

April 2015  
Spring Fishing



ODU MAGAZINE

**Muskie Fishing  
From a Kayak**

**Transitional  
Trout**

**Spring Time  
Panfish**

*Basic Jig  
Retrieves*



**HUNTING CORNER**

**ICE FISHING RAP UP**



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Spring has sprung and what most anglers are thinking of is fishing. When will I get out on the water? Can I put off the lawn mowing for another day? The family project can wait. Will it stop raining? You know what I mean. But, spring is also about the kids.

The other day I saw a fabulous site. The kids were on vacation this week and most town activities were shut down or not available. I was off on a family trek and we passed four teens, each with a fishing pole in hand, with back packs of supplies and tackle heading to a local fishing spot most of us know. No video games for these teens, they were on a mission, and Super Mario was going to have to wait. Fast forward three hours later and my family and I were on our way home. We

passed by the very same teens fishing another fishing hole a quarter mile or so away from where they started. The outdoors, fishing and fresh air is what we need to encourage the kids to experience more!

Do you remember those lazy afternoons when you and your buddies set out on those adventures, or when you and your dad went out for that first fishing trip of the season?



Getting children fishing has always been a focus of ODU and we hope when you are planning your next trip out to the local lake or pond you might consider bringing a neighbor kid with you or a friend's kid who knows you have that special spot for his/her first fishing trip.

There are several programs across the country which are instrumental in introducing fishing to our youth and they can help you or your fishing club as well.

**Editorial Team Leader:** *Bill Schwarz,*  
[Bill@odumagazine.com](mailto:Bill@odumagazine.com)

**Publishing Team:** *Bill Schwarz & Richard Barker*

**Advertising inquirers for our fishing magazines, ODU Fishing and Hunting News should be e-mailed to:**  
[odu.media@odumagazine.com](mailto:odu.media@odumagazine.com)

**Contributing Writers:** *Travis Sorokie, Captain Mike Gerry, Marianne Huskey, Richard Ofner, Mike Borovic, Lawrence Gunther, Brad Wiegmann, Dan Galusha, Ted Pilgrim, Brian "Bro" Brosdahl, Glenn Walker, Bob Jensen, Ted Takasaki, Scott Richardson, Dan Johnson, Jason Mitchell, D&B Ice Adventures, Josh Lantz and Eddie Salter*

**Thank You All!**

**Photos:** *Cover provided by Chad Peterson of HSM Outdoors Contact Chad at his website at this [LINK](#).*

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The **Fishing Kids Program** was established in 1996 and is built around the slogan "Getting more kids fishing, more often". Events are designed to create and provide more fishing opportunities for urban youth, ages 5-14. Each event hosts approximately 300-800 children and for a minimal entry fee each participant receives a Fishing Kids t-shirt, rod & reel to keep! The kids fish in groups on-shore for up to 60 minutes receiving instruction by experienced anglers on angling techniques and environmental stewardship. The parents are encouraged to participate with their children and prior to each fishing session each group receives a tutorial on water safety.

Getting kids into the wonderful sport of fly fishing is an exciting endeavor, and one that comes with the need for certain equipment and helpful information. For parents it can be a daunting challenge because you cannot walk into most fly shops and find a wide selection of gear for kids. Searching the internet can be frustrating because again, there isn't one single location that sells all manner of gear for kids. At **Take Kids Fly Fishing** they hope to simplify your quest for kids fly fishing gear by providing a comprehensive listing of manufacturers of all manner of gear, from rods and reels to waders, boots, clothing, accessories, books etc. They also aim to bring you other helpful information that will help enhance your kids fly fishing experience.

And please, enjoy the outdoors.

**Larry Thornhill and  
William Schwarz**

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## Spring Time Panfish

*By Travis Sorokie*

My favorite time of year is quickly approaching. The time when the Red Wing Black Birds start arriving, when the call of the Loon greets my morning, and the chill of the crisp morning air hits my face as I launch the boat on to one of my favorite crappie waters.

YES, I love chasing springtime crappies! Typically they are eager to bite if you put in the time to pattern them at this time of year. I usually start my open water fishing within 3-4 days of the ice melting off my favorite lakes.

Shallow, dark bottom bays will attract the 'bugs' and minnows...and the crappies and 'gils will follow as they are interested in putting on the feedbag before the spawn.

A few people have the misconception that the fish are spawning during this early period, because when they clean the fish the females are full of spawn. This is untrue. Panfish in our region won't spawn until that water temp is in the mid to upper-60's. The early ice out period is clearly about one thing. They are after FOOD!

If you're uncertain where to start your search, look for other boats and people fishing from shore. A good rule of thumb is any shallow-dark water bay on the northern end of your favorite lake....water temps will be the warmest there producing bug hatches...hence the food source and their prey...black crappies.

Roughly 10 years ago my friend Duane Osgood changed the way I approach springtime panfishing. As with most of you, I almost always fished with a jig/minnow casting below a slip float. Now this method will catch fish, no doubt but there is a more useful method in my opinion that doesn't involve minnows or waxies for bait and I would put this tactic up against everything else day in, day out during this cold

water pre-spawn pattern.. It's a simple rig, yet a few specialized tools are required. The rod/reel combo isn't what you typically would see.

You start with a 9 1/2' to 12' Ultra Light (noodle rod) shorter rods will work but the longer rods will aid in the casting distance---I use a Gander Mountain Guide Series, and your favorite spinning reel spooled with your favorite 4lb mono line. Mono line provides a bit of a shock absorber due to its stretch for landing the soft mouthed slab crappies. The long, ultra light rod provides you with the ability to cast light lures a greater distance...keeping

off these shallow fish, which tend to be spooky at times. As well, the ability to pick up slack line real quick on a hook set. The fight you get out of these long, limber rods is second to none.

We would start with a common 1/64oz Lindy "Little Nipper" or Flu-Flu style jig and a super sensitive pencil style bobber. If it's windy out, we switch to a 'rocket bobber.' Both bobbers I use tip up at the slightest tap. Now depending on the depth of the water, I'll set my depth anywhere from 18" to upwards of 5' or so (another advantage of a long rod). That's it...no bait.

Cast out as far as you can and slowly reel it in. Sometimes you pause, or 'twitch' the rod to give it a little different action, but most of the time it is just a SLOW, steady retrieve.



We would tend to search thru several packages of lures at the store, as we wanted the ones with the longest feathers possible.

In our opinion, this would keep a lot of the smaller 'gils away and provides a bit of a slower fall.

When you get the lures, we almost always take them out of the package and dab a tiny bit of super-glue on the thread, along with taking a small pliers and opening up the hook gap and off-setting it a tad.

Adding super-glue would keep the feathers on jig a lot longer. And opening up the hook gap and giving it an offset I feel improves my hooking percentage.

In the last 3 to 4 years, I have found another lure that hands-down is the best panfish jig I have ever fished. It's called T.H.E. JIG and is made by a local Minnesotan named "Crappie" Keith Nelson. What I really LOVE about T.H.E. JIG is its size, durability and color combinations.

T.H.E. JIG is made with hair, and not feathers. The hair makes this jig come to life even when sitting perfectly still! Some of my personal favorites are Pink/Chartreuse, Blue/Chartreuse, White/Chartreuse and Orange/White. T.H.E. JIG is standard in 1/100oz, 1/80oz, 1/64oz and 1/32oz. Day in, day out I will fish either the 1/100oz or 1/80oz the majority of the time. This jig falls very slow and often makes the neutral to negative spring fish bite when nothing else will.

Tie them directly on with a Palomar knot---you want the lure to hang horizontal at all times to best imitate the forage they are after.

The next key is your approach. STEALTH.... I will always cut the big engine off quite a ways from where I anticipate the schools of crappies to be. Entering the area instead with my bow mount trolling motor. A good pair of Polarized sunglasses can help with your visual search too, if the water is clear enough. I'm usually fishing with someone so we start with different color jigs and different depth settings until we can establish a pattern. Once we locate a few fish, I will SLOWLY and QUIETLY ease my anchor into the water. I try to make as little noise as possible at all times. Shallow fish tend to be pretty spooky.

I will work the area fan casting until a move is required. Then repeat the process. Myself, I always like early morning fishing. I'm almost always the first one at the access. However, sometimes the bite won't turn on until the water gets a little warmer temperature from the warming sun, and this could mean the evening. You just have to get out when you can and try for yourself.

To me there are 3 phases of spring panfishing that occur here in my home state of Minnesota.



Regionally they happen at various different times due to the weather, so depending on where your fishing you have to be able to recognize what particular phase you're fishing in and adapt your presentation to fit those conditions.

Typically when ice out occurs in the shallow bays and channels of your favorite panfish waters, ice may still be on the main body of the lake. The water temperature is in the real low 40s during the day and will warm only slightly a degree or two during the entire day. During this phase, the first panfish are starting to show up in the shallows looking for food, warmer water, and better oxygen levels within the water. Some of the first few hardcore anglers' start to show up at the public accesses, and along the shores to kick off the open water season. This is a period of time where the fish are in a negative to neutral mood. This is a time where T.H.E. JIG really shines because of its slow fall rate in the water column. Over the years, I have caught some of my largest panfish, particularly crappies during this phase.

The second phase, to me is the longest phase of spring panfishing lasting typically 3 weeks or more in most regions. The water is warming from the upper 40s to mid 50s and green weeds are starting to grow towards the surface in the shallow bays. By now, the public accesses are busy with activity. The 'word is out' so to speak about the fish biting. The fish are in a neutral to aggressive mood depending on weather and now fishing pressure. This is where using a good pair of polarized glasses and the long poles I mentioned really help me put more fish in the boat than any other time. No matter how quiet you try to be, your boat still makes noise and causes a disturbance in the shallow water that the fish can

sense with their lateral line. Not to mention if it's sunny, and how your boat and yourself if your standing can cast a shadow onto the water and spook catchable fish!

With the long poles I can stay way off of the fish that are staged in the shallows and still be able to reach them with a long cast.

The third and final phase to me is leading right into the actual spawn and when the fish





are on beds. Shallow or skinny water is where the 'pencil' weeds and cattails are and where those slabs look to make nests.. A lot of angler's, myself included have now switched gears and started to fish walleye, pike, and bass here in my home state. The water temperatures range from the upper 50s to mid 60s and the panfish are searching out their spawning grounds. The fish are again in a neutral to aggressive (protect the nest) mood. I use my polarized glasses to locate the beds and the fish. I then use the long poles here to 'dabble' my

lure right on the bed the fish are on. If I don't see any fish, I don't even bother fishing the spot. They are either there, or they are not. It's that simple. A key is to cover water while chasing these nomadic feeders.

If your favorite body of water has extensive 'pencil' weed flats---look there for the fish to start bedding. Better yet, if these pencil weed beds are very near to where you have been catching the crappie's weeks prior. Just dropping your jig in beds, pockets and wait for a strike. Or the use of a small slip float and a jig tipped with a minnow or small leech for 'gils. I prefer to tip with minnows at this time because I'm leaving my lure in one place for as long as I can, and waiting for the fish to find it. The long rod is now used to lift the fish almost straight up and into the boat out of the reeds. During this time, it's real easy to tell the males from the females. The males will be very dark compared to the females. The females will be full of spawn and fat in the belly. I always try to use a selective harvest method during this time, keeping only a few males for a meal.

I hope some of these tips and tactics will improve your spring panfishing adventures. It's a great time to get kids both young and old out on the water.

When you hit it right, the action can be non-stop.



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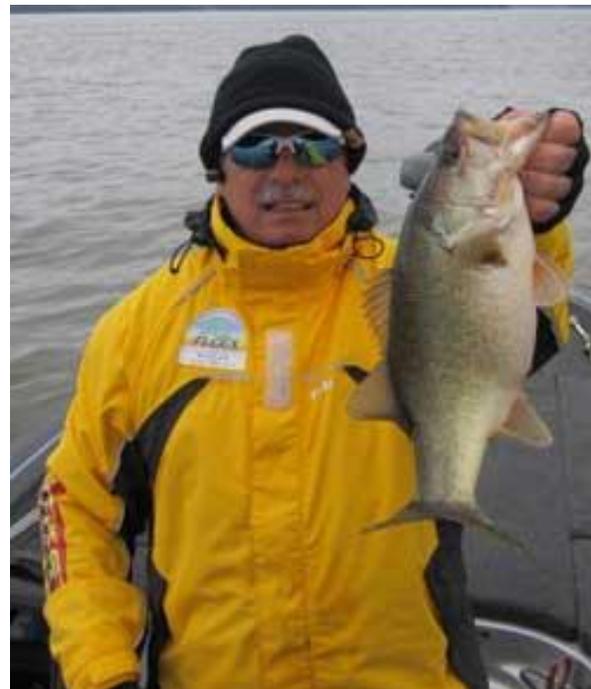
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It's getting close to the time of year when your electronics becomes your best friend; you're running down the lake and notice a big school of fish light up your Lowrance HDS unit in 30 ft. of water. You stop quickly and mark the school then drop your trolling motor; your next step is to figure out what do I do to get this massive school of fish to bite. Time is critical and presentation is everything; well here are my suggestions.

There is probably no bait that has been more prolific in fish catching for big schools in the last ten years than a big jigging spoon; its big flashy profile and the ability of the bait to get down to deep drops quickly and catch fish is unchallenged by any bait developed in many years. Spoons are designed to work horizontally with weights up to 1.5 oz. that offer a long profile that matches the size of the shad the bass are feeding on. A note of thought on using one of these spoons is to take notice of the bottom, flutter spoons have extremely big and sharp hooks that will hook up on the bottom structure real easy so be aware of the bottom and use it more over shell beds and hard bottom areas or you could lose them very easily.

Big spoons can be fished over many depth changing areas of your lake; they offer some of the best presentation for off shore points, ledges and humps especially on big bodies of water along the Tennessee River. Big schools of fish are most likely very competitive and a big flashy spoon fluttering down along their head and body turns on their competitive spirit allowing you to many times hook up on doubles. Make long cast, stay off being on top of the fish allow your bait to flutter down and jerk it up ward when it hits the bottom; the fluttering drop movement is just about impossible for the bass to ignore. The hook-ups generally come during the drop so let it flutter with a tight line so you feel the hit.



## *The Dynamics of Big Schools of Bass*

*By Captain Mike Gerry*

Big schools of bass like flashy baits and nothing drives them into the competitive mode better than a big flashy jigging spoon!

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An advertisement for Daiichi fishing gear and a book. The background is a scenic view of a lake with mountains in the distance. In the top left, there is a logo for ODU MAGAZINE with a mountain silhouette. Below it, the Daiichi logo is prominently displayed in yellow and black, with the tagline "World's Sharpest Hooks" in red. In the bottom left, the text "2015 Photo Contest" is written in large, bold black letters. In the center, there is a book cover titled "Fish, Frogs, and Fireflies: Growing up with Nature" by Robert D. Montgomery, featuring a silhouette of a person fishing. In the bottom right, there is a circular logo for "SNAG PROOF" with a fish icon.

