Jamie is a pan fish master and ice fishing guide here in Vermont



on Lake Champlain. But is well known for chasing the hot bite thru the North East. Spring and summer patterns on Lake Champlain were fairly predictable so our focus shifted towards winter ice fishing. During our time spent on the ice we started to see a trend, a relationship between our goals with the pan fish and the fact that we were experiencing some excellent bass fishing.





Our search for over sized pan fish allowed us to ice troll for bass. How is this? Well there are many factors to take into consideration; food, water temp and cover being the most important. Our search for un-pressured pan fish would often times leave us searching for healthy weed growth beneath the ice's surface. These healthy weeds providing not only cover for blue gills and crappies but also was exploding with food.

Where we found these fish, in these healthy weeds, we found bass. So obviously these bass were here for the food and cover, and perhaps the water temperature in the shallows was more pleasing but how could we catch them? Well strangely enough, the same way we caught a 10 inch Blue gill, or a fourteen inch crappie. Small Pan fish jigs such as a HT tungsten or marmooska jigs size 10-14, teamed with a Micro Plastic from Maki Plastics became just as effective as a Senko in the spring. Our Vexilars lite up like a Christmas Tree, just stacked with pan fish, when all of a sudden a large mark would appear, boom! Four pound largemouth. Time and time again we were running into more bass and better quality.

The winter months and limited weed growth allowed us to narrow down which weed beds were holding fish, unlike in the summer when most weeds are constantly growing, advantage ice season. We were able to access areas with recent weed growth easily with Vexilar's underwater camera and literally "drop shot" the bass. There was no need to worry about boat position we could walk right to the fish.

Don't let your bass fishing end with the parking of the boat, walk right to the fish and catch them. The bass are still hungry, easily predictable and for the most part very aggressive making for an excellent fight on a noodle rod. With a little research and some downsizing in presentation, you too can become and ice troller for bass.







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## Winter Foraging: The Art of Ice Fishing

By JJ Murphy

At first, there seemed to be no tension on the fishing line, but as I continued to pull, I could feel the tug of the wriggling yellow perch. Moments later the fish lay on the ice. Using a surgeon's forceps, Richie carefully removed the hook and the uneaten minnow bait. In a few hours, I'd be learning to fillet this fish. However, at that moment, the black-striped yellowish fish, with orange and golden-tipped fins provided an accent of color in the monochromatic world of ice, skeletal hardwoods and overcast skies.

When my friend Jim invited me to go ice fishing, I enthusiastically accepted this opportunity to learn a new skill. Jim loaded his sled with his tackle box, two buckets, which would also serve as seats, an ice spud for testing ice thickness, an auger - an ice drill that was taller than me,

and a small pack with water and snacks, and walked out onto a huge expanse of ice. I tagged behind him carrying my day pack with water, snacks and extra socks. The weather was ideal, windless, not as sunny as predicted, and the first mid-50-degree day in months.

As I took in the sight of this frozen wonderland, Jim attached what looked like an over-sized slotted spoon to his belt. "You're about to meet some of the best ice fishermen in the region," he said as he picked up the auger and surveyed the scene.

Jim drilled a hole in the ice with his "corkscrew" auger. He detached the skimmer from his belt and used it to clean the slush out of the six-inch-diameter hole. The ice was at least 18-inches thick. Jim reached for a short rod and reel and attached a lure called a "Swedish Pimple." He expected to catch yellow perch and bluegills, but with the possibility also of white perch, pickerel, crappie, and maybe even bass or trout. Jim lowered the four-pound fishing line into the hole until it touched bottom, then wound up the line until there was no slack. He told me that thick ice sometimes kills off the aquatic plants that attract fish. His strategy is to



start at the bottom and raise the line a few inches at a time. Some species prefer bottom and other species are found suspended just below the ice.

There was something peaceful and meditative about Jim as he waited for a sign of the fish taking the lure. Occasionally, he tugged lightly on the line, explaining that the subtle movement would attract fish. He also watched his line, since many fish barely disturb the line when taking the “bait.”

Soon after we were set up, John, Charlie and Richie arrived, each tugging a sled with more gear, including “tip-ups,” buckets wrapped in carpenter’s aprons filled with gear, and a nifty little gadget called a “fish finder” that reads the depths of the water. Sometimes it even shows the fish. John lowered the device into a hole in the ice to reveal several fish as well as some of the topographical features of the reservoir bottom. The fish finder even showed some of the aquatic vegetation that John hoped would be there.

Each man surveyed the ice as Jim had, and chose several spots to drill, many of which would be outfitted with a “tip-up”: a spring-loaded device that releases a flag when a fish has taken the bait. The tip-ups were baited with a minnow called a “shiner.”



In Sweden, ice fishing has a very long history and tradition. Our equipment and techniques have been developed and improved for generations.

We at [ProScandinavia](#) are serious and dedicated fishermen, who preferably spend our winter days out on the ice. The last 15 years we have devoted countless hours to improving techniques and equipment. All of our lures and hooks are handmade with close attention to every detail.

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All treble hooks are each carefully handmade. Each hook is like a little piece of art. The hooks have various combinations of yarn and glue to prepare you for any situation you may encounter on the ice.

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Throughout the day, the men drilled several holes circulating among them, since fish often move singly or in schools. There are also periods of greater and lesser activity during the day.

These sportsmen may be rock stars of the ice-fishing world, but they were sincerely welcoming, inviting me to try drilling (a lot more work than I realized), baiting the hook, and “jigging” (fishing with a pole). Charlie advised me to give the line a bit of a tug to “set the hook” after the fish bites, before reeling it in. The only tug I experienced was the tangled Eurasian milfoil that I hauled up.

On my first outing, I got a true appreciation of the skill and practice it takes to develop the “feel” that seems second nature to people who have been ice fishing since childhood. When all four men were jigging and the “tip-ups” were all set, the reservoir felt like Nature’s Cathedral. At one point, John, Charlie and Richie decided to fish near a downed, partially submerged tree. They should have been successful, but on this day the fish didn’t bite.

I noticed that when the fish did bite, they seemed to do so in flurries. I was impressed when Jim caught several fish in a row. He sat there, with fish flopping at his feet, focused. I

could only imagine the state of bliss that kind of “oneness with Nature” induces.

During the day, I got a good look at a pickerel, several small crappies, and one largemouth bass that had to be returned to the water, since it wasn’t bass fishing season. Along with all the coaching and learning, there were also some amazing fish stories, but one stuck in my mind.

John and Jim were fishing for large pike using six-inch yellow perch as bait. John indeed hooked a big one – but it wasn’t a fish. It was an unfortunate otter that grabbed the perch and made them think they had the biggest pike in the Adirondacks! They could do nothing but cut the line a few inches from the animal’s mouth when it was brought close to the hole.

