

December 2015 into
January 2016
Ice Fishing Edition



ODU MAGAZINE

**HARDWATER
PIKE**

**THE
OVERLOOKED
TROUT**

**North
Country
Walleyes**

**CHOOSING A
TRANSDUCER
BEAM ANGLE**



Happy New Year to all our readers. We hope this edition of ODU Magazine reaches you all well and optimistic for 2016. I specific shout out to our ice fishing anglers. It finally looks like we all should be fishing soon, so warm up your augers and go change your fishing line from last year.

What are our 2016 New Year hopes, dreams and our 2015 reflections?

Reflections!

I am thankful for all the dedicated anglers and hunters who have had the opportunity to learn about ODU Magazine. I am equally thankful to many of the same outdoorsmen and women for helping provide the excellent articles we share month after month.

I am thankful for all I learned from Larry Thornhill, my outdoor media mentor. Every challenge is an “opportunity”, remember to help the little guy, listen more than you speak, family first, do what you say you’re going to do and keep remembering ODU Magazine is for fishermen/hunters written by fishermen/hunters.

I am thankful for my supportive family and friends.

I am thankful for all of ODU’s partners who distribute the magazine. You all know who you are and I wish you a happy, successful, healthy and prosperous New Year.

Finally, I am thankful to our growing readership who month after month read, click and watch their way through each magazine. I am thankful for all of you who email, share, post, like, link, and talk about our website and digital fishing magazines.

Hopes and Dreams!

We are happy to see ODU Magazine continue to grow into 2016.

William Schwarz, Publisher

This edition of ODU Magazine is all about ice fishing. Panfish, trout, walleye, pike and more are all covered. A special message from Casting Carter and a feature on fish management have been slipped inside as well. Enjoy and feel free to email this magazine to all your fishing friends.



ODU Magazine Publication Plans For 2016

<u>Month</u>	<u>Topic Area</u>
1. January 2016	Ice Fishing
2. February 2016	Pre-Spring Fishing
3. March 2016	Early spring fishing
4. April 2016	Spring Fishing
5. May 2016	Late Spring
6. June 2016	Early Summer Fishing
7. July 2016	Summer Fishing
8. August 2016	Late Summer Fishing & ICAST "Top 25"
9. August 2016	Hunting – turkey and pre-season prep
10. September 2016	Fall Fishing
11. October 2016	Fall Fishing/Ice Fishing Preview
12. October 2016	Hunting – deer and big game
13. November 2016	Ice Fishing
14. December 2016	Winter Fishing

And please, enjoy the outdoors.
Larry Thornhill and William Schwarz
Co-Founders of ODU Magazine

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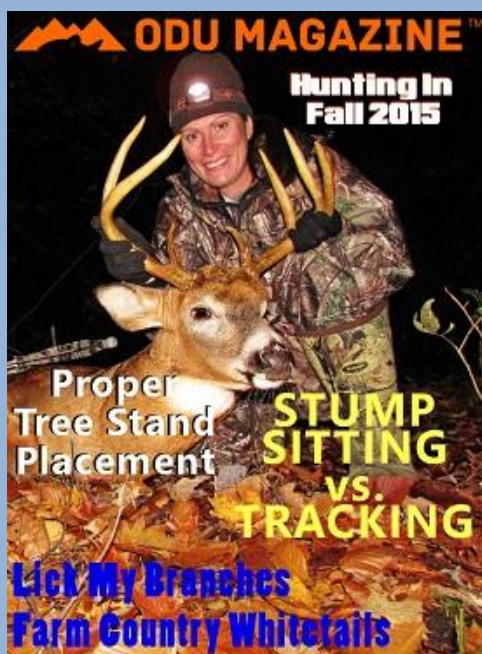
Publishing Team: Bill Schwarz & Richard Barker.

Advertising inquirers for our fishing magazines, ODU Fishing and Hunting News should be e-mailed to:
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Photos: Cover photo provided by Clam Outdoors.

Did You Miss ODU Magazine's Last Three Editions?



Click the magazine cover of the edition you want to read or the down load links below:

[Download Hunting In Fall 2015](#) [Download Fall Fishing 2015](#) [Download Winter/Ice Fishing 2015](#)



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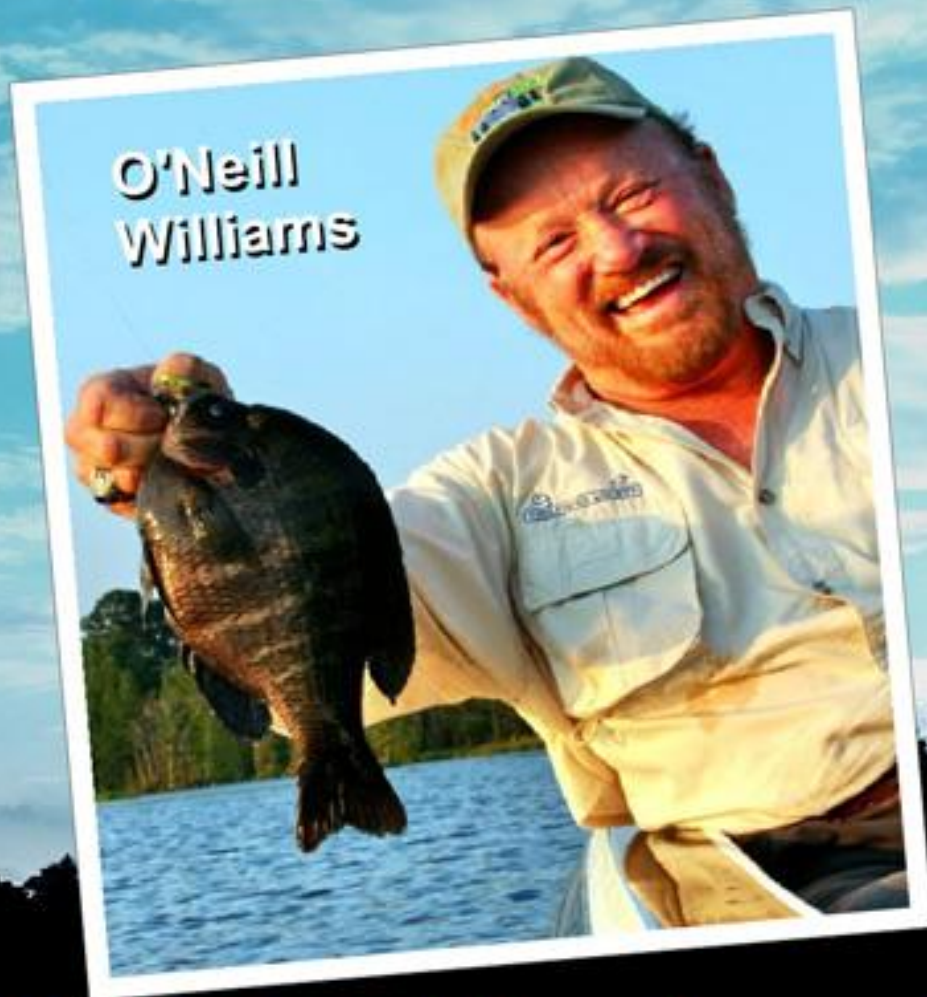
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EXPLORATORY MISSIONS

By Tom Gruenwald

Ice. The Frozen Frontier.

Ever since I can remember, the thrill of fishing new water has weighed heavily on my mind--and this past winter, we began planning several such trips. Right from the get-go, just thinking about them made it difficult to focus on anything else. I daydreamed; spent hours preparing gear. I'd wake up deep in the night thinking about presentations I wanted to try, seldom able to fall back asleep.

And for good reason: These journeys were lofty aspirations, angling adventures dreamed about since taking my first steps onto ice coated waters surrounding my Wisconsin boyhood home, where I grew up catching sunfish and bluegills, perch and crappies, walleyes and pike...these outings began with short walks to local ponds, branched out to exploring remote river backwaters and secluded lakes...all thrilling experiences leaving me thirsting for more.

I soon began stretching my boundaries, icing my first ciscoes from the depths of Big Green Lake, a winter musky in far reaches of northern Wisconsin waters; some hefty lake trout from Lake Superior's Chequamegon Bay, a double-digit walleye from Little Bay de Noc in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, and smelt in Ontario's Lake Simcoe.

I've since roamed the world in pursuit of many unique, even exotic species: Bull Trout in



Canada; Abborre in Sweden; Crucian Fish in China--and this past winter offered even more such exciting opportunities!

ARCTIC CHAR

One exploratory outing involved ice fishing in Alaska with George Krumm of Fish Alaska Magazine. We spent a day and a half on Big Lake near Wasilla, fishing arctic char.

This uniquely colored, Alaskan native is closely related to lake trout. Their favorite habitats include deep, cold glacial waters, so it's not surprising few other freshwater fish are found as far north. Individual fish typically average between 2 and 5 pounds, but given an appropriate environment, record sized fish may approach 20--and they quickly earned my utmost respect.

I was fortunate enough to hook a couple in the 20" range and a larger one measuring 26", and unquestionably found them one of the most exciting, worthy adversaries I've ever encountered. Each



attacked lures in a wild, erratic manner throughout the water column. Forceful dives, violent head shakes and abrupt, powerful runs tempered with highly unpredictable directional changes and movements created tackle wrenching pulls alternated with suddenly slack lines, bringing continuous challenge.

And the colors! Honestly, I can't remember ever seeing such brilliantly marked fish, and hoisting them up against a backdrop of majestic, snow covered Alaskan mountain ranges is a sight I'll never forget—truly an experience of a lifetime.

CUTTHROAT TROUT

Another incredible opportunity afforded itself this past season, when we flew helicopters high into Montana's Rocky Mountains to fish cutthroat trout.

What began as a bit of a far-fetched, casual thought over dinner following a day of ice fishing suddenly



became reality when my good friend Mike Howe of A-Able Charters/Howe's Fishing and the kind folks over at the Kalispell Convention and Visitors Bureau helped me locate adventuresome pilots willing to go. There were challenges: We needed to be certain we were flying within permitted airspace, in favorable weather with agreeable winds, and landing on waters graced by enough ice to support our birds.

Thanks to careful planning and cooperative weather, we were able to cover each of these points, but soon discovered our work wasn't finished. After landing on our first cirque lake at an elevation of over 6,100 feet, we discovered snow and slush so deep our auger wasn't able to extend through the ice below. While not entirely

unexpected, we were admittedly feeling a bit disappointed as we packed up, fishless.

Those emotions dissipated quickly, however, as the overwhelming excitement of landing on a second lake offering nearly ideal ice conditions brought another challenge: Finding fish.

We drilled holes over what appeared to be the deepest basin, progressed toward the inlet on the far

end, then zig-zagged back along a steeply sloping shoreline featuring what appeared to be a rockslide forming a point of sorts. Success came soon, as Mike and I each began catching brilliantly colored, thrashing cutthroat within minutes of lowering our lures into the crystal clear waters.

Best of all, we were able to return and do it all again the next day, sharing the experience while filming an amazing episode of TGO, Tom Gruenwald Outdoors with our Kalispell, Montana sweepstakes winners, Nancy Suthers and James Fenton!

GRAYLING

TGO on-ice adventures didn't end there--I also pursued another personal first this past winter: Grayling!



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Again joined by Mike Howe, mutual friend Tony Anderson and retired Montana fisheries biologist Jim Vashro, we set out on another high country lake just outside Kalispell.

This particular excursion had special meaning for Jim, because one of the most noted projects of his career involved the restoration of grayling here on Rogers Lake. Grayling and cutthroat were native, but an introduction of yellow perch had out-competed them, dramatically altering the balance of this sensitive fishery. Jim's team intervened, removing the perch and successfully re-establishing the native species.

We weren't on the ice long before Jim caught his first, a beautifully marked, golden-brown specimen, its distinct, turquoise spotted dorsal fin arched high. As I admired his fish, Jim explained they called them the "sailfish of the north," and it was certainly easy to see why.

After releasing that one, Jim was fast into another. Tony was next, followed by Mike. After asking a few questions and learning the pattern, I set up and promptly hooked a gleaming western slope cutthroat trout, soon followed by my first grayling. We caught several more as the morning progressed, mostly on select marabou jigs of Jim's personal design.

For Jim, this was a special day spent enjoying a fishery he had helped restore; for me, another refreshing and very memorable exploratory mission.

This article was sponsored by HT Enterprises, Tom Gruenwald Outdoors and Polar Fire.



I went ice-fishing last week and had a wonderful time on two levels. First of all, we caught lots of fish, big and small, and of several different species.

Secondly, it was encouraging and exciting to be on a lake that has become an outstanding fishery in the past few years. I was on Clear Lake in north central Iowa. Clear Lake is a short drive from my home. As a youngster, we would fish Clear Lake a couple of times a year. That was in the late 60's and early 70's. We caught mostly bullheads and every now and then a walleye. That's what Clear Lake was: A bullhead lake. There's nothing wrong with bullheads: Lots of us grew up fishing for bullheads, and bullheads sparked an interest in fishing for us. And prepared correctly, bullheads are good on the table. Nothing wrong at all with

bullheads, but there aren't as many bullheads in Clear Lake anymore and the lake is thriving. More than thriving: Clear Lake has become one of the best fisheries for a wide variety of fish in the Midwest.

On my recent ice-fishing trip, I fished with Kevan Paul and Chris Scholl. Kevan and Chris guide on Clear Lake and are outstanding anglers. During our day on the ice, we caught dozens of yellow bass. Yellow bass are abundant on Clear Lake and provide forage for gamefish and people alike. They are great on a plate, but yellow bass are small fish, mostly eight to ten inches long. You need quite a few yellow bass



An Ice Fishing Buffet

to make a meal, and the good thing is, on Clear Lake you can catch and keep a lot of yellow bass. There is no limit, and the fish authorities encourage anglers to keep yellows.

We also caught catfish up to about ten pounds. When you've been catching half pound yellow bass and a ten pound catfish eats your bait, you know right away that something different is going on.

We caught lots of white bass, and one of them went almost three pounds. That's another interesting diversion from yellow bass.

We caught crappies and bluegills also, and they were nice ones.

Clear Lake also has an outstanding musky and walleye population, and there are several other species that are starting to show up.

Back in Clear Lake's bullhead days, the water quality wasn't very good. Changes have created what appears to be much improved water quality that encourages vegetation growth and better fish populations.



The west end of Clear Lake, the Little Lake, was, back in the day, a bowl that was four feet deep and the bottom was mud. A dredging process was employed several years ago. The Little Lake now has lots of fish attracting structure and depths in the twenty five foot range.

Fishing techniques have expanded also. In the bullhead days, if you wanted to fish for walleyes, you couldn't use nightcrawlers or leeches. They would be quickly destroyed by the bullheads. Now, live-bait rigging with crawlers and leeches is a productive method for walleyes.

I know there are lots of other "Clear Lake Re-Birth" stories across the Midwest and North America, and that's why I'm encouraged about the future of fishing. There are problems in some places, but with effort, those problems can be fixed. I'm hopeful and optimistic that we'll see more bodies of water become what Clear Lake is.

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FIND AND CATCH MID-TO-LATE-ICE WALLEYES

By Dan Johnson



First ice is blissful for walleye anglers across the North, when community holes renew their reputations and hungry fish are right where they're supposed to be. But as winter wears on, the bite slows and 'eyes wander. Faced with tougher conditions and a less-predictable bite, many walleye fans begin losing interest.

Winter's final months offer plenty of solid walleye action if you know where to look. Longtime fishing guide and well-traveled iceman Jon Thelen doesn't pack away his ice rods until the final floes have melted. He targets high-percentage structure to strike walleye gold from January through the season's end—and you can, too.

Thelen's territory spans the Upper Midwest as he traverses the region filming Lindy Fishing Tackle's popular TV show "Fish Ed." His go-to fisheries range from Minnesota's iconic Mille Lacs Lake to the sprawling border bounty of Lake of the Woods, to prairie potholes and everything in between.

During a typical winter, January through February sees him playing the deepwater game.

"The fish are settling into their midwinter haunts," he said. "They often hold in depths of 20 to 35 feet during the day, then slide a little shallower onto structural feeding areas during peak activity periods early and late in the day, as well as at night."

Prime structure includes just about anything attractive to baitfish. On some lakes, a rockpile surrounded by deep water might be the hot spot, he says, noting that on his home waters of Mille Lacs, deep gravel bars and mid-lake mud flats are hard to beat.