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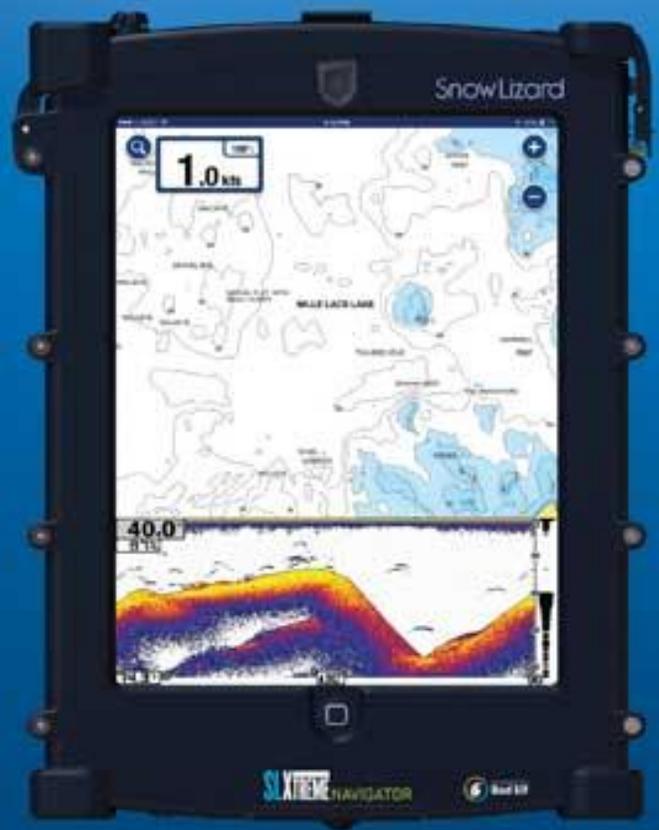
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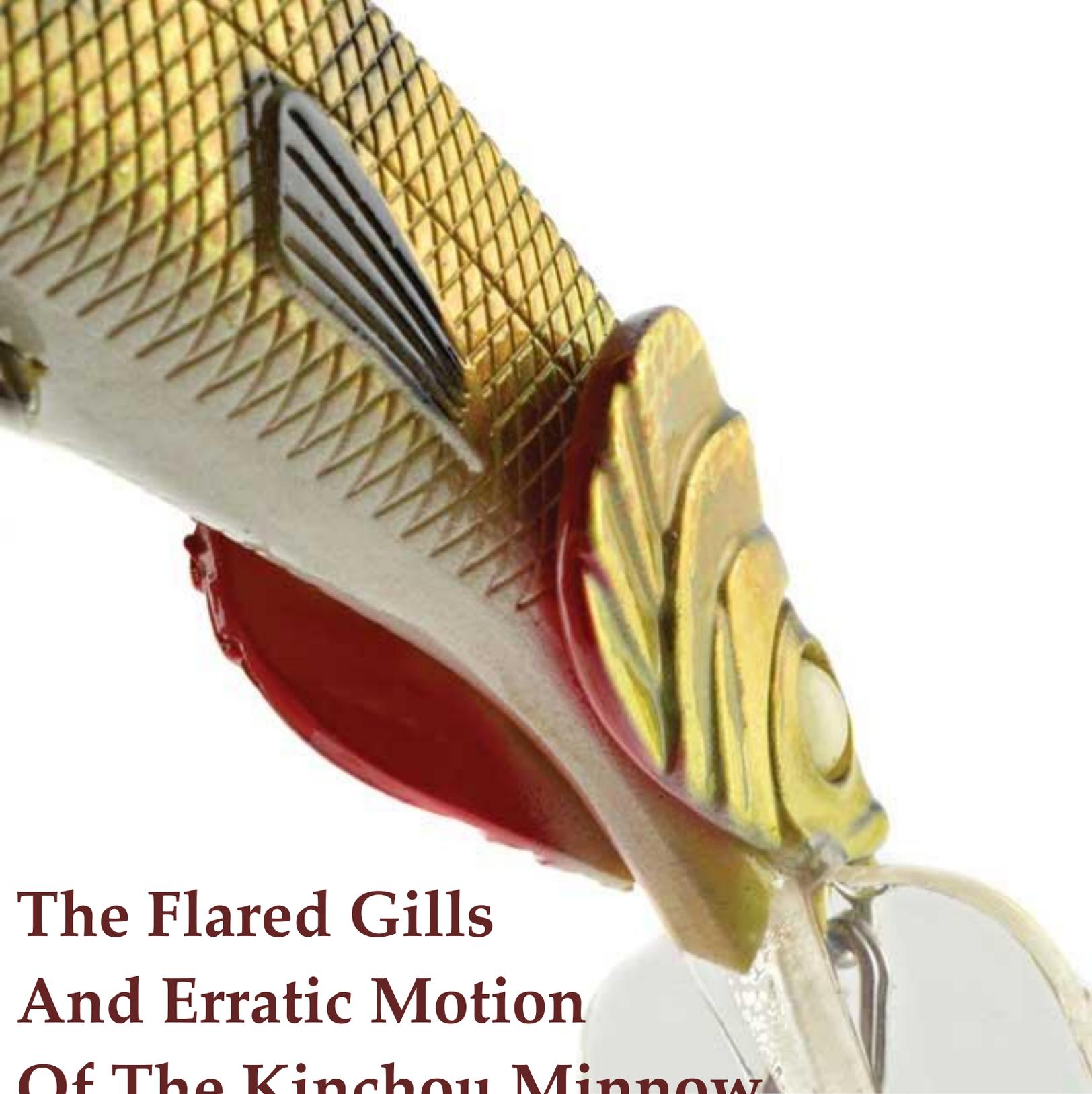


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# The Flared Gills And Erratic Motion Of The Kinchou Minnow Takes A Big Bite!

By Marianne Huskey

For over twenty years, I've been fishing predator fish throughout the Midwest. Growing up, I can still recall listening in as the adults swapped their fishing stories and recounted the details of their favorite baits that were absolutely "crushing the fish," or simply "couldn't be kept in the water." As a curious young angler, I couldn't wait to experience this kind of bite.

As I got older and continued to hone my skills on the water, I really started paying closer attention to how the fish were hooked on my bait. Often it seemed that even though I'd get a great bite, there were always those fish that would come in on the back hook of a crankbait, and still manage to shake off right at the back of the boat.



Since I have been using Matzuo Kinchou Minnow, I can say that losing fish off of the back hook are few and far between. The Kinchou Minnow is different from other baits on the market. The action of this bait is equally effective both casting and trolling. It has the ability to both dive and, thanks to the signature flared-gill design, keeps its erratic, side to side wobble, even at trolling speeds as slow as .8 mph or when casted with a spinning reel in cold water temperatures and retrieving slowly.



### ***Marianne Huskey Series***

As a result of this “nervous” action in the water, the fish really seem to attack the Kinchou Minnow differently than other baits. While fishing a National Walleye Tournament on Lake Erie in 2013, I began to notice something different about the walleye I was catching

on the Kinchou. Typically when trolling for walleye, the fish caught will have either the entire front hook in their mouth or the entire back hook in their mouth. The walleye I was catching on the Kinchou had the entire bait in their mouth with only the plastic lip sticking out—they were engulfing the whole bait!

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to talk with anglers from around the country targeting bass, crappie, stripers, and trout who have had the same Kinchou experience. I have received multiple emails, Facebook messages, texts and conversations expressing the same reaction—it seems that no matter which species of fish you target with the Kinchou, they just can't resist gobbling up the entire bait! No matter what species of fish you're targeting, in terms of quality and performance, you really can't beat the Kinchou Minnow.

ODU MAGAZINE VIDEO BLOCK  
([www.odumagazine.com](http://www.odumagazine.com))

As a walleye angler, I prefer to troll the Kinchou Minnow using 10# mono on both the Great Lakes and inland waters. When I am on larger bodies of water such as the Great Lakes or the Missouri River / Lake Oahe I will use the Kinchou size 11. For smaller or inland lakes I will use the Kinchou size 7 and size 9.

My color choice varies based on water clarity. On Lake Erie, which has a slightly stained water color, the Tiger Perch and the Chic Magnet never let me down. When fishing Lake Oahe, my color choices are Satin Glass, Chromatic Shiner, Tiger Perch and Churple.



*Kinchou Salmon Sizes*

As a guide on Green Bay, WI, I spend many days on the shallow reefs using the Kinchou size 9 with a brighter color presentation such as Chic Magnet, Tiger Perch, Purpledescent, Hypertension and Glass Cosmo.

For other species, see



### ***Kinchou Musky Sizes***

more information below from Matzuo pro staffers across the country on which Kinchou Minnow is right for you:

TROUT/STEELHEAD anglers have the best luck on the bright color selection that can be found in the Kinchou Salmon Series baits. In addition, many of them have reported back stating that the “Chic Magnet” from my Signature Series line was one of their best colors.

MUSKY anglers on Green Bay, WI troll the Kinchou Minnow size 18 at a depth of 12-15 feet. In these depths the best presentation is 25’ of line out and an Off Shore Trolling planner board. The most popular colors are Natural Perch, Loon and Brown Sucker.

CRAPPIE AND STRIPER anglers in Texas seem to gravitate towards the Satin Glass color in size 7.

### ***Kinchou Sizes***



BASS anglers have seen success with the Stiletto color in size 7 and size 9.

To view the entire lineup of Kinchou Minnow and Marianne Huskey Signature Series Kinchou Minnow colors, sizes and styles, please visit <http://www.matzuo.com>. Keep up with the Matzuo conversation by following our Facebook page at [www.Facebook.com/MatzuoAmerica](http://www.Facebook.com/MatzuoAmerica).

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# MUSKIE FISHING FROM A KAYAK

By Richard Ofner

“Have you ever seen the teeth on a Muskie?” was a comment that was made to me when I first decided I was going to try targeting Muskie from my kayak by a fellow that I was buying some used Muskie gear from. That was back when I first started fishing from a kayak when the sport was just getting noticed here in Southern Ontario, Canada. Targeting Muskie in a kayak was unheard of back then and there were very few people doing it.

At that time I had a Hobie Adventure which I didn't originally purchase for the intent of fishing, though when I did start fishing from it about a year after purchasing it, I quickly realized what a great craft it was to fish from. As a novice angler, I really had no idea how to rig a kayak for targeting any species, especially Muskie. Almost six years later, and having owned and rigged several Hobie Mirage Kayaks, I have been successful catching muskie utilizing several tactics, each method with different aspects of rigging that will help you catch what is known as “the fish of 10,000 casts”.

It isn't complicated and outside of trolling, catching Muskie from a kayak can be done with very little rigging.

## Trolling

A strong setup for trolling is important with rod holders that will bare the impact of a Muskie hit. I personally like the Scotty Powerlock as a good all around rod holder, which will hold both baitcasters



and spinning reels. There are several mounts that can be used, a Scotty Flush Mount, or Combination Side Deck Mount and even the combination of a Scotty Gear Head or Side/Deck Mount attached to a YakAttack wide track, which are all good strong installations for mounting rod holders to your kayak.

A sonar/GPS is also a valuable accessory to have when trolling as it will help you to maintain a

consistent speed that you may be trying to troll at. Once you have fished an area and have either caught or marked fish, a GPS can mark your spots for future reference. When Muskie are suspended in the water column there is no mistake when they show up on your sonar what kind of fish is near your kayak.

## Jigging

We will jig for Muskie on the Detroit River at certain times of the year in water deeper than 15 feet. The main accessories that will aid in jigging will be your Mirage Drive for keeping your line vertical in the current.



A sonar/GPS that will mark suspended fish, record hot spots, monitor bait fish, and water temperature.

## Casting

While casting for muskie, an anchor attached to an anchor trolley, can be a great tool to help you hold onto a productive spot that you know is good muskie water. My anchor also has a large red float attached, in order to be seen by the

power boats fishing the same area at certain popular times of the year, when muskie are concentrated in a small area of a lake or river. You will be fishing in tight quarters and it is possible for these powerboats to come very close to you.

A Sonar/GPS is nice to have when casting, though it isn't as important as when you are trolling or jigging a river, since you are usually in shallower water.

### **DIY Accessories**

When it comes to rigging my kayaks, I rarely use any do it yourself type accessories. Lake St. Clair which is one of the best muskie lakes in North America for volume and size, is a flat shallow lake with little structure. Side Imaging where you can pickup data up to



240 feet on both sides of your kayak, is a valuable tool for this type of lake and because the transducer needs 180 degrees clearance from any obstacles below the water line you have to mount it outside of your kayak. With the aid of Side Imaging, it will show you a larger path of the area you are trolling or searching to cast or jig for Muskie. It reveals contours, cover, structure, and baitfish, that you otherwise wouldn't be able to interpret as well with traditional sonar, and important to finding muskie. A few years ago I tried using Side Imaging on my Hobie Adventure, mounting the transducer on the rudder. It affected my steering and would also collect a lot of loose vegetation and weeds from the water, which unless I could shake it off by lifting the rudder there wasn't an easy way for clearing it without getting out of my kayak. This past season I thought of giving Side Imaging another try on my Pro Angler 14, and though I have never seen an example of mounting the transducer from the bow, I designed and manufactured my own fixture that would hold the transducer below the water line directly in front of the bow with the ability to lift it out of the water in case it became full of weeds. A regular sonar transducer was installed in the Hobie transducer compartment using a Y-cable to attach both transducers to my Humminbird 999 unit. The bigger screen also made it much easier to interpret the side imaging results. My setup worked satisfactory and I hope to make some improvements with possibly adding a small motor to lift and drop the transducer automatically.

### **Advantage of Hands Free Fishing For Muskie**

The Mirage Drive which gives you hands free fishing, makes a big difference when targeting Muskie. Trolling two rods with large baits will cause a lot of extra drag and if you add some wind and waves, it will be difficult to maintain a minimum of two mph. With the strong thrust of the Mirage Drive, you will be able to maintain speeds needed to troll for muskie.



The Bondy Bait which has made jigging popular in the Mid-West has been the go to bait for deep water jigging in the current of the Detroit River. Maintaining a vertical line in current and wind is made easy with the combination of the Mirage Drive and being able to steer with one hand corrections, while continuing your up and down jigging motion.

Targeting Muskie without a Mirage Drive and hands free fishing, will limit you to casting.

### **You Have Never Fished For Muskie?**

The “fish of 10,000 casts” is a myth, at least here on Lake St. Clair and the Detroit River where specifically in November anglers travel from most of the mid-west states and Southern Ontario to target a trophy muskie. This is also the best time for catching one from a kayak as they will be at the mouth of creeks and rivers chasing shad.

There isn't really anything special you need for your kayak other than what was mentioned earlier in this article, more important is that you have the correct gear to safely land, unhook, and release a fish as most anglers targeting muskie practice catch and release. The essentials include:

- A reel that can hold at least one hundred yards with a minimum of 65 lb braid. My reels are spooled with 80 lb as I find it keeps your line from digging into your spool, especially when throwing anywhere from six ounce to one pound baits.
- A rod at least seven feet long, heavy action, and one rated for throwing large baits if your casting. You could probably use the same rod for jigging. For trolling you will need a softer rod, as it needs to absorb the hit from a muskie. I have witnessed anglers that have used a stiff casting or jigging rod, have their rod holder explode on impact of a muskie hit.

- You should have a large muskie net that will allow you to keep the fish in the water while you unhook.
- Carrying a good pair of side cutters to cut your hooks if you cannot get them out of the muskie's mouth.
- A pair of jaw spreaders will aid you to keep the mouth full of teeth open while you put your hand inside if it is deep hooked.
- A first aid kit might be a good idea, as sometimes you may get caught by the large hooks or the muskie's mouth.

My first time targeting muskie, I hooked up and landed one 15 minutes into my day. It was 48 inches and still my biggest to date. Beginners luck, and there were three of us fishing out of kayaks plus several more casting from shore and a couple in power boats in a small popular muskie hotspot. We didn't see another fish landed that day, and it took me a couple years before I caught my second muskie. Partly because I mostly target muskie in the fall, though I have a friend who just took up kayak fishing in 2014 and targeted muskie most of the year landing 32.

Most experienced muskie anglers will help out a beginner, showing you proper equipment, areas to fish, proper landing, and handling, with the interest in maintaining a good muskie fishery. Look for a local or regional muskie club for information or contacts that can help you land that first muskie from your kayak.

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# Seizing the Moment

...and say cheese!



by Mike Borovic

So it is said, “a picture is worth a thousand words”, but a good picture captures the moment-of-a-lifetime.

For the most part, 35mm, 110 film and flip photo albums are long gone. The new alternative art form comes purely from the birth of the digital age. Anglers and hunters today, now have the means to creatively produce, present and preserve their most cherished memories in many different ways. With a simple home computer and camera, the power is all at your fingertips. From photobooks to a high-definition video slideshow, the possibilities are only limited to your imagination.

I am not a professional photographer, but I have taken many pictures over the years. I would be lying to you if I told you otherwise, but as a youngster I took pictures of fish and game simply to show them off and brag. At such an age, I had no idea how much I would mature to appreciate photography and the memories they can provide. Today, I find myself trying to capture the beauty in things. I feel the need to try and put my harvests into perspective and seize the surrounding moments others miss.



A well-taken photograph can be displayed in such ways as an alternative to a taxidermy mount, because not everyone can afford to have everything mounted. And for some, available space in the home may be an issue; such was the case my wife and I faced when she harvested her first buck, but a buck significant enough that deserved to be appreciated in some way. A simple solution was a largely homemade wooden frame with a print on canvas. The display took me about 2 hours to construct and less than \$60 later.

Now if you have the time and some basic art and

crafting experience, you can easily cut out a photograph in wood on a scroll saw for something different. Here, I have done just that, illustrating my cousin Tony and myself in our passion for canvasbacks.



Like I said, creativity is only limited to your imagination, but let us get back to “taking better pictures”. You don’t need a big fat fancy slippery pickle of a camera with a price tag the size of a mortgage payment to effectively take good pictures and you don’t need a degree either. All you need is a simple, decent quality point and shoot camera that takes high-resolution photographs. The secret is being serious about your shot and taking your time. Yes, the key point here is taking your time.

This article is not about choosing a camera nor am I going to marathon jibberish about shutter speeds and apertures. There are plenty of camera shop associates who would be more than happy to help you

with that, if that is what you wish. A piece of advice I do have especially from a hunting and fishing standpoint: Make sure your camera has a self-timer, a customizable one is even better. Most times I am alone, having the self-timer and a mini tripod have proven over and over to be priceless. Most of my images of myself are ones I took myself, and to be honest, I am glad I did.

Too many times I have taken a photo only to be disappointed. I want to share with you some basic things to insure that you get a decent snapshot of your trophy and avoid the many mistakes I have made over the years, things I’ve learnt the hard way.

Get in the habit of using the flash in bright daylight! This helps to eliminate shadows and bring out the details. More so when the sun is at high noon, use the flash to fill in the shadows, especially when you are wearing a ball cap.

If the focus is on the fish and angler then it should be treated as a





portrait. Move in tight to fill the frame accordingly. By doing so, you will expose detail and eliminate clutter; just be sure that part of your catch isn't cut off.

Be very mindful of glare when the sun is out, especially with fish, it can ruin a trophy snapshot before you even say "cheese". Fish are naturally very reflective, even more so when the sun is high and they are wet. Certain species can be harder to photograph such as steelhead and salmon. Any fish

silvery in color need a little extra attention.



Fifteen-inch crappies aren't easy to come by and I'd like to think they'd be prized just about anywhere across this country: definitely worthy of a photo or two. Here's a perfect example of how glare could slap you unnoticed, but with a slight tweak of my wrist I was able to save the day by changing the angle of reflection. It's ridiculously important to take lots of snapshots, that way you have plenty to choose from. You only need one good one, so why limit yourself to a couple when you could have a handful to choose from!



Sometimes close is good and sometimes closer is good too. Don't be afraid to get in super-tight. These creatures are all beautiful in their own special way and there is nothing wrong with trying to capture their grace. We don't always have to be in the picture, so step aside, and let Mother Nature's beauty have the spotlight... she deserves it.

If you want to get that "right-when-it-was-caught" feeling which certainly tells a more complete story to the photograph: Don't take the lure out of the fish's mouth.