Jim and I packed up late afternoon, but the others settled in for more fishing. We walked back through a couple of inches of slush. Jim assured me this was snow that had fallen after the reservoir froze; creating a thin layer that thaws and freezes. He was confident the ice was thick enough to support the weight of a car. All I could think of while sloshing along was “mud-lucious and puddle wonderful.”

-----  
JJ Murphy is a nature writer, blogging hiker, curriculum creator and tree-hugger in Highland Mills, NY. Visit [www.WriterByNature.com](http://www.WriterByNature.com) for information on JJ's writing services and her favorite places for gear and supplies.





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# Extending Your Ice Fishing Season

## Getting out for the Night Bite

By Nathan Krusko

The time is February and you watch the weather forecast all week hoping for good weather for your weekend outing. All is good until Thursday evening when the forecast takes a turn for the worst. High winds and heavy snows are coming and your plans to venture out on the ice on the weekend have just been halted. Snow so deep it is hard to walk, wind strong enough to push you back to your truck. To the average weekend warrior and



even the extreme ice fishing addict this is a common occurrence. Mother nature taking away yet another weekend on the ice from an already short season. We as angler cannot change the weather but we can change our habits to get more time on the ice. YES More time on the ice. You can get more time out this season than you have over the past few years combined. We are not talking taking back the weekends and getting an upper hand on nature. I am talking, take back the night.



### Getting Out

Night time ice fishing does inherently pose more obstacles than day time fishing as hazards are not as visible. Hazards such as holes or pressure heaves can be difficult to find at night and for that to be safe and successful some homework is necessary to make night fishing the best it can be. To start off know your waters. If you plan to fish at night observe the area during the day and make note of any poor ice conditions. A little caution goes a long way. By plotting a save travel route and fishing with buddies you are sure to have a grand adventure.

## What Is Waiting For You

Night fishing for most is considered to be an activity reserved for the open water months targeting smelt, bullhead and crappie. But only a select few are using this time to target these species in the winter. Crappie is a fish that is viewed by many as a prize catch. A fish that is skittish at every presentation and can be just downright hard to find for the average angler across the ice belt. They do have a weakness though. They love to feed under the cover of darkness and let down their guard being less finicky and thinking with their stomach, at times taking every presentation that comes their way.

### Discussion

To be a successful night fishermen there is a culmination of factors that have to be blended together like a recipe for an award winning fish fry. The ingredients for this are contour, food, lure selection and light. When seeking a night fishing destination seek an area that pinches down the fishes travel in seeking food. Places such as inside turns and the top of submerged points. Fishing inside turn's target the edges of weed lines, if it is a submerged point seek the top of the point where you can target fish approaching from all three sides leading off into the deep water.



### Light up the Night

Underwater lighting serves a major role in getting night feeding game fish to give into to their weakness, their stomachs. What lighting does, it attracts zoo plankton and bait fish and the noise of feeding bait fish serves as a major attractant to the game fishes lateral line system. Thus, allowing the light to bring you the fish. When using a light it will be the center stage of your fishing and all hole drilling will be established around this. When fishing an inside turn place the light at a location just outside the





weed edges or at a contour point that is approximately 12 -20 feet deep (this depth can vary depending on the general structure and average depth of your target lake). Fishing on submerged points, light placement is at the center of the point where it flattens out slightly. Regardless of light location place the light at roughly half the distance to the bottom thus maximizing the sphere of light that is given off.

## Setup and Drilling

With the location being established time to set up involves a bit of drilling. To be most effective at night fishing you want to set the stage by doing all of your hole drilling before you start fishing and once the fishing begins the hole cutting ends. This technique of hole drilling is much like the layout of spokes on a wheel with the light as the hub. Start off with a ring of holes roughly 5 paces from the light and gradually drilling hole series every 5 to 10 paces from there. Continue your hole drilling until you have covered an area that leads to the outer edge of the light pattern and slightly beyond, this may vary depending on your depth placement of the light but will average 60–100 feet across. If on an inside edge you will add

additional rings on the edge away from shore and less towards the shore, making your hole pattern more egg shaped.



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The 33rd Annual Great Meredith Rotary Ice Fishing Derby will be held February 11-12, 2012. Derby tickets can be purchased on-line by visiting the Meredith Rotary website at [www.meredithrotary.org](http://www.meredithrotary.org) prior to Derby Weekend, or tickets can be purchased during Derby Weekend at a variety of vendors throughout New Hampshire and at Derby Headquarters in Meredith on Lake Winnepesaukee. Tickets are only \$30

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## Lure Selection and Presentation

For the selection of jigs and bait presentation glow is top choice, then scent and vibration. There are many glow choices available,

the one that is preferred is glow white. White glow jigs offer a great contrast in the dark environment thus making it easier for fish to key in on your offering. Selecting the right jig, find one that offers a wide profile that is not too heavy for its profile. A wider profile offers you a large glow target for the fish to key in on. If large is not your style seeking a smaller offering that you can tip with a high quality glow plastic. But regardless of selection glow is a feature that must not be denied. With a proper jig selected there are two presentation methods that guarantee you catch of both the negative feeders and the most aggressive rod bending feeders. Deadsticking is a great offering for use of a minnow hooked just behind the dorsal. The quiver jigging method is preferred for active presentations. This method is where the lure is moving in a continually quivering manner. In the use of quiver jigging, jigs can be tipped with ultra active soft plastics or individual offerings of live bait such as wax worms, eurlarva, minnows or just a simple minnow head.



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## Finding Fish

Finding fish with electronics is as easy as walking from hole to hole looking for the expected undeniable suspended fish. But this method can also be accomplished by an angler blindly fishing not using electronics. To find the fish, work your holes (spending no more than five minutes at each) with your presentation roughly one third the distance to the bottom and gradually descending the offering until the fish are found. Most fish will be found suspended as many of the night feeding fish feed by seeking food at their depth and above. Yes this even applies to bullhead, many have been caught suspended 5 feet off bottom. Once you have keyed in on the location of the fish within your lighted circle you can now proceed to use your deadsticking presentation for the slightly less active fish and quiver jig the active fish.

## Conclusion

Find local water that has crappie, walleye or bullhead for your first adventure into the night. Be sure to use the power of light, work key fish holding structures, tie on a white glow jig with your favorite food offering and hold on for a night that is sure to get you saying FISH ON!!!! Nathan is from <http://northeasticefishing.com/>



# A Season of Colors

## Scott Brauer

Blue... No Green...No Red... Aaaaarrrrghhhhh!