"Depth is relative to what the lake has to offer," Thelen said. "In general, I avoid shallow structures that come up to 10 feet or less. While these areas might produce fish at first ice, you'll catch more midwinter walleyes on feeding shelves and edges in 20 or more feet of water."

Thelen cautions anglers heading out for mid-winter action that walleye behavior has changed from early winter, and encourages setting realistic expectations based on the fish's newfound frame of mind.

"The first-ice bite is over," he says. "Now walleyes are not as mobile and they definitely feed a little less aggressively, especially during the day. You can still



enjoy good fishing in peak feeding periods, but you have to work harder to get their attention and make them move to check out your bait.”

As a result, Thelen drills more holes in January and February than at any other point in the winter. He also spends less time fishing a hole before moving on in his search for fish. First-strike tactics now through winter’s end lean toward the louder side of the presentational spectrum.

“I rely on noisy rattling spoons and hard-bodied swimbaits to draw fish in. Many walleyes will hit these baits, but sometimes you have to switch to smaller, quieter spoons to get them to commit.”

Top picks for attracting fish include Lindy’s Rattl’n Flyer Spoon, Darter, Perch Talker and 360 Jig, while the silent-but-deadly Lindy Frostee Jigging Spoon shines as a deal-closer.

Thelen shifts gears as winter wanes and runoff from snowmelt flows into the lakes.

“Wherever walleye season remains open, I look for fish migrating toward incoming tributaries and shoreline spawning areas,” he says. “Lake of the Woods, for example, offers great walleye action in late March as fish funnel in from the main lake toward the mouth of the Rainy River.”

Here, Thelen often sets up shop on structural sweet spots such as humps or twists and turns along irregular breaklines, which attract pods of passing fish.

“I call them drive-throughs because they’re places walleyes can stop for a bite on their way out of the basin toward the spawning grounds,” he says. “They don’t take up residence in these areas, so you often end up catching a few and then waiting for the next wave of fish to move in.”

Thelen cautions that late-season location is also affected by the whims of Mother Nature. He says that



walleye movements toward shallow water tend to be delayed during an extended winter and accelerated by an early spring. Still, the underpinnings of his locational strategies provide a great framework for mapping out fine walleye action long after most anglers have packed away their ice fishing gear for the season.

[This article was sponsored by Northland Tackle.](#)

An advertisement for the Navionics Boating app. It features three main elements: on the left, a person in a blue jacket using a hand auger to drill a hole in the ice; in the center, a smartphone displaying the Navionics app's interface with a detailed contour map; on the right, a person in a blue jacket holding a large walleye fish. The background is a snowy, icy landscape. Text at the top reads "NAVIONICS Drill in the right spot with the Navionics Boating app!". At the bottom, it says "On your mobile, get the same detailed 1 ft HD contour charts that we provide for the best plotters!" and includes logos for the App Store and Google Play. The Navionics website "navionics.com" is also listed at the bottom right.

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I'm Thankful For The Outdoors

By Casting Carter

November and December the time of year when everyone reflects on what they are thankful for. I'm eight and already I have a lot to be thankful for: the most important things are my parents and my great family, my dog, Yogi, and that I am able to fish in the summer and ski in the winter.

But not everyone is so lucky. I think of all the kids who don't have the things that I do – a warm house, food every day, and the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors. That makes me so sad.

My school and community have programs to help kids and families who need some of these things. We collected canned good and winter coats recently and donated them. But there aren't as many programs for kids who need to get outside. I'd like to change that.

Everyone should get outdoors! The fresh air is so good for you! According to www.Care.com, Headstart, Early Childhood News, there are many major benefits of playing outside (and not just for kids!):

- Happier Kids!
- Healthier Checkups – Fewer Sick Visits
- Combat Childhood Obesity
- Stronger Growth
- Improved Vision
- Better Social Skills
- Increased Attention Span
- Reduced Stress



- Vitamin D
- Number Relationships
- Manual Dexterity
- Mental Health
- Communication Skills and Vocabulary



When I founded Kid In Outdoors, LLC when I was six, it was because so many of my friends preferred to play on video games rather than do things outside. My goal was to show kids, and parents, that there are many things that you can do outdoors every season of the year. Some require ongoing investment (skiing), others require a one-time purchase of equipment and then it is inexpensive (fishing) and then there are free things (hiking). There really is something for everyone, no matter who you are or where you live! City kids and country kids! Kids in areas where it is hot or places where there is a cold winter! Kids who have the ability to ask parents or friends for help with their outdoor passion – swimming, ice skating, or horseback riding! Or kids who may not have as much adult support in their lives – hiking, park activities, rock or bug collecting.

One other thing that Kid In Outdoors stresses is the need for unstructured playtime. While Little League, soccer teams, and karate, ballet are all great activities for kids, they are schedule-driven. Outdoor activities such as fishing, hiking, snorkeling, or snow shoeing are “unstructured”, so kids are given the freedom to make up their own schedule. This is important in young lives! So many of my friends jump from activity to activity every single day after school and then have to rush home and do homework late at night. Their weekends are full of games and birthday parties. When do they get to have their “own” fun?

Kids, just remember that the outdoors is a place for us to have fun. It offers so much to us. At this time of year, I give thanks to all it offers!

Have an idea or want me to answer a question in a future Bobber Bites column? Write to Casting Carter at: carter@castingcarter.com

Casting Carter is a kid entrepreneur from Manchester, NH. He founded Kid In Outdoors, LLC with the mission to get kids off of video games and outdoors and is nationally recognized as an industry spokesperson and advocate. www.kidinoutdoors.com

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TEMPTING STUBBORN BLUEGILLS

By Garrett Svir

A solid strategy can make all the difference when it comes to stubborn bluegills. Once snow cover has taken hold and the early ice weed edge bite has come and gone things can become a little more challenging in the world of a bluegill angler. Fish may push out to deeper water, may cling to remaining green weeds or may choose to suspend over the basin in pursuit of plankton. Bites are often reluctant and can be hard to detect from even the largest bluegills in a particular system. Fish will often show up briefly on electronics and disappear at the first sight of a dropped jig. While many bull chasers take this period off and wait for late ice, panfish guides don't have a choice. We need to stay on bluegills all winter long and with a solid strategy you can too.

Seek and you shall find

Last winter was unique in many places throughout the ice belt. Lack of snow cover kept cabbage alive on most lakes in Minnesota. On many bodies of water bluegills held tight to the remaining green cabbage all the way through winter. I spent hour's systematically checking holes with the Vexilar Fish Scout Camera looking for remaining green weeds. When we would find shallow isolated patches of healthy cabbage



ODU MAGAZINE VIDEO BLOCK (www.odumagazine.com)

and coontail, we would find them loaded with fish.

The challenging part of this can be finding the spot on the spot. Get too far inside the jungle and very few fish will see your jig between weed stalks. Get too far outside of the weeds and the fish will not investigate in fear of predators lurking in the open waiting for an easy meal. Find an open pocket inside the dense jungle and you could often continue to catch and work fish for an entire day from one vantage point. Once green healthy weeds are located don't stop at a few holes. Depending on the size and shape of a particular weed bed drill the area out in a grid pattern spacing holes no more than five feet apart. This kind of grid is going to allow you to find those sweet spots often leaving anglers only several feet away scratching their heads.

When weeds die they actually begin to use more oxygen than they produce and fish are sometimes forced out of shallow weeds. It all has to do with snow cover as diminished light penetration is the leading factor in weeds dying off. My observation has been that the largest bluegills are often the first to evacuate the weeds and head to deeper water when the weeds begin to die but they don't usually go far. When scouting a new lake I'll often take a look at my lake map and find the fastest break lines into deep water and start there, drilling from the weeds straight out to the base of the slope. Once I hit the base I will drill perpendicular in each direction. The base of these steeply dropping slopes often contains the correct substrate for blood worms a main stay in the diet of bull gills.

If this strategy doesn't uncover any bluegills I start to look for points and inside turns in a close



proximity to the weeds that held fish at first ice. Some of my favorite mid-winter bluegill spots are located on inside turns close to healthy cabbage beds that are notoriously great first ice locations. My mind set is always to spend the bulk of my time searching close to where I previously located fish before striking off to different areas on the lake. Don't expect big migrations but expect them to stay close to the food shelf while maintaining close proximity to deep water where they can suspend to avoid predators.

Rock piles are a favorite mid-summer bluegill location of mine and I usually return to them mid-winter. While the crown or very top of rock piles is often host to smallmouth and many other species, look for bluegills on the

secondary drop off out to the base of the structure. This is where a good quality lake map can come in handy. One of the best bluegills spots I have is a rock pile with an adjacent island featuring a deep saddle in between. The key seems to be the access to deeper water. Natural funnel areas between basins can also be big gill producers. These areas naturally funnel food, typically always host green weeds, and usually have current and oxygen.

Dialing in the bite

Midwinter bluegills can be reluctant bitters often sampling a bait several times before timidly sucking it in. This is the time to break out the spring bobber rods. Many anglers mistakenly believe that they are marking fish on their Vexilar but simply cannot get them to bite. While this may be the case a little work with the underwater camera may uncover a different story, a story in which bites are just very subtle and hard to detect without a watchful eye and a light spring attached to the end of your line. A spring bobber rod like the St. Croix Legend can be adjusted to account for different weight jigs. You want something that will not load up under the weight of your jig. It then comes down to rhythm. You want to find a rhythm that the fish like and something consistent where you can recognize anything that breaks your rhythm. Any break in that rhythm indicates a fish, set the hook. Many anglers simply jig in an upward motion and let jigs fall on a semi slack line but this makes bite detection tough. My strategy is to break the wrist and jig with an up and down motion. When fish show a preference for a more aggressive jigging cadence, you can make bigger or faster up and down motions, and conversely when fish show a preference for a more subtle presentation you can swim your jig in a tighter up and

down manner. Use your Vexilar to read the mood of each fish and adjust your jigging accordingly. While some gills like an aggressive pounding action it sometimes takes a subtle up and down swim to seal the deal.

Slowing down

Like most anglers I often get antsy and want to drop a fast falling jig on top of any red lines that show up on my Vexilar but with stubborn bluegills a slow fall is sometimes the best option. If you are noticing that any bluegills you mark disappear when you deploy your jig, slow down. Fish are never dive bombed by natural food sources so once bluegills receive some pressure they can perceive these baits as a threat. Northland Fishing Tackle recently released the Helium Ice Fly line of jigs that are designed to have a slow decent rate to tempt even the most discerning pie plate sized gills. They are a hybrid fly, plastic combo and are specifically designed to have a tantalizing fall. When the bite gets tough this winter go against the trend of bigger, faster, heavier and slow down to tempt stubborn bluegills.

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The Overlooked Ice Fishing Champs **Ice Fishing For Trout**

By Matthew J. Breuer

By late February or early March, the mid-winter doldrums have hit. The fish are lethargic and tough to pattern. Panfish anglers are complaining about cold temps and the inability to move around, chasing schools or roaming crappies and bluegills ineffectively. In places like Minnesota, walleye season is closed (as of February 28). A lot of anglers just throw in the towel for the season.

Some anglers are in the know, though, and don't mess with the midwinter blues. These anglers are after trout.

Quarry

There are many different species of trout, and all of them provide their own appeal.

Rainbow trout are extremely easy to target and catch in the winter, and you don't have to sit outside in the freezing cold, chasing them from hole to hole. You can simply plop down in a comfortable Clam Hub Shelter, drill a few holes and enjoy the fish coming through in spurts all day long. They vary in

size, with many fish ranging from 12-to-24 inches, with occasional trophies seeing the top of the ice. They put up an amazing fight, and are excellent table fare for the hungry angler.

Brown trout are typically shallower, and will feed with their dorsals nearly touching the bottom of the ice. They provide insanely fun sight-fishing opportunities, as they usually hold shallower than most trout species.

Regarded by many as one of the most beautiful fish, the brook trout is often found in similar areas and acts in nearly identical ways. These two species are also great table fare, and are a favorite for people who enjoy grilling or baking fish.

Lake trout are the hardest to catch, but also the hardest fighting and probably the most rewarding of the trout species. The way a lake trout will scream up from 100 feet of water faster than any adult can reel is simply amazing. Once hooked, they will take hard runs and give the angler headshakes that give even the most seasoned anglers tremors. Team their fun factor with the fact that they can reach more than 40 inches in length, and get well over 20 pounds makes them very appealing.

Where They Live

As far as lakes go, many states designate deep, clear lakes to stock trout. Most hold no other species, while others have a wide array of fish in them. These designated trout lakes often have special regulations, so be sure to know the rules on designated trout lakes before you enter them.

Other lakes and/or rivers and streams



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have natural trout populations, and provide a bit more challenge than stocked lakes. Then you toss in the ringers, the trout and salmon dream waters: the Great Lakes. While all of these bodies of water vary greatly in size and structure, they all hold trout, and trout are similar in where they live.

Trout are an interesting species. They can literally inhabit any depth, and can be found riding anywhere in the water column. A brown trout can be caught 6 inches below the ice over 20 feet of water, while you might find a lake trout 60 feet down while sitting over 200 feet of water. They follow no rules, and your jigging action should be uninhibited and as erratic as the fish themselves.

A Vexilar is imperative, as you may be fishing 20 feet above the mark where most fish are swimming on the day you're out chasing them. Trust in the marks on your flasher, and try to touch them all. Know that they can be anywhere in the water column, and have the advantage of a Vexilar to show what's below. This gives you a huge head start on your trout fishing excursion.

Equipment and Tactics

Equipment varies from body of water to body of water, and each species may require different baits. Typically, for stocked brown and rainbow trout, a simple Clam Blade Spoon tipped with waxies, eurolarvae or a Maki plastic will work incredibly well when teamed up with your standard walleye gear and some 6-pound-test fluorocarbon.

On stocked lakes, you'd be hard-pressed to find a trout that doesn't find a spoon with enticers dangling from it irresistible. If you don't want to mess with bait or adjusting destroyed plastics, a swim-style bait

is the ticket. Salmo Chubby Darters are heavy enough to get down to deep water in a hurry, and provide an awesome erratic jigging action that trout just cannot resist.

This equipment will get you started on Great Lakes trout, as well as non-stocked natural lakes that may hold some monster fish. Lake trout will, however, push that gear to, and beyond the limit. Avid lake trout anglers know that heavier action rods with some extra length are going to shine while fishing for these hard-fighting critters. Choose a 38- to 42-inch rod with 10-pound fluorocarbon or braid with a flouro leader. Baits like the larger Chubby Darters and large 4- to 5-inch white or glow tubes reign supreme for lakers. Tip-ups with dead smelt or ciscoes have also been known to work well.

No matter which species you're fishing, treat them all similarly while jigging and trying to entice them to bite your offering. Know that trout love to chase. When they see something flashy or eye catching that resembles food, they will chase it and inspect it from a distance and then close the gap very quickly. If you allow a trout to inspect your offering sitting still for too long, he'll surely know that it's not food and move on. The key is to keep your bait moving and shaking, darting and rising. When a mark shows up, reel quickly or jig aggressively and force that fish to react quickly. Hopefully by the time he realizes that your offering was fake, he'll be hooked. If he is, you'll surely be hooked as well.

Matt Breuer of Minnesota is a professional fishing guide and the owner of North Country Guides and Promotions. Breuer's versatility on the ice has allowed him to consistently catch trophy fish in all species. He also appears in many publications, both as an expert and as an author. www.northcountryguides.com. This article was sponsored by [Clam Outdoors](#) and [Ice Team](#).