Getting away from the "same 'ol same 'ol" is important. It gets old quite fast looking at the





same fish-holding posture over and over. Take time to compose your shots. Try something new, put that camera right on the ground next time you harvest a deer. The best photographs are



often taken from a low angle shooting upwards. Get high, get low, tilt the camera, and just try something different because you never know what might look good. And the coolest thing about today's technology; the little trash can button. That's right, you don't like it, just delete it.



Another great thing about today's technology is the ability to edit our own photos right beside the warmth of our own fireplace. I don't think there is a computer out there



that doesn't come with some sort of basic photo editing software.

I like it for the ability to crop and resize my images. I also like it because I am able to work with black and white. Back in the day if we wanted colorless photos we had to buy a special film. Today it's as easy as flipping the bathroom light switch.

The biggest misconception with such software is the belief that it can magically "fix" anything. At the end of the day, a lame photograph is just that. There isn't much you can do with it.



In my daypack I always have plenty of paper towels and wet-wipes. As hunters, it's natural that we are gonna have some blood to deal with. Take the time to clean it up, particularly around the animal's face. Snow, dirt, dust, water, whatever it takes, just get it clean. And for grandma's sake, whatever you do, make sure the tongue isn't hanging out.

Your photographs should be taken in the field as opposed to the bed of a pickup truck or a pile of dead fish in the kitchen sink. Just remember that never again will you be in that exact place and time. Photos will relive that

# Fish, Frogs, and Fireflies

Growing up  
with Nature

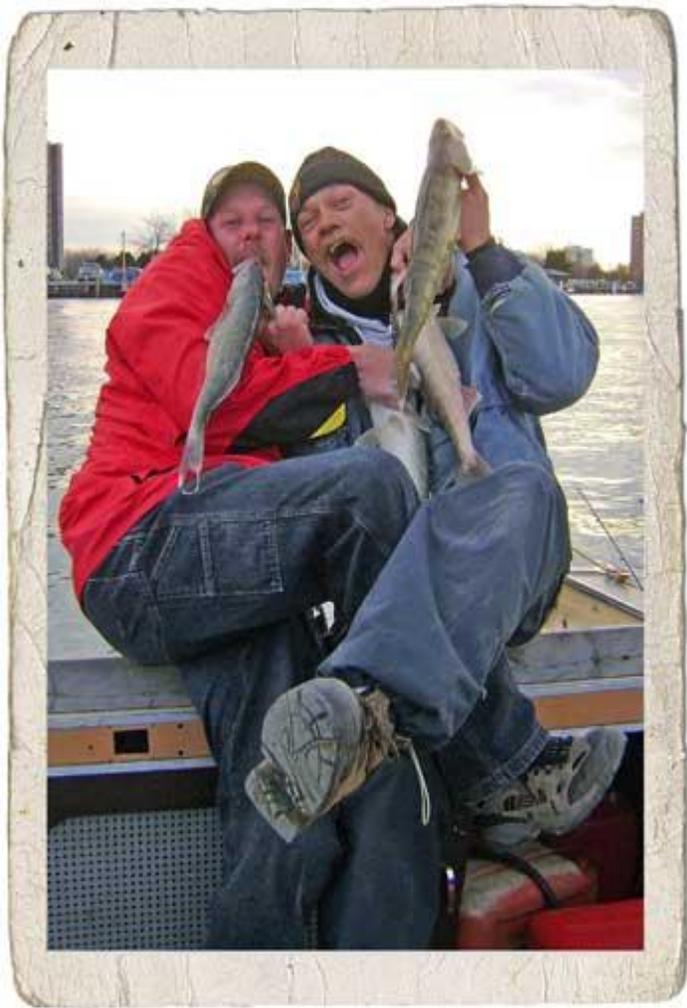
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## **Fish, Frogs and Fireflies: Growing up with Nature**

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experience forever. Livewell and driveway shots are great to text to your buddy at work but I can't remember the last time I saw a photo with a bloody nosed, field-dressed buck laid out on an oil stained gravel driveway hanging over someone's fireplace mantel as a center piece.

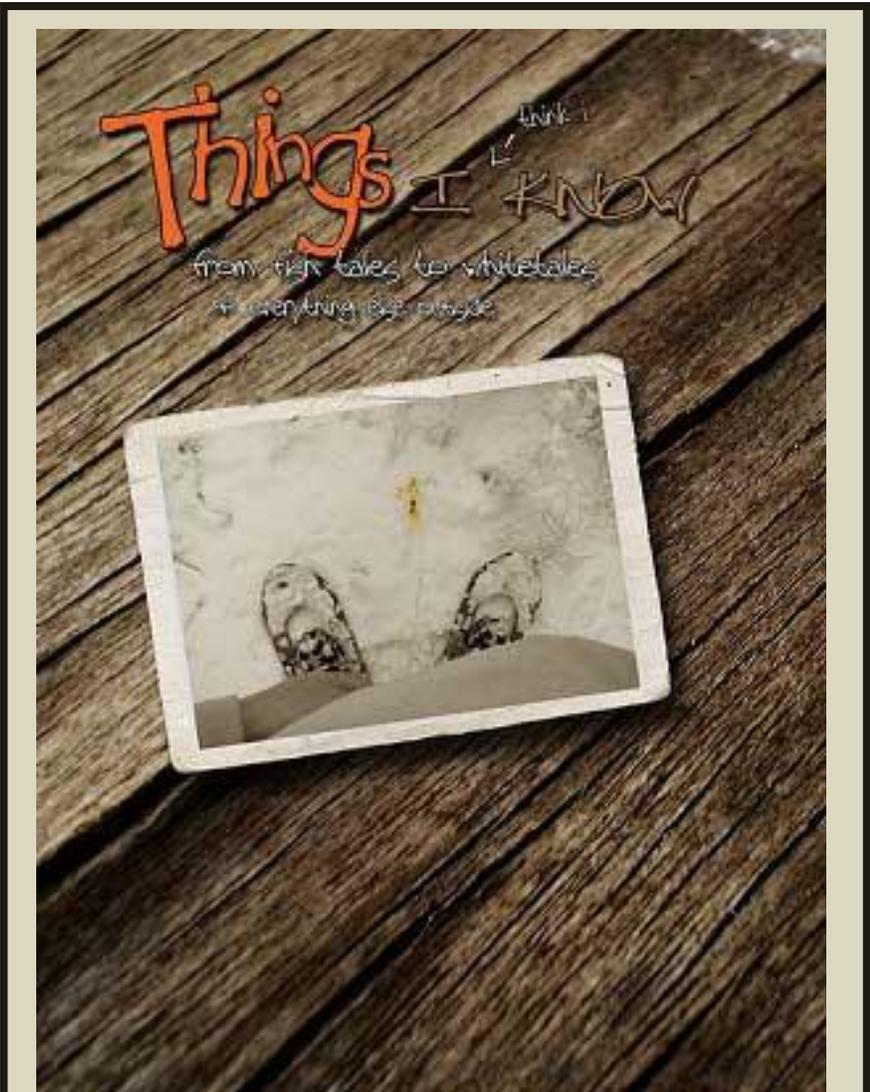
There's no question that natural light is the best light source, although the softer and more appealing light comes from the slant of the morning and evening sun.

Always make certain that the photographer or the camera and tripod are not shadowed into the picture. If you attempt sunrise and pre-sunset pictures, set up and start early as that sun moves quickly.

Take pictures of all the elements you're in, to capture the whole ambience. Get creative and photograph all the action around you. Look for different angles to shoot from. Hunting and fishing is about all the goodness in whole, friends, family, sharing good times and having a great time!

Smile big. Hug a little. Kiss a fish. Capture the joy that captures us. Take pictures... you'll be glad you did.

With the softwater now upon us, I wish you all a safe and happy fishing season with extra batteries in your pocket.



**April marks the year Anniversary for "Things I Think I Know" and there is no more appropriate way to celebrate it then to get it!**

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Len Andrews, Hall of Fame entrant, with a Florida largemouth bass.



P. Gabrielese holds a lunker bass, showing the fish with weight visible on a scale.

### 3 Easy Steps

1- Photo with weight visible on scale, **ENTIRE** bass body visible



Required



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2- Bass must be released.



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# Feel The BITE!



## ***The Hunter-Gatherer Jig Angler***

By Lawrence Gunther



Ever wonder where the term "Jig" came from? Hunter-gatherers have been fashioning fish attractors using feathers and fur for thousands of years. These artificial

baits would be jiggled on the end of a short strand of cat gut. Fish that drew near to investigate would be speared. It wasn't until much later that hooks were introduced. Early hooks were assembled with several fine bones or thorns tied together in the shape of a "V". The use of various metals to add weight and flash came much later. Interesting to note, it was primarily women who did much of the early jigging and spearing of fish.

Jigs may seem simple in concept, but the myriad ways they can be dressed and used are countless. From size, weight, shape, colour and the use of hair, feather or plastic attractors, all manner of adornments have been added to enhance their appearance. The endless variety of jig configurations can now make the task of picking one over another daunting.

Just as one wouldn't use a hammer for every repair job around the house, jig style and presentation method differ widely according to circumstance. The following factors need to be considered when selecting the ideal jig for a specific application. Consider: water clarity, light levels, local forage, current and depth, fish temperament, time of year, and fish habitat and structure.

The kick I get from buying new tackle still boosts my spirits. However, experience and a sore shoulder

has taught me well to avoid the temptation of preparing for all conceivable scenarios, as it only leads to a seriously over-weighted tackle bag. Jigs may be small, but in no time can add up to be quite the "boat anchor".

An easy way to keep a lid on over-stocking jigs is to limit purchases to a handful of colours. Instead of matching every conceivable hatch, go with natural colours for applications in open and relatively clear water, Black with a touch of something more vibrant for low light or heavily stained conditions, and



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# GAMMA

MOLECULARLY ALTERED LINES

***GAMMA Tip from Pro-Staff Jim Tutt: "Since using Gamma Line I have been able to reduce my line weight considerably. In the past where I might have used 14-pound for worm fishing, I now use 12-pound or even 10-pound. Gamma line is the strongest line I have ever used. Dropping down in line size gets more action out of lures and results in more bites. Using a smaller line will force you to check your line more often, make a good knot every time and take your time when fighting & landing fish. All these actions result in more fish in the boat. Do not hesitate to drop down to 8 or even 6-pound line for certain techniques. This size will land very large fish and I am confident you will get more bites."***

rattles only for low visibility situations. Colour is often the least most important factor. Well-loved jig heads pounded virtually free of paint still often get the job done.

To avoid falling into the trap of becoming a "Jack of all trades and a master of none", take the time to learn how to present jigs under different conditions. Presentation styles range widely from a simple lift and drop to sudden rips, and everything in between including: dragging, dead sticking, swimming, snapping, popping and twitching. Jigs can be fished directly below the boat or through a hole in the ice, pitched / flipped around visible cover, or fished blind by long-bombing them into open water.

More vigorous horizontal retrieve techniques meant to quickly cover

aquatic territory have me reaching for outfits spooled with fluorocarbon line and fast action rods. Fluoro sinks the fastest of all lines, and provides the straightest possible connection between the rod tip and your jig.

Deeper more vertical and slower presentation styles that demand rapid and instant hook sets increase the need for feeling subtle bites. Shorter extra-fast rods spooled with braid get the nod. The non-stretch properties of braid give a direct tactile connection to the jig below the boat / ice.

Ultra-light applications generally mean close-in work; making cheaper monofilament lines perfectly acceptable. Micro jigs used with ultralight outfits haven't the weight to



influence line stretch or sink rate, and even a basic ultralight rod will be able to transmit subtle bites without line stretch interfering. Besides, the bit of stretch in 2 or 4 lb line gives that added insurance against breakage.

## ODU MAGAZINE VIDEO BLOCK ([www.odumagazine.com](http://www.odumagazine.com))

In general, jig-rod actions almost always lean towards extra fast of whatever power will get the job done. The soft tip aids in detecting bites without imparting unnatural tension to the fish. It just doesn't feel right to fish when tasting or feeling small bits of potential food with their mouths to encounter resistance associated with something far larger. Jig rods should also have a stiffer backbone  $\frac{3}{4}$  up the blank for hook setting and to turn fleeing fish before they exhaust themselves beyond recovery.

A fast or moderate fast rod comes into play when actively swimming jigs horizontally. Fish first swipe at fleeing pray before making it a meal. The first strike is meant to disable the pray. The second and third strikes are signs of the fish actually eating. A rod with some give allows the jig to be slowed significantly by the first bite without it moving forward as if it possessed bionic strength.

The correct weight of a jig for each application is determined by current or drift speed. Generally, fishing as close to vertical is preferable as it affords maximum control over the jig without having to worry about dragging the lure into snaggy structure, or conversely, the jig drifting harmlessly just feet below the surface.

Penetrating heavy structure calls for heavier weights, as does clear warmer water. The first to break through to where the fish are residing, and the second to tempt active fish into reacting quickly without first having the opportunity to thoroughly size-up your offering.

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Under almost all conditions fish will strike a jig as it's dropping on a slack line. Too much tension, or any tension for that matter, will cause the jig to pendulum back towards the angler as it sinks; imparting the jig an unnatural look.

As a person who SCUBA's I'm constantly reminded just how little cover there is in vast areas of lakes and rivers. It's still possible to find fish in these open areas, but count on them being in continual movement. They expect their pray to be doing the same. When fishing over structure slow it down and even pause, but when the lack of tactile feedback from your rod is telling you there's not much down there, keep moving to improve your odds of crossing paths with actively feeding fish.

Lastly, retrieving a jig back to the boat may seem simple enough, but requires the application of basic geometry. The following holds true whether snapping, jigging or swimming jigs horizontally.

A jig cast out and then raised with the rod tip is going to have more forward momentum than vertical lift. Dropping the rod tip the same amount you just raised it isn't necessary. Follow the jig down by getting to know the sink rate, and then repeat the motion just slightly ahead of the jig to avoid line tension. As the jig draws closer, use less lift and more follow. By shortening the degree of lift with each stroke, your jig will exhibit a more consistent retrieve profile. By the time the jig arrives directly below, the movement of the rod tip on the lift and drop should be the same. This way when you do get bit you will know exactly how far your jig was above bottom at the time; allowing you to dial in your retrieve and eliminate waste.

Watching your rod tip to maintain a steady retrieve will work against you. Close your eyes and try visualizing what the fish are seeing. Do this, and I'll guarantee you will become far more adept at imparting a consistent retrieve, even if others observe the movement of your rod as changing with every stroke.



The evolution of jig fishing in the past 100 years is truly impressive. While the concept may seem simple and traditional, learning to fish jigs effectively under a wide variety of conditions has become an art in itself. Take the time to expand your jig fishing skills and embrace a tradition that goes back thousands of years.

# Anglers Need New Products and Lures

By Brad Wiegmann

Lure companies are always coming out with new products. It is a never-ending flow, but really do most anglers need more lures and fishing related products? The answer is yes, however, it may not be for the reasons you think and why Arkie Jigs continue to produce more and new products every year.



Every year, crappie seem to get a little wiser. What caught them the preceding year doesn't get as much as a sniff from a crappie now.

Over the years, crappie seem to have been conditioned about the danger of biting lures with hooks. It's not just one lure either as double crappie rig hook setups allow anglers to put multiple lures along with several poles. Unless it's new lures on these multiple rigs, the crappie have probably seen them before.

There are more anglers out there crappie fishing than ever before. It's true. Just go out on most Southern reservoirs you will see boat after boat lined up to launch. The growing number will only continue to expand putting more fishing pressure on crappie.

In the past, anglers had only one source of creditable information such as a father or relative. Now with the internet and cell phones, anglers can communicate even talk with other anglers on the water about techniques or fishing conditions. The internet also offers a bazillion YouTube videos on every technique, lures and how to catch crappie videos.

Equipment crappie anglers are fishing with has also taken a great leap forward. It's almost unbelievable how sophisticated fishing lines, reels, rods, trolling motors and other fishing equipment has come over the past few years.



Even rod holders have evolved with new and improved models coming out all the time. The value of adjustable, durable rod holders cannot be overstated. Although a few techniques require crappie anglers to hold on to a rod, spider rigging and long poling involve multiple rods rigged up while placed in holders firmly at the right angle.

One of the biggest advancements is in marine electronics. Now anglers can get picture perfect, photographic images of below the boat and side-to-side views with affordable units. It's never been easier to view below the surface allowing anglers to find cover, structure, baitfish and crappie quickly even on unfamiliar bodies of water.

Crappie anglers do have the advantage over crappie with new lures and terminal tackle. Lures get all the press in magazines, but some products with less fanfare often help anglers catch more fish every day. Terminal tackle such as jig heads, Tied Minnow Teasers and crappie rigs by Arkie Lures maybe the last thing on any angler's mind, however, it's the one thing that should be for successful

fishing trips.

"Demand for new lures and products by weekend and professional crappie anglers has driven the market, so in order to meet the request Arkie Lures has designed, manufactured and now selling several new lures and products," said Mitch Glenn, Marketing Manager at Arkie Lures.

Interestingly, crappie anglers wanted bigger sizes of original lures. "The larger size of traditional baits like our 1 1/2-inch Curl Tail Minnow and 2 1/2-inch XL Pro-Model Tube is driven by tournament crappie anglers targeting bigger crappie. They are willing to sacrifice bites to catch the bigger crappie. So we now have a 2 1/2-inch model," said Glenn.

