

Winter/Ice
Fishing Edition
November and
December 2015



ODU MAGAZINE™

**LOW
WATER,
LATE
FALL**

**Sucker
Time For
Big
Muskie's**

**Tackling
Tough
Times**

**Christmas
Shopping Guide**



For most of us, we are experiencing a mild winter start up this December. At lunch just the other day we watched an angler pull up to the boat launch near the dinner we were eating. He walked over to the stream inlet to the lake and started casting. He caught a small

mouth bass for his efforts. That doesn't seem too different, other than the lake is in Maine and the water temps in this lake are at 39 degrees. This lake should have skim ice throughout and a parade of hopeful ice anglers coming to the lake to pray for ice by now. We also watched a video on Youtube just the other day of Al Linder making reference to the mild temps as well. He voiced a concern about a huge 10,000 angler ice fishing derby that is supposed to happen in the Midwest in a few weeks. Al was concerned it will not happen. What a funny December for sure.

So what does this all mean? Run north as far as you can to find ice, or stop worrying about nothing and go open water fishing this mild weathered December. The fish are eating no matter the conditions.

POLITICS. OK, we said that bad eight letter word. Let's call this a simple reminder to keep one eye on our fishing

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It's time we stand together.

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July/August 2015

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The Healing Affect of Bass Fishing

CARTER'S NEW COLUMN KICKS OFF

Salmon Tactics
Northwest Giants
Lures for Striper Bass

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Hunting in Fall 2015

Proper Tree Stand Placement

STUMP SITTING vs. TRACKING

Lick My Branches
Farm Country Whitetails

Fall Fishing September/October 2015

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The Top 25 of ICAST 2015

October Beauties

A Bait for All-Seasons

6 THINGS TO WATCH OUT FOR WITH WALLEYES

Click the magazine cover of the edition you want to read.

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Photos: Cover photo provided by and of Anthony John Badham. Anthony of Montreal, Canada is an accomplished tournament angler, a year round multi-species fishing guide and ice fishing specialist.

and hunting rights. So you turn on FOX, CNN, MSN or whatever national news you can stand and guaranteed you will hear about politics. This guy doesn't like this guy. This one had another batch of questionable emails. Or these two debate climate challenges, while economic and safety concerns for North America are not as important.

These and many of the topics they debate are important, but who is really there for the fishermen and hunter?

What's next for ODU Magazine? Just after the Christmas holiday and before New Year's Day we will release the first of two all ice fishing editions. That magazine is packed with 20 plus articles on fishing the frozen water and helping you make the best of all conditions.

This edition of ODU Magazine is packed with just about everything an angler might be looking for. Open water fishing, ice fishing, what about them loons, a little hunting, and of course a Christmas and Holiday Shopping Guide. Please enjoy.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to all.

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

The banner features a grey background with a white border. At the top left is the Facebook logo and the text "Find us on Facebook". To the right, the text "FISHING NEWS HUNTING NEWS" is stacked vertically. Below these are two Twitter logos with the handles "ODUFishing" and "ODUHunting". At the bottom, the Pinterest logo and the text "Pinterest" are on the left, and the Google+ logo is on the right. The central text "Get Connected With ODU!" is written in a large, blue, italicized font.



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IS OUTDOOR TELEVISION IN YOUR FUTURE?

By O'Neill Williams

OK, you're the bass club champion and take huge 150 class Whitetails almost every year. Great! You're a natural for a television show. You simply can't lose. You're destined for greatness; Outdoor Channel, Sportsman's and Pursuit Channel are itching for you to be part of their lineup.

There might a couple of things you should consider before you give up your current employment, corporate or otherwise, and

dive into the world of outdoor television.

Number one, the networks don't pay you. You pay them. Really? Yeah. On average, to have your sterling presentation on one of the primary outdoor networks nationally, it's going cost you from \$250,000 to \$400,000 per year to have your show aired three times weekly according to how many :30 commercial announcements you intend to air. Generally, the minimum will be four minutes or eight :30 spots you will have to fill. Bet you didn't know that.

Anyway, you're just getting started. Are you beginning to waver in your resolve? After all you are the bass club champion and a veteran deer hunter. There's more, but don't give up.....yet. Hold on.

How about production of the shows? Let's see! You will have to field produce twenty-six original programs and air them two times each for the year for a total of fifty-two weeks. How much will that cost? If your show is to be professionally taped by a veteran cameraman or even a crew to help, it will probably take 80 to 100 days of production in the field including travel time. Fishing shows are easy and generally take one day sometimes two if it's a Saltwater destination, hunting shows hard but you will have, over time, about \$1,500 per day in expenses. Oh, your cameraman gets paid when traveling in the truck or plane to the lake or woods too so don't drive very far.

We're getting closer by the minute. Still reading? Hope so.

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(www.odumagazine.com)



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Ok, now we're at \$350,000 at least for air time and about \$150,000 for general expenses. That's \$500,000 for starters. Do you have to make money for yourself or are you wealthy enough to do all this for free? Think about it. Some guys can. O'Neill cannot.

I almost forgot, to have your show edited, captioned and sent to the networks for airings, it's probably going to cost about \$3,000 per show. Each network has their own standards so that's a spider web that can get expensive. Let's set that subject aside for the moment and re-figure: 26 shows at \$3,000 each is \$78,000. Getting tired already? Confused? There's more.

Hold on a second, who's gonna sell the advertising to your sponsors; your brother-in-law, neighbor, bass club partner, you? Let's talk.

Unless you can do it yourself, you will hire an experienced media professional with legitimate credentials, your upfront cost will be a retainer of \$50,000 at least even if he'll return your calls. He only gets about 20 a day from guys with visions of grandeur.

Good grief. This is getting serious. We're up to \$628,000 and you haven't made a dime for yourself.

Don't give up.

Your sales guy might be able to get upwards of \$100,000 per yearly sponsor. That doesn't sound bad at all, \$800,000. Great! You're \$158,000 to the good. What if you don't sell out? I hate to be discouraging, but I can assure you that virtually everyone you're considering as a readymade, standing in the wings, can't miss sponsor has had a hundred calls every week from other guys just like

you destined for outdoor television greatness and not remotely interested or have any advertising budget saved just for you.

So?

Go ahead and dive in. You may have tremendous success and be the next Lee and Tiffany, Michael Waddell or Jim Shockey. Then again, you might go broke and end up back at your old job, which was OK, with a \$100,000 loan to pay off, but so what, you're a natural so give it a try.

Wait a minute. It can't be that difficult. There are three networks that air outdoor programming 24-hours a day. What gives? O'Neill, "don't be so discouraging", you say.

Explanations as to how others make it happen.....:

It took three years to sell the advertising so went in the hole for a while and made money later.

No one made any money.

The show was produced by a company in the outdoor product's business and didn't need to make money via the show itself. It was an advertising venture for their brand.

The producer (you) didn't pay the networks and they took a loss. That happens a lot. Then you get sued. I know about that because my company sells programming time to producers and if you don't pay me, I have to pay the network but I take you to court. I win because I made you sign personally and take your home, car, retirement, whatever.

Or, the shows that air successfully are hosted by deserving veterans of the industry like Bill Dance or Roland Martin and have half a century of equity in the business with hundreds of sponsors waiting the wings. You don't.

How did little O'Neill do this? I worked two jobs, sometimes three, for fifteen years and was a thirty year corporate sales professional speaking in complete sentences, using good grammar and didn't rely on income from my television show to support my family. For many years I was on national television and paid myself \$25 per week.

Knowing all this, are you ready? Go for it!

OK, wake up, it was just a nightmare. Relax and go back to sleep. You've planned a nice relaxing fishing trip with your son or daughter tomorrow and need some sleep.



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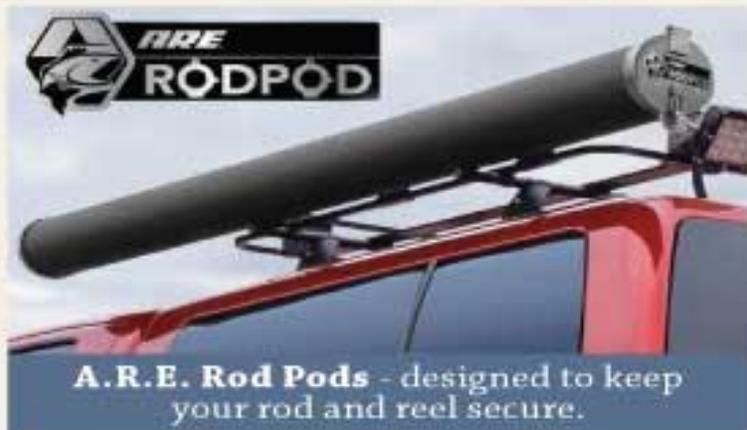