Ok, obviously my articles are almost always going to have something to do with working rubber micro bait. I am asked hundreds of times each year “what colors should I get?” It occurs to me that I have a definite pattern that I follow relative to the three seasons of ice fishing. This pattern is a guideline that I have followed, tracked and adjusted during my 25 years of ice fishing journal writing.

### First ice

I start with red or white. Red because the fish have not been fed by fishermen for a while and they are usually aggressive. Red also is the color of blood or injury and most fish respond to a wounded or fish with a strike. White is kind of the opposite of red, while red is one of the first colors to disappear in the water table, white can be seen for long distances and can be like ringing a dinner bell under the water. White, pearl, or silver all appear to be the color of bait fish in the water and if you can match that color attractant with the right presentation and movement, it is a deadly combo that will fill your bucket.



### Mid ice

Mid season can be a tough time to fish. Most attribute this to a drop in the fish's metabolism and a drop in oxygen level in the water. Both of the items above are true, but there is a color related effect as well. I attribute most of the mid season blahs to the many hatches which create an increased presence of natural forage in the water. The fish may not be biting because they are already full. So, during mid season I switch to natural colors: browns, blacks, motor oils, dark greens, dark purples and deep

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ins, the oxygen level is on the rise, and the fish are hunting for what is new in the water from all of the water movement. I like to fish bright colors during this phase. I like chartreuse, yellow, hot pink, bubble gum, glow and lures with a lot of prism flash, gold and silver. Fish can't reach out and touch stuff with their fins, so aside from hunger strikes, you can evoke anger and interest strikes during late\last ice and by doing so increase your catch.

blood worm red. The whole "match the hatch principle" is a must try during all seasons, and becomes a must do for me during mid ice. Basically anything that a fish throws up during this time I try to match that color and body form and my catch rates go way up even during the "tough" season.

Late\Last ice

Well, at this point the weeds are dying or already dead. There have been a few melts and run offs/wash



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This is the guideline that I follow when creating a color plan for the day's attack but, we all know too well, our plan is not as important as the fish's reality. So have a plan, a plan B and a plan C, but in all cases respond to the "lessons from fish". Document what you have learned that day and then share it with a new fisher or a young person.

Help feed the next generation of fishers!

**ODU**



# Gearing Up For The Ice

By Lawrence Euteneier

Many would say that the new standard for ice fishing gear now includes three primary must-haves. 1, some form of portable shelter; 2, a power auger; and 3, a flasher or sonar device. Of course, then there are the various tools such as rods, reels, line, baits both artificial and live, a scoop for clearing holes of slush and a spud for testing untraveled ice for safety. While the listed above tools are more or less essential, some might argue about the necessity of the first three bigger ticket items. The following attempts to shed some light on why and when sonar, shelters and power augers are warranted.



For sure, ice fishing is a social event, but it also involves team work. While large shelters, permanent or not, can seem like a great idea for hosting ice fishing gatherings, their ability to aid in finding fish is minimal. A group of friends fanning out and methodically working over a targeted section of ice is far more effective for locating fish. Once located, setting up shelters or wind breaks to warm up when sleds with built-in seating and flip-over tent-like coverings such as Frabill's Trekker Max can make a great day even better.

Dependents on shelters have come full circle with many now electing to employ "wearable shelters" (warm clothing) thanks to a number of ice-fishing companies that have begun marketing fashionable and functional extreme weather outerwear designed specifically for the ice fisher. My favorite is Frabill's new Ice Suit, a 2-piece outfit that allows for layering to make adjustments for a wide range of temperatures.

No plans on buying a shelter? It's still possible to catch fish with mitts on. The newer style of ice rods such as Frabill's Quick Tip series have built in indicator tips that flex under the

slightest pressure. Are handy alternative to fumbling in the cold with numb hands in the hopes of feeling the bite.



There are those times when you want to be equipped to "rung and gun". Rapala's new Sherpa series of pop-up shelters can be easily transported using the shoulder straps built into the carrying bag. An ice rod combo carrying case with 4-6 pre-rigged combos, a manual 6"-8" auger, and a 5-gallon bucket containing gear fitted with a lid to be used as a seat will pretty much

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cover all your needs. However, once ice has begun to thicken, adding a power auger such as one from Rapala's new "Black Ice" line of light-weight machines to the list of essentials means you can continue to explore remote waters late into the season without working up a significant sweat. Staying dry is crucial to one's comfort and warmth.

While drilling numerous exploratory holes alongside a cluster of occupied ice shacks may go unappreciated by the neighbors, punching a dozen wholes in line with identified but yet unexploited potentially fish-holding structure at one shot allows each hole to be tested in turn. Spending ten minutes at each is plenty enough to discern whether fish are present. Ideally, you're looking for rock or gravel transitions to muddy bottoms. Weeds are also good bet when perusing Perch or Crappy.

It's often the case ice fishing involves heading out to known community fishing holes and joining in on the action. There's nothing wrong with electing to fish alongside others already set up on the ice. They are there for a reason – it's where the fish are. However, if you're not one who's satisfied doing the same-old thing every weekend, then electronics will help you to explore new territory and find fish.

It wasn't so long ago that fishers would use the absence of light inside their fishing shacks to do with their eyes what they can now do with their electronics. IN fact, earliest ice fishing traditions had Inuit fishers kneeling on the ice and using the hood of their parkas to create a



light barrier around the whole, all while holding a feathered but hook less jig tied to a length of sinew with one hand and a fish spear with the other. While all these methods may work, sonar does make ice fishing more enjoyable – largely because it's transformed ice fishing into a reality-based video game. All fun aside, using electronics will result in fewer fishless days simply because you can actively trigger marked fish into taking your bait by continually adjusting your presentation style.



So what's the difference between flashers and sonar devices other than their display mode? There are those who claim that only a flasher can display in real time the movement of a jig, but evidence seems to be mounting that this isn't necessarily the case.

Used to their full potential, such as when incorporating GPS into the mix, targeting likely fish holding structure becomes much easier. Taking the time to establish way points during the soft water season using your boat's GPS unit can make this task go even quicker.

The new Lowrance Elite 5 combines the ability to utilize Navionic's maps with a sounder / flasher, all contained within one unit safely stored inside its own padded carrying case. Furthermore, enclosed is a light-weight rechargeable battery and transducer. Lowrance incorporates audible fish alarms, handy when ones focus is somewhere other than the display. Switching the focus of one's gaze from the screen to distant objects every 20 or so minutes can help prevent eye fatigue issues such as blurred vision or headaches. Just as importantly, alarms also ensure napping fishers don't miss the big one.