Another Arkie Lures ([www.arkiejigs.com](http://www.arkiejigs.com)) bait upsized was the Crappie Crankbait. Once only available in the smaller 220 series, the newer 350 series Crappie Crankbait is bigger and can dive deeper. "The 350 series Crappie Crankbait has an





in-between wobbling action of a Wiggle Wart and tight wiggle of a Shad Rap, the action is irresistible to crappie," said Glenn.

Diving up to 11 feet deep, the 350 series Crappie Crankbait targets crappie in deeper offshore structure and cover without adding a weight. "Other features crappie anglers love about the new 350 series Crappie Crankbaits are the larger hook size on the lure, longer castability, it's high pitch rattling sound and it's super buoyant making the Crappie Crankbait ricochet off cover or structure erratically enticing strikes from crappie," said Glenn.

Due to demand, Arkie Lures has also come out with nine new colors in the Curl Tail Minnow and 12 new color patterns in the Crappie Crankbait series of lures. Although, the Crappie Crankbait series still comes in the original color patterns, Glenn feels the real excitement comes from working with renowned lure painter Scott Vance. "Vance's color patterns are all proven crappie catchers. These are also exclusive color patterns designed by Vance and only available on our series of 350 and 220 Crankbait Hots," said Glenn.

Arkie Lures has also redesigned the Crappie Tube line of lures. "Crappie Tubes

have been redesigned and improved. The 1 1/2-inch and 2-inch Crappie Tubes are dipped and salt impregnated. This makes the tubes tougher. Crappie will also bite and hold on to our Crappie Tubes longer because of the nature favor salt gives the lure," said Glenn.

The process of dipping a tube increases, the cost of tube style lures. However, Glenn noted it's worth it because they don't tear up as quickly as other plastic tubes.

A growing number of crappie anglers have begun using teasers to attract and entice crappie to bite. "Our Tied Minnow Teasers not only adds color, but flash to any minnow or artificial lure presentation. The hand tied teasers with rubber legs and Flashabo have a light wire hook so it won't impede the action of a lure or minnow; in addition to coming in new glow colors patterns," said Glenn.

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One other product Glenn was extremely proud of was Arkie Lures Double Hook Crappie Rig. Designed to meet the demand by crappie anglers spider rigging. "It's all rigged and ready to fish. All you have to do is add our new Ball head Jigs with double end barbs, our new Tube Insert Jig Heads, teasers or hooks. The design allows it to be used with fishing line up to 20 pound test as a main line and still have a natural presentation without collapsing or having to re-rig.

It's not just the crappie being conditioned. "It's the nature of anglers to watch other anglers to see where and what they are fishing. Anglers know if they see a big, bright buoy, you are crappie fishing a brush pile. If you are catching them, they will see that too," said Glenn.

To keep from attracting attention to your secret spot, Arkie Lures designed the new Stealth Buoy. The miniature marker buoy easily fits in a pocket and the small size keeps other anglers from seeing them.

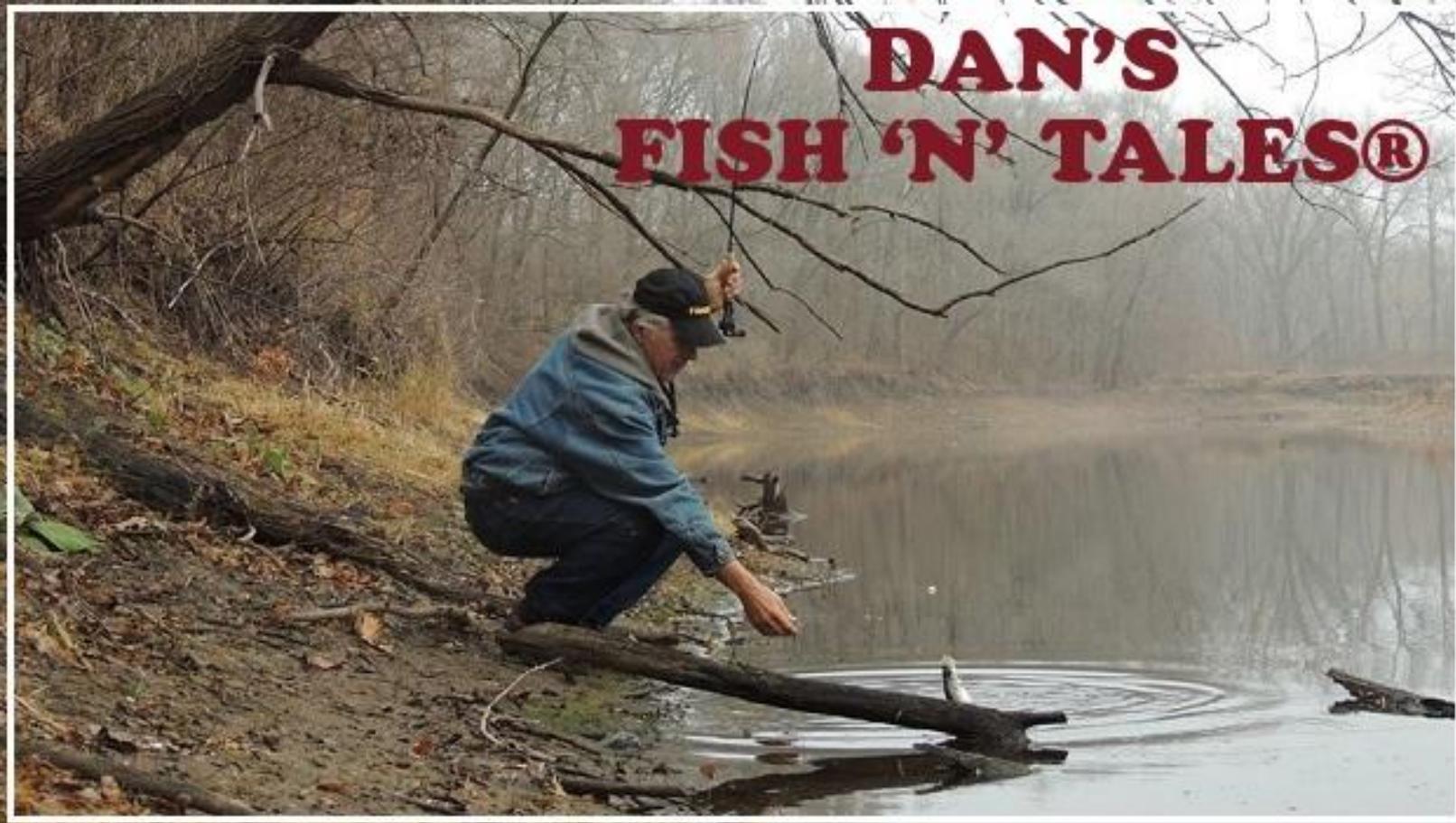
Successful crappie anglers fish with the latest products. New lures or different sizes can even trick crappie on lakes with lots of angling pressure into biting.

**Arkie Lures**



**Stealth Buoy**

# DAN'S FISH 'N' TALES®



## Basic Jig Retrieves

By Dan Galusha

Jigs are one of the best lures to combine with some sort of trailer in order to catch big bass. Unfortunately, many anglers stand back from pursuing this “tried and true” bass producer, because they feel it is difficult to master.

If three basic retrieves are learned then an angler can find himself using the jig more often. The three that I use are the swim, crawl, and what I call, the swimming crawl.

In order to explain each of these retrieves I will use a typical cover situation, which has been found many times. We will be fishing an area near a drop off, in 4 to 9 feet of water, which has sunken trees and brush. The lure used is a ¼-ounce, black/blue-skirted jig, with a black/blue or red flake plastic twin tail grub or craw worm trailer.

### SWIM

The cast is made towards the shore. Before the jig reaches the bottom a pumping retrieve is started. The jig is then swam up and down above the structure, only allowing it to tick the wood briefly, as not to stop the natural up and down swim.

This retrieve is a lot like using a spinnerbait, especially with the “slow roll” technique.



*An 1/8-ounce Blitz Spyder Finesse Jig with a 3" Power Minnow in a selection of colors used with the white/chrome jig.*

Strikes are often a bit more aggressive on this retrieve, as compared to the other two. Bass will hit it much like a spinnerbait, but with the difference of sometimes carrying it to the side as is done with the slower jig retrieves.

Many times when using this retrieve I will use a light colored Blitz Spyder jig with a pearl or oyster colored K-Grub as a trailer. I will also downsize using the white/chrome Blitz Finesse jig with a 3" Power Minnow or white 2" Manipulator

(twin or single tail) grub, and vary between the mentioned swimming retrieve and constant straight retrieve with the "finger jigging" technique using with spinning tackle.

## **CRAWL**

This time the jig is allowed to sink to the bottom. As the name suggests, it is then crawled slowly over anything on the bottom, making sure to stay in contact from the shallow to the deep areas. When a tree or brush pile is reached, the jig is pulled slowly up and over each piece, making sure it drops down after coming over the piece of structure. It can also be given some very short hops along the way, that lift it no more than about 6 inches from the bottom. An angler may also want to bounce on, and in, the wood cover.

The strikes encountered with this retrieve are what most

*Using a "swimming crawl" on the outer edge of rip rap along a dam, produced this nice bass.*



people recognize as the classic jig strike. It can be a slight tick at the beginning, a pick up and hold, or slow movement in any direction.

### SWIMMING CRAWL

Combining the two previous retrieves gives an angler this middle-of-the-road technique. The jig is allowed to sink part or all the way down, and then slowly pumped. When the trees and brush are reached, the jig hits and falls over the structures - not as far as with the crawl, but not just a tick of the top edge like a swim.

I've found that I use this retrieve most of the time. The bumping of the structure, and the fall over the top seems

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to excite the fish into striking.

The strikes are also a combination of both of the others. A hard hit can be had, but most of the times it is a "tick and carry", or slow swim to the side.

Being that these are the basic retrieves, anglers can improvise on them, and produce their own special fish producing technique. All of this, as with any technique/retrieve, can change from day to day with whatever pattern is found.

While fishing a jig is quite similar to using a plastic worm, the hook

*Bob Quist, a top-notch tournament angler, shows why his favorite technique is to swim a white skirted jig with matching, curl tail trailer.*



set is different. After the strike/pick up, don't give the fish slack line. Hold it tight to feel the weight of the fish, and set the hook.

Jigs are one of the basics in bass fishing, and if these three retrieves are practiced, and learned well, along with the proper hook setting technique, then some great catches will be found season after season.

If you have any

questions on this or other fishing subjects, contact me through the Dan's Fish 'N' Tales® website at [www.dansfishntales.com](http://www.dansfishntales.com). This site also provides links to the Dan's Fish 'N' Tales® You Tube channel, Facebook page for "likes" ([www.facebook.com/dansfishntales](http://www.facebook.com/dansfishntales)) and the ODU Magazine website.

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# DROPSHOT PANFISH

*The Best Rig You've Never Fished!*



By Ted Pilgrim with Brian “Bro” Brosdahl

*Dropshot rigs are wickedly productive for crappies holding from the bottom to about 5-feet.*

Amazing that such a versatile rig— this perfect presenter of soft plastics and livebait— would be so little employed by panfish fans. In reality, a dropshot rig can be as productive as a bobber and bait, or even a tiny jig. It’s even possible that the dropshot is the most versatile rig of all, providing instant depth control; fishes heavy without impairing or impeding the presentation; shines in shallow and deep water; and activates softbaits like no other presentation.

Despite the rig’s “advanced” connotation, the dropshot couldn’t be simpler. Think split-shot rig in reverse. As a softbait delivery method, the dropshot excels for bass. So it’s no surprise that small baits twitched and wiggled in new and tantalizing ways hold equal appeal for crappies, sunfish and big perch. If you can cast, you’re in. If you can tie a Palomar knot, you can master a dropshot rig.

## Dropshot Baits

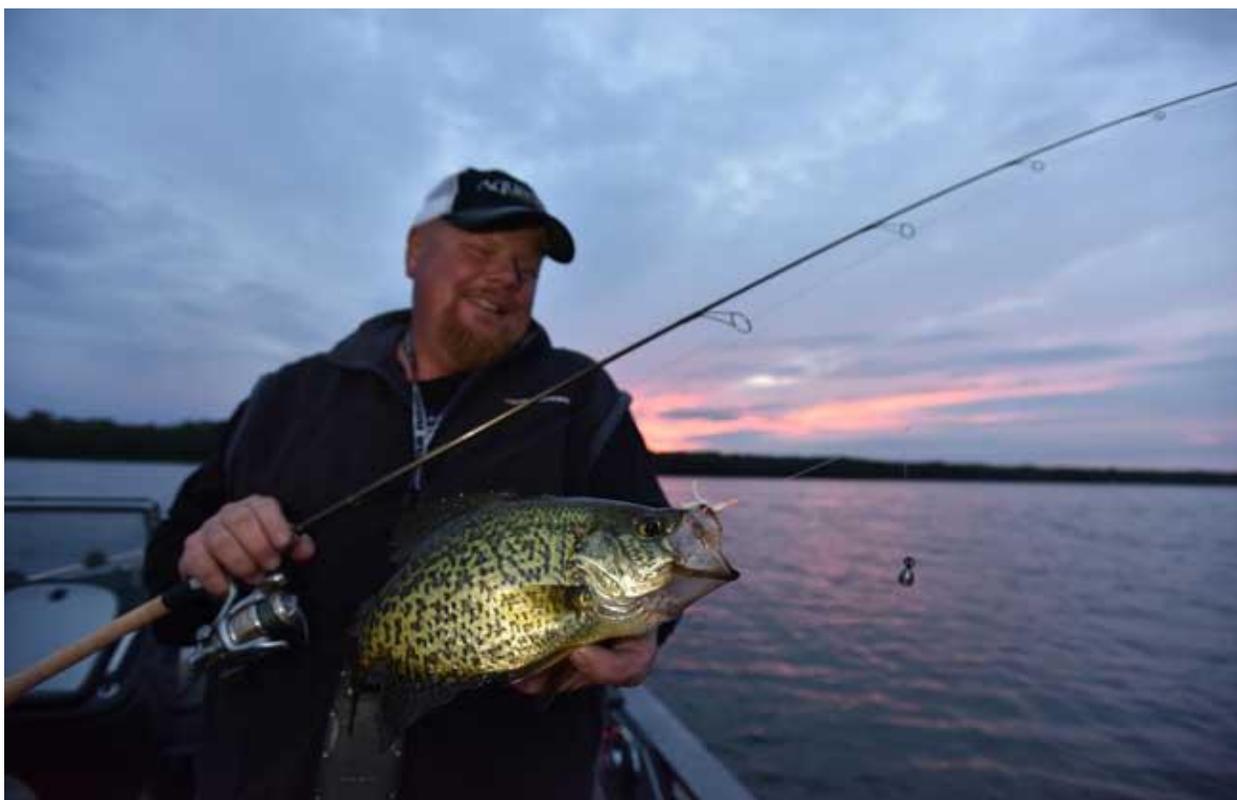
Tons of small softbaits now give panfish angler’s an arsenal of sweet options. Yet, while shapes like twister tail grubs excel on a jig, a dropshot activates straight tail worms, minnows and other subtle

shapes. Moreover, many classic softbait shapes traditionally threaded onto 1/8 to 1/64-ounce jigheads spring to new life when pinned to a plain hook above a sinker.

Consider the Custom Jigs & Spins Wedgee, a lively microbait “twitcher” that marries perfectly with a dropshot. Impaled onto a #10 or #12 short-shank hook above a dropshot sinker, the Wedgee and other wispy sliver-tail baits can be almost magic for palm-stretching pans. Deployed with a ¼- to 3/8-ounce weight, these tiny morsels move with spellbinding action. Other microbaits like Custom Jigs & Spins Finesse Plastics and Noodel and Northland Tackle’s Impulse Bro Bloodworm perform truly captivating dropshot dances.

Anything with nice soft appendages and a fine quivering tail is a potentially perfect dropshot enticement. So long as you can nose hook it on a #6 to a #12 fine-wire hook, such as an Eagle Claw L2B, nearly any miniature morsel can be made to tempt bites, including livebait.

“Any time I need to put a bait at an exact level and keep it in the fish’s face,” contends guide and panfish pioneer Brian “Bro” Brosdahl, “a dropshot is priceless. Not only can I cast a dropshot and simply twitch it in place, I can also drag the rig, swim it, troll it or even work it vertically beneath the boat or a hole in the ice.”



*Bass don't have an exclusive on dropshotting. Variations of the technique are effective for crappies, bluegills, perch and even walleyes.*

As with any presentation, of course, limitations exist. Shallow dense cover areas, such as thick vegetation or brush are largely off limits. Fish suspended higher than three feet above bottom are also better served with other approaches. But even this situation has exceptions. When crappies or sunfish suspend in treetops or sparse brush deep enough to fish vertically beneath your boat, a dropshot can be the perfect presentation.

### **Rigging the Drop**

Based on countless cover, depth and other conditions, a well-armed dropshot can be built with an array of possible componentry. “To detect bites,” says Bro, “I use a 4- to 8-pound test braided mainline, joining it to an 18- to 36-inch section of mono or fluorocarbon, using back-to-back Uni knots or an

Improved Albright knot.” Often, when hunting fish within a foot of bottom, Bro says, an 18-inch length of 4- to 6- pound test mono is perfect.

The most critical aspect of the dropshot is tying the Palomar knot so the hookpoint faces up. Bro interjects that an exception to the standard dropshot rig often becomes necessary with light biting fish. “Big bluegills often mouth a softbait like humans taste red hot food. So it’s sometimes best to rig with a short dropper, or pair of droppers jutting from the mainline, as opposed to pinning the bait to the line with a Palomar.” Beyond the obvious advantage of allowing fish to more easily flush a bait entirely into its craw—thanks to the semi-slack dropper line—Bro also extols the ‘flutter factor.’