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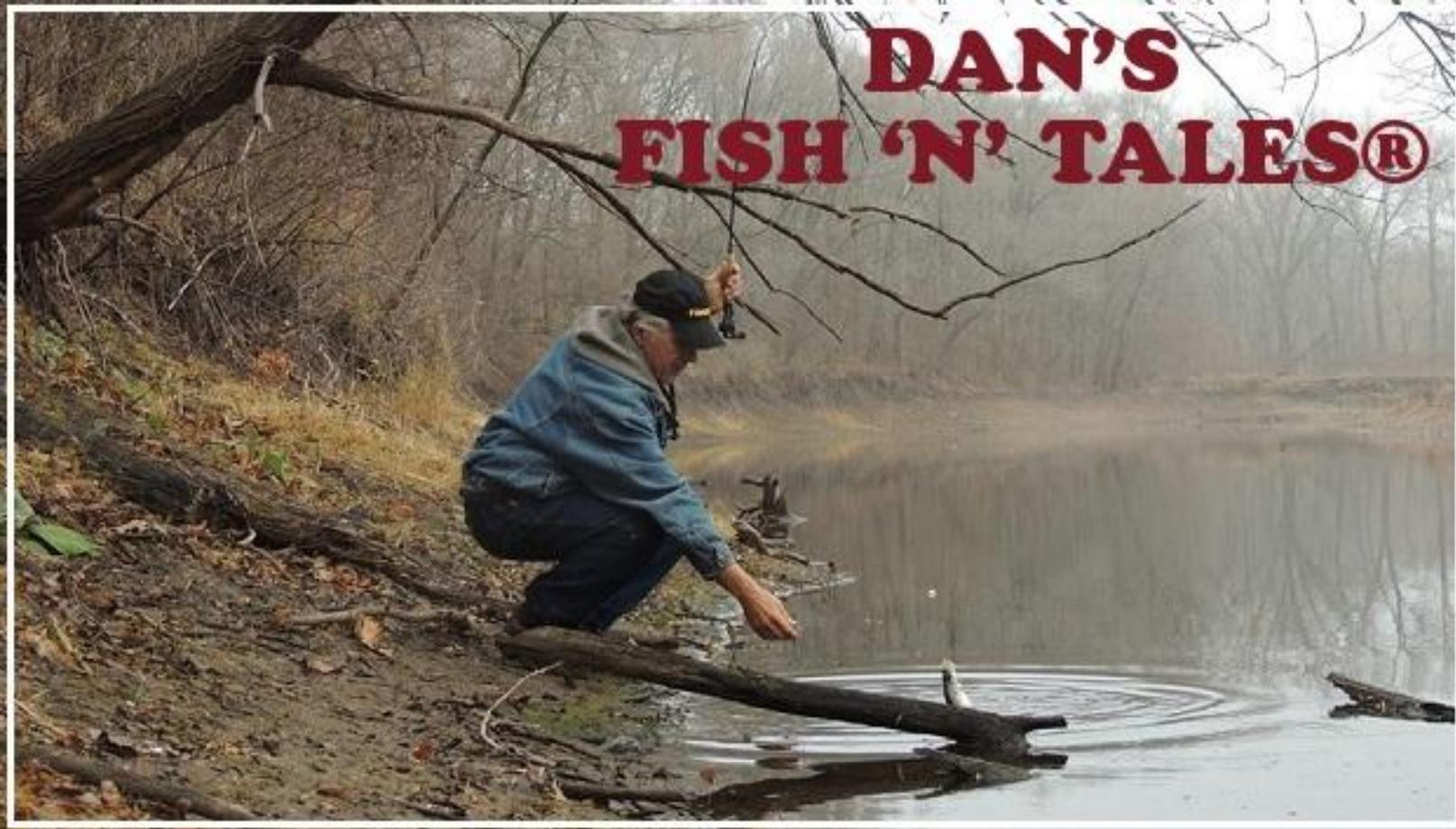
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DAN'S FISH 'N' TALES®



Low Water, Late Fall

By Dan Galusha

Once again the Internet has brought forth a question to be answered for our readers. Richard asked about locations and lures to fish for bass in lakes, during low water conditions as the fall progresses towards winter.

First lets look at locations. Prime locations at this time are the wintering areas. These are usually brush piles or submerged trees in deeper water, near drop offs. Bluff walls in the larger, deeper lakes are places to look, especially on days with a mild wind, blowing into or parallel to the shore. Points that lead to the deepest water in the lake are good, as are rip-rap areas during a warm day, if the sun is shining on that area. For the rip-rap it is best to wait for the warmest part of the day. Another thing about rip-rap in a low water condition is that it must continue down into the water to a deeper depth to be the best producer.

A Dragon Hopper jig head, with a Xgap hook, rigged with a pumpkin tube.



While not a location as such, there are times when schooling fish will surface for a short period. Normally, if this happens, it is over deeper water, and fishing time is short, as once they head back down the action slows and eventually is over.

As you will notice, “deep” is a key word. When the level is low the fish have been pulled out further, which means they are heading to deeper water structure, and locations where depth change is not that critical.

The lures I use in these conditions are medium to deep diving crankbaits, rattling crankbaits, ½ ounce jiggling spoons, and jig combinations. Not all are used in all locations.

For submerged brush piles and trees use the medium to deep diving crankbaits, and jig combination (suggestion – Blitz Spyder Jig with Havoc Pit Boss). Bluff walls are good with all crankbaits, and vertically jiggling spoons over any suspended fish. The rip-rap areas are like the deep wood cover - using a jig combination and diving crankbaits seem to be the best selections.



Fishing shad busts on long points with a shad colored Rat-L-Trap caught this nice bass, along with several others.



The schooling action that may be found calls for a fast action lure that can cast quickly, long and accurately. In this case I select the Rat-L-Trap – in the original ½ ounce size.

Richard's question did not mention colors, but it seems important to throw it in at this point, since people generally ask.

I use few colors, as is done with most of my fishing. Rat-L-Traps are shad, chrome/black back, and pearl/black back. Tennessee shad and crawdad are the two colors for diving crankbaits. The Blitz jigs are used with a Mann's Auger Frog, Berkley's Chigger Craw, Big Hawg Baits Mudbug or Havoc Pit Boss, and for this combination I prefer black blue jig/matching trailer and brownish/pumpkin jig/matching trailer. One color, or shall we say finish, is use for the jigging spoon – chrome in the hammered or smooth design in a Mann-O-Lur.

Another possible combination I will toss in is the Dragon Hopper swinging style jig head with any of the above-mentioned trailers. When using the Hopper model that has Xgap/Fat Gap hooks a Big Hawg tube will be used in the same colors as above.

Something not to forget is applying Kick'N Bass Attractant to the jig combinations and Dragon Hopper. I would suggest Garlic and Crawfish scents.

Fishing rocky points heading to deeper water in Little Sisters Creek on Bull Shoals Lake, with a deep diving crankbait, help catch this lunker smallmouth.

Thanks again for all of the questions, and to Richard for supplying one that helped create this article.

If you have a question about a fishing subject, drop me a line through the Dan's Fish 'N' Tales® website at www.dansfishntales.com, or Facebook page at www.facebook.com/dansfishntales where you can also like and follow the it for more fishing information. There is a link that will bring you back to the ODU Outdoors website.

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

A black/blue Havoc Pit Boss Jr. and a Blitz Finesse Jig with black Auger Frog.



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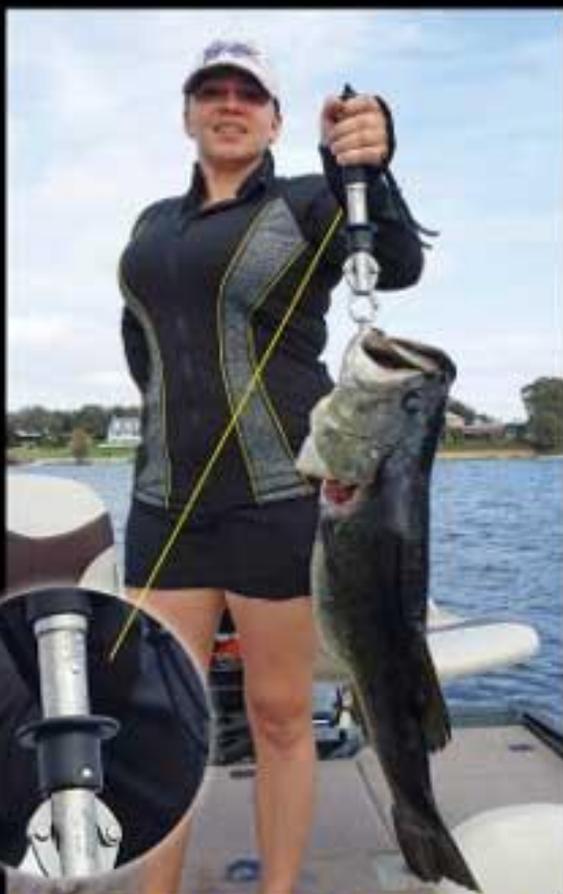


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Len Andrews, Hall of Fame entrant, with a Florida largemouth bass.



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

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



Required



Recommended



2- Bass must be released.



3- Submit entry at:
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Fishing With Billy "Hawkeye" Decoteau



Top-To-Bottom With Rat-L-Traps

By Billy 'Hawkeye' Decoteau

Ask The Bass University Instructor and Professional B.A.S.S. Elite Angler Cliff Crochet to sum up in one-word his success as a 3-time B.A.S.S. Classic qualifier (2010, 2014, and 2015), and his response is "Confidence"! Follow-up with 'Name one-bait in your arsenal which is the most versatile', and his answer is a "Rat-L-Trap"! Certainly, not what most inquiring anglers would expect? So, I followed with a simple 'Explain Why'!