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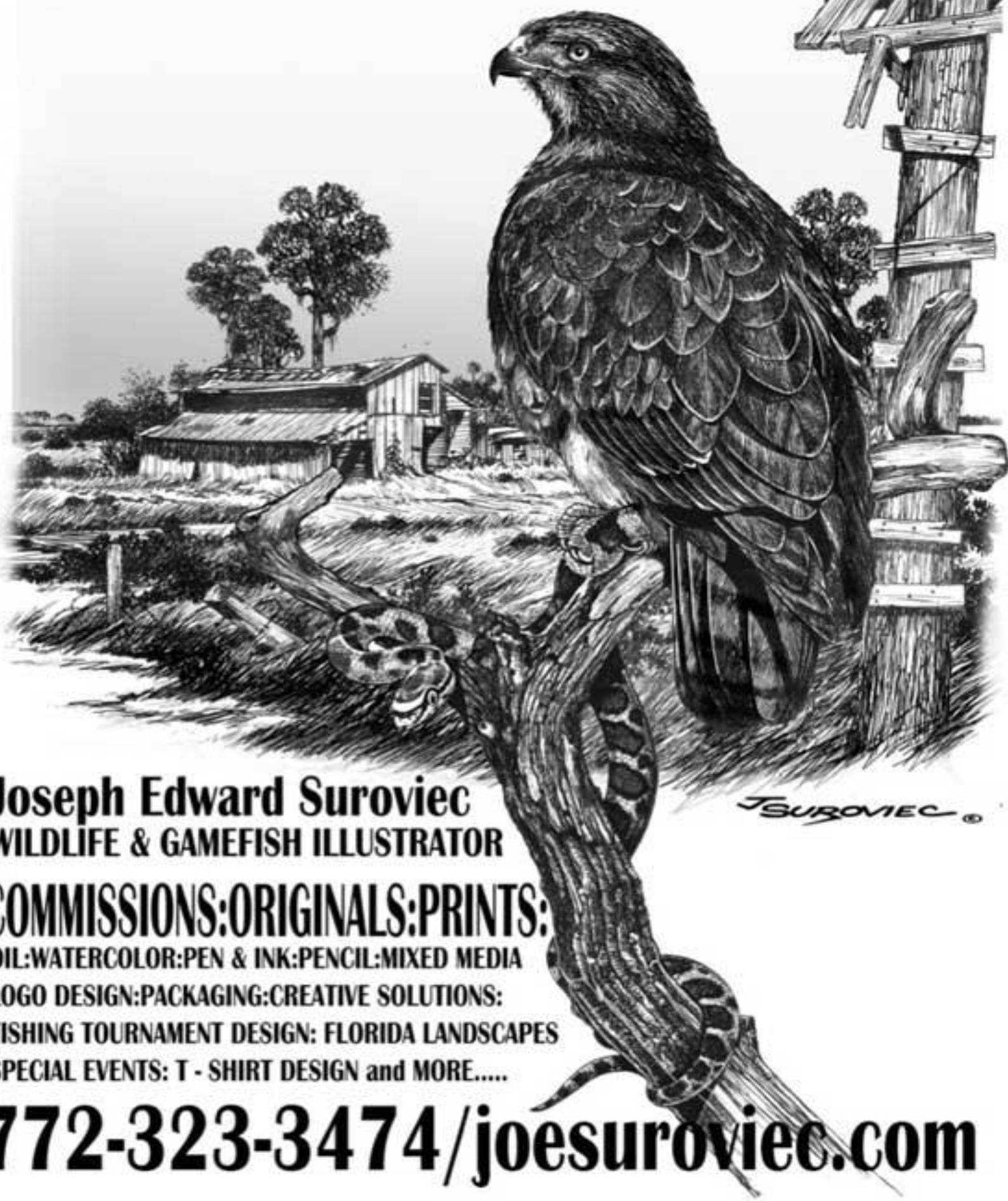


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ICE FISHING AND MEMORIES OF YEARS GONE BY

By Dana Benner



Winters in New Hampshire can be long and cold. Unless you really have to, many people spend their time holed up inside next to a warm fire. I see winter as an opportunity to re-stock the freezer and get a meal of fresh fish at the same time. Sudden drops in temperature, which can start as early as mid-November, and seeing the first layers of skim ice on the local ponds triggers something in every ice fisherman and I am no different.

With the thermometer registering temperatures in the single digits I begin to pull my ice fishing gear from its place in my shed. Seeing these trusty tools of the trade brings to mind memories of ice fishing seasons of the past. Over the years I have had the privilege to fish with many fine people, each one



teaching me something that I have been able to carry on. To them I owe a debt that I will probably never be able to repay.

I started ice fishing 40 some odd years ago. At the time I knew very little about the sport, but I wanted to give it a try. My mother bought my first tip-up at the local hardware store. My father, who wasn't much of an outdoors person, took me to buy the minnows I would use as bait, putting them in some old plastic bucket that we had around the house. The next day he drove me to Ottanic Pond near our home in Hudson, New Hampshire. Armed with a bucket of minnows, my one tip-up, an old broken fishing pole that I would use a jig rod, an axe that I would use to cut my holes and one of my mother's slotted spoons to keep the hole clean, I piled into my dad's truck for the short ride to the pond. My dad



dropped me off and told me when he would back to pick me up. I was on my own as I dragged the gear laden sled across the ice. You would never do that sort of thing in this day and age, but that was a different time back then.

I chopped my two holes, set my tip-up and then sat down on my sled, one of those old fashion ones with the metal runners, and proceeded to freeze to death, trying to jig in some fish. With the jig rod I pulled in a couple of nice yellow perch, but it was the tip-up that paid off, but not in the way you would think. It was about time for my father to pick me up, so I started to pack up my gear. The flag on the tip-up never went up, but I had a couple perch to show for my efforts (along with the early stages of hypothermia and frostbite), so in my pre-teen mind, it



was a good day. As I pulled my line on the tip-up, something pulled back. Come to find out there was a 24 inch pickerel on the other end. I have no idea how long it had been on as I had spooled the reel backwards so when it turned it never triggered the flag.

Because of the lack of money, my equipment didn't change much over the next few years. It wasn't until I came home from the Army that I updated my gear, and started fishing with people who knew a great deal more than I did. One of those people is my friend Peter.

Peter gave me a call one day to meet him over at Silver Lake in Ossipee, New Hampshire for a morning of ice fishing. Loading my gear into my truck I made my way along Route 28 until I reached our meeting place. Out on the lake was a bob house and waiting to take me there was Peter and his ATV. I soon found out that Peter doesn't mess around. His setup was a far cry from what I was used to. I loaded my gear into the sled that was attached to the back of the ATV and as I did so Peter informed me that I would not need my manual auger as we were all set.

When we arrived out at the house I found that Peter had already pre-drilled some holes, so it was just a matter of setting our tip-ups and waiting. This wasn't a bad thing as the inside of his "house" was better than some hotels I have found myself in. No sooner had I taken my coat off the action began. The first flag was a large yellow perch and that was just the beginning of things to come.

In between flags Peter and I talked about everything under the sun. Then the flags started popping



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again. On one was a good sized Lake trout and on another was a Brook trout. The Lake trout was a little under the legal size, so it went right back into the water, but the brookie went in the bucket with the perch.

My next trip found me on the Connecticut River in Hinsdale, New Hampshire with my friend Brian. Brian fishes mainly for northern pike, but with ice fishing you just never know what you are going to get or when you will get it. With ice fishing there are long periods of idle time broken up with a few minutes of action and such it was on my day out with Brian. We never caught a pike, but we did manage to get a mess of crappie, perch and even a few largemouth bass.

My daughter Sarah was born in 1990 and right from the start she was daddy's girl. She wanted to do everything with me and she did. One winter she wanted to go ice fishing and it just so happened that my good friend Jack and I were going out the next day so we took Sarah with us. I made sure she was bundled up and we packed a thermos of hot chocolate for her and one of coffee for Jack and me.

After Jack finished drilling the holes I sat Sarah on a five gallon bucket next to one of the holes. I armed her with a jig rod baited with a minnow. As Jack and I were setting up the tip-ups Sarah got her first fish of the day, a nice yellow perch. That is a moment that I will never forget. Sarah is grown now and has a daughter of her own. I have already started making plans to take her out.

My adventures out on the ice don't always result in trophy fish. Sometimes they result in no fish at all. That's OK, because for me, being able to get out there in the first place is what it is all about. It is a way for me to get back in touch with nature. When it is all said and done, it is not about the number of fish that were caught. It is about good times with good people. A great deal of time has passed since then and new adventures occurred, each one leaving lasting memories. When the time comes that I can no longer get out there, it is these memories that will keep me going.



WINTER BLUEGILLS

By Brian 'Bro' Brosdahl

Did I mention I love bluegills? My version of curing the "mid-winter blues" involves gills, fins and chubby bellies swimming around in circles below my ice fishing hole.

January is admittedly the low point of the winter, but by the end of January, the fish are starting to feel the days getting longer and winter starting to lose its' grip on the landscape.

Bluegills don't have the luxury of going into semi-hibernation like some of the larger fish during the dead of winter. Muskies, pike, bass and big walleyes have substantial fat reserves and can eat much larger meals at one time, so they don't have to feed nearly as often during the cold water period as smaller fish like bluegills.

Bluegills feed mostly on microscopic prey like zooplankton or insect larvae. Their prey is usually smaller than the size of a shelled sunflower seed and they have to hunt them down and catch them one at a time. Bluegills have no choice other than keep grazing in order to survive.

Bluegill location in mid-winter can vary greatly between lakes. Their location is largely based on what is available in their home lake and the population dynamics between the bluegills and their competitors as well as between them and the predators living in the lake.

Many factors help determine where the best feeding opportunities for bluegills are located in each lake. Anglers need to study their lakemaps and figure out where the bluegills are most likely to be, based on what they know about the lake.

Many lakes have the best feeding areas in the basin, while other lakes may have better opportunities

for bluegills on the weed flats.

Bluegills living in the basin may be in little depressions or rises on the flats, they may be in the deepest trench or they may be on the edges of the basin in isolated areas between other structures.

Bluegills living on the weed flats usually prefer different types of micro-edges, like the edges of stubble weeds, pockets between weeds, patches of rocks or any other physically different types of areas that distinguish one part of the flat over the rest of the flat.

Many lakes have multiple areas that appeal to bluegills, so bluegills can be more selective in the types of locations they prefer.

Bluegills sometimes act like smallmouth bass and use complex areas that give them everything they need in all seasons of the year. They are able to move around the larger structure at different times of the year, without having to leave the general area.

Lakes where the basin provides the best feeding opportunity for bluegills will tend to have most of the bluegills feeding on edges of the basin, closer to the breakline. Bluegills usually prefer mud flats in the upper teens to the 20s in depth, while perch and crappies often prefer deeper basin areas in the 30s and deeper.

Lakes with high densities of bluegills often have bluegills and crappies mixed in the same locations, with both species competing for the same food sources.

Bluegills have binocular vision, so they can see microscopic sized prey in the water. This also means they can see anglers' presentations, so keep that in mind when selecting lure size and line weight.

Population dynamics are huge with bluegills. They are some of the most complicated fish in the lakes as far as spawning habits and what happens to bluegill populations when the larger fish become overharvested.

Bluegills grow up to five times faster when they are in the juvenile phase than they do when they are adults. This means they need to stay in the juvenile phase as long as possible in order to reach their maximum growth potential.



Bluegills are fiercely competitive for spawning sites and about as particular as whitetail deer when it comes to selecting their mates. The little bucks don't get the does any more than the little bull bluegills get the biggest hens.

Young male bluegills have to grow large enough in the juvenile phase to be able to compete for nesting sites with the largest bluegills before they mature and their growth rate is stunted. If the bluegill population has been overharvested, then the juvenile bluegills don't have to grow as large before they mature in order to compete.



The mature adult bluegills in a stunted population still continue to grow, but at a much slower rate. Anglers need to release the larger bluegills for the genetics of the lake, which usually means all bluegills longer than 9 inches.

Anglers harvesting bluegills should take them from one of the strongest age classes in the lake, which usually means keeping fish that are eight inches or less.

Depth is a key factor when releasing bluegills. It is difficult for bluegills caught in water deeper than the low 20s to get back to the bottom without suffering baro-trauma, which is basically the same thing as "the bends".

The mortality rate of released bluegills caught out of deep water is much lower than most anglers realize. Many of them end up floating in the hole or just under the ice around the edges of anglers' holes.

Anglers should fish shallow enough to be able to release the big bluegills or fish "guilt-free" lakes with stunted populations and keep everything you catch if fishing out of deep water.

Presentation is the last factor to

consider. I like to use a 6 inch bit on my Nils Master ice auger and leave some slush in the hole to block the spotlight effect of the sun.

I like to use two or three pound test Northland Bionic Ice Fluorocarbon for most of my bluegill rods. The line is tough and it gives the small lures better action than heavier line.

My favorite rod for bluegills is the Frabill "Bro-Series" Quick-Tip ultra light with the 371 straight line reel. The straight line reel is important to minimize line twist and to keep the lure from spinning when I am trying to hold it still.

The Quick-Tip combos come with 25 and 30 inch rods for fishing inside a Frabill "Bro Hub" and in a 35 inch length for hole-hopping outside.

Tungsten jigs are all the rage with many anglers, but I often prefer a slower drop like I get with the New Northland Helium Fly. I will use an impulse plastic on the Helium Fly or tip it with a single wax worm or a couple of eurolarvae, depending on what I am observing on my Humminbird Ice 688ci.

Brian 'Bro' Brosdahl is a multi-species fishing guide and multi-media star living in Max Minnesota. He is sponsored by the following companies: Frabill/Plano, Northland Fishing Tackle, Aqua Vu, Humminbird, MinnKota, St. Croix Rods, Ranger Boats, Evinrude, Cosa Del Mar, Nils Master Augers, LakeMaster.) (Please follow my fishing events and adventures on facebook, twitter, and Instagram.

Have I mentioned I love bluegills? I love them enough to let the big ones go...and so should you!

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Getting Ready For The Ice

By Dan Galusha

Early winter is a good time to pull out ice fishing equipment and tackle to get it ready for the upcoming season. The temperature is a little cooler, but not too cold to check things out in comfort.

The first item, and one of the most important, is the ice drill. Check the blades, and replace or have them sharpened. It is always good to have an extra set of blades on hand, so if new ones are purchased throw a second set in the cart. Be sure the engine starts easily, and runs well. A warmer November day will be much easier to solve problems then on a cold day when you are thinking about going out on several inches of ice. Replace the spark plug, and fill the tank with fresh gasoline. If a 2 cycle make sure that is mixed properly with the oil recommended by the manufacturer. On a propane model like the Jiffy Pro4 and Pro4 Lite, it won't take much for starting, but make sure there are not leaks by testing all connections with a soapy water solution. For electric drills, such as the K-Drill that uses a Milwaukee Red Lithium drill for the powerhouse, check and charge the batteries.

Next, pull out the portable ice shelters. They should have been dried out before storage, but there is always possible that moisture has been drawn in. Because of this it is a good idea to open them up and dry again. Check for any fabric tears or mold, rusted or damaged parts, and anything else that could cause a problem during the fishing season.

Rods, reels and line come next. While I have several Frabill outfits, I get my 4 basic units ready first, and will take care of the remainder as the season progresses, or the situation demands a different

model. My four basics are Straight Line units, spooled with 4 and 6 pound Magna Thin line. Because the water I normally fish is not deeper than 4 to 30 feet, I replace only the first 50 to 60 feet of line. Be sure to check the rods for any damaged guides or wrappings, and grease the reels with a winter tolerant product, such as Frabill's Sub Zero grease.

Buckets are a major part of an ice angler's equipment. They carry all sorts of things. Some use them for rod/reel combos, fish and tackle. For my own use if I carry one, it is a Sit-N-Fish, which I use as a platform to place my small tripod and camera, and store a few items, including camera equipment. For rods/reels I use a Frabill Rod Safe, which is like a portable rod locker. With all of these just a quick inspection and cleaning is about all that is needed.

For carrying my tackle I use Frabill's tackle bag instead of a bucket. I also use one of these for my video camera equipment. They fit easily into my Frabill Trekker Deluxe, along with the Rod Safe, Vexilar FLX28, Plano Bait Container Stowaway, Jiffy 8-inch Pro4 Lite drill and 6-inch K-Drill.

This leads to the terminal tackle and bait. Sort out the jigs, hooks, split shot, floats, and jars of Power and Gulp Baits by types and sizes. It is amazing how so much stuff gets mixed together, and you can't find what you want once on the ice. After taking inventory, stock up with what is needed. This can also be an order for live bait, such as wax worms, spikes, etc., which can normally be cheaper purchased in a bulk box from a supplier. If you don't have need for that many perhaps your buddies would want to go together on the purchase to save everyone some money. It will often take a week or little longer to process an order, so plan accordingly as to not receive the bait too early in the season, but not past the time when it is needed.

Don't overlook the ice dippers. The plastic models may be broken, while the metal ones could have a loose rivet. If replacing, I would suggest Jiffy's Teflon coated Chipper/Dipper or, if on a budget, one of their economy metal models. Both of these dippers not only work to clean out the hole and skim the ice, but also have a handy light duty ice chipper on the end of the handle.