“Once the sinker hits bottom,” he says, “a short 3- to 8- inch dropper gives your bait a nice fluttering effect—more movement—as the dropper and bait slowly descend to catch up. I also like that a dropper gives baits a little extra whipping action when you move the rod-tip.”

### **Situational Droppin’**

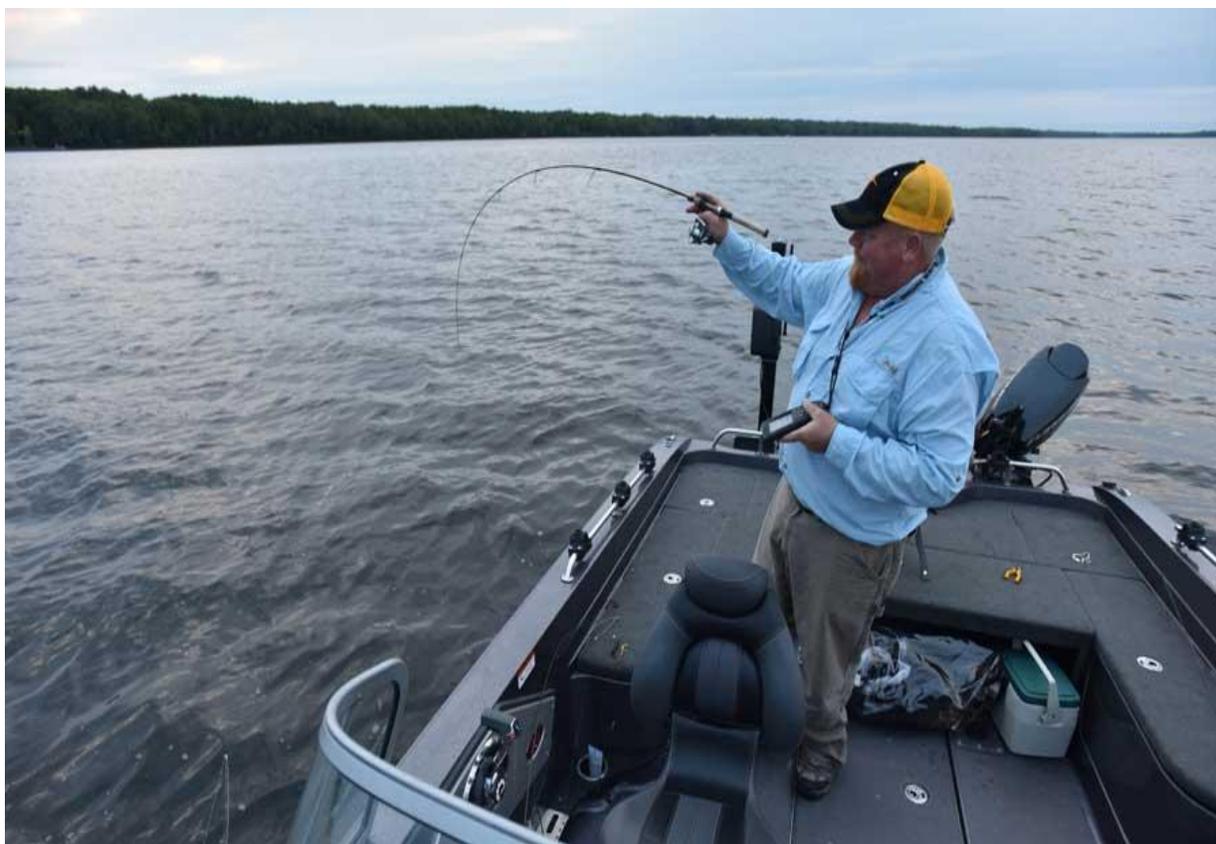
“Best rig there is for fishing just inches above low growing grass or small rocks, keeping a bait clean and at eye-level with the fish,” Bro asserts. “With a ¼-ounce sinker and 4-pound test, I can even get down to 20 feet of water fast, and fish with finesse and precision.

“In flooded trees and bushes, I’ll position my boat directly above a school of fish, and slide the rig down to a certain level—tops of the trees or mere inches above the level of fish I’m marking on the Humminbird. With Spot-Lock engaged on my iPilot, I’ll hover directly above and simply shake the rod tip to activate the bait’s tiny tail. The control you have with this presentation is unbelievable.”

For casting to shallow spring panfish, a dropshot can be powerful medicine. “Fish that have just moved up onto shallow flats aren’t real active yet. I use a 7-foot St. Croix Panfish Series rod to pitch a compact

dropshot rig past the fish and slowly work it into position. Once there, give the rod-tip periodic nervous shakes, so the sinker stays put, but the bait’s little tail quivers like a defenseless invertebrate, inches above bottom.

“A dropshot is absolutely beautiful for putting a bait at the fish’s eye level—right where they’ve got no choice but to eat it.”





# Frog Modifications

By Glenn  
Walker

As I begin to gear up for a new fishing season, one of the projects I undertake is to doctor up some of my Snag Proof Frogs. By making some small modifications to your frog, you can gain that advantage over your competition, by putting something different in front of a bass.

## Make Some Noise!

I like to make some of my Snag Proof Frogs LOUD. What I do is I insert jingle bells into the hollow cavity of the bait. This turns that frog in to a fish attracting machine and will call bass in from a distance. The rattles also add some extra weight to give me increased casting distance.

## Put Some Weight In It

I like to use the Pro Series Tournament Frog in the compact ¼ oz size when the bite gets tough or the bass just want a more compact meal. Well sometimes that ¼ oz weight doesn't allow me to put that frog where it needs to be. So what I'll do is wrap some lead around the shaft of the hook. Now I'm able to cast this compact frog to that juicy patch of lily pads from a far.

Before you hit the water this year, take the time to play around with your Snag Proof Frogs and make these modifications I noted above, along with ones you come up with and you can create a game changing lure!

Glenn has been fishing tournaments for over ten years, spreading his passion and knowledge of the sport via articles and videos. For more information check out [www.glennwalkerfishing.com](http://www.glennwalkerfishing.com) or on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/glennwalkerfishing](http://www.facebook.com/glennwalkerfishing).

If you're looking for a long standing old timer bait that has produced for years nothing fits better into that class of great baits better than jerk baits do. It has been around for years and has evolved as one of the best cold water baits ever produced. It's been such a prolific fish catcher that year after year new companies enter the jerk bait market with their version of the newest craze in their design space. The thing you can count on is that even the newest designs of this bait all appear to be pretty much like the old ones, their long slender and have flat sides; the change, some terrific new coloring but that is about it.



What I look for in this bait are a couple of things; the jerk bait must have sharp hooks as it is bait that you can easily lose a fish. To me that means Gamakatsu Hooks, as they are the sharpest in the world without question. I also try to go to an oversize hooks to help with the near misses; sometimes depending on the manufacturer the bigger hooks change the action so you have to be careful as not all the jerk baits can take the weight of bigger hooks.

# Keys to Jerk Bait Fishing

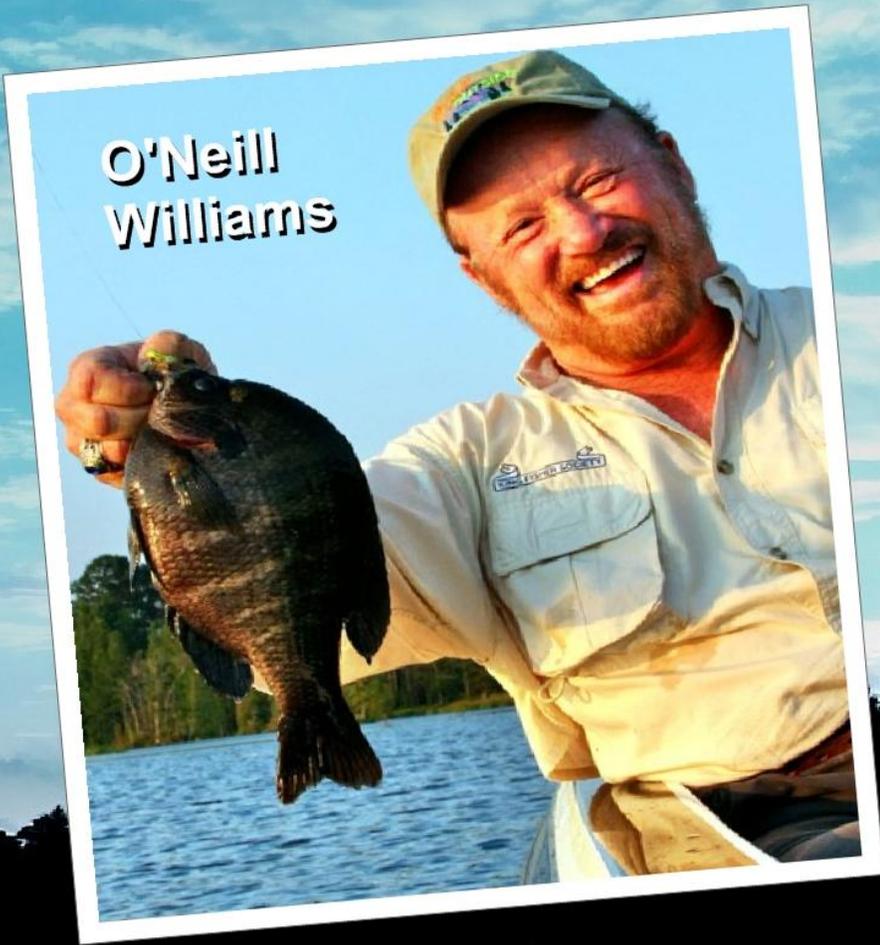
By Captain Mike Gerry

Presentation is everything when it comes to jerk baits, even though most jerk baits are the most effective when they are moved slowly it does not mean that you can't pull them in a hard jerking motion to get the most effective presentation. The jerk with slack line to me is the key, let the bait sit and rock but use a slack line to move the bait, as it is the slack in the line with movement that makes this bait so deadly. The key is that you can make sharp hard jerks or soft slight jerks and make the bait do its thing with your movement from the rod tip.

Jerk baits are deadly cold water baits and with the weather we are seeing as of late this bait is producing some great results!

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# Planning For Open Water Fishing

By Bob Jensen

My ice-fishing is officially done until ice returns next fall. Now it's time to start thinking about open water fishing. Every new year brings new things to add or consider adding to my fishing. In the open water fishing season of 2015, I've got some new things that I will be trying, and also some things that were new for 2014 that I will be expanding on. Following are some of those things.

This open water fishing season I am going to be more open-minded to new fishing techniques, and also to going after alternate species of fish. Sometimes we get too locked into certain lures or techniques or species and we miss out on catching a lot of fish and enjoying the fishing experience more. For example, several years ago I started hearing about using swim jigs for largemouth bass in situations where I usually used spinnerbaits, like around reeds. Through the years I've been pretty successful with spinnerbaits in the reeds, so I resisted using swim jigs. Big mistake! When I finally broke down and tied on a swim jig and started throwing it around the reeds, I started catching lots more bass. I still throw spinnerbaits around reeds, but there is always a swim jig tied onto another rod that I throw at least as much as the spinnerbait. If you want to be a better angler, you need to be willing to try new stuff.

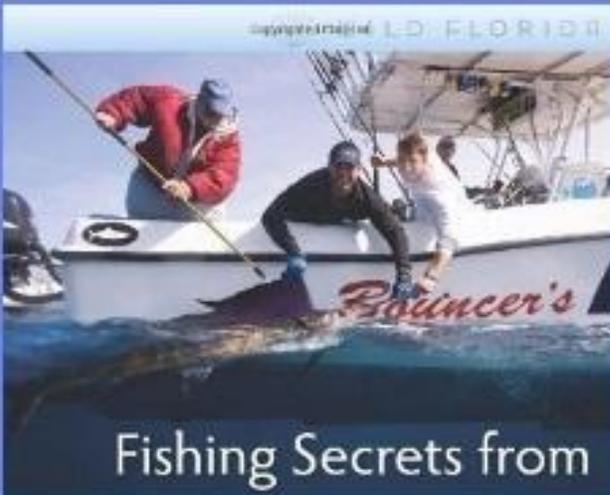
I've been using fluorocarbon line off and on for several years now. This year I'm going to be using it a lot more. Last year while using a friend's rod, I noticed that the line felt different and better than the line I had been using. My friend explained that it was Sunline's Super FC Sniper fluorocarbon line. This fluorocarbon was unlike any I had used before: It cast extremely well and was super sensitive. Fluorocarbon I'm told is nearly invisible underwater and has minimal stretch so sensitivity and hooksetting are enhanced. Fluorocarbon is going to be a much larger part of my fishing this year.

Plastics are also going to be a much bigger part of my fishing. For the past eight or ten years, I've been using plastic baits much more in situations that aren't usually plastic bait situations. Plastic baits were

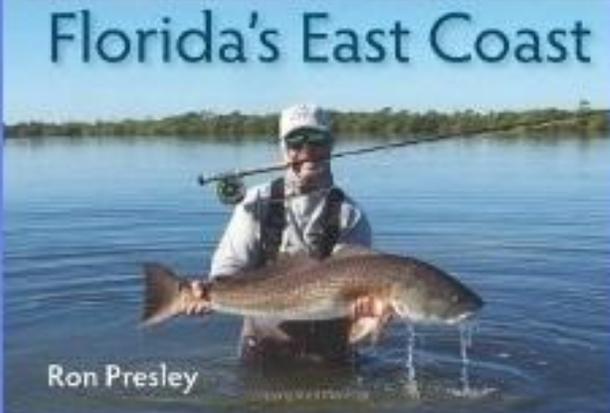


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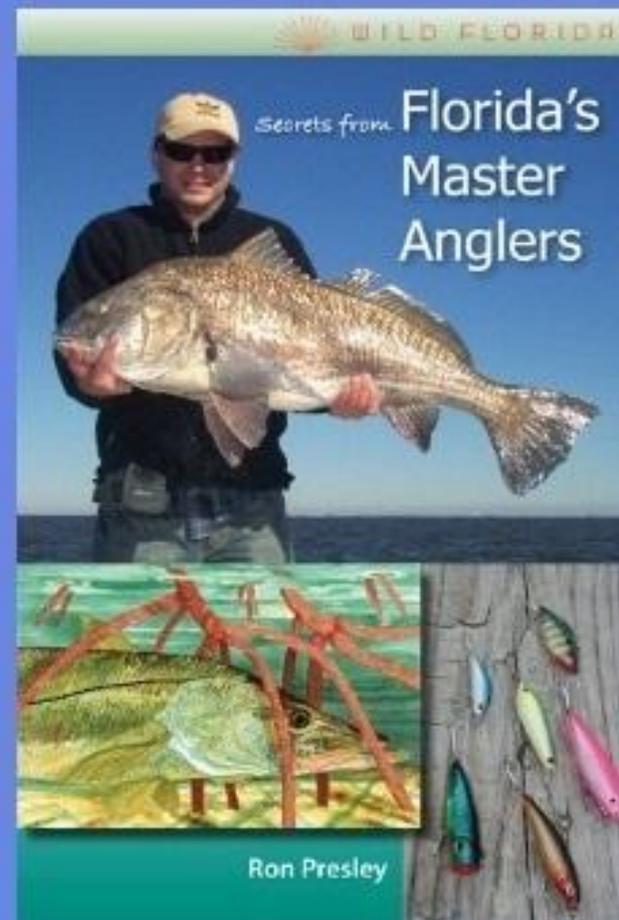
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developed for largemouth bass primarily, but they work great on panfish, walleyes, and smallmouth bass also. More and more, we're using Impulse plastics instead of live bait for walleyes. There's something about the Impulse taste or smell that's more appealing to the fish, and it comes in good shapes and colors. We're fishing it on jigs, spinner rigs, and even live-bait rigs. The key is, you've got to keep the bait moving. Plastic doesn't move by itself, the angler has to provide the action, and if you do, you'll find plastic is as good as, and in some cases, even better than live bait.

And talking about spinner rigs and live bait rigs for walleyes: Last year I was introduced to a new system for storing spinners and live-bait rigs that is really appealing to walleye chasers. These snell and spinner storage systems are called RigRaps and are a departure from traditional storage systems. They're enclosed, so they keep your snells and spinners stored neatly, yet easily accessible when you need them. They're also small, so you can store a good number of rigs in a small container. Great idea, great product.

There are other things that are new, or at least new to me that I'm looking forward to trying this year. But I just heard that the walleyes are starting to bite on a nearby river, so I'm headed there. I'll report on some other new things as the open water fishing season progresses.

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# MUSKIE BASICS

## LOCATIONS

## TIMING AND

## LURES

By Ted Takasaki and Scott Richardson



Sometimes muskie fishermen seem to spend as much time in bait shops as they do on the water. Muskie hunters seem to need all the latest and greatest baits in order to catch that one fish of ten thousand casts.

Right now is a great time to take an assessment of your muskie tackle in order to fill in the gaps. There are a ton of muskie shows around the country with vendors who would like to help you with discounted lures along with a wide variety of them.

In order to put the odds in your favor, it is important to keep in mind some of the key feeding periods and locations for muskies:

- Low-light periods such as early morning, evening, or at night
- Just before low-pressure storm fronts roll in
- A few days before and after full moon periods

- Wind-blown shorelines/rock reefs
- Big patches of cabbage or other fish-holding weeds with multiple open pockets and boulders around Muskies are at the top of the freshwater food chain and are not the most aggressive fish. Triggering fish to bite is the key to any successful muskie angler. Knowing when and how to fish a particular bait is often more important than the bait itself. The point is you just don't need a suitcase full of expensive lures to be successful.