With his Louisiana 'Cajun Baby' accent (Crochet's nickname.) he added, "Very few bass baits can consistently catch bass within a wide range of seasonal situations, while covering the entire water column as does a Rat-L-Trap! If that doesn't develop confidence in a bait, I honestly don't know what will?" (www.CliffCrochet.com)

"Survey carefully any bait manufactures catalog and every page will profile a completely different style



and pattern bait. Open up Rat-L-Trap's catalog and every page is the 'Same...But Different'." I quickly learned Crochet's phrase 'Same...But Different', had a much deeper meaning. "Every Rat-L-Trap bait looks exactly the same no matter what size. Except the Echo 1.75 crankbait or stretched out Slap Stik with their diving-bill? However, the Slap Stik and Echo 1.75 still incorporate the very obvious patented original Bill Lewis trademark design!"



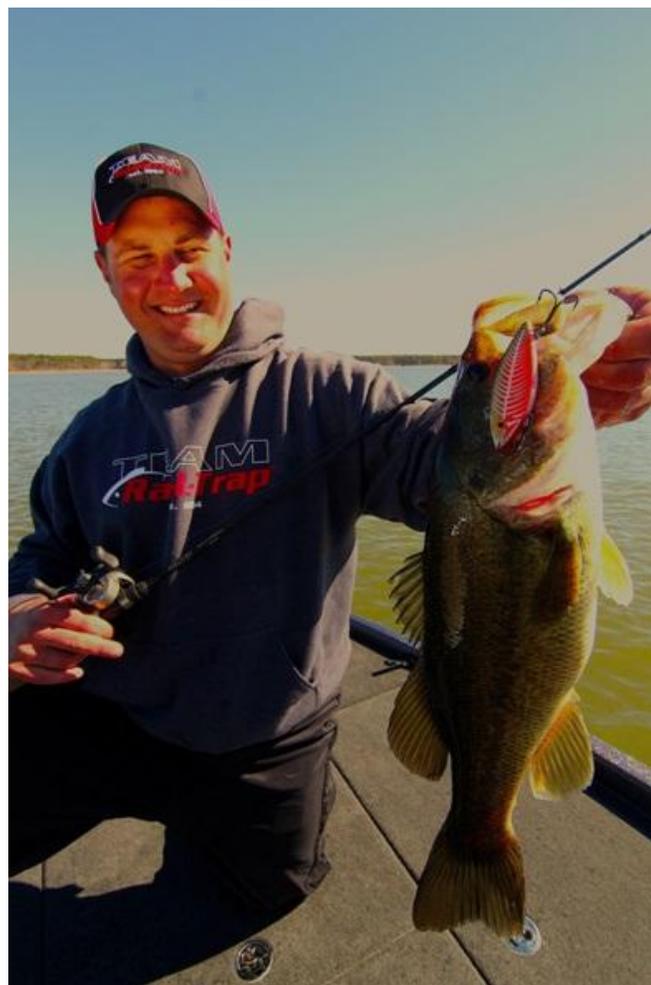
Listening attentively, Cliff placed five Plano boxes in front of me. Each with a Rat-L-Trap logo on the cover, but each labeled with different names; Zombie, Knock-N, High-Def, Stealth, and Liv-N-Image. Cliff removed one Rat-L-Trap from each box, placing them side-by-side and then looked me straight in the eye responding, "Same...But Different"! I knew then I was about to be tutored in the anatomy of the Bill Lewis Rat-L-Trap far beyond my wildest expectations!



"The first and foremost important difference all Rat-L-Trap's are now rigged with Mustad Triple Grip hooks. This translates into 'Game Ready' Rat-L-Traps right out of the box!" Handing me a Rat-L-Trap Cliff instructed me to shake it. "Tell me what you hear," he replied. Responding with rattles,



Crochet laughed answering back, "Wrong"! What you and the bass actually hear is a school of scared Shad." Crochet then educated me on actual under-water FFT Spectral Sound Comparisons with Shad and the Bill Lewis Rat-L-Trap performed May 3, 2002. The results proved Rat-L-Trap's sound chamber mimicked scared fleeing Shad perfectly. "It is better known these days as FPA or Fleeing Prey Action." (To download a 2016 catalog go to www.rat-l-trap.com)



Cliff enlightened me to the Rat-L-Trap I was holding. "That is my confidence bait, it's a 1/2 oz. Rayburn Red Zombie Shad. I have caught bass on that Zombie competing along the B.A.S.S. Elite Series trail all over the country all year long. This bait works within the entire water column from topwater schooling bass to lethargic deep cold-water bass. The secret is 'Same...But Different', same bait but with a different presentation and retrieve!"

Thinking I knew more than I actually did, I asked Crochet how he worked his 1/2 oz. Zombie Rat-L-Trap in shallow water invested with vegetation and scattered wood cover. He replied, "I don't! In these situations I tie on a 1/3 oz. 3" Float-N-Trap, in a Super Natural baitfish color." Explaining the advantages of the 1/3 oz. Float-N-Trap, I was intrigued with this bait's ability to come through slightly submerged vegetation, shallow riprap or rocks piles and wood cover. "One of my favorite techniques is to weave and wake it through lily pads or burn it erratically down open lanes within submerged/emergent vegetation," added Crochet.

ODU MAGAZINE VIDEO BLOCK (www.odumagazine.com)

As my tutorial on the versatile Rat-L-Trap continued, I was overwhelmed to learn of the wide variety of Rat-L-Traps available in different lengths, weights, sounds and the enormous number of colors for both fresh and salt-water applications. It suddenly became obvious why B.A.S.S. Elite Angler and 3-Time Classic Qualifier Cliff Crochet labeled his Rat-L-Trap Plano boxes on the side with different names. “I keep my color-list short and simple, Rayburn Red, Chrome, Shad, Tequila Sunrise and Natural Bream,” revealed Crochet.

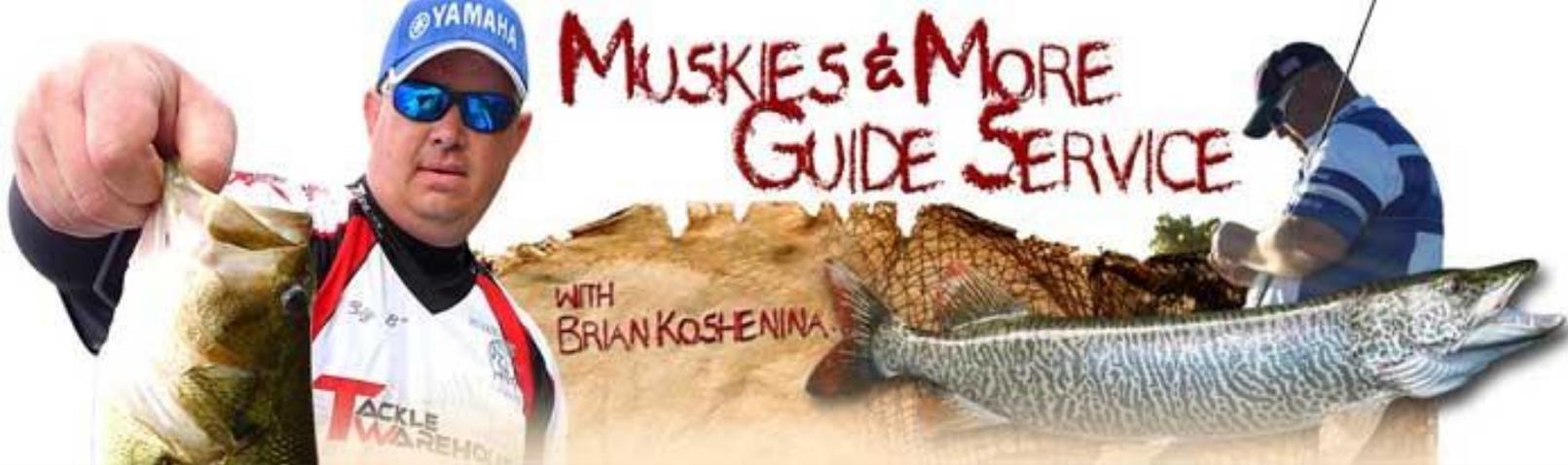
“As a Professional Bass angler it is imperative to make the right decisions, catch a limit and cash a check. I prefer to keep everything simple, Bill Lewis Rat-L-Trap Lures allow me to stay on top



of my game in just about every angling situation. Except for a few changes in line diameter, type of line, my standard Rat-L-Trap equipment consist of a 7' MH Falcon 'Cajun Baby' signature series Low Rider fast Crank...Shake-Rattle-Roll Rod, fast retrieve reel and 15 lb. monofilament line,” stated Louisiana’s Cliff Crochet.

Follow BASS Elite Angler Cliff Crochet by logging unto; www.cliffcrochet.com, and www.TheBassUniversity.com. See you in The Bass University Classroom.

God Bless and Best Bass’n



FALL TIME IS SUCKER TIME FOR BIG MUSKIES

By Brian Koshenina

The boat landing is nearly empty. It's cold, windy and overcast. The waves are rolling at a good pace and you look off in the distance and see "white Caps" on the main lake. You hear the "shot" of a near by duck hunter trying to get a limit. It's the fall hunting season for all types of game but don't put your Muskie gear away quite yet, fall time is "Sucker" time for big Muskies.

It's that time of the year when most of the pleasure boating has stopped, the jet skiers are gone, most of the docks are now on land and most anglers are taking their ice fishing gear out of storage. But for some hard core Muskie anglers the next few months can be considered "prime time" for trophy sized Muskies.