Any propane heaters should be checked for leaks and worn parts. These devices can be very dangerous. During an ice fishing tournament I attended a few years ago, an angler had a heater, which had recently been serviced,



The K-Drill's batteries are checked and charge, and the Jiffy Pro4 has been cleaned, inspected, and fired up before the season gets underway.

catch fire around the bottle's connection fitting. He threw it out of the ice shelter just before the top blew.

Most anglers have electronic equipment, such as depth finders/fish locators. These need the connectors and batteries checked. Check to be sure that the batteries are fully charged. My Vexilar units are mounted in Pro Packs, which have a handy digital meter that monitors the charge, with the exception of the FLX28 model which has the readout in the dial face. The pack also has an attachment to which the charger can be connected so that the battery doesn't need to be disconnected to charge. If this is not the type you have, then be sure to use a good voltmeter to check the charge, and a "smart charger" that will know when the battery is fully charged, and shut off, or down to a trickle charge mode. It would have been wise to check the battery off and on during the off-season. Any internal failures will need attention, which means get them sent to the service departments as quickly as possible so they will be ready when they are needed. I definitely stand behind the saying - "I won't go ice fishing without my Vexilar". So I want this piece of equipment running at its best.

Several times I've seen anglers coming on the ice for the first time of the season only to find there is something wrong with their ice cleats. With this in mind, check the fastening devices, as well as the cleats themselves for wear and broken parts.

Items that are sometimes forgotten are clothing, and are the most important for comfort and preventing hypothermia. Boot inserts and laces may be worn and need replacing. They may also have cracked through the time of storage, which can lead to leakage. Snowsuits, jackets, sweatshirts, caps, and especially gloves, have many spots that could be worn out, and in these cases may need replaced.

The list can go on, but these are the basics. Just remember to check out anything that will be used during the ice season. This is the time to do it, before the ice comes in strong to produce safe fishing. Also, if there is anything needed, Christmas is a short time away, and items needed make excellent suggestions to the person or persons looking for your gift.

Have a comfortable and safe ice fishing season.

If you have a question about this or another fishing subject drop me a line through the Dan's Fish 'N' Tales® web site at www.dansfishntales.com and Facebook page at www.facebook.com/dansfishntales. There are also links to my You Tube channel.

Until next time, get out on the water, and have a great day of fishing.



A good color flasher in top working order is almost a "must" for successful ice fishing, so be sure the batteries are maintained properly year around.



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SAFETY ON THE HARD WATER

By Captain Adam Walton

As ice takes hold on waters to the north, anglers are venturing onto the hard water. Although many anglers look forward to this season, some forget about the inherent danger associated with it. Unfortunately, every year numerous anglers fall through the ice and all too often, some tragically perish. Before heading out, knowing a few simple precautions

and understanding basic survival skills may make the difference between life and death.

Let's first discuss the effects of cold water shock to the human body. When a person first falls through the ice, the body's initial reaction to abrupt cold water immersion is to gasp. The cold water shock will literally suck the breath out of your lungs, causing many people to panic and inhale water. This factor alone causes many drowning deaths, compared to hypothermia which is discussed later. Understanding that gasping and losing your breath is a short term normal response, keeping calm and treading water the first minute after falling in should be your only priority. (Figure 1) Attempting to escape the water while unable to control your breathing is difficult and dangerous. After a short time, your body will

become accustom to the cold water and your breathing will return to normal. Once your breathing is controlled, focus on quickly getting out. First, get your bearings and try to locate the tracks you left prior to falling through. This points you in the general direction of safe ice, since it was able to hold your weight before falling through. After you have quickly located the direction of escape, prop you body onto the ice and kick hard while pulling yourself up. If ice

Figure 1 - Tread Water & Control Breathing



breaks off, push away broken pieces and continue going until solid ice is found. Once your entire body is onto solid ice, roll safely away from the hole. Rolling away disperses your weight and helps to not fall through again. If you carry ice picks, use them to pull yourself onto safe ice. Ice picks are inexpensive and make a huge difference when attempting to pull your body onto safe ice. (Figure 2) Although is it may seem insane, once out of the water, remove as much heavy wet clothing as possible and head towards help. Since cold wet clothing pulls away body heat much faster than cold air, removing items will keep you warmer compared to keeping them on.



Figure 2 - Use of Ice Picks and Kick to Escape

Along with drowning, hypothermia is a secondary, but just as import threat. If you are unable to get out of the water, or if you do get out but are far away from help, hypothermia will quickly set in and may cause death. The first stage of hypothermia is body shivers. As time passes, numbness will begin to set in, eventually making it difficult or impossible to control your body movements. Continued cold exposure will lead to advanced stages of hypothermia, which include alter mental status and poor decision making. If no help is found, unconsciousness will eventually occur, which can lead to death. Both the water and air temperature will affect how quickly these stages occur, but generally speaking,



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the human body has roughly 10 minutes of purposeful movement before hypothermia begins to set in and 1 hour before unconsciousness occurs. After this time frame passes, it becomes very difficult to rescue victims.

If you are able to rescue someone, be aware of the advanced stages of hypothermia. It is important to rewarm a victim, but do so slowly. Rapid rewarming, like submersion into a hot bath, can cause a victim of advanced hypothermia to go into cardiac arrest. Never hesitate to call your emergency response number if you see someone in distress, even if you are able to rescue the victim. Advance care is usually necessary even after the subject is pulled from the water.

One can see the importance of traveling with a fishing partner and letting others know your location prior to heading out. If alone, self rescue can be very difficult and hypothermia effects can take hold before you reach help. Some other things to think about are wearing equipment such as ice picks or a life jacket and carrying items such as a throw rope, extra gloves/stocking hats, flares, etc... which all can help in emergency situations. Please be safe this season and plan accordingly. Ice fishing is a blast, but understanding the dangers that go with it and how to handle them may save your life!



For more information and to see our cold water immersion / self rescue video, check out the video above.

Captain Adam Walton operates Pike Pole Fishing Guide Service and is a certified firefighter paramedic for the State of Wisconsin.

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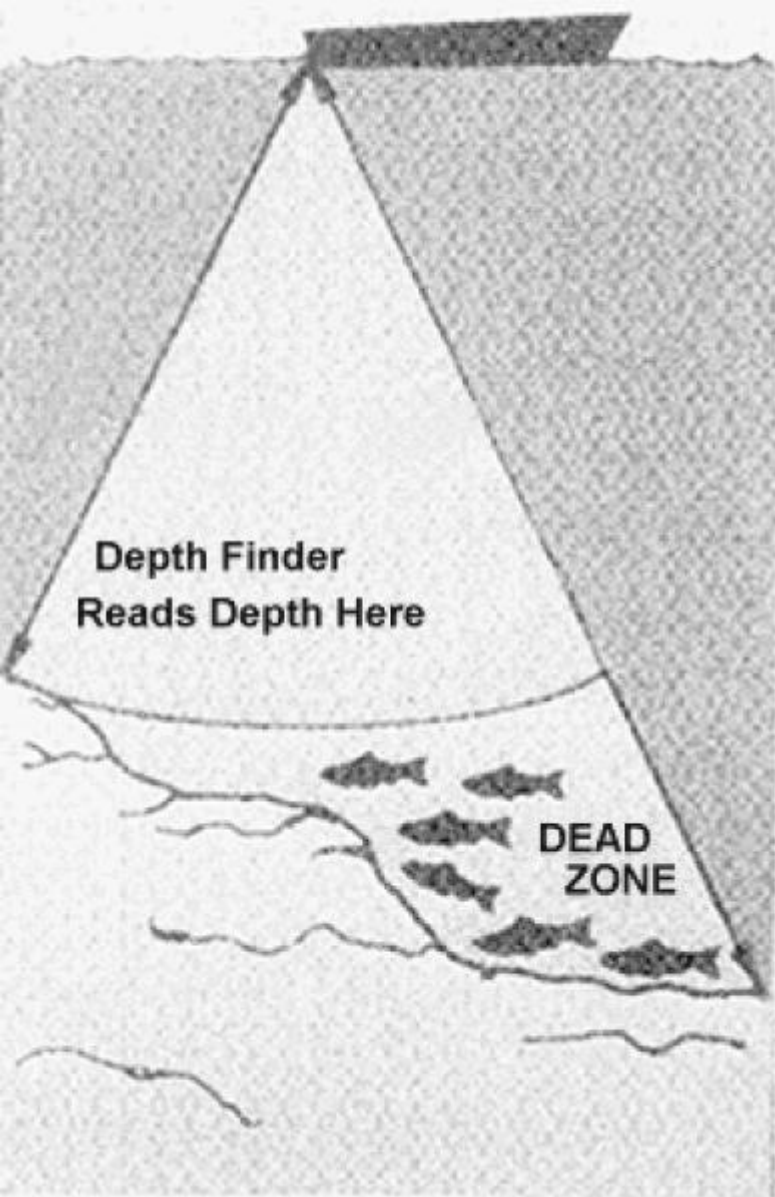
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Choosing A Transducer Beam Angle

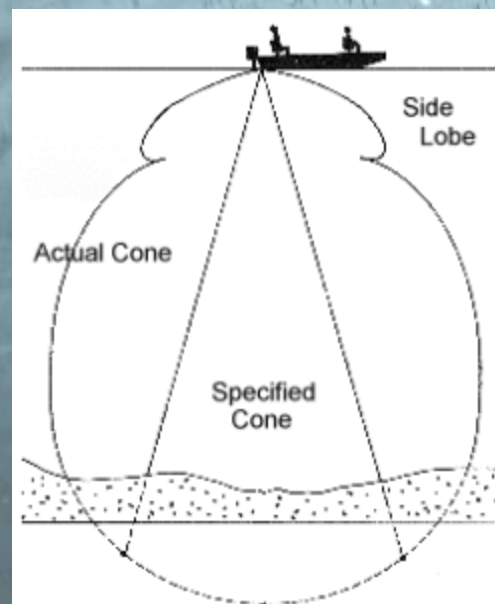
out a constant amount of power. It does not matter where you have the gain level set. Gain simply controls how much you amplify the signal that is bounced off of the bottom. Therefore, a narrow beam transducer will appear to be much more powerful than a wide beam transducer. This is because you are putting that same amount of power into a smaller area. This can be an advantage if you are fishing in deep water or a detriment if you are fishing shallow. A narrow beam transducer can be overpowering in shallow water. Switching to Low Power (LP), or the use of an S-Cable on an FL-8se, will solve this problem, though.

Beam angle has a large effect on the performance of your depth finder. There is more to it than simply area of coverage. Most of our FL-8 se units are sold with a wide beam, 19 degree, and transducer. There are several reasons for this, but it does not mean that this angle is the best for you. Most fisherman, and the stores they buy from, believe that wider is better. If you have more area of coverage then you should be able to see more fish, right? The answer is a definite maybe.

The correct beam angle to use depends entirely on what you are trying to see with your sonar. If you are fishing for suspended Crappies then you probably would be very pleased with the performance of the wide beam. However, if you were going after Walleye that are hanging right on the bottom along a steep drop-off you may be disappointed.

DEAD ZONE – Dead Zone is the area within the transducers cone of sound that is blind to you. The wider the beam angle the greater the possible dead zone. The sonar will mark bottom as the nearest distance it sees. If you are fishing over a slope it may see the high side of the slope, at the edge of the cone, and mark that as bottom. The fish that are hanging on the bottom in the center of the cone will be invisible to you because they are actually within the bottom signal on your depth finder. A narrower beam angle will reduce this effect.

POWER – Your depth finder puts





This chart shows the difference in area of coverage for our various transducers. It is meant to give you a rough idea of what the diameter of the circle, in feet, on the bottom you are seeing at a specific depth. You must keep in mind that these are transducer specifications and, unless you have your gain set at the maximum level, you will actually be looking at a smaller area. This brings up another interesting point. Your gain control acts much like a variable cone angle control. The drawback is that when you turn your gain up high everything in the middle of the cone gets blown up to the point where you can't see what's on the edge anyway.

Area of Coverage

DEPTH	8	9	12	19	20
10	1.4	1.6	2.2	3.4	3.5
20	2.8	3.2	4.3	6.7	6.9
30	4.2	4.7	6.3	10.0	10.6
40	5.6	6.3	8.4	13.4	14.1
50	7.0	7.9	10.6	16.7	17.6
60	8.4	9.4	12.6	20.0	21.2
70	9.4	11.0	14.7	23.4	24.7
80	11.2	12.6	16.8	26.8	28.2
90	12.6	14.2	20.0	30.1	31.7
100	14.0	15.7	21.0	33.5	35.3
120	16.8	18.9	25.2	40.2	42.3
150	21.0	23.6	31.5	50.2	52.9

ACTUAL vs. SPECIFIED CONE ANGLE

Most people picture the cone of sound to be triangle shaped. This is true only for the specified cone angle. The actual cone of sound is shaped much like the drawing. As you can see there is a lot of area outside of the specified cone. You may or may not be able to see a target in this area. It depends on how well the target reflects the signal back to the depth finder. Good fisherman understand this and can actually identify

schools of fish that are way off to the side of them. They look at the depth finder in the area beyond the bottom. If this area is normally clear, but suddenly a group signal appear, then it's a good bet that there is something out there. Also, notice the side lobes of the actual cone of sound. This area is generally considered undesirable and a good transducer has minimal side lobes.

Choosing the correct beam angle is a difficult decision. That is why Vexilar offers different transducers. This article was sponsored by [Vexilar](http://Vexilar.com).



Making Plans

By Bob Jensen

There was snow in the air last week. Not much, but enough to remind me of something that I didn't need to be reminded of: Winter is getting closer. We could be ice-fishing on small ponds and lakes in less than a month. Strangely, I enjoy ice-fishing more now than I did in the past. I am planning some of my ice-fishing trips for the upcoming season right now. Following are some locations you might want to consider if you want to get in on some outstanding ice-fishing action this year.

Clear Lake in north central Iowa is developing a reputation of being one of the best multi-specie lakes in the Midwest. On a trip to Clear Lake last year, we caught dozens of yellow bass, white bass, crappies, bluegills, even a big catfish. If we had fished different areas, we would have caught some walleyes. However, yellow bass are the primary draw to Clear Lake. When you get on the yellows, the bite is non-stop. Yellow bass are wonderful table fare, and there is no daily or possession limit for yellow bass on Clear Lake. If you're looking for the ingredients for a fish-fry, Clear Lake's yellow bass are the deal.



Yellow bass are mostly smaller fish, mostly less than ten inches, but you will catch some bigger ones. Tiny baits are best for yellows. Northland's Mooska Tungsten Jig or Banana Bug tipped with a tiny minnow will catch yellow bass anywhere. Check out Clear Lake at www.clearlakeiowa.com or www.paulsfishingguide.com Kevan Paul guides on Clear Lake and puts his clients on the fish consistently.

Lake Winnibigoshish in north central Minnesota is historically a favored ice-fishing destination for many Midwest ice-anglers. Perch are the target for most of those anglers. Winnie has lots of perch, good numbers of big ones, and lots of eaters.

On Winnie last year, we were fishing water about twenty feet deep. We could see fish on the sonar that were right on the bottom, but we only let our baits go down about fifteen feet. These perch were so competitive that they would come up that high to eat our spoons. When they quit coming up that far, we let the bait get closer to the bottom. We would catch a few more, then we'd move to another hole. Fast, fast fishing, and again, really good eating. Visit www.mcardlesresort.com for more Winnie information.

Another must-visit location is Big Stone Lake on the Minnesota-South Dakota border. Big Stone has become one of the Midwest's best perch fisheries. You'll get big ones, and you'll get lots of them. I've visited Big Stone twice in the past two years, and both times I've arrived during not-so-good fishing conditions, and both times we still caught lots of fish. One of the keys on Big Stone, like on many other bodies of water, is to keep moving until the perch are located.

Sixteenth ounce Forage Minnow Spoons and Buck-Shot Rattle Spoons tipped with a small minnow or a tiny piece of Impulse plastic are perch killers on Big Stone and everywhere else. Experiment with color and lure action until the fish show you what they want. Sometimes they want a particular color, and sometimes they want an aggressively jigged spoon, other times they want a more subtle presentation. Visit Big Stone Lake at www.bigstonelakechamber.com.