### Shopping List of Essential Lures

- Bucktails, like Venom Outdoors' twin-bladed Rattler, work in spring, summer and fall by creating flash and vibration to attract and trigger muskies. They are also an efficient lure that is designed to cover water fast and effectively. They can be reeled fast to stay near the surface, or more slowly, to go deeper.

Use Colorado-bladed bucktails to run high in the water column or you can weight them to run deeper. Smaller blades can be reeled faster. Speed sometimes is the key to trigger strikes. Big double-bladed spinners with #10 size blades, have been very productive in capturing monster muskies.

The walls of tackle stores are covered with every color in the rainbow. But keep it simple. White and silver work well. Combinations of chartreuse, orange and black are good in dingy water or at night. Flashabou/tinsel are excellent when the forage are shiny like ciscoes, tullibee, or shad.

- A 10- to 12-inch crankbait like a Grandma can be twitched to resemble a wounded baitfish. It can be used shallow or deep. A few outlandish colors aren't bad to stand out in a crowd. But make sure to have natural colors that resemble the forage.



- A topwater propeller bait can be retrieved across the surface at varying speeds. They work best when surface temperature is above 65 degrees or are devastating at night. There's nothing better than a gigantic muskie hitting at boatside when you can't see it!

- A second topwater bait can offer a different look. Try a Jackpot, which slides from side-to-side. Or a Suick which is more a jerk bait, but dives just slightly below the surface.

- A pin-style spinnerbait offers both flash and vibration and can be fished top to bottom, fast or slow. The pin-style spinner also can be jigged up and down below the boat or trolled over the top of

weedbeds, on weed edges, over wood and along drop-offs.

- Larger crankbaits can also be used for trolling. Make sure you vary your speed in order to trigger strikes or find out what the fish want.
- Plastic baits have caught a lot of winning fish on the Pro Musky Tournament Trail, according to Jim Saric of Musky Hunter Magazine. Bull Dawgs make great 'throw-back' lures to trigger strikes after a follow on a crankbait. They shine on pressured waters and during tough times, including cold-front conditions.

No matter the lure you are throwing, always do a 'figure-8' at boatside after every cast. When trolling lures, speed up and slow down, in addition to making sharp 'S' turns with your boat. The change of speed and direction are key strike inducers.

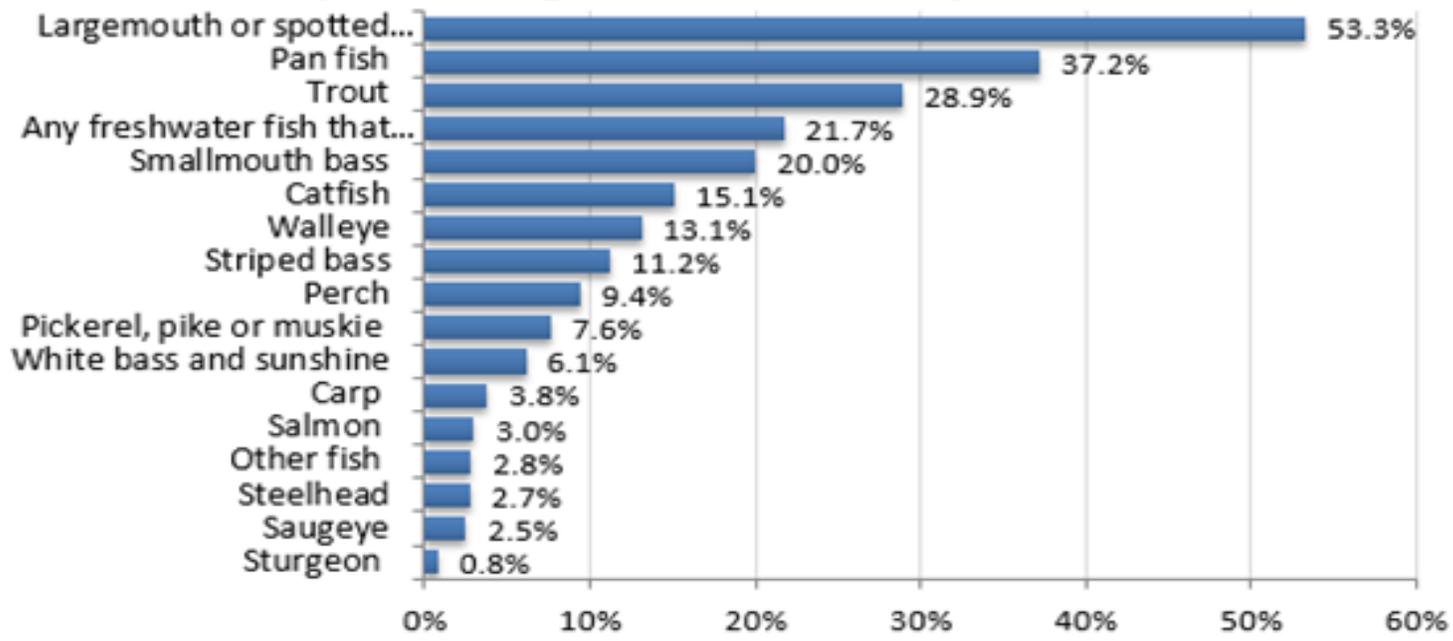
### **Release Tools**

Muskie anglers, who give everything they have to catch one fish, can't get that fish back in the water fast enough after finally subduing it. To be gentle on the giants you release, it's important to get quality tools for the purpose. Long needle-nose pliers and bolt cutters are must-haves. A protective fish-handling glove improves the odds of a safe release. Every boat should be equipped with an extra large net to keep the muskie in the water while you grab your release tools and a camera.

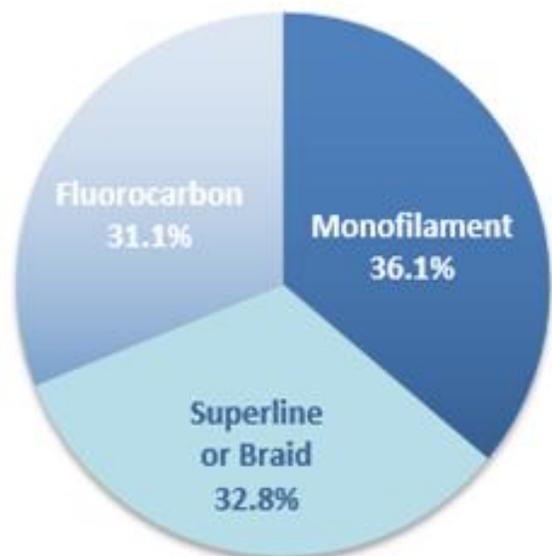
There's no need to take out a loan to buy a boatload of muskie gear, but it is beneficial to start with some key pieces. Keep your lures wet and be prepared to make a bunch of casts. Always maintain a positive mental attitude and make yourself believe that a big 'ski is right behind the very next cast!

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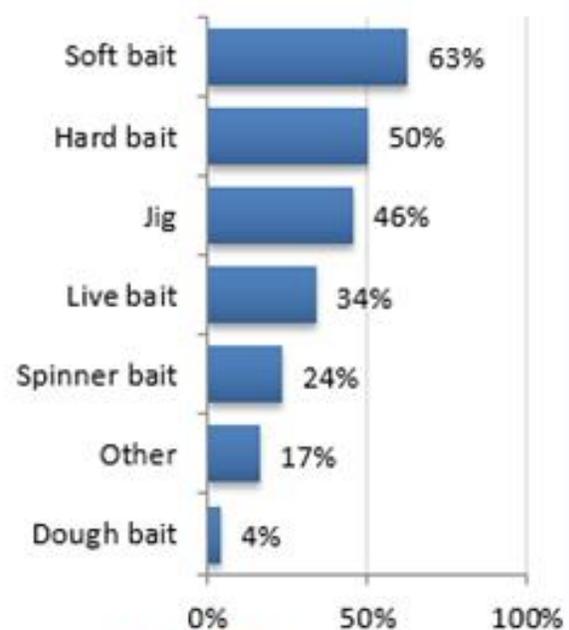
### Freshwater Species Targeted in March - April 2014



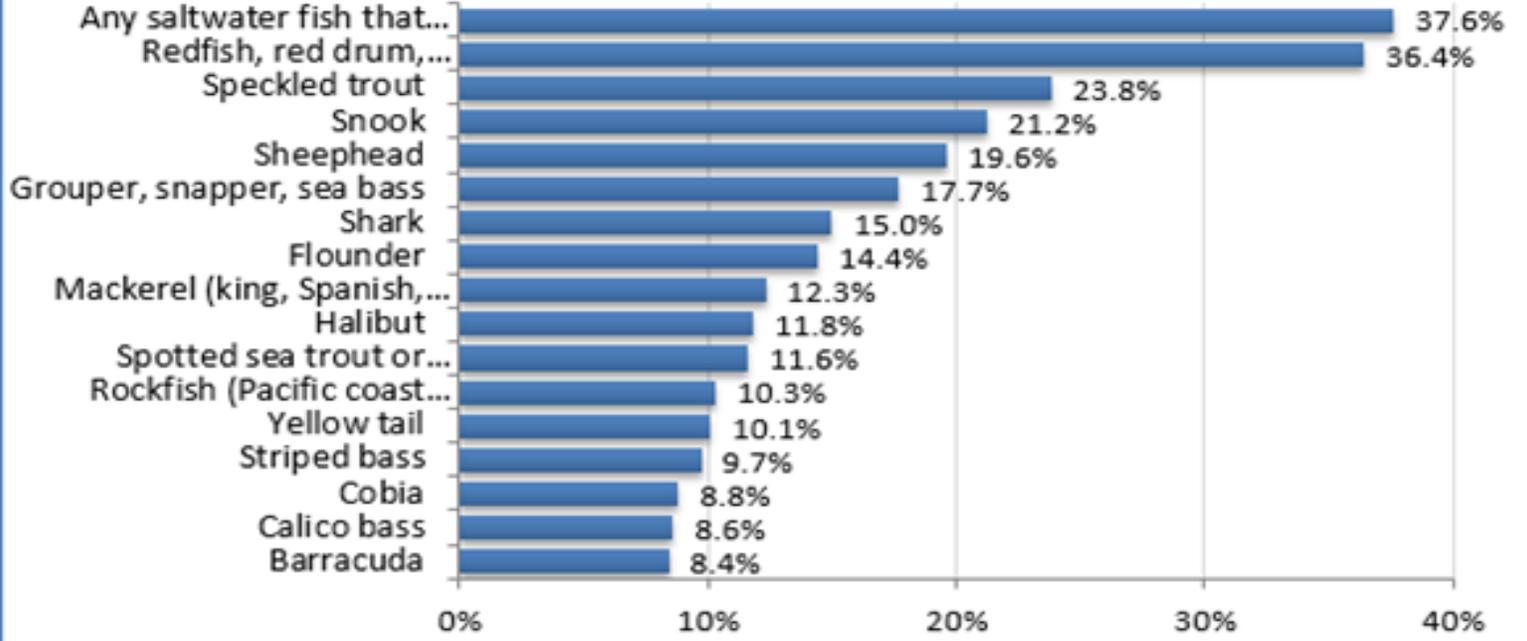
### Types of Fishing Line Purchased in March - April 2014



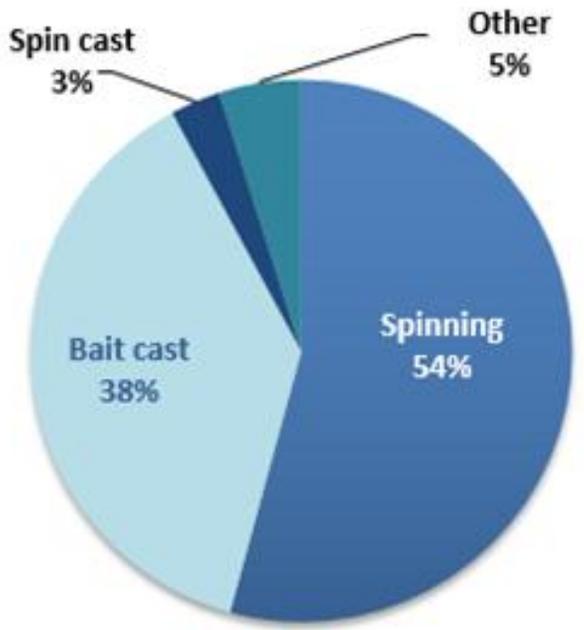
### Type of Fishing Lures Purchased in March - April 2014



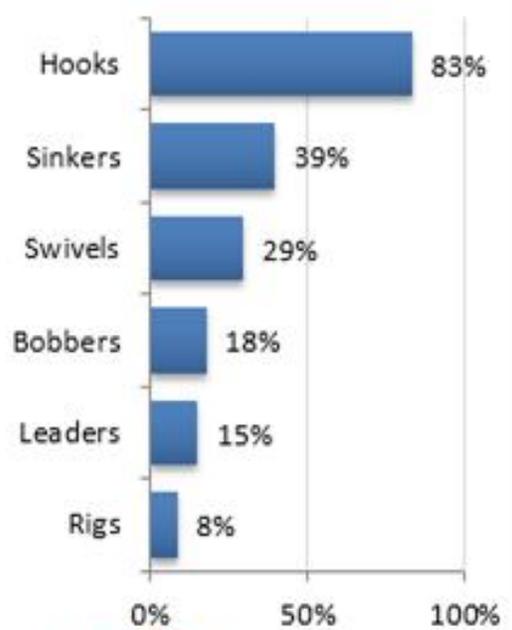
### Top Saltwater Species Targeted in March - April 2014



### Types of Fishing Reel Purchased in March - April 2014



### Type of Terminal Tackle Purchased in March - April 2014





# TRANSITIONAL TROUT

***SWEET SHORELINE  
TRICKS FOR EARLY  
SEASON SUCCESS***

By Dan Johnson

While the period between ice fishing and open-water action puts some anglers in limbo, it's actually one of the best times of the year to wet a line for a variety of winter-weary trout, including rainbows, browns and lakera.

"Hungry trout cruising predictable shoreline areas add up to the best bank fishing you'll ever experience," says veteran guide and compulsive salmonid stalker Bernie Keefe. While Keefe plies pristine lakes and reservoirs in the idyllic high country around Granby, Colorado, his strategies hold water in fisheries across the continent.

The first step is finding an A-list trout lake or pond where the ice is beginning to recede from shore. "I look for open water off points, here and there along darker banks, and near tributary inflows," he says,

explaining that each of these scenarios offers trout a place to fill their stomachs after a long winter under the ice.

"This pattern is all about food," he says. "Everything is hungry right now. Browns and lakere are totally focused on eating anything they can. And even though rainbows and cuttbows may be looking for spawning areas, they need to eat, too."

Let's start with shorelines and points. "Both of these areas offer increased bug life, especially spots with darker bottoms," says Keefe. "But it's important to understand the baitfish connection as well."

Here's how it works. "All winter, juvenile trout and suckers cruised the shorelines," he begins. "They survived by darting toward the bank whenever a predator appeared, and by tucking themselves into inches of water, where large trout couldn't reach them. Now that the ice is going out, this sanctuary is gone-and big, old, smart trout know these smaller fish are fair game."

Which explains why Keefe's lure of choice for such scenarios is a 3- to 5-inch-long, shallow-running slender stickbait, in natural shades of silver, gold or rainbow trout. Wielding a 7-foot, medium- to medium-heavy power Fenwick HMX spinning rod-paired with a Pflueger Patriarch reel spooled with 10-4 FireLine-he tiptoes quietly to the waterline and fires long casts parallel to the bank.



"Keep the bait close to shore, in about two feet of water," he says, noting that a 5-foot leader of 10-pound test Berkley Trilene 100% Fluorocarbon helps fool line-shy fish in gin-clear water. "Make a slow retrieve interspersed with rodtip twitches that give the bait an erratic action, so it acts like a disoriented

baitfish." Keeping all casts tight to shore, Keefe methodically works any stretches of open water between the bank and main icepack.

Many shorelines drop quickly into deep water, but some offer slow tapers that create expansive feeding grounds for trout. When Keefe reaches such a flat, he makes long casts from shore, then wades in and gradually works his way out to about waist-deep water. "Obviously, a good pair of waders is critical," he laughs.

Early mornings are prime time for Keefe's shoreline stickbait pattern. "Cloud cover and ripples on the



water can extend it, but it's generally over by 9 a.m.," he explains. "On our mountain lakes, you typically get glass calm conditions with full sun about this time of day." When that happens, it's time to shift gears. He rigs a 3- to 5-inch softbait such as a Berkley Gulp! Jerk Shad or PowerBait Minnow on a 1/8- to 3/8-ounce leadhead jig and tosses it out into deeper water a long cast from shore.

"Let the jig sink to bottom," he says. "Lift the rod tip and, while lowering it, quickly reel in slack to make the jig swim just above bottom. Continue this cadence back to shore. Work your way down the bank, casting every few feet to pick off trout that have moved into deeper water to feed on crayfish and minnows."

Once he's thoroughly

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worked near-shore depths in this manner, Keefe moves on to fertile inflows ranging in size from small creeks to mid-sized rivers. "Tributaries are usually running high and a little darker than normal, and offer trout an abundance of worms and bugs," he notes.

Presentational options include various flies and jig-and-softbait combos. "Or, you can do it the really easy way and bounce an angleworm along bottom on a split-shot rig," Keefe confides. Keys to successful worm rigging include threading the bait on a size 6 baitholder hook, and using just enough weight to allow the sinker to hop downstream with the current, without becoming anchored in one place. "Bouncing catches more trout than suckers, while anchoring gets you more suckers than trout," he explains.