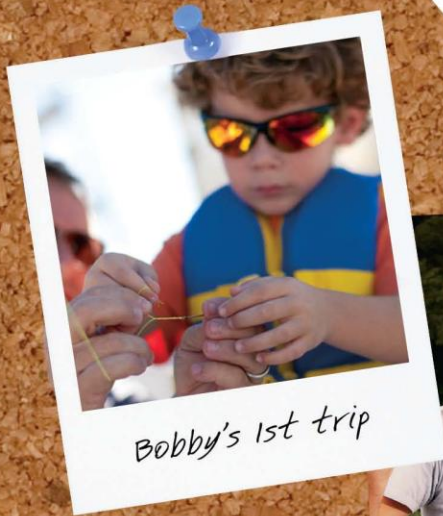


Some of my favorite artificial baits include Lindy's original Viking Spoon and their Darter. Lindy's new line of ice fishing jigs also seems extremely promising. Rapala's Jigging Raps are consistent producers, especially when tipped with their Trigger-X grubs. However, what baits you choose to use will depend largely on the species of fish being perused. Don't hesitate to ask local fishers what's working. Ice fishing really is a sport that encourages sharing. Whether it's a nearby fisher punching hole for a stranger, or advice on where and when to go, there just doesn't seem to be the level of secrecy that one normally associates with those fishing open water.

If an ATV or snowmobile isn't going to be used to haul out your gear, then remember to Exercise caution and avoid parking your vehicle alongside everyone else on the ice. Nothing's worse than a collection of heavy trucks parked together and then someone deciding to drill a hole nearby resulting in several feet of water being displaced to the surface through the newly formed "pressure release valve".

Finally, wearing a flotation suit such as those made by Salus Marine on newly formed or potentially treacherous ice and carrying ice spikes is always a good idea at the beginning and end of the ice-fishing season. Wearing a personal flotation device is also perfectly acceptable. Even the most experienced ice fisher will tell you there's no such thing as safe ice.





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# Ace in the Hole Proven Crappie and Bluegill Patterns

By Jason Mitchell

Even on lakes with good structure and good weed growth, it seems like a percentage of panfish, both crappies and bluegills will pull out and suspend over holes and troughs at first ice. On many bodies of water, most of the panfish will be

suspending over these deeper basin areas by mid winter. A good starting point is to simply look for the whole or basin that is close to the lush weed growth or flooded timber where many of fish summer. In years past, these deep basin fish were often a big fish pattern as finding suspended fish that were roaming through this wide water column were difficult for anglers to target, like finding a needle in a haystack. With technology and better equipment however, finding these nomadic trophies has gotten much easier.



Both sonars along with GPS mapping are crucial tools for finding basin orientated suspended

fish. The advantage a flasher gives you is pretty obvious. Not only does a flasher indicate how far off the bottom to fish but also the mood of the fish. When fishing suspended fish, I like to watch the whole water column as there are many times where it seems like I am reeling up or dropping down to different fish that are coming through at staggered depths, so I avoid the zoom features. What is really important? However, is reading the mood or





aggressiveness of the fish with your flasher? In my opinion, nothing beats a Vexilar for indicating how the fish is reacting to the presentation. The Vexilar units do an excellent job of displaying the mood of the fish because the dial has more lines of resolution, and the signal is unfiltered. In a nutshell, when

a fish moves through the cone angle on a Vexilar, the signal will flutter. When the fish stops, the signal will steady and darken. This is why you don't get the choppy lines when you are dropping a lure down through the water fast when using a Vexilar. By reading this signal, you can really react to the mood of the fish much more so which can be crucial for these deep suspended fish.

Another piece of electronics that I just have a hard time leaving home without is a GPS with a lake contour map if available. By just having my position in correlation to a contour lake map seems to help me not only break down this open water but also focus on edges, contours and funnels where the density of fish might be higher. Besides giving you the big picture in regards to your exact location on a big sheet of ice, GPS allows you to save and remember the subtle sweet spots. Small depressions or bumps on the bottom can often focus fish movements and good locations or holes can be saved and returned to. Even with fish that are suspending over basins or holes... irregular features on the bottom just make some zones fishy.