Today's ice-angler has clothing that keeps us comfortable on the ice, and equipment is available that will enable us to have a very good opportunity for fish-catching success. If you like ice-fishing, consider one of the locations mentioned above. If you haven't discovered ice-fishing, consider doing so as soon as the ice is safe.

To see all the new episodes of Fishing the Midwest television, new fishing related tips, and fishing articles from the past, visit www.fishingthemidwest.com. If you do Facebook, check us out for a variety of fishing related things.





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HORIZONTAL JIGS, KNOT ADJUSTMENTS, AND THE KICKER

*It's all about
cadence. It all
begins with
pounding*

By Mark Strand

Since the late '70s, Dave Genz has been seriously fiddling with the fine points of presenting a bait to fish under the ice. The goal, always, has been to replicate that rapid, kicking, vibrating life that real prey items have.

When your presentation “has that life to it,” says Genz, “it draws fish in. It gets them in the mood to eat your bait.” The secret sauce is a rapid series of microscopic movements sent from your rod to the bait, enhanced by thin, tight line that doesn't cushion the movements. “That jig has to respond to everything you do,” says Genz.

Of all the factors adding up to your bait going into a fish's mouth, Genz believes that this is the most important. Since the earliest days of the ice revolution, he and his friends have been using the ‘Genz pound,’ done by rapidly vibrating your wrist while jigging. “We used to talk about how ‘it looks like you're nervous’ when you're doing it right,” he said, laughing. “The trick is to try to learn how to make movements that are short enough. You don't want the jig to travel up and down; you just want it to look alive. You move the jig up or down by raising or lowering the rod as you pound it.”

When done to a jig that's designed to hang in a horizontal posture, the jig's eyelet becomes a pivot point—and the rear section of the jig ‘kicks’ up and down, sending out realistic vibrations that

excite fish. Picture it in your mind: the rear section (where the hook point and live bait or plastic are) kicks up and down, like a buckin' bronco. The jighead remains more or less in place, but vibrates rapidly in response to your fast, extremely short movements.

It's a realistic, exciting action. One of the true keys to consistently catching fish through the ice. "That's my go-to presentation style," says Genz. "It's what I start every day with. I might have to slow things down, change things up, but that's always my starting point."

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It's All About Cadence

Several years ago, while thinking of a word to describe the fine-tuning process he goes through with his presentation each day, Genz settled on cadence. "I really want to get people to understand the importance of cadence," he stressed. "In other words, how the bait moves. How fast it moves. What kind of feeling it gives off."

As mentioned, he typically starts the day showing fish the Genz Pound. More often than not, it does the trick. Calls fish in, gets them to chase the bait (or at least approach close), then forces them to suck it in, to see for sure whether it's something to eat. "And you have to keep doing it once the fish is at the bait," urges Dave. "When the fish gets right up to the bait, that's when most people stop doing the cadence. You have to keep it going, so they keep coming, so they keep chasing it, and grab it."

On those days when a "hard pound" isn't the answer, Genz experiments by slowing down the cadence.

“I’ll do that before I switch baits,” he says. “Instead of thinking you have to change (jig) color, change the cadence first. Sometimes they want it slower. But I always try to keep that ‘kick’ going, even when the cadence slows down. That’s a challenge, for sure.”

Importance of Jig Design

In order to produce the Genz Pound with the kick, there are several must-have features in the jig itself, and the real ‘kicker’ that we’ll talk about in a minute.

First, the eyelet on the jig (the thing you tie the line to) has to allow the jig to adopt a horizontal posture in the water, if rigged to do so. A horizontal posture means the hook sits perpendicular to your line. This is determined by what type of hook is used, and by the ‘kicker’ we’ll talk about in a minute.

(You can ‘pound’ any jig, including vertical jigs. But you can’t produce the buckin’ bronco, hook-kicking motion unless the jig is horizontally oriented.)

Genz has forever talked about the quest to find “small jigs that fish heavy for their size,” so we can get our bait down into the fish zone quickly, and back down there quickly after reeling up. It also has to do with the desire to pound the bait and maintain the feel of each cycle, so bites can be detected by noticing the feel has changed.

“But one problem we’ve always encountered,” he says, “is that, as the jighead size went down, the hooks got so tiny we had a hard time putting on more than one maggot, or wax worm, and most plastics were too big for them, too. We’ve needed small jigs that fish heavy, but with bigger hooks, that have a wide enough gap so you can put six maggots or two wax worms on there and still have enough hook to stick the fish when it bites.”

With precision, Clam declared war on the ‘small hook problem,’ releasing its XL series jigs.

“That got us going in the right direction,” notes Genz. “That, and the fact that all the jigs in the Drop series feature tungsten heads. For their size, they’re much denser, and heavier, than



other jigs. That allows you to make small jigs that fishes heavy, and now we have the right hooks on them, too.”

Importance of Knot Position

Now, we come to the ‘real kicker’ that means everything when it comes to producing the pound with the kick: knot position.

You can tie on a ‘horizontal’ jig, but it behaves like a vertical jig because of how the knot sits on the eyelet. Or, you can swivel the knot around so it points toward the hook point, and that same jig holds a horizontal attitude in the water.

It’s a night-and-day deal.

“That’s why we’re always talking about swiveling the knot around,” says Genz, “to keep the jig horizontal. Every time you snag up on something, get a bite but don’t hook the fish, or catch a fish, the knot goes back to that vertical position.”

It has to become a habit, says Genz, “to rotate the knot back toward the hook point before putting the line back down the hole. Watching my brother, Jerry, fish this winter, he automatically adjusts his knot every time. He’s 80 years old, but many times at the end of the day, he had the best quality fish in the group. He does really well, and that’s a big part of it.”

Over the years, Dave has developed a streamlined technique for rotating the knot.

“Grab the knot between your index finger and thumb,” he says, “and rotate the rod. You don’t have to put the rod down and grab the line. The rod does the work for you, so you can do it quickly every time.”

Meaningful Experimentation

We’re going to talk in detail about it later this winter, but the new frontier in Genz’s study of cadence is experimentation with knot positioning and pace of the pound.

“When you bring the knot all the way around on the eye, toward the hook point,” he says, “that gives you the most vibration. That’s the position I use most of the time. But now I’m working on what happens when you dial the knot to different positions on the eye.”



Genz long ago learned to experiment with 'speed of the cadence' to find what fish want on any given day. Now, knot adjustment is bringing a new wrinkle to the testing.

Best 'Cadence Jig' Ever?

Genz and Clam never consider any product final. The pursuit of refinement is never ending. Such is the case with jigs, and new for 2015 is the Drop-Kick.

"The name gives away what this jig does," says Dave. "First, the head is made from tungsten, so it's part of the Drop series. And it's designed to make it easy to get that kicking motion when you're pounding, so we added kick to the name. With this jig, you can change the cadence, and the kick stays in there."

Genz has ants in his pants about the jig's release, because it's been three years in development. "We wanted the tungsten head, but we wanted to shape it in a certain way, so it shows up easily on electronics, and it behaves right in the water," he said. "And we had to make the right hook for it. Most tungsten jigs have the eye opposite of the eye on American jigs. The Drop-Kick has the eye set for maximum rotation of the knot."

When you study the jig, you see the interesting, squarish top edges. "The larger flat surfaces give you a better sonar echo," Genz explains. "I can see it no problem on my Vexilar, even when I turn down the gain. But we also tweaked the shape so it maintains that kicking motion, even at slower speed cadences. This is the jig I've wanted forever. It's the closest thing we've ever made to a perfect jig for the way I like to fish."

The Drop-Kick comes in hook sizes 12, 10, and 8, big enough for easy rigging of plastics, and for putting on plenty of maggots or waxies. "This jig," says Genz, "will be on some of my rods all winter."



Note: Dave Genz, known as Mr. Ice Fishing, was the primary driver of the modern ice fishing revolution. He has been enshrined in the National Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame and Minnesota Fishing Hall of Fame for his contributions to the sport. For more fishing tips and to order his new info-packed book, Ice Revolution, go to www.davegenz.com.

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POLAR FIRE

By Justin Hoffman



Snow-covered landscapes and frozen bodies of water have a deliberate way of changing a pike angler's methods and routines. Gone are the oversized [spinnerbaits](#), [cranks](#) and [spoons](#) — the familiar tools of warm weather fishing — and outcome the dead baits, [tip ups](#) and [quick strike rigs](#).

Got Bait?

Dead bait is the preferred tool when chasing winter pike. They represent a large, stationary profile to a hungry fish, triggering instinctive strikes from these freshwater predators. They also provide the perfect scent and taste attributes to attract fish, leaving a magnetic trail washing in the water and arousing their senses. Add to that how

easy they are to handle, store and rig, and you've got yourself a definite winner.

Smelt, herring, sardine and sucker all make excellent choices (please check local regulations before using), and can be purchased either fresh or frozen from most grocery stores. Suckers can also be caught from local streams or rivers, and put directly in the freezer until needed.

→ Choose bait between 6 and 10 inches in length, as this seems to be the preferred size for pike, especially during the winter months.

Rigging Dead Fishing Bait

A quick-strike rig provides the perfect presentation when using dead bait. It allows for a single hook to be placed through the lips, while a [treble hook](#) is lightly skewered on the upper backside, toward the tail end.

When a pike swims with a bait, turning it around to swallow after a short run, the hooks will usually find a secure place at the front of the mouth on the ensuing hook set. A No. 1 single [hook](#) coupled with a No. 4 treble works well in most situations.

Tip Up Choice

In order to present dead bait, a high quality tip up is needed. Regardless of the style you choose, reliance on Dacron or tip up line in 30 to 50-pound test strength is your best bet. I prefer a black colored [line](#) as it is easier to see against the snow and ice, especially when hand lining fish in.

Smooth drags are also imperative when chasing pike, due to the length of runs and the speed that they can achieve. Make sure that it can run freely, with no hesitation at all.

The trip mechanisms are smooth on these units and can be adjusted for varying degrees of release, making them ideal choices when dealing with weighty dead bait.

Setting Up to Catch Pike

High percentage spots often depend on the body of water, but include shallow and deep weedlines, rivermouths, breaklines and flats. Pike will target these areas in one of two ways — in a patrolling, active feeding mode, or sulking near bottom while waiting for prey to stumble by.

Pike are typically more aggressive when the sun is shining, and mid-morning to late afternoon will usually see them in their hungriest disposition.

Cover a variety of areas with your tip ups when beginning the day from shallow to deep. First and last ice will find fish taking up shop in the shallow stuff, especially adjacent to any green weeds that are still kicking about. Mid-winter will see a shift to deeper water and it may be necessary to punch numerous holes at varying depths in order to connect.

I prefer to suspend dead bait just off bottom, perhaps one to two feet at most. I find the majority of fish (especially when dealing with skinny water) cruise “belly to the bottom,” giving bait presented in this manner the best chance for being seen.

This article was produced by [Justin Hoffman](#) for [Bass Pro Shops 1Source](#), where it appeared first.



JIGGING FOR PIKE

By Jason Akl

Out of all the different ways you can [catch pike through the ice](#), jigging has to be one of my favorites. Jigging pike is simple and really requires a very basic set up. No bait, [tip ups](#) or fancy setups needed. If you can figure out the movement of pike and learn a couple simple jigging techniques, winter pike are easy prey.

To understand why pike are such good targets for [ice jigging](#), anglers need to understand the mindset pike have. Since they are a group of fish that spawn early in the spring (right after ice out), pike can never take a break feeding throughout the winter. If you can understand what these pike want to feed on and where these baitfish are during the winter months ice anglers can catch pike all season long.

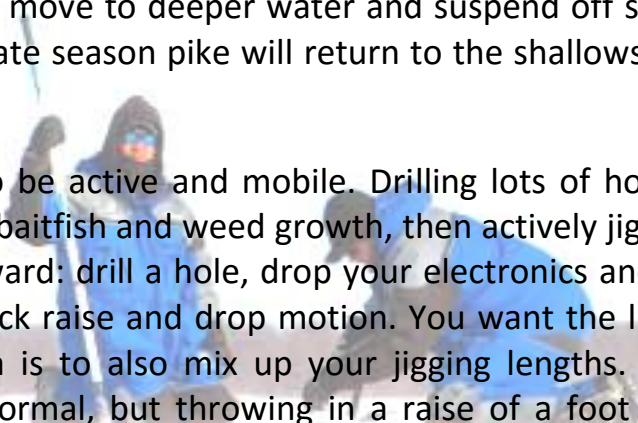
In the early season, look for pike to be where you can find green weeds. These weeds produce much needed oxygen that small fish and aquatic invertebrates need to survive. When these forage fish take up residence in good numbers, pike, and other game fish, won't be far away. Pike will actively search these weed for any baitfish that makes the mistake of not finding good cover. As the season advances and the snow gets deeper, the light that reaches the lake bottom gets less. With this lack of light, weed growth and oxygen levels will be on the decline. Baitfish will spread out and pike will abandon these feeding areas soon after. Pike will move to deeper water and suspend off structure like rocks or wood again looking for baitfish. In the late season pike will return to the shallows to find potential spawning areas.

To catch pike, ice anglers have to be active and mobile. Drilling lots of holes in the ice and covering water is the key. Look for signs of baitfish and weed growth, then actively jig these spots to trigger pike. The process is pretty straight forward: drill a hole, drop your electronics and jig for five to 10 minutes. The jigging action should be a quick raise and drop motion. You want the lure to dart and flutter as it falls from each pop. A good idea is to also mix up your jigging lengths. In most cases, raising and dropping the lure 3-4 inches is normal, but throwing in a raise of a foot or two every now can get cautious pike into biting.

When we think of jigging for pike, [spoons](#) are the best baits for the job. Spoons come in various shapes, sizes and almost any color you can think of. For most purposes, flutter spoons is what you should be looking for. These spoons fall at a slow rate and dance the whole way down. If you plan on fishing deeper water, use solid spoons which allow you to control your bait throughout the water column.

Take the time to chase some pike this winter with the jigging pole. Jigging with spoons will allow you to cover more water and fish both shallow and deep water in your search for big pike. The jigging motion triggers pike for larger distances than live bait, and help initiate their opportunistic attitude even when they are in a negative mood.

This article was produced by [Jason Akl](#) for [Bass Pro Shops 1Source](#), where it appeared first.





There is something special about plucking fish through the ice that gives us “Ice Fever.” Ice fever is defined as “rapid heartbeat due to intense excitement when catching fish through the ice.” And there’s no better fish to catch through the ice than feisty crappies.

When lakes freeze over, hordes of anglers congregate on key lakes throughout the Midwest and many of them are targeting crappies.

There are several reasons for chasing these fish. One is that when you find one, you’ll often find more. Secondly, they are good fighters, especially on light line and a limber rod, like St. Croix’s new Avid Glass Ice rods. Third, they taste great on cold winter evenings after a long day on the ice.

CRAPPIES ON ICE

By Ted Takasaki and Scott Richardson

One of our favorite lakes that has been hot over the past few years is Lake Thompson, located in eastern South Dakota.

Thompson is the

second-largest natural lake in South Dakota, more than 18,000 acres in size. This lake was formed during the glacial period of our earth’s history and has a maximum depth of approximately 20 feet. Large numbers of walleyes, northern pike, perch, and crappies inhabit this lake, in a variety of habitats.

The fishing on Lake Thompson has been excellent over the years, yet the lake continues to produce

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strong populations year after year. The tranquil backwater areas are perfect for crappie spawning habitat and that is exactly where you'll find them during first ice. During this time period, crappies are stacked in specific, shallow areas that contain brush and logs.

The great part of fishing on Lake Thompson is if you find one, you find a bunch. The downside is that anglers have to be careful about not to take so many that they harm the population.

There have been times where a limit of 15 can be caught in less than 15 minutes. Two rods are legal in South Dakota, but one is about all a guy can handle when the action is fast and furious. When it's like this, we suggest releasing the large 14 inchers and keeping a few 10 to 12 inchers for cleaning.

Speaking of cleaning, there's new tool available



I am more than a weekend warrior.

I'm also a dad. Soon my kids will be old enough to be out here with me. That's why I switched to lead-free weights and biodegradable baits. I pick up and recycle used fishing line. I never dump unused live bait into my lake. It's SAFE Angling, and it will ensure that my kids enjoy a clean and healthy lake. Now I'm more than a weekend warrior.

I am a steward.



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which makes cleaning easy, fast, and with very little waste. When you have numbers of fish, the Skinzit is a “must have.” Skinzit is an electric fish skinner that quickly takes the ribs and the skin off in seconds. You are left with a perfect fillet every time with no bones and little wasted meat!