Around the middle of October the weather starts to change drastically here in the midwest. Early morning temperatures can range in the upper 30's to low 40's. This early morning "shock" to our systems forces us to layer our clothes as we venture out on the lake. These drops in temps also signal the start of some of the best Muskie fishing of the year.

Female Muskies carry anywhere from 18,000 to 200,000 eggs for the spawn in the spring. They need to keep their eggs healthy through the winter so they gain

weight by gorging themselves on anything they can eat in the fall. This is the time to change our tactics on how we fish for them.

As water temps cool Muskie slow their movements down to conserve energy. They become "opportunistic" often looking for injured or slower moving prey. This makes it a good time for "Live Bait" bobber fishing. This rig consist of an over sized bobber, a "quick strike" rig and a very large decoy sucker. I still use my Hook Look rod and Shimano reels but that's pretty much it from summer fishing. This is a very easy set up in which you tie your line directly to the quick strike rig and choose your depth by where you attach your boober to your line. Your Quick strike should consist of two large treble hooks and one large circle hook seperated with a swivell and attached with heavy flourocarbon line. Youtube has some great videos on all different kinds of strike rigs and how you attach the bait.

You can fish this set up stationary or at slow trolling speed. I personaly like to troll with this rig as you can cover a lot of water. You can troll shallow and also hit midlake areas that might hold fish. Look for midlake flats, shallow areas with access to steep drop offs and current swept points with a calm, shallow side. Troll at 1 to 1.5 miles per hour. You don't want to troll to fast as your bait will turn verticle and not horizontal which makes it more natural looking. You often will get many





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follows by trolling suckers which makes your day more a lot more productive.

If you decide to stay in one spot I recommend casting your bait as little as possible. Sucker fish have low tolerance to temperature change and the shock of them hitting the water often kills them. I will set my rig in the water and slowly move away as not to spook any fish that might be in the area. I then drop my anchor, sit back and watch my bobber and try to stay as warm as possible. I try to set up on the calm side of an inner point that has current or flow passing. Muskies will often stage themselves on the calm side of a point waiting to ambush an unsuspecting fish swimming with the current. I also like to use very large "decoy" suckers as they look very enticing to a large Muskie.

I have caught more trophy sized Muskie in the fall than any other time of the year so it's important to stay warm at this time. I put on a heavy pair of socks, layer my clothes and wear my Striker Ice Brands winter suit. It might be overkill but I guarantee I will outlast anyone on the water with the way I dress. It also helps to have a good winter hat and a pair of thin work gloves. The warmer you are the longer you will last on the water. It is also important to stay dry. Keep extra clothes, hats and gloves in a water proof container with you.



If you stay warm and try this technique, you will have a very good chance at a "trophy" Muskie. Not only will you learn a new technique and prolong your season, you will also create new memories that will last a lifetime.

Sources; Striker Ice Brands
<http://www.strikerbrands.com/>, Hook Look
 Musky Rods <http://hooklooklures.com/t/musky-rods>, Shimano Reels
<http://fish.shimano.com/content/sac-fish/en/home/products/fishing-reels.html>.

Minnesota- Muskies and More Guide Service <http://muskiesandmore.com/>, A radio co host- The Outdoors and More Show <http://knsiradio.com/>. A volunteer with Simply Outdoor Experiences <http://simplyoutdoorexperiences.org/>, Staff writer for ODU magazine <http://www.odumagazine.com/>, and is on several Pro and Guide Staffs.

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TRAP BITE

By Captain Mike Gerry

We all associate the rattle trap with spring time fishing, it's an aggressive fish catching machine and there has been no better time to make it your number one bait than in the spring; I contend the fall can be just as much fun. As we continue to see the bass move farther into the pockets and start their fall feeding a rattle trap can once again be your bait of choice you just have to pick your spots off the grass to fish it!

Long points that drop into deep water lose their grass quickly as the water cools and fishing that trap off transition points dropping from 5 ft. to 10 ft. of water and more can be very productive. It's the kind of bait that bass chase all year round, but there are some differences in how you fish it in the fall vs. the spring and a lot of that has to do with adjusting to the fall grassy points at least in a shallow lake like Guntersville.

First of all I down size in the fall, instead of working that 1/2 oz. or bigger trap I go to a smaller 1/4 oz. so it can be easily worked over the top of the grass. The smaller size also allows you to move it slower and have it just tick the top of the grass giving the bait some deflection while reeling it. You can also fish it in a more stop and go pattern as the smaller size does not have as big of hooks and drops slower in that type of retrieve giving you time for the bait to just slightly hang on the grass aiding the presentation. I know to a lot of fisherman hanging a trap in the grass gets aggravating but if you use the rod tip to help you snap it out of the grass when it hangs it will catch you more fish. The smaller 1/4 oz. trap pops out very easily and becomes deadly fall bait with just a little bit of patience and will and you will see it produce very well around grassy areas in the fall of the year.

Many times the fall is the most aggressive time of year for bass and fishing rattle baits in the fall will increase your catches big time. Don't be fooled by the grass and let its ability to hang your bait up turn you off, rattle baits can be very productive and the fall is a great time to prove it.

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BILL OYSTER'S FLY ROD ARTISTRY

By Bill Vanderford

"Give me a rod of the split bamboo, a rainy day and a fly or two, a mountain stream where the eddies play and mists hang low o'er the winding way." This is an excerpt from a lovely poem written by Mrs. Eunice B. Lambertson about trout fishing that seems to have been taken to heart in pure artistry by Bill Oyster of Blue Ridge, Georgia.

Art in a multitude of forms is as old as man's imagination and desires to depict in a beautiful way that which he wants to convey to others. Following a bad bike racing accident that ended that career, Bill Oyster has combined and mastered the arts of fine engraving, rod building and classic fly fishing into an extremely lucrative business and the passion of his life!

"After I had done everything possible with fly fishing as a sport at a young age, building fly rods started

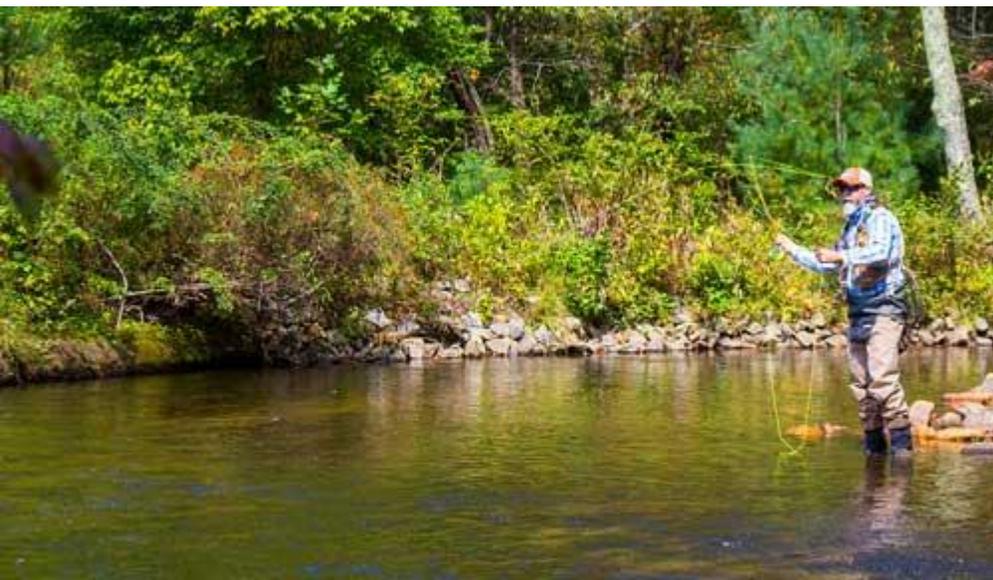
as a hobby during my early 20s,” stated Oyster. “I got some books, started learning, went to art school, used the abundance of knowledge available on Google and taught myself the rest.”

Even with his newly acquired knowledge, it wasn't always easy or profitable for the former bicycle racer and avid fly fisherman. Bill Oyster became a part time fishing guide and fly casting instructor, but continued to dream of making traditional split-bamboo fly rods. He knew that this particular type of rod was exclusively woven into the fabric of early American trout angling, but he soon discovered that those with the “know how” were very tight-lipped with no intention of being helpful. Nevertheless, through lots of trial and error, reading everything he could find about rod building and an inordinate amount of passion and exuberance, Bill began to find success. In addition, he slowly mastered the intricate art of metal engraving, which nobody else in the fly rod building trade could do, and it instantly made each of his rods stand alone as one-of-a-kind art treasures.



Each of Oyster's traditional bamboo rods would have to be considered a masterpiece on its own merit, but the engraved artwork that is uniquely different on the butt plates and ferrules of every rod makes them collector's items. Dignitaries like former President Jimmy Carter and many others often wait as long as 6 months to receive these prize possessions that may take 100 hours to build and can cost from \$2000 to nearly \$20,000.

Despite all of the exhausting research and hard work that it took to become successful in this practically ancient art, Bill Oyster is always completely open and very helpful about what he has learned. He feels



that nothing is wrong with making it easier for people to try their hand at rod making...if that's their passion. “Besides,” said Oyster, “with the Internet, there are no secrets anymore.”

With all the mass production and space age materials being utilized in every kind of manufacturing these days, it is still impossible to make quality bamboo fly rods

ABOUT ROD BUILDING CLASSES

Spending 6 days in the historic village of Blue Ridge, Georgia, learning fly rod building from Bill Oyster would be the equivalent of having art classes with Pablo Picasso. You also come away with a Bill Oyster bamboo rod worth nearly \$2000 that you made under the his watchful eye, and the whole experience cost less than what the rod is worth. Your finished rod will leave in a bag, inside a tube, with an Oyster label, proudly displaying your own signature under three coats of varnish and ready for fly fishing action.