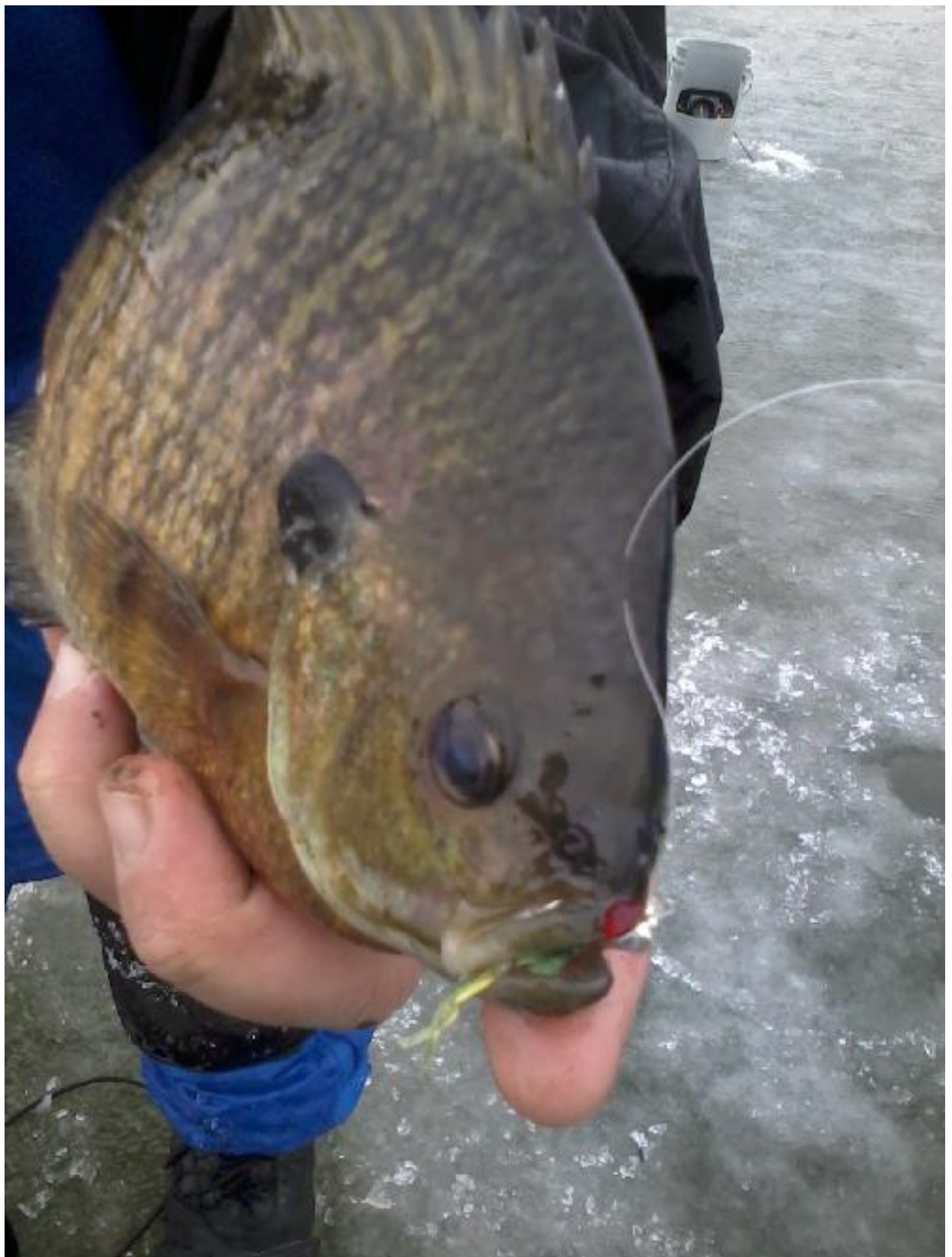


As far as the nuts and bolts of the presentation, I firmly believe that these fish can and will move a considerable distance to check something out. I like to start on the large side of the lure spectrum just to gauge the general reaction. Particularly, for crappie, I like to start with small swim lures like Northland Tackle Puppet Minnows or the tiny Salmo CD3 Chubby Darters and when I fish these tiny swim lures, I am making an effort to see how high I can get



fish to shoot up. If I can get a school or even an individual fish to rise vertically and gain speed, the fish often turn aggressive. One of the best things you can do for getting fish wound up raise them and get the school to stack vertically. This same concept can also be applied to sunfish, but you might have to switch the presentation to a small spoon like a Forage Minnow packed with wax worms.

If fish won't raise more than a few feet and seem hesitant, you might have to back off of the aggressive presentations and use more



finesse. Particularly, when the sun gets higher, you might have to rely on some smaller finesse presentations at some point each day. For this deep water fishing where you might have to get down over twenty feet of water or more, tungsten is tough to beat for getting down fast and the extra weight also enables you a little better control and feels when fishing small profile jigs in deep water. A sweet combination is a Northland Tackle Mooska Jig tipped with an Impulse plastic tail. The extra weight of the tungsten really brings the tail to life and basically, the action you are looking for is just a quiver that causes the tail to dance in

place. We actually developed a spring bobber rod in the Jason Mitchell Elite Series line up called the Micro Bite which was built for using plastics in this type of situation as the light spring adds a lot of subtle actions to the tail which triggers panfish.



The other secret weapon for presenting small jigs into deep water is the use of Fluorocarbon line. Some people have embraced fluorocarbon because of the zero visibility characteristics of this line but what I like is the weight of the line. Fluorocarbon is heavy and sinks through the water faster than monofilament. The best fluorocarbon line on the market for ice anglers is the Bionic Fluorosilk which is actually a monofilament line with a fluorocarbon sheath or covering which makes the line sink faster. Combine this line with a tungsten jig and use with the right rod action/ spring bobber and you have a deadly presentation for deep crappies and bluegills when some subtleness and finesse are required.

No doubt these tools have revolutionized and opened up this basin exploration. With the right equipment, some of the largest and most difficult schools of fish become accessible to anglers.

Editors Note: The author, Jason Mitchell is credited with pioneering several of the advanced



ice fishing tactics on the ice right now.

Jason Mitchell also hosts the outdoor program, [Jason Mitchell Outdoors](#),

which airs on Fox Sports North and Fox Sports Midwest at 9:00 am Sunday mornings.



# Work The Water Column For Iced Trout

By Vic Attardo

When I'm fly fishing a heavy stream, I know that if my nymphs are not dragging the bottom chances are I won't get bit. Same thing with bait. That corn, that worm has to be lying on or close to the rocks if I want a strike.



In flowing water trout are notorious for staging just a few inches above the bottom. There's a slower current at the lower level and this is a key reason they hold there, for food and repose.

But trout in lakes, and particularly under the ice, are a different story. Not hampered by a strong current, they ride through the water column like a kite in the wind. In Pennsylvania lakes of average depths -- less than 20 feet -- trout will be on the top in one breath and half-way down with the next. They ride the water column like an elevator.

On ice-covered lakes, I've seen trout almost scraping their fins on the underside of the frozen sheet, then work either suspended or close to the bottom. They go the full range.

For ice fishermen this is a big deal.



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If you keep bait just a few inches from the lake floor, and nowhere else, then a lot of trout will be swimming over your offering. They may decide to submarine to the bait you're presenting or they may mosey right along, several feet above where you hoped to have caught them.

Certainly, many iced-up trout are caught close to the bottom but many more could be nabbed if you work the entire water column – or the core of it from a few feet below the ice to a few feet above the bottom. Staggering your baits and your presentation is the way to go with winter trout.

Getting even more technical there is another solid reason for working the core of the water column for iced-in trout.

As the sun gets up, trout tend to rise higher. On a few occasions I've seen one scoot-by just under the eight-inch divot I've drilled. The rising in the water column as the day gets bright seems to be a reaction to the trout's prey and the prey of its prey. As one becomes active and ascends the water column so does the other.

I have never seined the water beneath a frozen lake, but I have seen water bugs dancing around an ice hole in mid-afternoon. Right behind them are minnows and right behind them are trout. A winter lake is clear, with no algae haze, and the fish I just saw swim by was clearly a trout. So the rising begets rising theory is a conclusion of informed speculation.



The tactic of working the whole column for winter trout is good for other reasons as well. If you suspend a bait several feet above the bottom not only will you attract trout at that level but you'll get those "hot" trout that are competitively triggered to strike.

Having watched a flasher during ice outings, I've seen fish crawling a foot or so above the bottom. My bait, also clearly seen on the flasher, was three to five feet from the lake floor. As evidenced by the wavering lines, a number of trout would rise towards the suspended bait. With more than one fish heading for the food, there was suddenly competition for the meal. At this point one trout will almost inevitably try to outrace the other, and this trout gets hooked.

Instilling this sense of competition is another major advantage of suspending a bait. Getting a fish to sprint to dinner often results in a solid strike. Proverbially if it were just one trout swimming along, the solo has the time – and the inclination – to slowly inspect the bait. I've seen this posture as well on the flasher. So many times a single fish will approach, study and swim off. A school of assertive trout is to the angler's advantage.