To present a worm rig, Keefe casts slightly upstream and lets the rig wash down-current until it sweeps toward the bank. Strikes typically register as solid taps, and are met with a quick and solid hookset. "Focus on the rivermouth," he notes. "On a large creek you can work your way upstream, but the lower reaches are often the hot zone."

Keefe notes that the timing of ice-out bites varies from lake to lake. "In my area, it's starting right now in some of the high mountain lakes, and usually runs through the end of May on larger waters that are slow to lose their ice." By following Keefe's lead and monitoring the progression of ice-out on lakes in your area, it's possible to enjoy first-class shore-fishing for trout all spring.

Contact Information: For more information or to book a trip with Keefe, visit: [www.fishingwithbernie.com](http://www.fishingwithbernie.com) or call (970) 531-2318.

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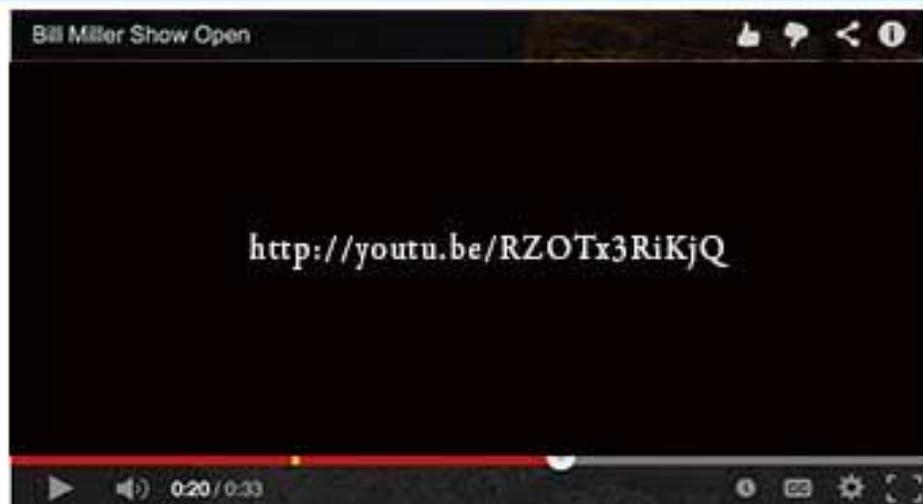
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# **TIPS FOR MORE WALLEYE THIS SEASON**

**By Jason Mitchell**

some of this Intel is hard earned. None of you want to know how many tough days of walleye fishing I have had in my life.

## **Tip One: Understand Water Clarity**

One of the secrets to catching walleyes consistently is just avoiding bad situations. Extremely clear water and extremely turbid water are two conditions to avoid when possible.

You can sometimes find the right water by using wind. On really clear bodies of water, wind will give the wind blown area of the lake just enough stain. On the flip side, what we see so often on wind swept prairie dish bowl lakes is that wind can whip up too much turbidity in the water and we end up looking for areas that are out of the wind so that the sediment can settle.

Fishing is usually better in stained water, that is water that has some color and this stained water often gets moved or pushed around the lake with wind or current. There is a difference between stain and turbidity. Fish can still see well in stained water but can't see well if the water is turbid.

Fishing can remain frustrating, humiliating and most of all humbling regardless of how much you get to fish or how much you think you have learned. There will always come a time when you feel like you just hit a wall. Anybody who has never been stumped on the water just hasn't backed the boat down the ramp too many times or they are not being honest. Either way we have probably all pounded a lake from before sunrise to after sunset with our pride seriously tarnished.

I can't tell you how many lessons I have had to learn over and over in my life but regardless, here are a few guidelines that just might help you catch a few more walleye this season. Believe me when I tell you that



This is why mud lines have a life cycle. Mud lines create an opportunistic window when waves crash up against a bank until a veil of turbid water protrudes from the shoreline. In the early stages of the mud line, the plume of churned up muddy water reaches out and hangs like a veil in the top of the water column and at this stage is typically when mud lines are the most productive. As the wind continues to pound and the veil becomes bigger and sinks down through the water column, the bite will often dissipate.

So often when wind churns up sediment and clouds the water, the day after the big wind can sometimes be the best because as the sediment sinks, the visibility increases yet still offers some stain in the water.

What also happens is that the water will get a green color as it warms up so we often find stained water with the temperature gauge. Colder water is often much more clear and warmer water is typically more stained.

## Tip 2: Focus on the Process

So often with walleye fishing, the key to catching fish is to find fish. At times, locations will let you down; specific spots will let you down. Tried and true patterns will sometimes disappoint. What never fails however if you have enough time is an honest and thorough process of elimination.

In order to truly be successful, you have to almost turn off human emotion and start checking off possibilities from the list. The walleyes should be shallow but they are not, next step is eliminating main lake structure in depths from twenty to forty feet as an example. The key is to keep checking off possibilities even if the possibilities don't feel right at the time. So often, there are things happening in an ecosystem that we don't have a grasp of until after the fact.

When it comes to finding fish, the least you know going into the day is sometimes better because you can adhere to the process of elimination easier. If you give something a good honest effort and it isn't happening, turn the switch. It is always amazing how many anglers will cling to a spot or pattern for agonizing amounts of time.

Been guilty of beating a dead horse myself. This is why a clock is an invaluable fishing tool. Use the element of time to force yourself out of ruts and also use the clock to slow you down when you begin to scramble. What can also happen in search mode is not giving any one spot enough time. Commit yourself to hour increments as you begin the process of elimination so that your day has some structure and you can stick to the strategy.

### **Tip 3: Worry About Efficiency**

I honestly believe that most anglers worry about the wrong stuff. They get hung up on matching the hatch or they simply out think the fish. With everything that you do in fishing, focus on becoming as efficient as possible because this can greatly increase your likelihood for success.

Consider this, if you can become twice as efficient, you can basically become twice as successful. Do some real honest self-evaluation and try to do an honest assessment of how much you actually have a lure or hook in front of fish. If you can take steps to become more efficient, you will basically increase your success exponentially. If you can land a higher percent of the fish you hook or hook a higher percentage of bites, your success climbs.

Most people want some secret formula. Some B.S. reasoning that if there is sunshine, you need to use bright colors or if there are perch in the lake, you need to worry about using a perch color. Worry about being in the right place at the right time and when you get an inch, take a mile. You do all of these things right and you can use the wrong color to catch all kinds of fish in the right spot at the right time until the paint is all chipped off.

### **Tip 4: Chameleons Catch More Fish**

We all have our favorite way of doing something. We all have something that gives us confidence. Sooner or later however, there will come a time when you are simply an observer. Somebody else is catching all kinds of fish and all you can do is watch. A little humility can do an angler a lot of good if you let it.

When it is your turn to watch somebody else put on a clinic, embrace



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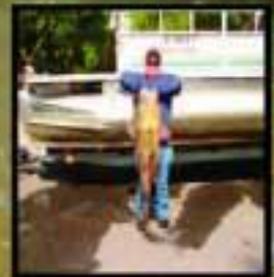
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the opportunity and let the experience make you a better angler. That means no excuses or over evaluation. Adjust and match, be the chameleon.

Again, don't get hung up on cosmetics but monitor and break down the big picture, watch the jig stroke, the rate of retrieve, casting angle, visualize what that successful presentation is doing in relation to the structure and fish. Visualize what the lure or presentation looks like. If you are fishing below the boat, look to see what the angle is from the rod tip to the water and match that angle with the angler that is

catching fish. Test location versus presentation so that you gather better information. Locational nuances to test might be pushing the boat up or out of the break.

When somebody is catching fish and you are not, the best thing that can happen to you as an angler, is to figure out why. This often means you will have to swallow some pride.

### **Tip 5: Make Time to Learn**

As a guide, it was easy to go right back to the same old well because of the familiarity. Could be as simple as going back to a good spot or sticking with a presentation that had worked well in the past. There are times however when we cling to the past as anglers and that experience that works so well for catching fish can start to work against us.

Spend parts of your day exploring. Make a point to try something different each day. Mix up exploring the unknown with the tried and true. Force yourself to embrace the unknown. Experiment with new lures, new tactics and most of all new locations. Try approaching old locations with a different mindset.

What I have found for myself personally is that learning new things keeps fishing exciting and fresh. I sometimes hear anglers complain that there is nothing new in walleye fishing but it is safe to say that anglers who are learning nothing new are not making an effort. By forcing yourself out of the rut, you not only expand your knowledge but also increase the amount of satisfaction from fishing.

Editors Note: The author earned a reputation as a top walleye guide on Devils Lake, North Dakota, now hosting the popular outdoor program, Jason Mitchell Outdoors. [www.jasonmitchelloutdoors.com](http://www.jasonmitchelloutdoors.com)

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# Timing Is Everything

## D&B Ice Adventures

As we roll into the spring and summer fishing season, it is hard not to mention the benefit of knowing what's happening in the world of the fish. Water temperatures slowly begin to warm triggering two major events in a fish's life; their

spawn and their post spawn rituals. If you are able to hone in on the specifics of these transitions, you will surely put more fish in the boat.

Panfish are for the most part extremely predictable. Whether it's perch, crappie or bluegill, understanding where to locate them while water temperatures warm is a major advantage. Warming water is the main factor that triggers these fish into their springtime movements. Depending on the winter and the spring, this usually starts towards the end of April and can run into the month of June.

Depending on the air temperatures, precipitation, and run-off the spawning period can happen fast, slow, or even in several runs.

After ice out, the water tends to warm slowly as the night time air brings any warming from the daylight back down. This period can be tough to fish, it is a great time to





capitalize on perch as they prefer the cooler water that usually ranges from 45 to 55°F. Perch do not build nests, rather they will lay their adhesive eggs in shallow areas that offers underwater vegetation, roots and trees. While the more structure the better, many times, a single limb provides enough habitat for their needs. There are many ways to target them depending on the depth you are fishing, from small jigs under a bobber to trolling small flies and Erie Dearies.

The size of some of the fish particularly the big females can be impressive as many fish over a pound can be caught in our region.



By the time the Perch are done laying their eggs, the water has began to warm into the mid 50's low 60's. This is the time to shift your focus over to two of our favorite fish, crappie and bluegill. In many of the bodies of water that we fish, we find both of these species spawning at the same time. However, the bluegills prefer slightly warmer water and are mostly found in

depths of two feet or less whereas the crappie tends to spawn in depth of 3-8 feet. Both of these fish build nests to lay their eggs. When surface temperatures reach the upper 50's to low 60's the males will migrate to the shallows and begin building nests. While it is possible to catch females regularly, their presence in the spawning grounds is short lived. They will slide in to drop their eggs and leave while the males will stay with the eggs until they hatch and are able to feed. The spawn for crappie and bluegill tends to be somewhat longer than that of the perch making for more opportunity to catch them. Because these fish use nests it makes them very aggressive towards our lures at this time.

This time of the year also shows the brilliant colors of both the black and white crappies, the males turn dark as they are spending much of their time in shallow water, black crappie males can get extremely dark. This is a good way to tell the males and the females apart if you do choose to keep a few for dinner. We believe it is important to think about the future of our fisheries and making sure the big females are able to spawn. We rarely keep fish during this time of the year but that is our choice, it is up to you with what you do.

After the spawn the fish will begin their migrations towards their summer grounds and for some this might be right where they are. Crappies will often suspend in main lake basins where they will remain until fall. Bluegill will often times stay right where they are, if anything they'll slide just a little deeper.



Weed beds in 8-12 feet of water are sure bets for summer time bluegills.

The short window between spawn and summer hideouts can also produce some phenomenal fishing opportunities. The spawn demands a lot of energy from both the males and the females with means once they are done they will have their feed bags on. Once again understanding the body of water in which you are fishing will help you pinpoint these areas for post spawn fishing. Look for these transition areas outside of spawning bays, sharp breaks and points are natural travel corridors for post spawn fish.

Timing is everything in the spring of the year. It helps to have buddies around the areas you fish to keep you up to date on water temperatures and water levels. It is important to learn the nature of each particular body of water to improve your chances for success. While the spring is a great time to catch numbers of aggressive fish it is also a time to utilize selective harvest methods to ensure that they are allowed to reproduce and carry on their species! Hopefully these tips will help you on the water, good luck.



# HUNTING CORNER



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# WATCH, LISTEN AND ADAPT FOR SEASON-LONG TURKEY HUNTING SUCCESS



By Josh Lantz with Eddie Salter

Evergreen, Alabama's Eddie "The Turkey Man" Salter is one of the world's most experienced turkey hunters. Over nearly 50 years of observation, Salter has refined his skill set through trial and error to learn what works in the turkey woods and why.

Most of the time.

"Old Tom Turkey plays by his own rules," says the Plano-Synergy pro, who may hunt a dozen different states each spring. "Just because I can puff out my chest after fooling one doesn't mean the next one's going to come the same way," he continues.

Yes, the Turkey Man is quick to admit that no single strategy works 100% of the time. It's what keeps him coming back to the field spring after spring, searching for the next unique experience or observation that will make him an even better hunter the next time out.

Humility is an important trait in any hunter, and Salter maintains his through ample lessons from the birds he loves, as well as a sincere appreciation for the opportunity he's been given to hunt turkeys for a living and to share his knowledge with others.



I had the opportunity to shadow Salter and his cameraman, Mike Miller, on a challenging hunt in the hills of central Kentucky during filming for Salter's popular Turkey Man television series last spring. Two things quickly became apparent over the course of our two-day hunt. First, Salter never gives up. If there's a tom in the neighborhood,



bird within earshot.

“Calling is an important skill a turkey hunter needs to have,” says Salter, “but it’s more important to know when to make those sounds. Anyone can learn to call, but if you want to kill turkeys with regularity, you’ve got to listen to those hens and jakes and toms in the field and watch how they interact together,” he adds. “There’s no substitute for experience.”

While every turkey-hunting situation is different, the Turkey Man has strong views on how hunters can, and should, adjust their strategies throughout the spring season.

### Early Season

t turkey hunters believe the opening days of the spring turkey-hunting season offer the best chances at taking a bird. This is probably true in most cases. Turkeys that haven’t

he’ll work that bird ten different ways until he either puts it down or pushes it into the next county. Second, Salter – a two-time world champion – is the finest turkey caller I’ve heard. His ability to effectively vocalize all manner of turkey sounds – with or without an actual call – is truly remarkable. Miller is an incredible caller as well, and the team worked in tandem to light up every

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been hunted in months can up the odds for success, but an abundance of weather-related variables can easily turn what should be prime turkey killing days into disappointing outings that often leave less-experienced hunters scratching their heads.

If opening day arrives on the heels of typical spring weather, hunters can expect toms to be fired up for breeding yet frustrated by hens that aren't quite ready. These are great conditions for the turkey hunter, as toms will be close to the hens and establishing dominance. These are birds that can be expected to respond favorably to effective calling – especially the less-dominant toms.

“You’re mostly hunting satellite toms in the early season,” says Salter, who often hunts from a portable ground blind during this period. “You’ve got a lot less cover at the start of the season, and a blind is a key tool,” he continues.

Turkeys are often less vocal now, too. “Silent birds can be on top of you before you know it during the early season,” he says. “A good blind set up is



going to conceal your movement when repositioning your gun towards the old tom that seemed to pop out of the ground right next to you like a mushroom,” he concludes. Of course, a ground blind also provides welcomed comfort and protection from early spring’s unpredictable weather.

Most seasoned hunters agree that weather is the single largest variable in early season turkey hunting. “So many times in a cold early season, the birds don’t crank up when you want,” says Salter, who recently experienced this very challenge during the opening days of Alabama’s 2015 spring turkey season. “Go to areas with a lot of sign that you know birds are using and try to deer hunt them a bit,” he says. “Use a couple decoys and try a little calling, but don’t be surprised or concerned if they don’t gobble,” he advises. “Have patience and move on to a different location after an hour or so. Pack a lunch and hunt all day if your state allows it. You’ll probably stumble up on one,” concludes Salter.

When it comes to early season decoy strategies, Salter prefers a single Avian-X breeder or feeder hen and a single Flextone Thunder Chicken jake. “I don’t like big, fluffed up decoys or a lot of them,” says Salter, who appreciates the relaxed posture of the Avian-X hen’s head, and the feather-like fan that moves in the wind on the Thunder Chicken jake. “Those small details help put birds at ease and can make a big difference whenever you hunt,” he says.

Deciding how much or how little to call can only be learned through experience, and is a critical consideration during the early season. “When toms are sorting out their pecking order during the pre-breeding period, you can have great success with aggressive calling,” says Salter. But it’s important not



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to overdo it right out of the gate. “Guys have a tendency to keep hammering away, especially when turkeys aren’t gobbling, but that isn’t always what the birds want to hear,” adds Salter.

Instead, Salter suggests starting with three or four little notes and building up gradually. “Wait a minute after those soft initial purrs or yelps, then apply a little more pressure,” he says. Salter will repeat this process a couple more times, getting louder and extending his sequence each time. “By the fourth time, I’m screaming 10 to 12 notes at them... feeding calls and throwing some cuts in, too,” says Salter, who often rustles leaves with his hand or a branch between calling sequences to simulate scratching and add realism. “Mix it up, and wait different periods of time between calling. Hens have a lot of personality, so put feeling into your own calling,” he suggests.

Salter’s point about each hen being – and sounding – different, was proven on our Kentucky hunt last spring.

We were set up on a ridge of oaks attempting to call in a stubborn tom from the next ridge over. Salter and Miller were each working slate and mouth calls simultaneously, playing off of each other and the live birds in the area with the precision and artistry of Duane Allman and Dickey Betts jamming the bridge to Jessica in 1972. During a brief pause, the world’s worst turkey caller started yelping down slope from us and out of view.