Good ice fishing strategies begin by finding the areas where crappie will spawn during the spring. Subtle holes and channel areas located near brush and timber hold the fish. Find some wood and you’ll find the crappies. This cover concentrates the fish.

This next summer, try finding these spots during open water as it is far easier slow motoring on a boat than drilling tons of holes through thick Thompson ice.

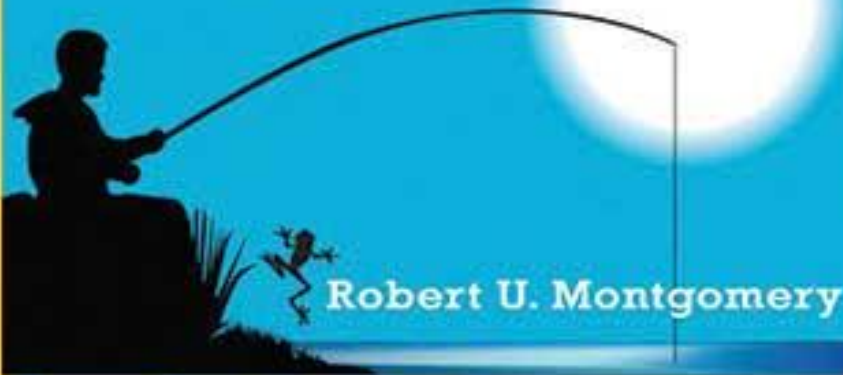
Use your GPS to pinpoint several likely locations and use your side imaging to find the brush piles and to learn each area’s subtle characteristics that will be the spot on the spot.

Once the water freezes up, take some friends and punch a few holes in the area. Use your electronics, such as Humminbird’s Ice Helix 5, to look for marks that signal fish. If they’re there, they will show up immediately.

Most are suspended near cover in about 5 to 8 feet of water. Watch your screen and adjust the depth of your jig as fish appear in the cone. Some crappies will also hold on the deeper cover just outside the bays near deeper channel bends.

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Although small crappie minnows and wax worms are deadly most of the time, try some small plastic tails on your jigs. Some of these new soft ice plastics are tremendous and you don't have to always be digging into a cold minnow bucket.


Crappies are curious, and after you catch one or two, others will come in to see what their buddies are feeding on. Always keep bait in front of them in order to maintain the feeding frenzy.

Crappies also seem more color-sensitive than many other species, so make changes often to see what they want on any given day. Also change up your jigging motion several times on the quarter hour. An aggressive motion will often attract the fish and as they appear on your electronics, see if they will bite. If not, then slow the motion down and quiver the jig. Then pause and stop it completely.

Another tip is to drop the jig all the way down into the muddy/sandy bottom, then raise it up quickly and keep it still. The poof of the silt seems to attract attention and the crappies will come up and will often blast the jig.


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Jimmy Houston




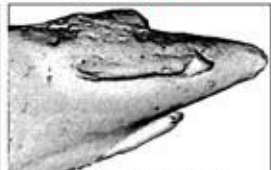

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If the action is just plain slow, then actively jig with your first rod and use your second rod as a "dead" rod. Rig it up with one of Venom's new ice floats. These floats are tremendous, as you can adjust the float without any cutting or re-tying. If you switch to a heavier jig or spoon, then you just slide the foam up or down to maintain maximum sensitivity.

If there's no luck quickly, then move to another spot. Crappies are not shy and it won't take long to know if the spot is productive.

Crappie fever is contagious, so be careful when talking to other anglers about catching 'em. You'll have a bunch of company the next time you go out for sure. And practice selective harvest. We want the fish to be there next winter.



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THE RIGHT PITCH FOR PANFISH

By Jason Mitchell

When it comes to presentation discussion concerning bluegills, tungsten has dominated the discussions over the past few years. Tungsten jigs have become so popular because tungsten is much heavier than traditional lead. An angler can either go a couple different directions with tungsten. You can use a

much smaller profile or size with tungsten or you can use the same mass or size as traditional lead but increase the sensitivity because of the increase in weight.

The extra weight also seems to not only increase sensitivity but also seems to give more action or kick to traditional soft plastics and also displace water better for putting out a cadence that calls fish in. If you want to see a very well thought out line up of tungsten for bluegill, check out Dave Genz's Clam Tackle Drop Series of tungsten jigs.

Typically, the Drop Jigs are the answer for most fish. Heavy enough for





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getting back down through the water column fast. A great choice for the first drop down the hole. Cut through slush good, maintains sensitivity outside in the elements when wind is pushing the line around. Sensitive and fast... yes there is not much not to like about tungsten. Until fish start to stall out before they get to you. As anglers, we have to balance between efficiency versus effectiveness. This balance becomes extremely evident with sunfish.

Tungsten rocks when fish are in at least a neutral mood and want to eat. Often, the first look fish give you is often going to be the best look and after you wear out your welcome, you will see fish stall as they come in on you. No acceleration or rise in the water column. When fish get tough they peddle real slowly up to the presentation and analyze it from further away, essentially stopping off the lure. Fishing pressure is the usual culprit for creating much more difficult to trigger fish.

There are situations where you won't get bit if you use line heavier than two-pound test. There are bites that require extreme finesse. The action on the jig has to be controlled with the most delicate dabble to float the jig without any twisting or spinning. Ultra light spring bobbers, one-pound monofilament and micro size jigs can make a big difference in catching some fish. When things get really tough, move away from tungsten and incorporate presentations that drop or hang slowly down through the water column. Imagine pinching a wax worm and dropping it in the hole. The wax worm falls painstakingly slow down the hole and takes forever to drift slowly towards the bottom. This ultra slow descent usually snaps the self-restraint of any bluegill in the area.

How can you mimic this descent? There are a couple of options. Where legal, a very effective method

is to tie a small wet nymph a few feet above the jig using a loop knot tied inline. This method is extremely deadly over the tops of weeds. Simply lay the bottom jig on the weed stalks and let the wet nymph do the slow descent on semi slack line. Sometimes referred to as a “Michigan Rig” in some parts of the country, this ice fishing variation of a drop shot rig can also be modified to use a plain hook and soft plastic.

In water less than ten feet, another option to accomplish this descent is to simply free fall a small plain hook rigged with a soft plastic so that the action is smooth and sliding as the plastic falls through the water column. No quivering or pounding to get the lure to kick and dance, the action is simply the slow descent that is painstakingly slow but seductive. An ultra slow drop will catch the most difficult fish left in a school, even catching fish that have been hooked or rolled just previously.

Because this presentation wrinkle is slow and sometimes tedious, this is not necessarily the best strategy to start in a hole or spot and is definitely not the best choice for finding fish.

What this finesse tactic will do however is round you out as a more complete angler. The more tools and presentations you have to throw at fish, the more effective you will be. On a typical school of fish, we will often start out using tungsten and then as conditions get more difficult and we start to wear out our welcome in a spot, we can pull more fish off the spot with some of the finesse tactics described in this article. In some areas where there is intense fishing pressure, anglers have to shift to some of these strategies much sooner.

If you have yet to embrace the new tungsten jigs, I strongly encourage you to do so and also recognize the situations where tungsten can be put to the best use. A pitcher however has to have more than one pitch. The slow fall finesse game is the change up ball. Master both pitches and you are on your way to striking out a lot more big bluegill and sunfish this winter.





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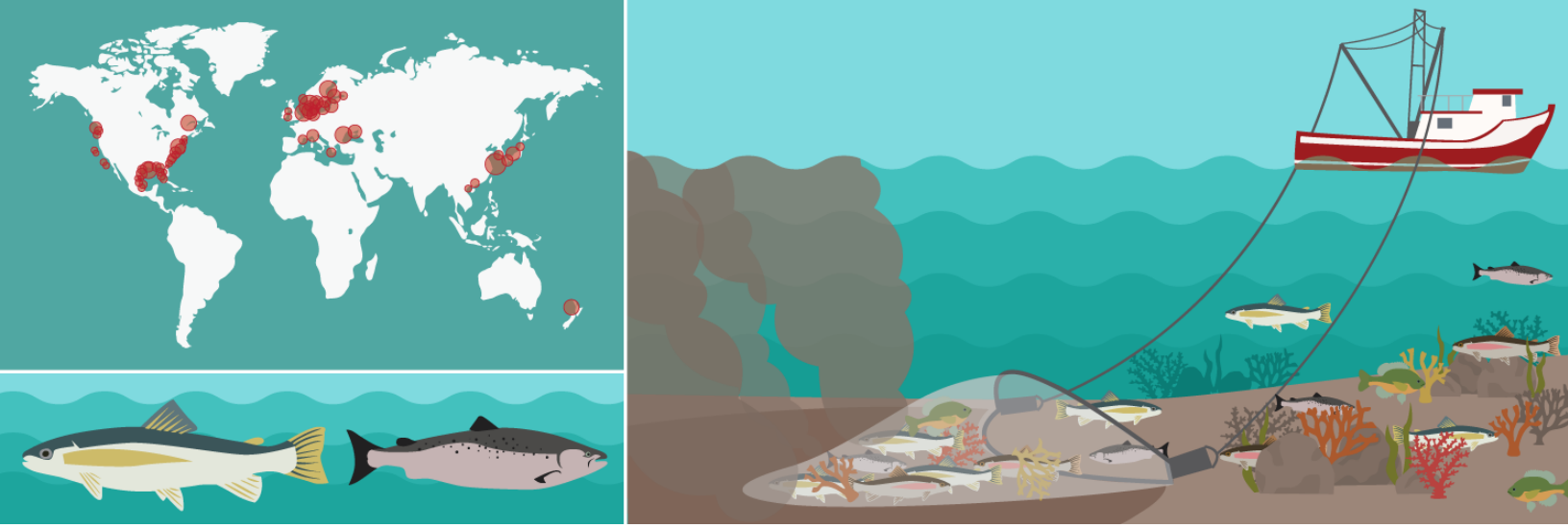
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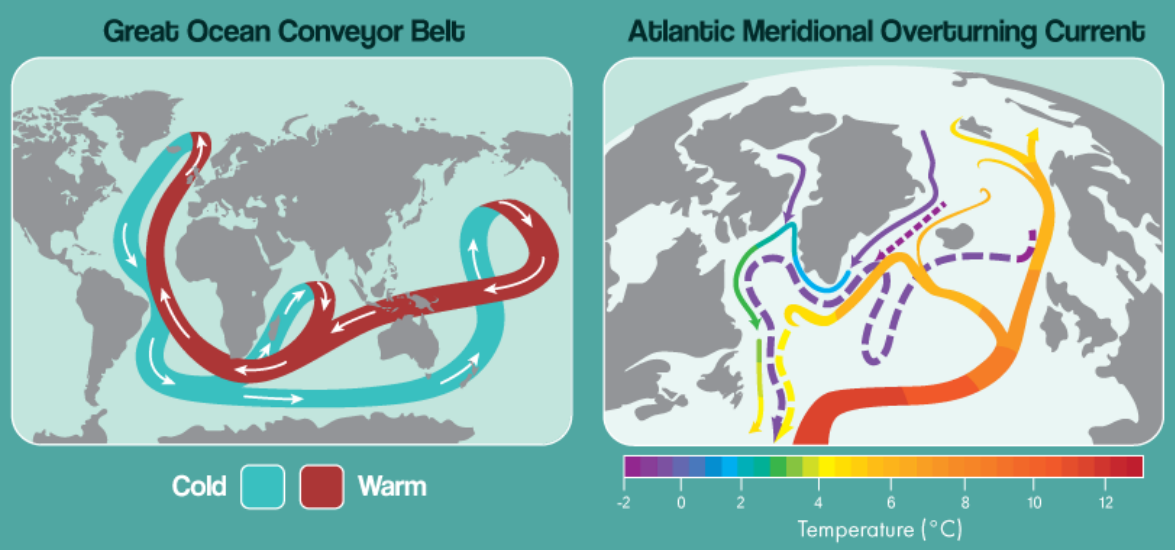
The Three Biggest Threats To Global Fisheries

CLIMATE CHANGE, POLLUTION, AND OVERFISHING

By Joe Overlock

Climate change, pollution, and overfishing are all taking a heavy toll on our fisheries and our planet. Climate change is affecting the ocean on many levels. These changes influence everything from droughts and floods to marine life and ocean currents. Pollution has destroyed entire aquatic habitats and left us with giant patches of floating debris all over our oceans. Overfishing leaves us with destroyed ecosystems, nutrient-lacking species, and a lack of biodiversity in our very sophisticated food web.

Ocean Currents Slowing



The ocean current moves not only aquatic biomass, it drives atmospheric weather through evaporation, temperature, and current direction. Changing ocean currents equals changing weather and potentially stronger weather systems.

Climate Change

The ocean's capacity for storing heat is roughly 1,000 times greater than that of our atmosphere. Thus, any changes to its circulation, temperature, and salinity can dramatically affect our weather patterns over land.

Ocean currents slowing

The Atlantic Meridional Overturning Current conveys warm water along the ocean's

surface from the tropics northward, where it is cooled, before flowing back south along the basin. It is a major player in our weather system. A 30% reduction was observed in the AMOC between 1957 and 2004.

Warming Waters

- The oceans are warming, but there are some geographical differences.
- Warming is not exclusive to surface waters. The Atlantic is showing clear signs of deep warming (United Nations FAO, 2009).

Changes on Land

Local changes expected in the Arctic:

- 5°C (9°F) increase in air temperature
- 6 percent increase in precipitation
- 15 cm/6' rise in sea level
- 5 percent increase in cloud cover
- 20-day reduction in sea ice duration
- 20 percent reduction in winter ice with substantial ice-free areas in summer

Ecological consequences in the Arctic:

- Primary production increased two to five times over present conditions
- Reduced ranges of cold-water fish and benthic species and expanded ranges of Atlantic and Pacific species northwards
- Capelin and other species with narrow temperature tolerances and late reproduction are likely to disappear from southerly habitats
- Changes to migration timing and increases in growth rates
- Non-native species are likely to increase in Arctic waters

Physical changes expected in the Atlantic:

- North Sea, Nordic seas, and Barents Sea are likely to warm by 1 to 3°C (2–5°F) over the next 50 years, with largest changes in the northernmost regions
- Increased vertical currents
- Reduced ice cover
- Populations at their range limits will be highly affected
- Glacier melt in Greenland could cause pockets of cold water that would be lethal to Atlantic cod
- Atlantic salmon may be extirpated from their present habitats

Chris Wood, President and CEO of Trout Unlimited (TU), told [Fix.com](https://www.fix.com) the following:

Climate change has already begun to alter our nation's rivers and streams. As precipitation patterns change and snow melts earlier, watersheds become drier and wild fires grow in frequency and intensity. Peak stream flows occur earlier in the year, base flows are lower, and aquatic insects and fish change their behaviors.

Native species such as Gila and Apache trout have been profoundly affected by wildfires in recent years, and low flows can compromise Rio Grande trout where two-thirds of the remaining populations persist in streams with flows of 1 CFS or less. Up to 50 percent of suitable wild and native trout habitat in the Intermountain West could be negatively affected by climate change by mid-century without corrective action.

One way to address the impacts of climate change is through projects that increase the resistance and resilience of rivers and streams. Restoration projects that TU undertakes to restore degraded riparian areas, reconnect fragmented streams, and reduce stressors such as livestock grazing and invasive species help build resilience.