As for other ice practices, a good trick to entice minnows, and eventually trout, to your location is to throw flaked crumbs of bread or the sawdust from your bait container into the

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water. Dust-size smidgeons of bread dropped periodically will cause minnows to gravitate to your ice opening. It works on the same principal as a chum line in salt water. The only difference is that you can't position the boat so that the chum drifts behind the craft in the current.



On the ice you are at the mercy of whatever direction the lake current takes your bait. But as long as it doesn't swirl around, minnows, and trout will be able to track and approach your chumming location.

When you catch your first trout, if you intend to keep it, be sure to scrape the scales from its side. Mix these to the mash of bread or sawdust that you're sending out; the scales add flash and interest both minnows and targeted trout.

Often I'll squeeze and slice up a couple of the milky larvae – waxworms, spikes, mousies – I'm using and let these drift away. Adding bait to the water is very effective.

If you find yourself in a fishing situation with a bunch of anglers spread across a lake, the iced chumming tactic is not as effective for the obvious reason there are baits and smells everywhere. But if you can acquire a more isolated location, ice-hole chumming really brings them in.







Most often I jig for trout. Of course, suspending a minnow on a tip-up can also be effective. I've seen days when, inexplicably, trout only took dangling minnows; while on others they vigorously took a jig and larva. I like the jig technique because it keeps me active and because I can jump from hole-to-hole.

Certainly, "Hole Hopping" will increase your odds at intercepting moving trout. To Hole Hop drill about a dozen holes in a workable, reachable area. All the holes are prepared when I drop a bait into one of my fancy. If I get a solid strike that's good; but if I get a nip and miss, I quickly lower the bait again. Many times a nip is followed by an even weaker nip and then a long void. Rather than attempt to make a reluctant trout strike, I move along.

Starting a few feet below the ice sheet I methodically work the water column all the way to the bottom. With no strike, I move onto the next hole, etc., etc., etc. However, eventually, I will return to the first nip. I approach the hole quietly, lower the bait to the expected level, but this time I am ready for the hit. When it comes I set the hook quickly and a fish that thought it was getting a free meal, suddenly becomes the meal itself.

Working the water column, or at least the core of the column, is an important tactic when fishing iced-in trout. In a gushing stream it's often necessary to be tight to the bottom, but for lake fish, it's an up-and-down affair.



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# Recycled Fish: Anglers as Stewards of the Resource

By Teeg Stouffer

Leaves are long gone, ice twinkles in the trees. Our views are shades of grey and white. Lakes are locked up under a scalloped shield of snow; the fish have a ceiling on their world and if you're like me; your blood heats up with these frozen fantasies.

We're just people who love to fish. We're doing what we can to make sure there are more and bigger fish today and a legacy of healthy waters for generations to come.



To get there, it takes a “lifestyle of stewardship” both on and off the water, because our lifestyle runs downstream.

While on the water, its things like catch and release, selective harvest and making sure we're never the ones leaving trash on the ice, and we should be cleaning up trash when we find it – not just stepping over it and grumbling about “the other guy.”

9-inch bluegill and 15-inch crappie make impressive fillets, but keeping the big ones takes the best genetics out of the lake. Big fish aren't just old, I feel they're genetically superior. True stewards release their biggest fish, and keep a few mid-sized fish for the table.

So when you let that big girl swim, you want to know she lived, right? When we pull fish out of more than 20 or 25 feet of water, many die after release, even if they swim away at first. Look for a shallow bite if you plan on practicing catch and release.

That's a start for when you're on

RECYCLED FISH PRESENTS  
**STEWARDSHIP  
ON ICE**



hard water this winter, but a true “lifestyle of stewardship” means looking at our everyday choices, too.

Fish need water, and it's increasingly in short supply. So do you have a low-flow showerhead? High efficiency toilet? What does your lawn watering regime look like come summertime?



Reducing our energy use matters too. The way we generate most of our energy in this country is not beneficial to fisheries. That doesn't make energy bad; it just means that using less is good – and using less saves us money that we can spend on fishing!

Whether it's recycling, changing the way we take care of our lawns, or even stuff like picking up after our pets, strong fisheries require a healthy planet. Who better to lead the charge than fishermen?

At Recycled Fish, we're making a call to our fellow anglers – to you - to help safeguard this thing we all love so much.

If you're not on board already, now's the time. Visit <http://www.recycledfish.org> and take the



Sportsman's Stewardship Pledge. It's free. (Or pony up a few bucks and become a Premium Member – you get cool gear, and you help us fund the cause.)

Be sure to look for us on the ice this winter, too. The Recycled Fish “On Ice” schedule is on our website. Be sure to come say hi, we'll have a hot coffee or cocoa waiting for you.

Our lakes, streams and seas need not just sportsmen but stewards – like you.





## **You're Catching WHAT? Late Ice Carp Tactics ....Yeah Really!!**

**By Bob Bohland**

Everyone has found themselves carp fishing at some time or another. And although most people don't really pursue them too actively, or even admit that they liked catching them, they sure can put up a fight. Ask anyone who has tied into one while crappie fishing with light tackle, you had better have a good drag, or they will put a bruising on your equipment. I have always been a sucker for just about anything that will tug at the other end of the line. On days when I couldn't get on the water, I have even been known to play tug-o-war with my dog by tying one of her chew toys to the end of my musky rod (yeah, I have a problem). So when my brother and I found ourselves trying to sight fish shallow gills this past February and all, we kept seeing when looking down the holes were huge carp, we knew precisely what needed to be done. Luckily, I had left a couple of tip-ups in my truck from a previous outing.

Lacking traditional carp gear (although I am not sure what technically constitutes traditional carp gear, nor does anyone else on this side of the Atlantic Ocean); we took a couple of tip-ups and improvised. All my tip-ups were pre-rigged with 50 lb Power Pro line, but this being gin-clear water, we added a SPRO swivel and 6-7 feet of 20 lb fluorocarbon to the end of each. My brother added a size 6 circle hook to his with no weight and baited it with as many wax worms as he could squeeze onto it. I took a slightly different approach. Some of the fish were cruising and from the looks of it, they were picking off aquatic insects as they swam around. So I took a size 12 Lindy Genz Bug and loaded it with waxies. It didn't take more than 5 minutes before a flag was flying. The first fish came on my brother's circle hook rig, and he made the mistake of taking his gloves off before trying to land the fish. Well, that first fish gave him several line burns on his fingers to make him think better of taking his gloves off the next time. It also weighed in at only 4 lbs on his digital scale, and man was I excited to see what one of the bigger ones we had seen swimming around could do.