“As the most prolific teacher of this rod making art alive today,” stated the Fannin County Chamber of Commerce, “Bill Oyster draws students from as far away as England and Scotland as well as every corner of the US to our quaint little southern mountain town. We feel honored to have him here in Blue Ridge.”

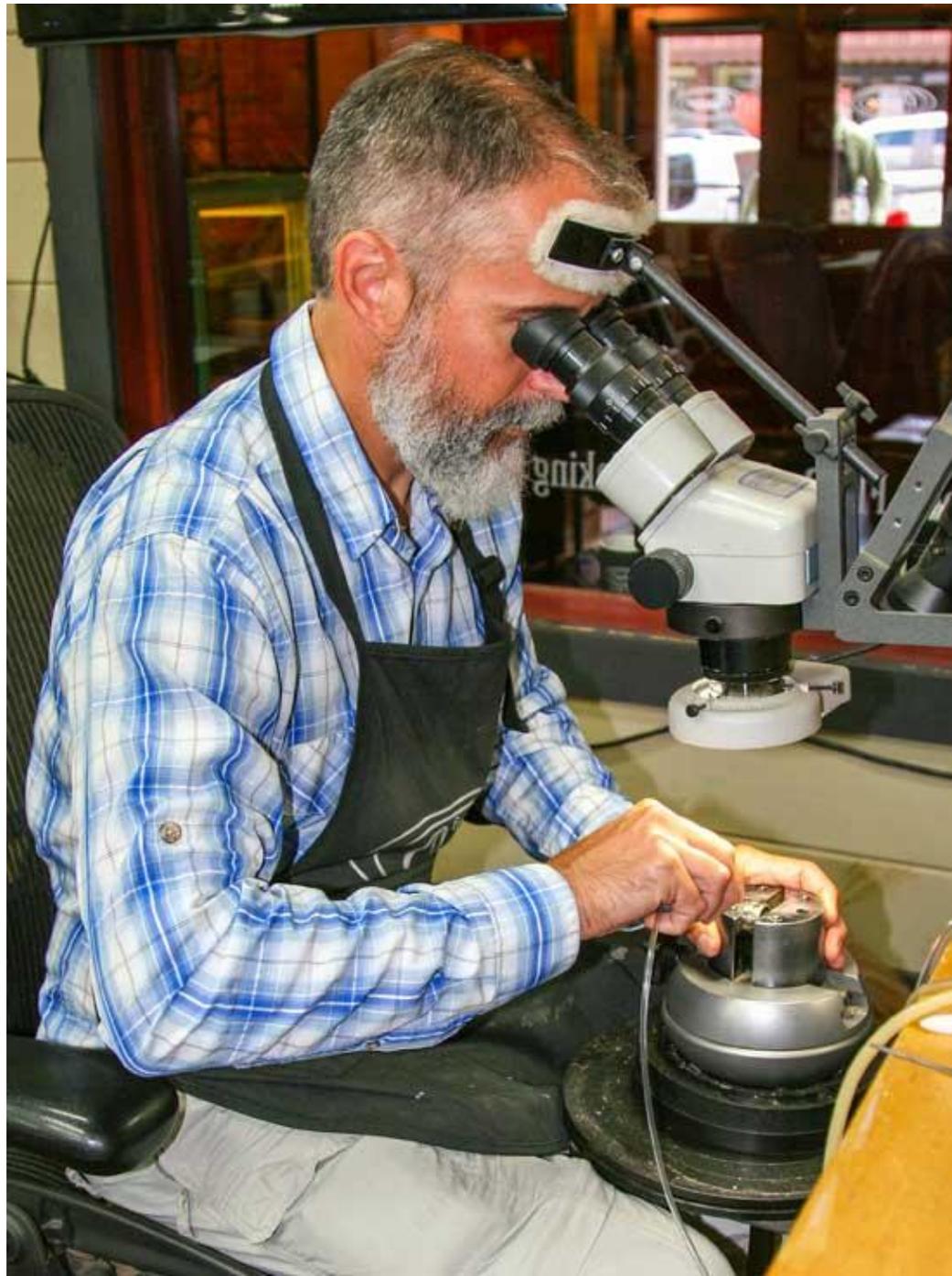
During the school, each student works at their own solid maple work bench which is outfitted with the highest quality tools like Lie-Nielsen planes and Bellinger planing forms. The process incorporates the same tools and methods used to create every Oyster bamboo rod, and when your rod is finished, the year-round trout fishing in the Blue Ridge area will afford you the opportunity to put your new rod to good use before leaving.

Most of the classes are filled more than 6 months in advance, so make contact sooner rather than later. To schedule a class, please call Shannen at 706-374-4239 and she will do everything possible to accommodate you.

except one-at-a-time. Add to that personalized engraving, and Bill Oyster’s rods are the only option...plus they are a truly “made in America” product. Only the Chinese grown Tonkin bamboo gives it an international flair, and that’s because of its uncanny straitness and strength that is not seen in bamboo from other parts of the world.

Bill Oyster’s wife and business partner Shannen says, “The most ceremonial part of the process is choosing and splitting the Tonkin cane. That part is always music to our ears.”

From that point on, only one machine is used...a beveler. The rest of the rod building and engraving process is done by hand. All of the engraving and some of the rod building is accomplished with the artistic hands of Bill Oyster, but he has some great help. About



five years ago, 19 year old Riley Gudakunst came down from Michigan to one of Bill's rod building classes. "He was fast, good and young," recalled Shannen. "So, we kept him!"

Riley has become an integral part of the rod making business and an important member of the Oyster's extended family. He loves the rod building, the Blue Ridge area, the fabulous nearby trout fishing and has recently become married. It's doubtful that he will ever leave!

It's an old saying that behind every successful man there is a good woman, and Bill Oyster agrees that without the efforts of his wife Shannen, none of his success would have been possible. "She's the glue that made all of this come together," proclaimed Bill Oyster. "I'm simply a worker here. Shannen is our biggest asset because what she does allows me and Riley to only concentrate on crafting the rods...and do a little trout fishing as well."

Shannen's duties now include running the retail store, keeping the books and schedules and running the new Cast and Blast Inn on the second floor for visiting fly anglers and rod building students.

Having been a fishing guide myself for more than 40 years, I sometimes see things from a different perspective than others...especially when the opportunity arose for an afternoon of trout fishing on a famous North Georgia stream with Bill and Riley. I had already been totally

mesmerized by the most beautiful and artistic fly rods of my lifetime, but the fishing showed me the rest of this amazing man. He went about his fly fishing with the same intense expertise and artistry as he had with an intricate engraving design...until we stopped to have lunch under the shade of oak trees accompanied by the sound of the babbling brook. Then, his eyes sparkled with his zest for life, and the warmth of this wonderful man came flowing out in laughter and engaging conversation. It matched perfectly with what you would expect from such a masterful artist!

Bill Vanderford has won numerous awards for his writing and photography, and has been inducted into the National Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame as a Legendary Guide. He can be reached at 770-289-1543, at jfish51@aol.com or at his web site: www.georgiafishing.com.



Across the Midwest many anglers are putting their open water fishing gear away. Some are going hunting, others are getting ready to go ice-fishing. However, there are a good number of anglers that look forward to this time of year for open water fishing. They know that right now, in rivers throughout the Midwest and other regions, there are lots of opportunities to catch walleyes. In fact, a very knowledgeable river angler told me awhile back that the period between November 15th and December 15th is his favorite time to catch walleyes. Here are some tips for getting in on this action.

Number One Tip: Be prepared for any weather. It can be twenty degrees or seventy degrees. If you're cold, you're not going to enjoy being out there no matter how good the fish are biting. Start out dressed for cold conditions: You can always take clothes off, but you can't put on clothes you don't have. No matter the forecast, I put on long underwear. I also always

take my insulated Guidewear. It cuts the wind and spray and is warm and comfortable. Guidewear is an outdoor accessory to some, but a necessity to many.

Next Tip: Tie some rigs in advance. If you have a couple of rod and reel set-ups, tie a jig on one and a three-way rig on another. Even though you may need to change when you get there to match water conditions, it's easier to tie rigs in the house the night before where it's warm. I keep rigs pre-tied in Rig-Raps for quick access. Rig-Raps have made a live-bait riggers life so much more organized.



FALL RIVER WALLEYES

By Bob Jensen

The key to catching fish in the fall on rivers is the same as always: You've got to find 'em, and you'll need to do some looking. Different areas will produce. Sand flats, wingdams, mid-river holes, current breaks, they'll all hold fish. You need to keep moving around until you find the areas that have the most biters. Slurp! Jigs tipped with a three or four inch Impulse Smelt Minnow or a three inch Swim'N Grub will be productive much of the time. Plastics such as Impulse are usually a very good choice, but there will be days when the fish show a preference to minnows. This is when you want to tie on a Fire-ball jig and team it with a minnow. If the fish won't eat this offering, find another area to fish.

When the fish are in the deeper areas, it works well to hover directly over them and hold the bait right in their face. These fish don't want to chase a bait, but if it is wiggling right there on their nose, they're going to eat it.