Out of cadence and more grunt than yelp, the calls sounded like someone working very hard to sound like a hen turkey, but failing miserably. The three of us, moderately amused, looked at each other with

stunned faces. Thirty seconds later, a live hen turkey – completely normal by all other accounts – cleared the ridge and proceeded to continue with her unconventional and entertaining yelping. She busted us and ran away when someone began laughing.

### Late Season

Conditions change in the late season, and hunters should adapt their set-ups and calling strategies accordingly.

Breeding is winding down at this time, and many dominant hens will be nesting. But while these older gals are laying and sitting, a number of younger hens will still be out and about broadcasting their availability to suitors. Those are the birds hunters need to observe and mimic. The toms are listening. Are you?

Salter says it's usually a good idea to tone down your calling during the late season, but recognizes that hunters should continue to let the birds tell them what they want. "If they aren't doing a lot of calling, I'll stick with those softer purrs, clicks and yelps," says Salter, who carries and uses a pack full of calls during this period. "I like to try a bunch of different calls later in the season... just for variety... to try and find that one he'll key in on," he adds. "If I can get a tom to answer, then I'll stick with that one call he likes, but won't be too aggressive."

Gobbler calls can also become effective hunting tools during the late season. Such a call can be used for shock gobbling birds on the roost, but also excels when used in conjunction with a mating yelp. It's a deadly combination that can bring a jealous old tom running in to look for a fight. But gobbler calls can serve another purpose in the late season as well.

"Gobblers will switch gears at some point late in the season and look to buddy up again," says Salter. "A call like Flextone's Thunder Gobble (pictured) is underutilized, especially late in the game when toms become more interested in each other's company again," he says.



The physical hunting environment also changes throughout the season. An increasing amount of foliage on the ground and on the trees makes visibility – for both turkeys and hunters – more challenging as the season progresses. But the heavier vegetation can also be an asset. “We often need to cover more ground in the late season, and the increased cover makes mobility and concealment easier,” says Salter, who recommends leaving the ground blinds at home at this time of year.

“I’ll work paths, trails and clearings where I can see more, but tuck into available cover using my turkey pack,” says Salter, referring to his Tenzing TP 14 Turkey Pack, which has a fold-down padded seat and unique spring-loaded legs to create a comfy backrest. “I can set-up anywhere with that pack in seconds and don’t need a tree or a log to lean against... It’s been a real game-changer, for me and a lot of other turkey hunters,” he continues.

The late season provides another key advantage for the turkey hunter, the importance of which cannot be overlooked. There’s simply less competition from real hens.

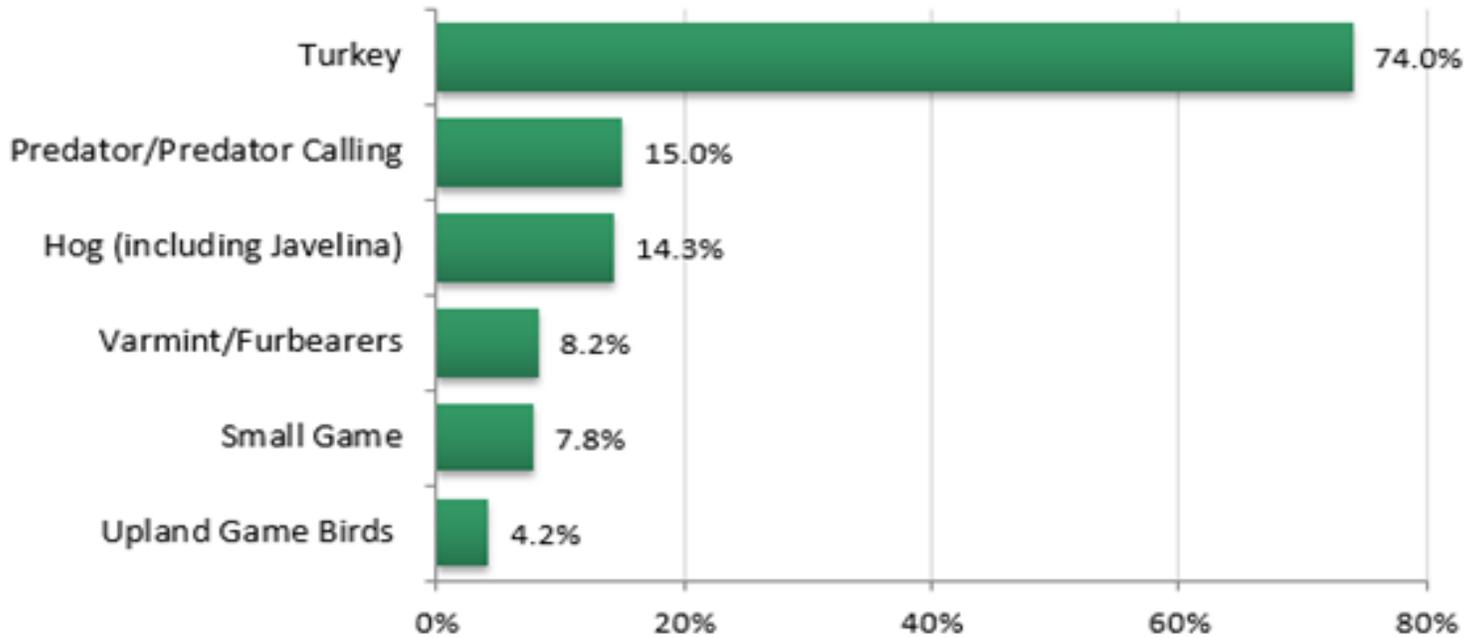


“If you find a tom that isn’t henned-up, he’ll likely be sucker for the proper calling and set-up,” says Salter, who tends to stick with his hen and jake decoy set-up throughout the late season. “Toms seem to make more mistakes during the late season,” he says, “and seeing that single jake with a hen is just something he’s not going to be able to brush off. He’s coming in; so let him make the mistake, not you. Watch what he likes, then keep doing it and you’ll get your bird.”

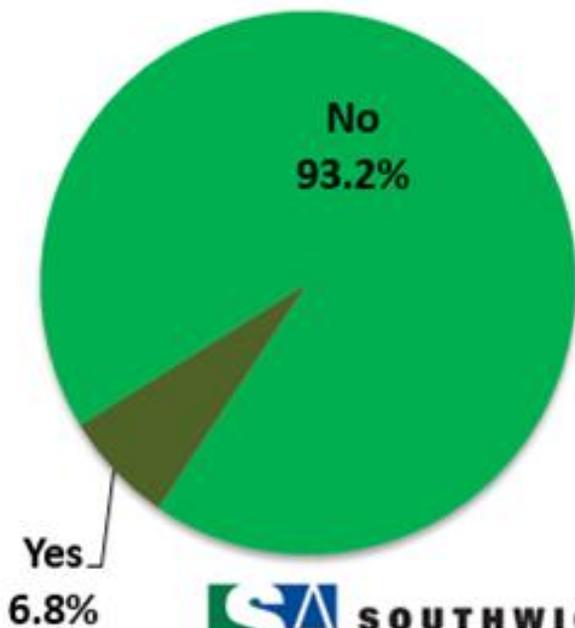
The most successful turkey hunters avoid mistakes by watching, listening and adapting their strategies accordingly – throughout the course of a single hunt and over the changing conditions and circumstances of an entire season. Still, everyone makes mistakes. The key is racking up enough experience to realize errors right away and make immediate adjustments.

Spend enough time in the woods and the birds will show you what they want.

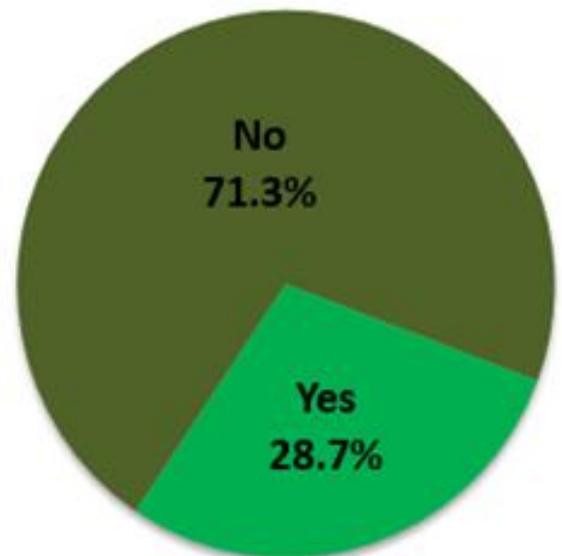
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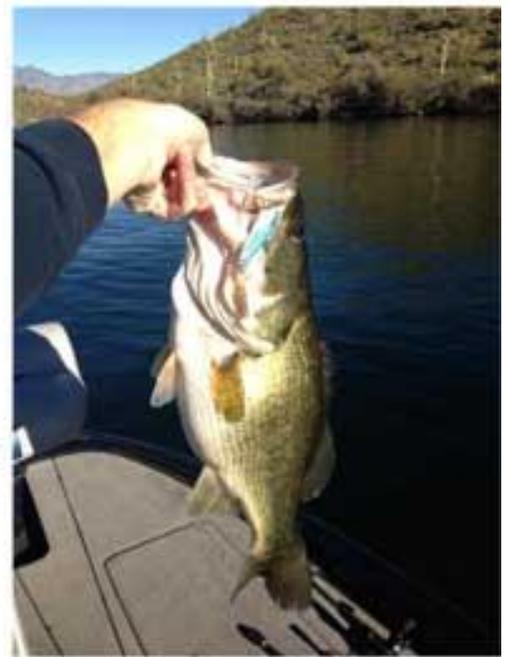
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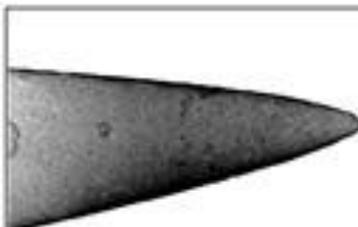
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Caught This Landlocked Salmon  
On Lake Memphremagog

I just returned from what will probably be my last ice-fishing trip until ice returns later this year. We were on Lake Winnibigoshish in north central Minnesota. I was fishing with my friend Craig Brown who, along with his wife Paige, own McArdle's Resort on Winnie. Craig spends a lot of time on Winnie on the ice and in a boat. Winnie is an outstanding fishery for walleyes, northern pike, and perch. Perch were our quarry on this trip. This was another trip where I re-learned a very valuable lesson that will almost always pay dividends and help any angler catch more fish through the ice or in open water.

Craig and his brothers had been on the ice the day before my arrival and had done well, so we returned to the area that had been productive. We drilled some holes, maybe ten. It was apparent right away that the perch were still calling this area home. On the first hole I fished, on my first drop, I kept a close eye on my depth-finder as my spoon headed toward the bottom. As my spoon was going down, I noticed a mark come off the bottom and head up toward my spoon. I stopped the spoon, but the mark coming off the bottom didn't stop. It ran mouth-first right into the spoon and was soon flopping on the ice: A nine inch perch. Not a jumbo, but certainly an eater. Winnie has lots of eater perch.

Things were looking good. Several more drops, several more perch. They were hungry and wanted to get caught. My spoon wasn't even getting to the bottom.



# LAST ICE- FISHING TRIP FOR NOW

By Bob Jensen

Then things changed. I put the spoon down again, and the fish would come in and look, but they wouldn't eat it.

I moved to another hole using the same spoon and caught a bunch more perch. Then they stopped hitting also.

I moved to another hole and caught several on the same spoon. Eventually they quit eating also.

I moved back to the hole I started on and dropped the spoon they had been eating. They looked at the spoon but wouldn't take it. I knew what had to be done. I went to a different bait in a different color and dropped it down my ice hole. The perch approached the bait cautiously, then ate it. I caught a couple more, then they quit. They were

getting lure shy. Initially they were very aggressive, but after seeing a bunch of their schoolmates jerked to the surface, they got finicky. This is a common thing. Craig and I fished around that spot a little longer, then left for a completely different area. When we got to the new area, the scenario repeated itself: Fast action, a change in presentation, some moderately fast action, then a slow-down in the catching. This is so, so common.

We can learn so much by watching our depth-finder when ice-fishing. We know when fish are looking but not eating, and this tells us we need to change our presentation. I use a Vexilar FL-12. This is a basic unit, but it does an outstanding job.

The hottest bait on this trip was a Forage Minnow Spoon tipped with half of a white Impulse three inch Angle Worm. The perch took the plastic as eagerly as they did minnows, and the plastic lasted a lot longer.

We got lucky on weather on this last trip. It was fifty degrees in the afternoon, the sun was shining, just a wonderful way to wrap up the ice-fishing season. The ice is shot in some areas of the Midwest for now, shaky in others, still safe in other places. If you can get out, do so, but be very careful. We'll have more ice to enjoy in eight months.

To see the newest episodes of Fishing the Midwest television, go to [www.fishingthemidwest.com](http://www.fishingthemidwest.com) If you do Facebook, check us out for a variety of fishing related things.

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# Babysit Batteries In the Off-Season To Extend Flasher Lifespan

To avoid damage to your flasher battery during off-season storage, charge it every 30 to 60 days. That will ensure reliable sonar next winter and for years to come.



“If you’ve ever had trouble with your sonar unit, the culprit was most likely an improperly charged or stored battery,” says ICE FORCE Pro-Staffer Brad Hawthorne. “That’s something you can control – unlike cold fronts or bad ice, or any of the other things that can prevent you from catching fish. So take time in the off-season to take care of the battery that runs your electronics.”

Over time, all lead-acid batteries will lose their charge. Without regular re-charging, even the highest quality battery can become so damaged it will refuse to take a charge. Worse yet, it could appear to take a charge, only to fail on the ice, rendering your sonar unit unusable.

“Fishing without sonar is like a blind squirrel hunting nuts,” says ICE FORCE Pro-Staffer Will Roseberg. “You ever see a fat, blind squirrel? Didn’t think so. Take care of your battery in the off-season.”

After charging your battery every 30 to 60 days during the off-season, leave it disconnected from your sonar unit. Doing so ensures that a stray current draw won’t slowly drain its charge over time.

## Bits And Pieces

Before storing your MarCum this off-season, inspect it closely for missing parts, like gimbal knobs, snow shields or transducer cord grommets. Any of those small parts can be easily misplaced in the field. Ordering a replacement now guarantees you’ll have your MarCum ready for action at the start of the next ice season.

## Time For A New Transducer?

Although your MarCum’s transducer is designed to work perfectly for many years, it can wear out prematurely if you crack open iced-over holes with it, or drag it across the ice on a too-long cord.

“Mistreating your a transducer can cause it to lose some of its ability to detect faint signals, explains ICE FORCE Pro-Staffer James Holst, host of “In-Depth Outdoors” on the Fox Sports North channel. “That can have a noticeable impact on your MarCum’s ability to display fine details.”

If your sonar doesn’t seem as sensitive as it once was, it might be time to order a new transducer. They are available online here. “There’s no time like the present to replace this critical piece of equipment,” Holst says.

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TOM GRUENWALD  
\*Tom Gruenwald Outdoors\*

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## **Ice Forces Shares Essential Tips For Storing Your Ice Auger**

When the ice season ends — or when you tire of winter, whichever comes first — it's time to properly store your StrikeMaster ice auger. Follow these tips from ICE FORCE, a collection of the world's most trusted hardwater companies, to ensure your auger remains the fastest and most reliable auger on the ice.

### **Engine Storage**

StrikeMaster, a legendary ICE FORCE brand with more than 65 years of experience reaching fish through the ice, recommends performing a wet shutdown before storing your gas-powered auger.

Fill your fuel tank more than 1/4 full with fresh, stabilized fuel, then start and run your motor for five to 10 minutes. This will ensure even distribution of stabilized fuel throughout the carburetor and fuel system.

Next, drain the remaining fuel from your tank. This important step will prevent damage to plastic parts due to prolonged exposure to fuel. StrikeMaster recommends running your engine once a month for five to 10 minutes, using fresh, stabilized fuel.

Do not run your engine entirely out of fuel. Leaving fresh, stabilized fuel in the carburetor will keep components from drying out. Store your gas-powered StrikeMaster auger in a cool dry place in an upright position.

## Battery Maintenance

Owners of electric ice augers, such as the StrikeMaster Electra Lazer, should charge their battery once a month over the course of the off-season to maintain battery life.

## Prepare Blades For Storage

Carefully remove the blades from your auger's blade carriage. Inspect the blades for any signs of damage or dulling. If there's any sign of nicks, chips, or roll-over, it's time to replace your blades or sharpen them.

Before storing your auger, apply a light coat of oil to the blades, blade bolts and blade carriage. This will help deter rust build-up, which can dull the blades and affect auger performance. Reinstall your blades and attach the blade guard. Warning: Blades are razor sharp. Use extreme caution while removing the blade guard and blades.

## 4-Stroke Maintenance Adjustments

For Honda™ 35cc LITE 4-stroke auger owners, it's a great time for a preventative adjustment on your powerhead. Four-stroke engines use far more moving parts than 2-stroke engines. Taking the time to get the motor inspected and adjusted will keep your auger running faster and longer.

StrikeMaster recommends getting your auger's valve lash adjusted once a year by an authorized Honda service center. This is a precise, internal adjustment that should only be done by an authorized mechanic.

When the cold and ice returns, you'll be happy you followed these simple instructions, which will extend the overall life of your ice auger. For more helpful tips, visit [www.ICEFORCE.com](http://www.ICEFORCE.com).