The commotion from the fish (and my brother's squeals of pain as he got burned from the line) attracted some attention from a group of people crappie fishing not too far from where we were. Two of them came over to talk to us about what we were catching, and thought we were either stupid for fishing for carp, or lying through our teeth and had found either some





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big northerns or walleyes in the shallows (supposed "real fish"). Luckily, they didn't have to wait around long to see it with their own eyes as my brother's tip-up went off again. This time he left his gloves on, and when the slush cleared, and we managed to squeeze it up the hole, he was holding a beautiful (they say beauty is in the eye of the beholder) 7lb carp. By the end of the day, we were able to ice 6 beautiful (c'mon, they are cooler looking than walleyes) carp, the biggest being a 10 lb brute that took a little extra effort to squeeze up the hole. All while catching bluegills not 50 yards away.

**Now We're Prepared, Whatever That Means**

We decided to be a little more prepared the next time we went out to that spot. This was going to be a serious attempt at fishing for only carp. We even took the time to make dough balls out of Wheaties and vanilla extract, which have always been a killer for us when open water carp fishing. The fishing really seemed to pick up from the previous day, or maybe it was just because we were "serious carp fisherman" now. Try calling yourself that without laughing. The action was split between dough balls on the bottom and wax worms about 1 foot off of the bottom, and we ended up icing around 15 fish, although it did seem as though our bigger fish were caught on dough balls lying on the bottom. I also decided it would be a good idea to rig up a tip-down, which is like a tip up except it allows you to fight the fish with

a rod and reel. My reasoning was that it would be a lot more fun to fight the fish on a rod and reel, and it would help me avoid burns from the line and the girlish squealing that would ensue. The one down-side to the tip-down is that the moment the fish felt any resistance; they would drop the bait, so I had to open the bail and just constantly check to see if I had a fish. Luckily, we were using a circle hook so I didn't have to worry about gut hooking any of these gorgeous fish (they really aren't that ugly)

We took a look around the area in between flags and found out a little more about the area, we were catching these fish. We were getting the majority of our fish in 9-10 feet of water over a sandy/weedy bottom at the entrance to a small bay. This particular area came up out of a 22-foot mud flat very quickly. The back of the bay was very muddy and had a stream that connected to several other lakes. Although we never checked the temp of the water, we figured that was a big reason why the fish were in that area, as well as the bug hatches that we could see coming up our holes.

As the snow cover began to diminish near the end of this ice season, we found that the fish became a lot spookier and would take longer to move back into an area after we had drilled holes. They also began to move back further into the bay over the dark bottomed areas. They were still biting, but if there was any commotion going on above them, they would vacate the area, so there have been fewer doubles on the tip-ups.



Why? Because They are Fish!

I have received almost the same reaction out of everyone I have told about this bite so far, "Why?" and all I can really say in response is that you have to try it, if for no other reason than it gives you an excuse to still have a tip-up while you are out fishing for panfish. So dust off those tip-ups, grab yourself a pack of circle hooks and some canned corn or dough balls and make an excuse to fish carp for a day, or don't tell anyone if you feel embarrassed. This



is one fish that will quickly win you over, if not for its looks (although I still say they are far better looking than walleyes), then for its sheer brute strength and willingness to eat almost anything. Hook up with a carp on a tip-up (but leave your gloves on) and try and wipe the smile off of your face, I dare you.



## TEAM USA Honor and Glory

"We have what"? "I had no clue". Those are the typical responses from people when they find out, there is a United State Ice Fishing Team. Read that again... let it sink in... a United States Ice Fishing Team! To put Team USA in the right context, think the Summer/Winter Olympics, Ryder Cup in Golf, Davis Cup in Tennis, or America's cup in yachting, and you will get the idea. As with all National teams the USA Ice Team travels the World representing the United States... the best of the best competing at the World level... there could be a spot for you... to find out take the first step and tryout. Come join a team made up of the best fishermen whom our Nation has to offer... you could be one of them... but you have to stand up and be counted.



Until you are a part of the team, there is no way to truly describe the feeling representing your county. To try and get an idea for what being a team member is like all you have to do is look at the faces of the current Team USA. Their eyes and never ending grin... you know the kind of smile that that tells everybody all they need to know... I got the World by the tail... this is fun... this is something you want to be a part of. Going up against the best that other countries have to offer for Honor and Glory... for your Nation... for yourself... is as good as it gets.

Not enough!!! You want more reasons to get involved... think about the learning experience you gain from rubbing elbows with the top fishermen from around the world. The equipment you will see, the techniques used and the friendships made. There is no other sport that makes joining a World Class Team this easy... but you got to try out... get off the couch... or out of the ice shack and into the game.

Team USA won the World Gold Medals in 2010, with Mike Boedeker from Lansing Michigan as the Individual World Champion. How would you like your family's name said along with the title World Champion? ... you can... but you have got to earn it. The 2012 Team USA is already set and getting ready for the World Championship in Kazakhstan. Do not get left behind again, you can tryout this winter for the 2013 team when the World Championship will be held in the UNITED STATES... home (ice) field advantage... it does not get any better than that!



Team USA tryouts are separate but are conducted in conjunction with NAIFC events (North American Ice Fishing Circuit). Tryouts are held Saturday afternoon during an NAIFC weekend. Come just for the Team USA trials or join in the NAIFC Tournament as well... you will not be disappointed! Team USA needs you!!! Step up for your shot at Honor and Glory with TEAM USA... join the fun and be counted.

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# Stewardship On Ice: Selective Harvest Ensuring Abundance

By Teeg Stouffer & Finn Horvath

Winter fishing in the North can be a hot and cold affair. It can feel like forever between bites, and then the bite turns on and landing fish gets to be like factory work.

Today's electronics like portable sonar units or underwater cameras can be powerful tools in locating concentrations of fish quickly. GPS can get us back to the spot-on-the-spot time after time. With the power of these advancements comes the need for responsible use.

In winter's icy waters, fish typically hold in relatively predictable, tight locations. Most of those locations are connected to food supply, travel routes, dissolved oxygen content, temperature and cover.

Modern anglers have so much knowledge and technology on their side that a few skilled anglers can quickly deplete a population, which takes years to rebuild. In some cases, the population dynamic can change and a lake will never be the same.



To catch more and bigger fish and leave something great for our grandkids, it's always best to "limit one's catch, not catch one's limit." The greedy "catch all you can, and can all you catch" mentality has no place in a stewardship-minded angler's lifestyle.

There's nothing wrong with keeping some fish for the table. Fish are delicious, healthy, and a renewable resource. Part of the heritage of our sport is eating fish. However, we have to harvest selectively.





the same species. Take big fish out of a population, and you take big genes out of population. All these years, we kept the big ones and threw the little ones back. Guess what we got in return? Smaller fish!