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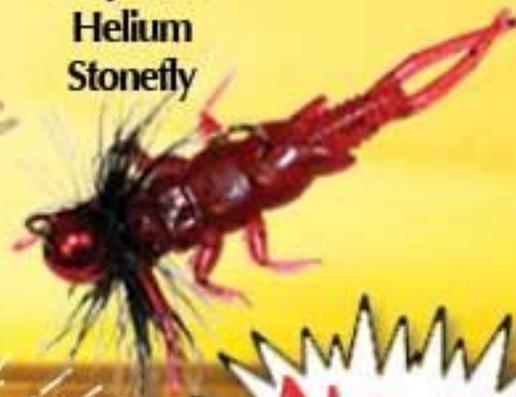


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There are times when you'll see a flurry of activity early or late in the day, but much of the time the best bite will be from mid-morning to mid-afternoon.

There are lots of rivers, big and small, across the Midwest that hold walleyes and sauger. Most of them can be fished from a boat or from shore. You'll have the opportunity to catch eaters and trophies. I'll bet you can think of a river not too far away from where you live that has walleyes in it. Now would be a great time to go there and see if you can catch a few.

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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WHAT YOU CAN LEARN FROM THE WINTER DRAW DOWN

Captain Mike Gerry

As we move toward winter one thing that is always obvious on many lakes is that they drop the water level on many of our best fishing lakes. Some view this as a problem but I view it as an opportunity to learn plenty about your lake. The lake draw down allows you to see the change in the lake structure which many times occur yearly as current and wind can move structure around the lake.

In the days before some of the newest and greatest electronics, I would go to some of the area lakes that really dropped the water in great depth and take pictures of the structure. I actually would take those pictures put them in an album type book divided by lake and use them as a resource the next time I fished that particular body of water. There is an enormous amount of things you can learn by moving around the lake during these draw downs.

As we all know bass like subtle drops, corners, depth change and more; when you're taking your joy ride to discover the structure during these draw-downs all the key elements are right there in front of you. Making mental notes or even taking pictures can help you when you go back to that same spot; the key pieces of structure in the lake along with the bends and change is in your memory bank. Many times, as I have stated before, angles of presentation can be everything, boat alignment on a structure means the difference in catching or just fishing. When you have visualized a rock pile for example and understand how it lays on the bottom and the depth, points and current are taken into account you can now make an informed decision as to how fish this particular rock pile.

These informed decisions are there because you did this work to understand your lake structure; giving you a heads up and an advantage over others. Mental notes, written notes, pictures and today's electronics can be a difference maker. When you're informed it doesn't matter if your fishing or doing your job at your work location, information helps you make better decisions and better decisions lead great results; or as some call it "luck." To me "luck is when "preparation meets opportunity."

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Walleyes On Target

By Jason Mitchell

So many situations come late summer and fall where if walleye are present, they are going to show up on electronics. When walleye start stacking up on rock reefs, deep points and classic structure that is between fifteen and forty feet of water, you are going to see fish on the screen. Bare spots that are void of life are usually a waste of time. No arches, no clutter, no bumps on the bottom often means no activity.

A proven strategy for fishing classic walleye structure is to drive up and down over structure until you see fish on the screen. Keep driving and looking until you mark fish. What often gets lost however is just exactly what to look for. Eliminating dead



ODU MAGAZINE VIDEO BLOCK (www.odumagazine.com)

water is relatively easy. Determining which marks are indeed walleye and exactly which locations to fish takes a little more intuition.

On many lakes and reservoirs, there is such a wide variety of biomass. The fish that show up on the screen could be catfish, suckers, tullibee, whitefish, drum or some other fish that isn't a walleye. I have beaten my head against the wall wasting a lot of time trying to catch "perfect" marks that were not the intended species. What makes target identification even more subjective is that each body of water has it's own personality.

There are some lakes where if solid targets show up on certain locations a foot to three feet off the bottom, there is a high likelihood that those marks are walleye. The same screen on a different body of water however can completely fool you. Large white suckers in particular often lay across hard bottom breaks and often look just like walleye and you can spend a lot of time fishing for an unintended fish. The surest way to gauge and judge what is below you is simply time on the water on that particular fishery.

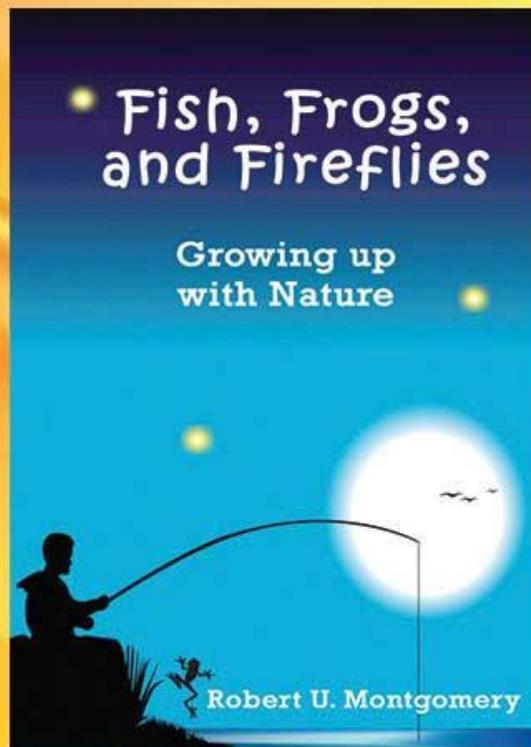
So often with walleye fishing, if it looks too good to be true... it usually is. Some anglers stop and fish where they see the most suspended fish on the screen or numerous stacked arches coming off a point only to realize later that the fish are whitefish or something else unintended. There are no hard fast rules with fishing and there has to be exceptions but usually, walleyes come across the screen one at a time. You might have five marks on the screen depending on how fast the boat is moving and how fast your scroll speed is set but walleyes often seem to set up in loose formations. Over deeper water, fish might sometimes overlap more but don't make the mistake of looking for too much because

when you find too much, the targets below the boat are often not walleye from my own experience.

When picking apart structure, I can't tell you how many times I would mark a fish or two going a particular direction and then completely miss the same fish with my electronics when coming back along the same path but from the opposite direction. With a lot of rock reefs and deeper structure that has dips and crevices created by larger rock and boulders, there are blind spots in your electronics where fish get lost in the bottom if they don't get hit with the cone angle of the sonar so that they can separate from the bottom. So often, if you mark a handful of fish, there are often more that got missed. Fish that are really tight to the bottom in rocks can often look just like smaller rocks if there isn't enough separation. There are times when these really tight to the bottom fish will bite but often, the fish riding a foot to three feet off the bottom are the biters. Look for targets where there is good separation between the fish and the bottom and those are usually the fish that make you look good.

The key for catching walleye this time of year on so many lakes is to get into the rhythm where you know what depth range to search and also know what to look for. Remember as well that as we get later into the summer and fall, fish movements can tend to be more horizontal than vertical. What that means is structure that has a wider range of depth that say tops out in five feet of water often gets used less than a similar reef or hump that tops out at the depth fish are using.

If most of the fish are holding between twenty and thirty feet of water during this time of year, look for structure that tops out at that depth versus structure that comes up much higher and fishing the twenty to thirty feet of water available on that particular spot. This is a general rule of thumb that I believe plays the odds and here is why. Later in the year, when fish are holding at a particular depth, they are often simply sliding out over open water to eat and when they move, they don't move up or slide shallower but simply move out. Spots that top out at the right depth often hold more fish. Not to say that you won't find fish using the sides or the wall on much shallower structure because you will but usually there are fewer fish and they are not as concentrated.



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With many deep structure fish, there are often windows where you catch seventy percent of your fish. When walleyes are gorging themselves on the swarms of tullibee, smelt, ciscoes or shiners that are often available in late summer, they often make you look bad because they are only active for short amounts of time. As a result, you can go back and forth over these fish fighting to get a bite and then for half an hour or so they open up. I have often felt that if I could get a fish an hour, I would hang in for the long haul as there is often some window where the fish open up for you. You might average a fish or so per hour for a five-hour window and then get an hour where you catch

seven.

As a result, fishing this time of year is often very methodical and calculated. You have to trust your electronics and put yourself into position to be successful. Find the right fish and wait them out. Usually, when the marks start to lift off the bottom and separate, those are your active fish and that is your window to strike. This entire strategy however will unravel if you spend the entire day focusing on the wrong targets and the easiest way to get on the right track is get intuition into what to look for and learn to distinguish situations or marks on the screen that are a waste of time. Ignore the flat that has five solid feet of the water column filled with marks indicating fish because chances are, the marks on the screen are not walleyes.

Ice-Fishing Baits For Open Water

By Bob Jensen

The cool weather we've been feeling in recent days reminds me that it's time to get the ice-fishing baits ready to go. However, I won't be using them for ice-fishing just yet. Many, many years ago, probably sometime in the late 80's or early 90's, a group of us started using spoons that were thought of as ice-fishing baits in open water in the fall. And we caught fish: Mostly walleyes, but when we got on a school of crappies, we caught them as well. Ice-fishing baits have come a long way in the past few years. More and more anglers are using ice-baits year 'round now. Here's why and how you can catch lots of fish right now with baits designed for ice-fishing.

When you go ice-fishing, you're fishing straight up and down, no cast and retrieve.

Baits designed to be fished straight up and down need to be designed differently than baits that are to be reeled in or trolled. Ice-fishing baits need to wobble as they fall. Open water baits need to wobble as they move horizontally.