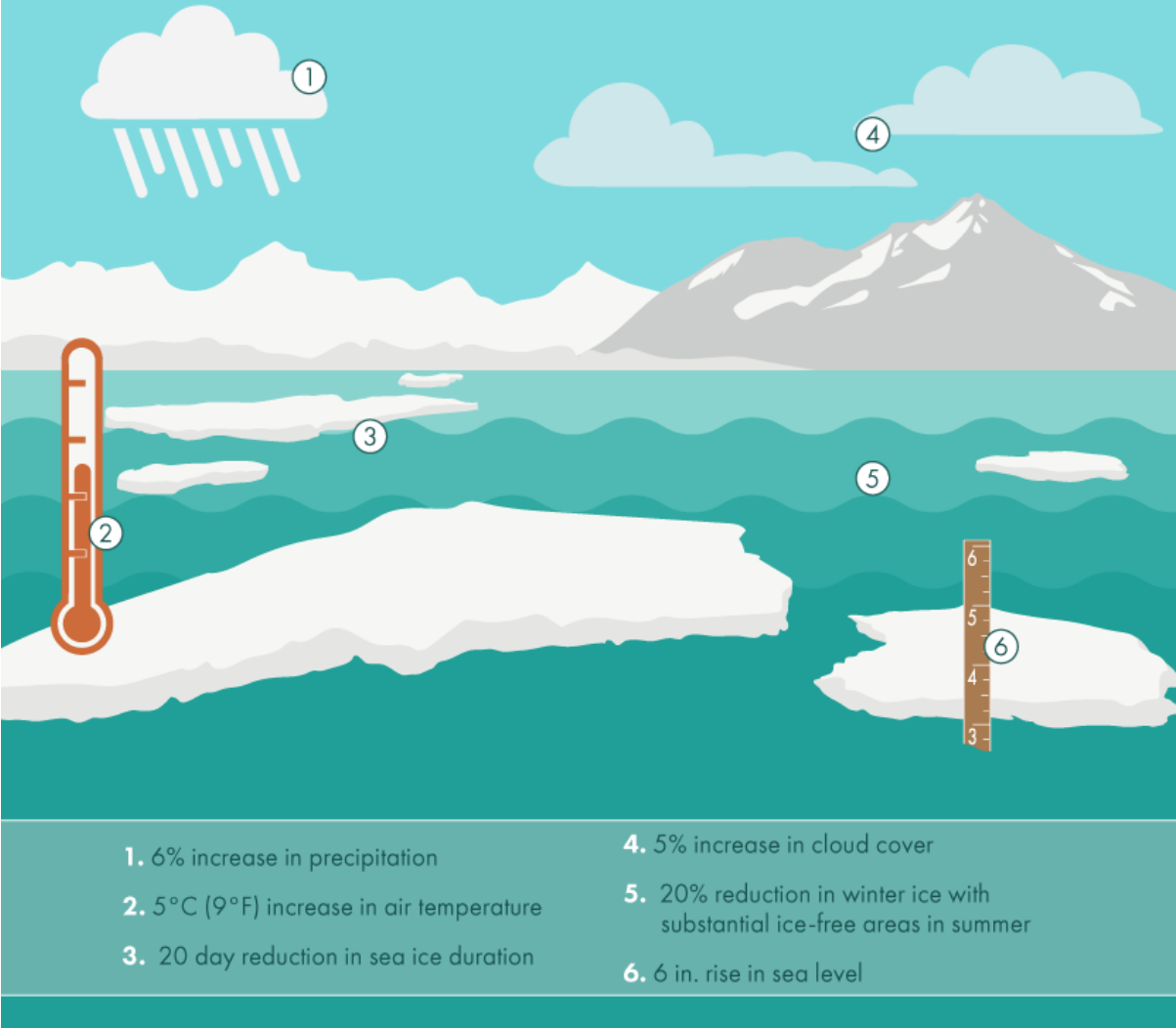
Our collaborative work on streams in places like California shows how this works. TU is restoring high-elevation wet meadows and riparian habitats in an effort to keep rainfall at higher elevation for longer periods and reduce the effects of less snowpack. Dam removal in places like the Elwha in Washington and the Penobscot in Maine increase resilience by expanding populations and available habitat. We need more "adaptation" projects, not only to help our trout and salmon survive climate change but also to buy society time to find more lasting solutions.

Ecological changes in the Atlantic:

- Primary production likely to increase in the Barents Sea
- Zooplankton production likely to decrease
- Northward shifts in the distributions of all species
- Fish species from south of the North Sea likely to appear in the North Sea
- Spawning areas for capelin in the Barents Sea likely to shift eastwards
- North Sea dominated by pelagic species such as herring and mackerel in the north and sardine and anchovy in the south
- Baltic Sea is predicted to become warmer and fresher; current marine species will lose their habitats to species that can tolerate low salinities

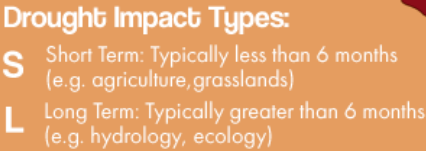
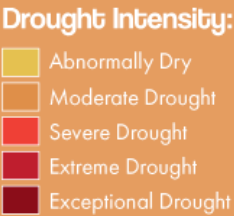
In addition to the changes in the Arctic and the Atlantic, the survival rate of cod in the Gulf of

Physical Changes Expected in the Arctic

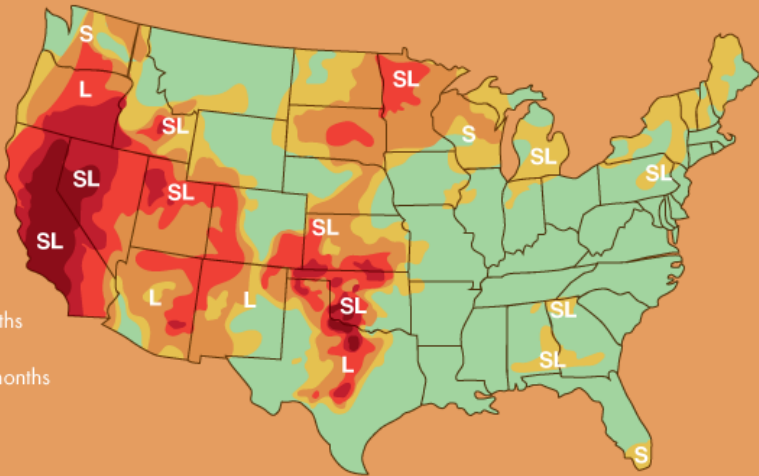


US Drought Areas

“Up to 50% of suitable wild and native trout habitat in the Intermountain West could be negatively affected by climate change by mid-century without corrective action.”
—Chris Wood, President and CEO of Trout Unlimited

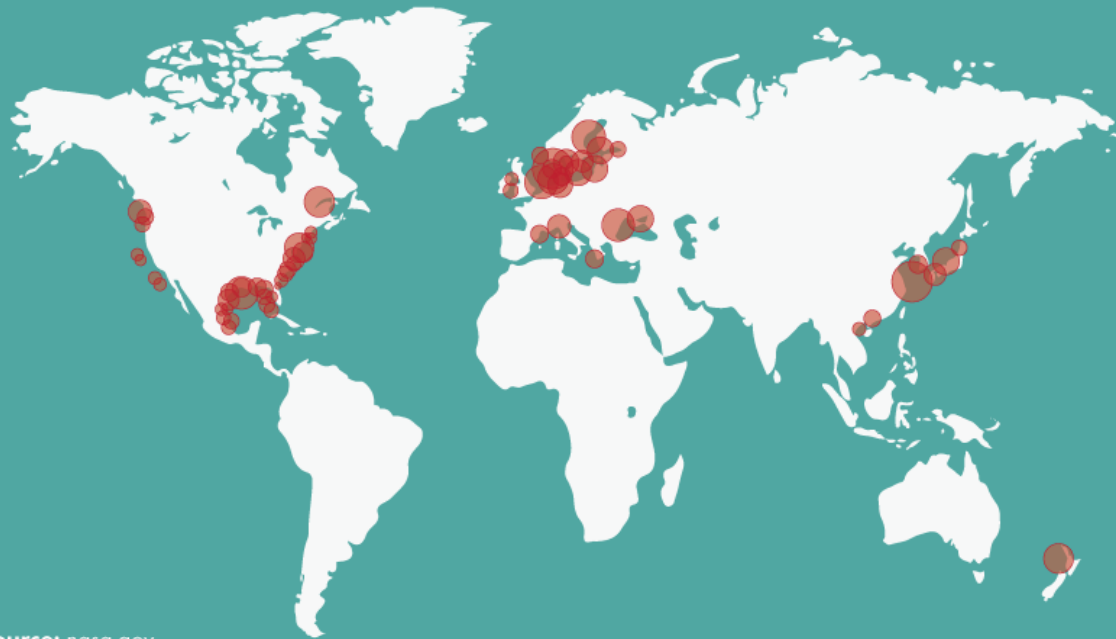


As of April 2015



Marine Life Dead Zones

Dead zones where marine life cannot survive, cover more than **245,000 km²** globally.



Source: nasa.gov

Maine will decline. In the middle range of the Northwest Atlantic, capelin are important prey for cod, but spawning times for capelin are susceptible to delays due to cold water from melting glaciers. Northeast Atlantic cod populations will also decline due to increasing temperatures in the North Sea.⁴

Pollution: Dead Zones

Agricultural run-off, which involves the discharge of nutrients,

pesticides, untreated sewage, and plastics, accounts for approximately 80 percent of all marine pollution around the world. Excessive nutrients from untreated sewage and agricultural run-off have contributed to dead zones in which most marine life cannot survive and have already collapsed several ecosystems. There are close to 500 dead zones so far. In all, they cover over 245,000 km² of land worldwide. If all these dead zones were in one area, their size would be roughly equivalent to that of the United Kingdom.

Plastics

Over 220 million tons of plastic are produced each year. Because most plastics are not disposed of properly, they eventually end up in our oceans. The United Nations Environment Program estimates that every square mile of ocean contains 46,000 pieces of floating plastic. These discarded plastics become weathered and eroded into very small pieces known as “micro-

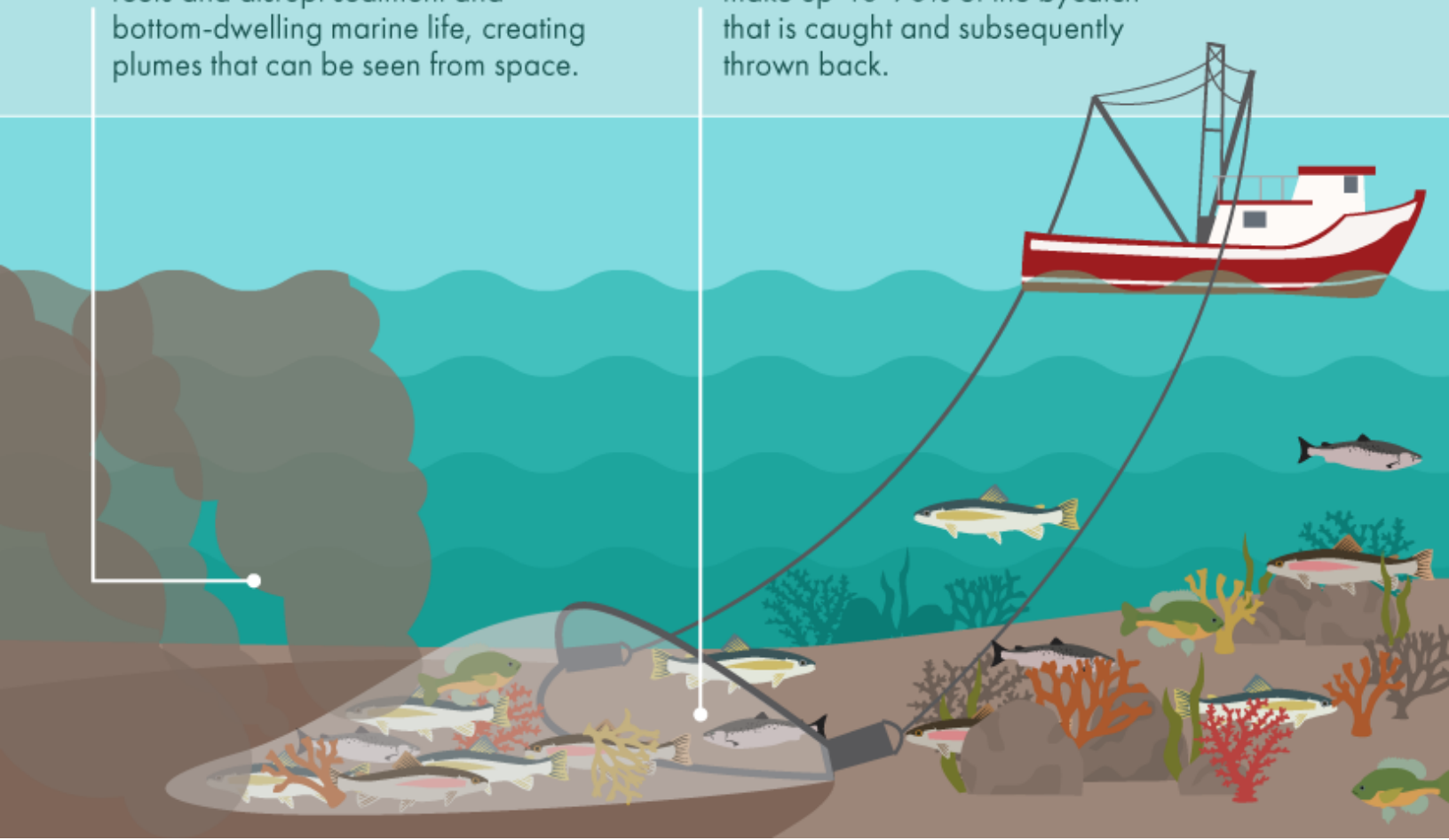
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Effects of Bottom Trawling

Bottom trawling can destroy coral reefs and disrupt sediment and bottom-dwelling marine life, creating plumes that can be seen from space.

Unwanted fish or marine life can make up 40-90% of the bycatch that is caught and subsequently thrown back.



plastics,” and they can be found on most beaches around the world. This type of plastic debris causes the deaths of over 1,000,000 seabirds and 100,000 marine mammals each year.

Oceanic currents can concentrate plastics and other types of marine pollutants in areas known as gyres. There are now five gyres in our oceans. The North Pacific Gyre, known as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, occupies a relatively stationary area twice the size of Texas. This gyre collects waste material from across the North Pacific Ocean, including the coastal waters off North America and Japan.

Overfishing

Destructive fishing practices such as bycatch are leading to the endangerment of global fisheries. Bycatch refers to all non-targeted marine species caught and destroyed by commercial fishing methods. It is highly unregulated, and it goes unreported in most areas. It can devastate protected or commercially viable stocks.

Bottom trawling is a commercial fishing method in which a boat drags a large weighted net along the ocean floor, producing vast amounts of bycatch along the way. This method of fishing scars the ocean floor by destroying habitats, including natural coral reefs. It is estimated that 40.4 percent of all

marine catch around the world is discarded back into the ocean as bycatch.⁵ In the Philippines alone, it is estimated that 94.6 percent of the shrimp trawling fleet's catch is bycatch, and only 5.4 percent of their total catch is shrimp.⁶ The news is not all bad, however. A recent study from the EDF shows the potential for growth in the fisheries industry alongside the health of our oceans within 10 years, should fisheries reform introduce and legislate more sustainable practices on a global level.

Poison

Poisoning is one of the oldest and least-known methods of fishing for sustenance. Tribal nations around the world have long used organic, plant-based ichthyotoxins and piscicides to stun fish in slow-moving water, allowing easy gathering.

In the 1950s, Pacific Island nations began using more potent, inorganic sodium cyanide to help capture coral reef species, which were sold as pets and seafood. The use of this poison quickly spread, consequently decimating fragile coral reefs. While it may be illegal in many nations today, the practice is hard to regulate, and it still persists.⁷

A snapshot of how overfishing has affected salmon alone paints a picture of the issue on a global level:

- Pacific salmon are now extinct in 40 percent of the rivers they historically populated in California, Oregon, Washington, and Idaho.
- Overfishing for Atlantic salmon began in the 1950s when a handful of European fishing boats discovered a patch off the coast of Greenland where the total population converges.
- The Atlantic salmon population is now around 500,000. Historically, it ranged from 10,000,000–100,000,000. Atlantic salmon were once so common that they were served to soldiers and prisoners and were used as pig feed in New England and the United Kingdom.

There's no doubt that our environment is changing due to human impact. The degree of that change may not be certain yet, but it's clear we're trending in the wrong direction. This is evidenced by the effects on our oceans that have already been recorded, and those that are predicted for the future.