Worst of all, true giants too often are hung on walls. These



In a nutshell, this means taking fast-reproducing species like panfish and releasing predators.

No matter what species you're harvesting, keep mid-sized fish and release the biggest specimens. Big fish aren't usually just old, they're genetically superior faster growers. Whose kids are going to be taller, Shaquille O'Neill or Tom Cruise? Shaquille O'Neill, of course! Why?

The answer is genetics.

Big fish make big fish, and small fish make small fish – even if they're

days, a steward will take a photo and have a painting, sketch or fiberglass reproduction made if he wants a trophy.

Quality reproductions look just as good, cost about the same, last longer, and allow those giant fish to spread their good genes in the future spawning cycle.

## **Suggested Selective Harvest Guidelines**

### **Always obey local regulations**

#### **Eat Me**

- Bluegill (under 9")
- Crappie (under 13")
- Yellow Perch
- Yellow Bass
- White Bass
- White Perch
- Hatchery Trout
- Whitefish
- Smelt
- Freshwater Drum
- Ling Cod
- Non-native Lake Trout (invasive in western waters)

#### **Limited Harvest**

- Walleye & Sauger (a couple of mid-sized fish)
- Northern Pike (mid-sized fish from waters abundant with pike)
- Largemouth Bass (mid-sized fish from waters abundant with bass)

#### **No Harvest**

- Salmon
- Muskies
- Smallmouth Bass
- Wild, Native Trout





## Icing Hawgs in Crystalline Waters . . . the Answers are Clear

**By Mitch Eeagan**

When the lakes freeze over and fishing pros Mark Martin, Mike Gofron and Mark Brumbaugh can't launch their Lund boat, you'll surely find them ice fishing the inland waters and Great Lakes near their homes.

The distinguished angling trio, who resides in Michigan, Illinois and Ohio, respectfully, are surrounded by some of the clearest water in the country. These waterways have always been lucid enough to see bottom in 20 feet of water, even before the HEPA-filter-like zebra and quagga muscles invaded their way into the systems, siphoning waters even cleaner than before.

"What many anglers don't realize is that catching fish from ultra-clear waters—even with a thick layer of ice on them—

can be as tricky as during the open water periods. It takes a stealthy approach and specific equipment to fool fish into biting," says Brumbaugh. The three fishing aficionados have been teaching students at the Ice-Fishing Vacation School ([fishingvacationschool.com](http://fishingvacationschool.com)) about catching many different species of fish from on the frozen tundra of Lake Huron's Saginaw Bay for several years now. This fishery has become cleaner every year, and what they've learned during the bay's transformation has even surprised these already knowledge instructors.

### **Walk softly and carry a sharp auger**

Wherever you are right now, look up. What do you see? Notice how clearly you can see the sky, the ceiling, or whatever it is you're looking at? Now imagine you're a fish and the water's as clear as the air around you, and the ice over your head is as translucent as a sheet of thick Plexiglas. You, too, could see whatever it was over your head. And if it was moving and making noise, more than likely you'd become alarmed and vacate the area. That's exactly what fish do.

"If the ice is clear; I make sure to set up my portable shanty onto any snow that may have drifted onto the ice to blanket my silhouette, movements, and muffle any sound I might

make,” Brumbaugh says. If the ice is hard and transparent, he’ll fish inside his Frabill Thermal Predator shanty—the insulated material shadowing any stirring from within—even if it’s warm enough to warrant fishing outside.

Once he’s drilled sufficient holes with his StrikeMaster power auger, and his shanty’s in place, Brumbaugh removes his ice cleats, and to reduce noise, lays down a piece of carpet to place his feet on. “I’ve seen fish dart off the second any noise is made, or even when I just move,” he says. “Fishing from within a shanty is a must when atop snow-free clear ice, no matter what depth you’re fishing.”

### Lighten up!

When Gofron's ice fishes clear water, he lightens up his equipment and tackle. “The biggest mistake I see the students of the ice-fishing school make is they use too heavy of a line, and terminal tackle,” he says.

In clear water situations, Gofron drops down to 6-pound-monofilament for his main line, and then attaches a tiny swivel (a must for warding off-line twist when using larger lures.) He then secures a 1-foot section of fluorocarbon leader and a small snap (not a snap-swivel.) “Too large a swivel may distract fish away from my lure,” he adds.



A good answer to the swivel dilemma is Aquateko's InvisaSwivel—a transparent fluorocarbon-based swivel that is also nearly neutral in buoyancy, so as not to impede the action of a lure, or even a lightweight flutter spoon. The 12-pound-test InvisaSwivel is a great match for clear water, light line jigging.

### See ‘em and hook ‘em!

Martin is a firm believer that an immediate hook set is a must when fishing clear water. “The fish are already weary about

An advertisement for Picasso Shake-E-Footballs. The top features the Picasso logo in purple and green. Below it, the text "Shake-E-Footballs" is in large red letters, followed by "Shakey Head Style Football Jig Head" in smaller red letters. A list of features is provided: "Flexible Nickel Titanium Spring", "6 Great Colors", "Picasso developed Duraseal Coating", "Chip Resistant", "Super Smooth", and "Extra Hard". Two images of the jig heads are shown: one with a yellow and orange pattern and another with a black and silver pattern. At the bottom, the Picasso logo is repeated, along with the phone number "724-409-4400" and the website "www.PicassoLures.com". A row of eight small images shows different color patterns for the jig heads: black, white, green, yellow, orange, red, blue, and silver.



hitting a lure in this situation, and they'll spit out a hook faster than the blink of an eye once they realize that something isn't right, or real. You almost have to set the hook before you feel the strike," he says.

The perfect remedy in Martin's eye is an underwater camera, which lets him watch a fish strike before he feels it. "It doubles my hook ups, and then some," he adds. Martin currently employs a MarCum VS825SD. With the camera's large 8-inch screen and super-clear color image, there's no doubting when a fish strikes.

"But you don't want the camera hanging down and looking out to the side, but rather aim it downward and have it suspended well above the fish. With a large color screen, you won't miss a thing, even when it's dangling several feet above the lure," he adds. You can also use MarCum's Camera Panner, which lets you scan the clear water all around your position. Martin says some fish, especially large walleye, can be wary about the camera hanging in the strike zone in clear water situations and won't come near the lure, no matter how badly they want it. Suspending the lens well above their level solves this dilemma.

Fortunately, if you're having trouble icing fish from crystalline water, the answers are clear: fish from atop any snow on the ice, rather than the clear, bare stuff. Employ a portable shanty. Downsize your line, and your terminal tackle. Use an underwater camera and as soon as jaws snap, set the hook!



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