For a long time spoons were the primary ice-fishing lure. Some spoons wobbled a lot as they fell, others had a very tight falling wobble.

Then the Air-Plane jig came along. It was a jig with wings that circled as it fell. More recently the Puppet

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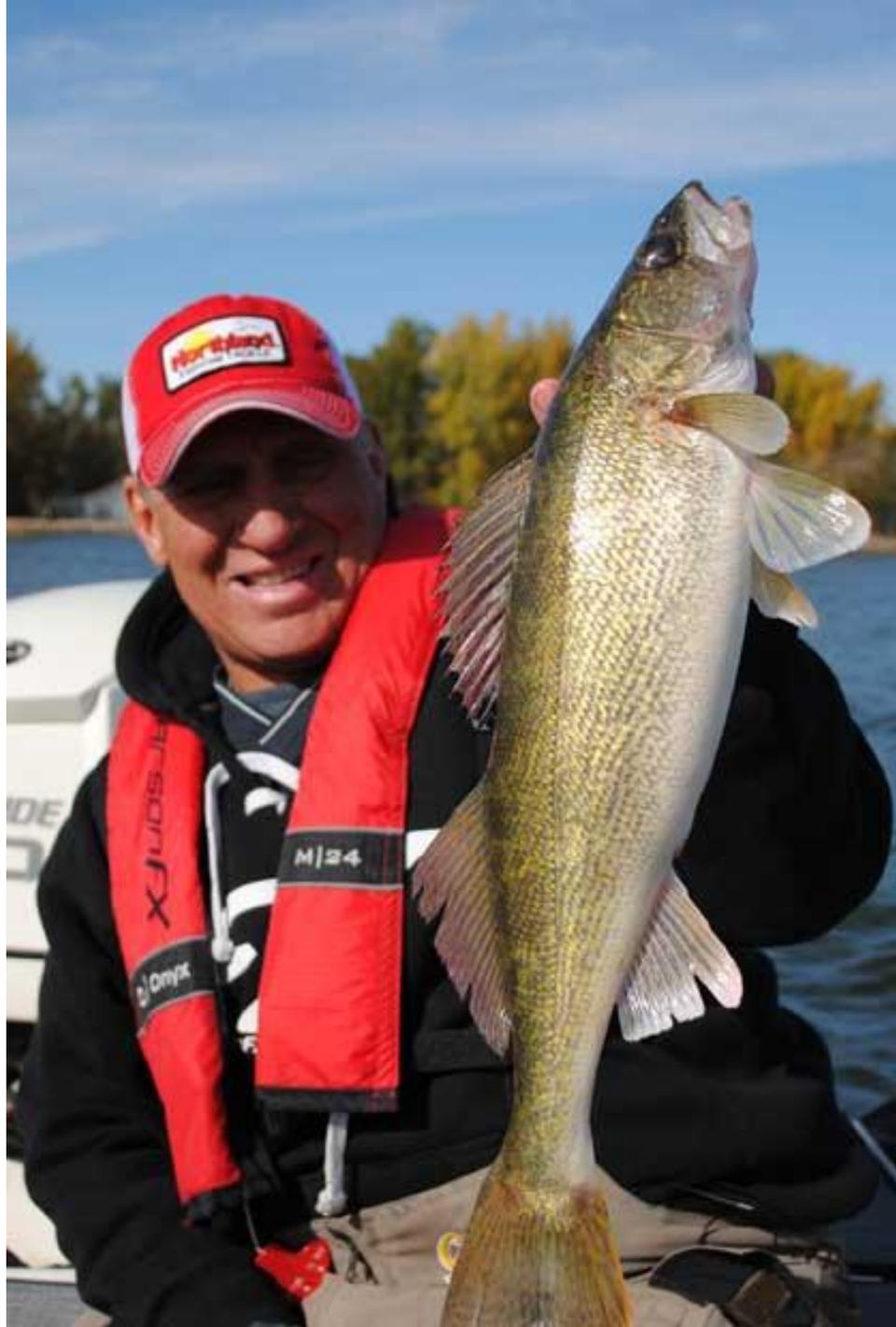
⚠ WARNING: use of these baits may result in a sudden spike in fish related catches.

Some anglers are always looking for a better way to catch more or bigger fish. The thought was, when the walleyes or crappies are tightly schooled in deeper water like they are in the fall months, and we're sitting right over them in our boats watching them on our sonar, why wouldn't they take a bait designed to be fished straight up and down? It's just like ice-fishing except we're in a boat instead of in an ice-shelter, and the water is soft, not hard. We started dropping ice-fishing baits on those open water fish, and we started catching them. Lots of them. And sometimes we caught them better in open water with ice-fishing baits than we were using open water presentations. The fish had been seeing open water baits for the past few months and maybe the ice-fishing baits were just more appealing. Fish certainly do become conditioned to lures, and lure color and presentation. We don't know why fish prefer certain baits at certain times, but they do.

There are times when spoons will be good fished vertically in open water. Just last week I caught fish in 25 to 27 foot depths on Buck-Shot Rattle Spoons. But, day-in and day-out, it's the Puppet Minnow type of bait that is most productive. A while back in South Dakota we caught jumbo perch and nice walleyes on the Puppet Minnow in 15 to 17 feet of water. Again, we fished the bait vertically for the deeper fish, but we also cast it in shallower water with good success. Most of the time though, we're locating schools of fish in deeper water and hovering directly over them, fishing the bait straight up and down.

Some anglers fish these baits as-is, but I like to add a little bulk to them, either a tiny minnow or a minnow head, or an Impulse Bloodworm: Just a little something to make the bait more appealing. If you're going fishing in the next few days or couple of weeks, and if you have some ice-fishing baits, be sure to take them along. Right now is a great time to catch open water fish on baits designed for ice-fishing. Baits designed to be used on the ice will catch open water fish year 'round.

To see all the newest 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.





GET THE DROP ON CRAPPIES

By Dan Johnson

Drop shot rigging is a staple presentation of serious bass fans from coast to coast. But it remains a largely overlooked option for anglers pursuing other species of gamefish, including crappies.

That's unfortunate, because in the right situations, drop shotting can yield banner catches, and even outfish textbook strategies.

"Drop shotting is a great choice whenever the fish are relatively close to bottom and you want to cover water a little faster, or with more precision, than you can with slip bobbers or vertical jigging," says veteran fishing guide and lifelong panfish fanatic Scott Glorvigen.

Case in point: the late summer to early fall crappie migration.

"When crappies abandon withering shoreline weedbeds and head toward the main basin where they'll spend the winter, they often follow bars and points that serve as travel corridors on their way out to deeper water," he explains.

Drop shot rigs excel at presenting a tantalizing softbait or minnow at or just above the level of fish, and allow anglers to customize the speed of retrieve and amount of animation, without fear of the rig falling to bottom or drifting out of the strike zone.

Glorvigen admits his fall panfish epiphany came while chasing bass on a north-central Minnesota lake.

"I was drop shotting bass with a 6-inch worm on a long finger bar leading from a shoreline saddle straight into the basin," he recalls. "I was catching bass, but noticed on my sonar there were a lot of crappies and bluegills mixed in with them."

Glorvigen credits the ultra-sensitive readings from his Lowrance Elite 9 CHIRP electronics for revealing the difference between bass and panfish.

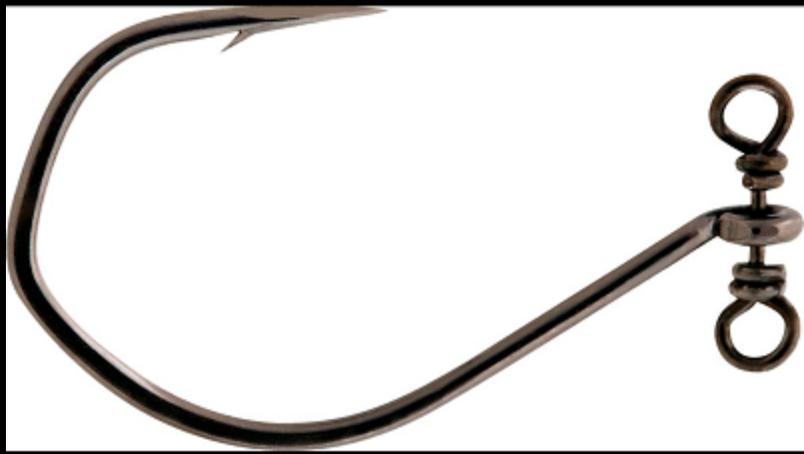
"I was also catching the occasional crappie here and there, which told me that drop shotting might be a winning presentation in this scenario," he adds.

To tempt more crappies into biting, he traded the bass-sized worm for a more panfish-appropriate, 3-inch Impulse Angleworm from Northland Fishing Tackle.

Panfish-sized softbaits excel on drop shot rigs.

He also down-sized the business end of the setup to a size 4 VMC Spinshot Drop-Shot Hook. "The Spinshot hook is great for drop shotting because it spins around, allowing the bait to move freely, without causing line twist," he says.

After threading on the worm so the tail remained free for maximum gyrations, he added a live crappie minnow for extra attraction.



"The plastic bait's constant movement and water displacement makes it easy for crappies to find it, even in stained water, and the minnow is icing on the cake," he explains. "Plus, if the minnow comes off halfway through the retrieve, I still have a chance to catch fish because the plastic is still in place."