Author: Joe has over a decade of experience in the Outdoor Industry. He is a passionate conservationist and has been writing about the outdoors since childhood. He resides in upstate New York with his wife and four children. He can be reached via email: Joe.Overlock@gmail.com

Fix.com contributed this article and here are the sources they used:

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| 5. FatFish Shelter 6 – Sided Insulated Shelter | 29. Eskimo Shark Z51 Ice Auger |
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| 7. Eskimo 8" Propane Ice Auger | 31. Rivers Edge 17' Spin Shot Tree Stand |
| 8. Eskimo 8" Propane Ice Auger | 32. Eskimo Shark Z51 Ice Auger |
| 9. Eskimo 8" Propane Ice Auger | 33. Eskimo Shark Z51 Ice Auger |
| 10. Rivers Edge 21' UpperCut Tree Stand | 34. QuickFlip 2 Ice Shelter |
| 11. QuickFlip 2 Ice Shelter | 35. FatFish Shelter 949 |
| 12. QuickFlip 2 Ice Shelter | 36. Eskimo Shark Z51 Ice Auger |
| 13. FatFish Shelter 949 | 37. Rivers Edge 17' Spin Shot Tree Stand |
| 14. Eskimo Shark Z51 Ice Auger | 38. Eskimo Shark Z51 Ice Auger |
| 15. Eskimo Shark Z51 Ice Auger | 39. FatFish Shelter 949 |
| 16. Rivers Edge 21' UpperCut Tree Stand | 40. Eskimo Shark Z51 Ice Auger |
| 17. FatFish Shelter 949 | 41. Rivers Edge 17' Spin Shot Tree Stand |
| 18. Eskimo Shark Z51 Ice Auger | 42. Eskimo Shark Z51 Ice Auger |
| 19. Eskimo Shark Z51 Ice Auger | 43. QuickFlip 2 Ice Shelter |
| 20. Rivers Edge 21' UpperCut Tree Stand | 44. FatFish Shelter 949 |
| 21. QuickFlip 2 Ice Shelter | 45. Eskimo Shark Z51 Ice Auger |
| 22. QuickFlip 2 Ice Shelter | 46. QuickFlip 2 Ice Shelter |
| 23. Eskimo Shark Z51 Ice Auger | 47. Rivers Edge 17' Spin Shot Tree Stand |
| 24. Rivers Edge 21' UpperCut Tree Stand | 48. Eskimo Shark Z51 Ice Auger |
| | 49. QuickFlip 2 Ice Shelter |
| | 50. Eskimo Shark Z51 Ice Auger |

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The High Road For Panfish

By Jason Mitchell

Panfish can suspend anywhere in the water column and a big equation for locating fish and putting together a pattern is dialing in that productive zone. Before electronics, anglers often fished down through the entire water column. The edge that sonar gives us today is that we can speed up the process of getting back down to fish which makes us more efficient. What also happens as we race back down to a school that might be fifteen feet below the transducer is we miss the high fish or leave fish that might not show up well on electronics.

The reason today that high fish are so often overlooked is because when we use sonar, the cone angle is often merely a few feet wide at the most for the top six feet of the water column. If visibility allows, anglers can often sight fish for high fish but there are also a few adjustments that enable your Vexilar to be more effective when looking for fish that are in some cases a few feet below your boots. The first step is stretching that cone angle as much as possible. Drill the holes as straight down as possible and hang the transducer as high as possible in the center of the hole.

Many anglers will actually use the foam, leveling device as an arm to hang the transducer in the center of the hole often just a few inches under the water. As simple as it sounds, keep the jig or presentation right below the transducer. Keep the transducer in the middle of the hole and keep the rod tip right above the transducer so that the presentation is also hanging right below the transducer. Remember that the cone angle can often be extremely small so if you are hanging the transducer on one side of the hole and you are fishing down the other side, you might be off by as much as six inches which can make a big difference for seeing your presentation and watching for fish when your cone angle might only be a foot wide a few feet under the ice.

Sonar is fast and nimble where you can run and gun easily but underwater cameras like the Vexilar Scout can also be really deadly for figuring out high fish. Panning with an underwater camera is a great



way to look for fish that are hanging below the ice, perhaps the best way. For actually catching fish, hang the lens so that it down views and just lower the lens in the hole far enough where you can essentially sight fish without needing a dark house.

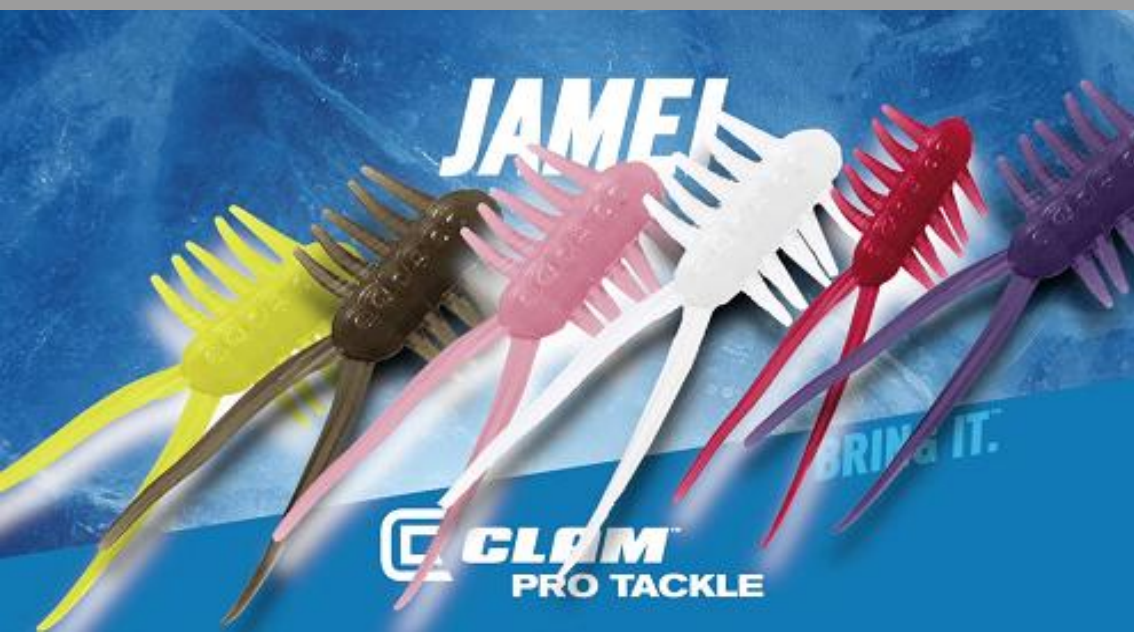
Some areas offer great sight fishing opportunities and if water visibility allows, sight fishing inside a blacked out Fish Trap is educational, productive and enjoyable. Over the past ten years, I have been gravitating towards smaller diameter augers when targeting panfish but sight fishing shallow water and high fish is still one scenario where I really like drilling a bigger hole as I can peer and see to the sides of the hole so much better.

There are bodies of water where anglers are really in-tuned to fishing high in the water column and anticipate this pattern. Thus these anglers are set up to capitalize on these fish. Other regions, other water however and some anglers have trouble fishing in the top tier of the water column, often the result of the pattern not being as prominent.

There are many situations however when high under the ice patterns shine, especially for big fish. I have my own opinions and theories but I believe we often find some of the biggest panfish right under the ice because the bigger fish feel more confident and safe where as the small fish don't seem to like to leave the security of either the school, weeds or bottom and be silhouetted. Big fish also get to you faster so if there is a pack of twenty fish swimming say ten feet down and they rise up to investigate you... guess who gets to you first?

With that being said, some of the best baits for exploring these patterns are often larger profiled soft plastics that not only have a tendency to flip the trigger of big crappies in particular but can also be seen from a distance below. My confidence bait right now for big crappie high in the water column is a Makki Plastic Jamei rigged onto a Clam Tackle Duck Bill Drop Jig. I like how this combination swims in the water. The new Clam Tackle Cavier Jig is another great shallow water crappie killer that really bounces nice when worked and gives soft plastics a nice vibration and action.

Crappies are notorious for riding right under the ice but there are also times when we have seen sunfish and perch ride this highflying pattern as well. Pressure ridges and ice heaves often attract fish. Frozen weed fragments hanging from the ceiling of ice are also sweet spots. Not every day necessarily do you



find fish a foot or two under the ice but it happens enough that it should definitely be a pattern to check as you search for fish. When fish seemingly disappear from the water column as the day progresses or don't show up in the usual locations, take the high road to some of the biggest panfish caught each winter.



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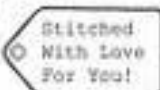
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North Country Walleyes, 'Meat' The Precision Jig

By JP Bushey

In two-line situations throughout North-Central Ontario – and much of the continental Ice Belt for that matter -- not much beats a jig and minnow combination for scraping extra walleye off the spots you jig. Spoons, rattle baits and other lures bring fish under you, and a lively dace, chub or golden shiner set up nearby adds a whole other angle to your game. Struggling against the weight of a lead ball in its nose or back, a minnow rigged this way is just too easy for a walleye to eat.

Inside a shelter, rig up a horizontal rod holder and set your drag to slip a little if a good fish scoops up the jig and minnow when you're not looking. I like shorter rods, from 26 to 32 inches long with a soft tip. A bouncy tip shows what your minnow is doing at all times and gives walleyes a cushion when they pick the bait up. You'll see them hit before they feel the rod. Set the hook by simply lifting firmly and reeling. A good jig hook slips right in, without much effort.

B FISH N Tackle's H2O Precision Jigs have emerged as my favorite head for two reasons:

1. A sharp, fine-wire Mustad hook does minimal damage to live minnows, so they stay frisky and looking

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for trouble.

2. They're available in huge varieties of weights and colors. They're one of the few companies that makes a true, gold plated jig head. In the tannin/iron-stained lakes in northern Ontario, this color is just aces for me.

Tip-ups with live minnows generate tons of walleye all winter for us too, but nothing beats watching a fish hit right beside you and then fighting it on a light rod and reel outfit. Of course, look for walleye on your sonar as you jig with more aggressive lures. You'll be impressed by how many respond to the jig and minnow.

Methods like the jig and meat combo start to shine right about now, when cold snaps start getting measured in weeks and that first-freeze rush has kind of petered out. Walleye are still absolutely catchable using lures with more razzle dazzle, stroked quicker. But season after season, battling cleanup with a well-placed baitfish gets hotter and hotter the colder it gets.

What's nice about these colder periods is they force me



into moving around less and slowing my entire approach way down. How that is even remotely a good thing? For one, camping out on good spots really lends itself to being thorough, meticulous and maximizing what I'm doing. There's nothing better suited to soaking great structure than a baited jig. Use the cold and rougher travel to your advantage.

Ma Nature wants to pin me down all day with huge wind chill or deep slush all over the lake? No problem. I'll set up on a sweet spot and kill it softly. Don't fight the bite. If things slow down or you're unable to be as mobile as you'd like, capitalize on it.

You'll love the way a jig and bait buries its chances. Walleye eat it and hooking/landing percentages are almost perfect. It's a key method for mid-winter fishing and a terrific slump-breaker, too. If you're marking walleye that won't eat spoons or other lures, send one down, believe me. On your Solunar events or during light changes (daylight to dusk will always be a top one), having this type of tool ready to use makes a huge, huge difference, in terms of walleye caught. It's really that simple.

It's worth noting that while walleye in the inland lakes we fish 'up north' love the jig and minnow, so too do our big water fish, in places like Georgian Bay and The Bay of Quinte. If you fish anywhere along Ontario's Trent-Severn system, in the Muskokas or on that big beauty they call Lake Nipissing, get a couple different jig and minnow rods set up and play them.

And one more thing: small, heavy, lower-action spoons also make a deadly anchor for a live minnow who's good and irritated. Think Buckshots, Swedish Pimples or my personal favorite, the Custom Jigs & Spins Vertiglo Lightning Spoon. Knick the minnow around the dorsal fin, give the glow paint a good zap and feed it to 'em.

JP Bushey is a fishing educator and syndicated fishing columnist living in Barrie, Ontario. North-central Ontario is where he spends the bulk of his time on water and ice, from Lake Ontario's Bay of Quinte to the spawning, Georgian Bay and all points in between.





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Early each fall, a close-knit group of North American Ice Fishing Circuit (NAIFC) anglers—Kevin Fassbind, Nick Smyers, Brandon Newby, Ryan Wilson and Shawn Bjonfald— already know where they'll be fishing when first ice forms. For the dynamic cadre hardwater competitors, ice fishing never really ends. So even when fishing from boats, the Wisconsin based posse use the time to scout panfish spots on upcoming tournament venues. Running vast lake sections with side imaging and zooming in with underwater cameras provide the anglers with amazing sneak-peaks at fish location, even within a big body of water.

At the December 2012 NAIFC Championship on Mille Lacs the comrades took three of the top four positions, including 1st, 3rd and 4th. Bjonfald won big fish honors with a 2-pound crappie. The key to the anglers' collective success was taking an extra day in late October to probe literally hundreds of acres of shallow flats, less than 15 feet, in a boat armed with side imaging and a Lakemaster digital lakemap. Anytime the anglers discerned something different—a clump of thicker pondweed, a dense



Mining Underwater Gold

By Ted Pilgrim

mixture of pondweed and coontail, or a clear spot surrounded by heavy vegetation, they dropped a waypoint.

During December pre-fishing on ice, the teams checked each pre-determined spot with an Aqua-Vu Micro camera. When the first day of the event arrived, each angler already understood what every spot looked like and knew the exact location of the biggest crappies and bluegills. During the 2013 and 2014 tournament seasons, the strategy and success repeated itself. For the past two seasons, Newby-Wilson

and Fassbind-Smyers have finished #1 and #2 in the Team of the Year standings.

Discovery Details

At most of these NAIFC events, the crew employed similar pre-ice scouting methods to unearth tournament sweet spots. “In the boat we can cover a whole lake in less than a day,” says Bjonfald. “Coupling Lakemaster maps with side imaging and an Aqua-Vu Micro, we can identify every piece of unique structure in the lake—weedbeds, cribs, rockpiles and other subtle spots. Before launching, though, we’ll spend days gathering intel. We tap every possible resource—DNR lake maps, satellite imagery, Google maps and precise Lakemaster contours—to expose all those subtle, often overlooked goldmines.”

In addition, Bjonfald notes that he’ll employ something called the ‘bug-out bag’ system. Waypoints are entered into a boat-mounted Humminbird 597 unit, which can be instantly detached from the console and snapped back into a portable ice shuttle for use on hardwater. “By using the same unit, openwater and ice, we can reference the exact waypoints we discovered prior to freeze up, and even see where the boat’s plot lines are most dense, indicating areas of activity. Between late fall and early winter, panfish locations in some lakes don’t change much. It’s a key detail that has helped us unearth some of our ultimate big fish spots.”

Checking Crappie Cribs

Among Bjonfald’s more intriguing findings are artificial cribs, which can be a conglomeration of cobbled-



together logs, wood pallets, brush piles, root balls and old tires. Bjonfald says the best cribs aren't necessarily the biggest ones, but rather the structures stuffed with the most brush, branches and other canopy-creating cover. Isolated cribs can be even better than colonies of cribs, if they're associated with a drop-off, weedbed or a rockpile. He also adds that larger panfish favor the corners and edges of the cribs, while smaller fish often get pushed to the top and outsides of the edifice.

"The best cribs create a sort of micro food chain," he says. "Panfish feed on the small crustaceans and invertebrates that cling to or hide in the crib. Often, bass, walleyes and muskies patrol the perimeters. You've got to go in with a Micro cam and probe every opening to identify the golden spots; see how to approach each one and where, exactly, to drop your lure."

Micro Mobility

While Bjonfald scouts during soft-water, Brandon Newby and Ryan Wilson burn hundreds of calories during the ice tournament itself. Wielding specially adapted Milwaukee portable hand-drills with 4- or 6-inch augers, the topflight team incises hundreds of 'gill sized holes per day, always spying on the underwater landscape with an Aqua-Vu Micro cam.

Last winter, Wilson and Newby designed a new viewing/transport system, a portable underwater camera case that greatly eases underwater study. Working closely with the two anglers, Aqua-Vu created the Pro Viewing Case, which allows anglers to essentially "wear" their camera on their chest while they move from hole to hole. The customized soft container frees up hands and positions the LCD screen in the direct line of sight, for easy viewing, while a built-in sunscreen and cable pouch add further convenience and functionality.

"The Mobile Viewing Case has been a huge part of our success," says Newby. "It keeps the Micro cam screen handy and in plain view at all times. It also allows us to fish, drill holes or tie-knots, all while underwater viewing, hands-free. The mini drill and Micro Case system also helps Ryan and I scout with stealth, so we can keep our good spots hidden from competitors. Sometimes, though, when teams are really pushing in on our turf, we'll use misdirection and a little subterfuge to put them off the scent. Like your golden spots, some secrets you simply take to the grave, man."



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