Glorvigen's rigging also included a 7-foot, medium-light Lew's spinning outfit spooled with 10-

pound-test Northland Bionic Braid mainline and an 8-pound-test monofilament leader tethered to the hook's lower line tie.

"The setup works great for crappies, and can still handle the occasional big bass that grabs the bait," he says.

Leader length was tailored to how high crappies were above bottom. "On structure, the fish were close to bottom and an 18-inch leader worked the best," he says. "But when they occasionally moved off to suspend over deeper water, leader lengths up to 36 inches produced fish."

Glorvigen compulsively keeps sinker weight as light as possible when drop shotting panfish, and this was no exception. "It's important to use the lightest weight you can get away with, so you can feel the fish but they can't feel the sinker," he explains.

Glorvigen says pencil-style weights ranging from 1/8- to 3/16-ounce were perfect in the 11- to 19-foot depths he was working.

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The advertisement features a man in a white fishing shirt with 'TACKLE WAREHOUSE' and 'Abu' logos, and a blue cap, standing next to a large musky. Another person is visible in the background, also fishing. The background shows a lake and trees.



Once rigged up, he'd cast out, let the sinker settle, and then tighten the line for a direct connection that allowed him to detect bottom as well as subtle bites.

"You can move the rig across by reeling, drifting or using your trolling motor to slowly cover key areas," he notes.

No matter which means of propulsion you choose, Glorvigen recommends toning down the amount of action you give the bait.

"If the bait jumps around too fast, it's hard for them to hit it," he cautions. "I've had the best luck with a more subtle approach than what I'd use when bass fishing. Simply shaking and gently twitching the worm is enough. If you get too aggressive, the number of fish drops off dramatically."

High-quality sonar and GPS can help you find and catch fall crappies.

Glorvigen notes that a good GPS chartplotter is a big help in mapping out structural thoroughfares and waypointing key areas that hold the most fish.

"Custom mapping systems like Lowrance's Insight Genesis, which allow you to map structure in fine detail, can really help you get the lay of the land and learn why the crappies are attracted to certain areas over others," he adds.

While the fall crappie transition is a great time to throw drop shot rigs, Glorvigen says there are plenty of other times it pays to keep an open mind on the water.

"Anglers get stuck in our ways and pigeonholed into certain presentations," he says. "But it's always good to experiment, adjust, and pay attention to what the fish are trying to tell you, all the way from early spring to last ice."

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The image shows a collage of several covers of Outdoors Unlimited Magazine. The covers feature various fishing-related images and headlines, including: "Ice Fishing January 2014", "July 2014 Late Summer Fishing", "Breaking Down Muskie Water", "Wild Rose Musky Habitat", "ODU MAGAZINE", "ICAST Top 99 Fishing Products Of ICAST 2014", "GOING TO THE POINT", "Summer Crappie", and "Trolling Systems". A central blue button with white text and green arrows pointing left and right reads "REGISTER NOW COMPLETELY FREE!".

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Crossover Anglers, From Salt to Freshwater

By Jake Bussolini



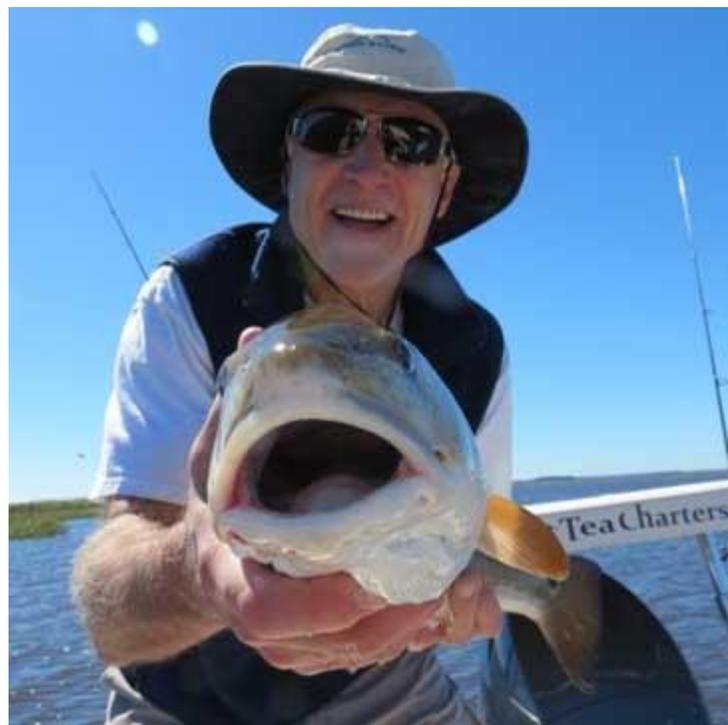
It's probably not news to most anglers that depending on our location around the country, we are either freshwater anglers or we prefer salt water activities. Many anglers my age (upper middle age) who have retired and changed the location of their residence after their retirement have

been presented with the opportunity to select either option. The retirement movement from northern states where freshwater fishing is the general rule to the warmer southern states where saltwater options are also available, has created a great number of "cross-over anglers". Like myself, we have been presented with the opportunity to try both options.

For all of my younger years, I was a freshwater guy. Even when I lived on Long Island where I was surrounded by ocean water, I never really liked ocean fishing and I would travel hundreds of miles to find fresh water. My thrill of fishing came from the fight of the retrieve that I felt using light gear with relatively small fish.

When I did get the opportunity to go off shore, I felt that it was like pulling up logs. The gear was heavy, the fish were big, but they didn't seem to me to fight as hard per pound of fish weight.

Then a couple of years ago I got the opportunity to fish for red fish in coastal Louisiana. Now I was back to the light spinning gear that I grew up on. Smaller hooks and





very light weights so that I could feel the fight of the fish.

My first red fish was a 30 inch 12 pound golden monster. That fish now resides in my trophy room in North Carolina. The thrill of this fish was its fighting capability but without any deep water in the area, the fish loved to pull out drag as it swam around the boat. For this first experience we used small shrimp for bait, casted over oyster beds with little or no weight. What I was feeling was all the weight of the fish.

My second red fish experience was at Cape Hatteras where we fished the grass flats off of Ocracoke Island. This was slightly different, the captain stayed up on his loft spotting for schools of reds.

Once spotted, it was simply the job of us anglers to make an accurate cast to the swirling fish. It was like

striper fishing, hours of boredom with 10 minutes of panic. Within minutes we had our limit of nice reds. Of course we were only able to keep the slot limit fish but even throwing back the monsters, it was a great day.

North Carolina's daily catch limit is one fish per angler but with four of us, we had enough fish for a great feast that night.

My most recent shot at the reds was last week at Georgetown South Carolina. Unfortunately we had scheduled this trip for the day after the flooding in that area. It took us seven hours to make a four hour trip but the results were worth the problems of the trip.

The tremendous rains and flooded rivers had completely changed the conditions for fishing, but a very experienced Fred Rourk, our guide, did manage to figure it out and we caught several big reds, each weighing more than 10 pounds.

Rich Doering, my fishing partner indicated that this 12 pound red was saying, "come back and try again ya'll."

I have now become a cross-over angler but my salt water favorite is definitely red fish. They are big, they fight like mad and you catch them with freshwater gear. With the light gear you feel every movement of the fish trying to break off, but the circle hooks do their job every time.

Sometimes the slot limits become frustrating, especially if you are looking forward to a fine red fish meal, but the thrill of the catch is not soon forgotten. I live on a



freshwater lake so my primary love is freshwater fishing. Living less than a 5 hour drive away from red fishing territory, I feel fortunate to have these golden monsters available nearly year round.

Jake Bussolini is a freelance writer. He has published seven books about freshwater fishing. These books can be reviewed at www.booksbyjake.com. Jake is also a regular lecturer at Gander Mountain in Mooresville NC.

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By David A. Brown

Could Lake Guntersville be Going Down Hill?

By Captain Mike Gerry

With the one of the toughest years and early falls behind us I can't help but wonder what is going on with our lake. Guntersville is suffering from some slow times and I for one am concerned that we are in for some tough times ahead. This past winter was tough the spring was so, so, and the late summer got really tough as we progressed through September. I realize that all these lakes seem to go through ups and downs that seem to run in 7 to 10 year cycles. I though am seeing signs that really concern me.

First and foremost there is an obvious lack of bait fish, the days of looking out from my back window or deck and seeing just gobs of bait being pushing around by bass are gone; there appears to be very little of that occurring and this is alarming. It was a very few years ago that no matter where you went or what time of day the bait fish appeared to be everywhere in the fall time of year and I don't see that any more. I can't tell you the last time I have pulled up on schooling bass frantically chasing bait; I know it has not been this year and I am not sure it occurred last year. I am worried that the enormous amount of bait being eaten by cormorants and the like is killing the food out on the lake. I have also caught many fish that appear to be starved with belly's that have just caved in and look very under nourished to me.

It is also concerning to me that the amount of bait you see when you stop at a mat to fish is very low; you hardly see bait anywhere around the mats and this is a problem. Bait fish are either hiding and buried in the deepest part of the grass or they are just not there. It was always a big part of fall fishing to pull up to a mat and see tons of bait but that appears to be the days of past years. Catches are down, size is down, the food appears to be mostly gone and numbers are for sure not good; a good day on the lake is 10 to 15 fish and that is awful. It's time for the leadership of our towns and our state fisheries to push for answers or we will suffer the results!

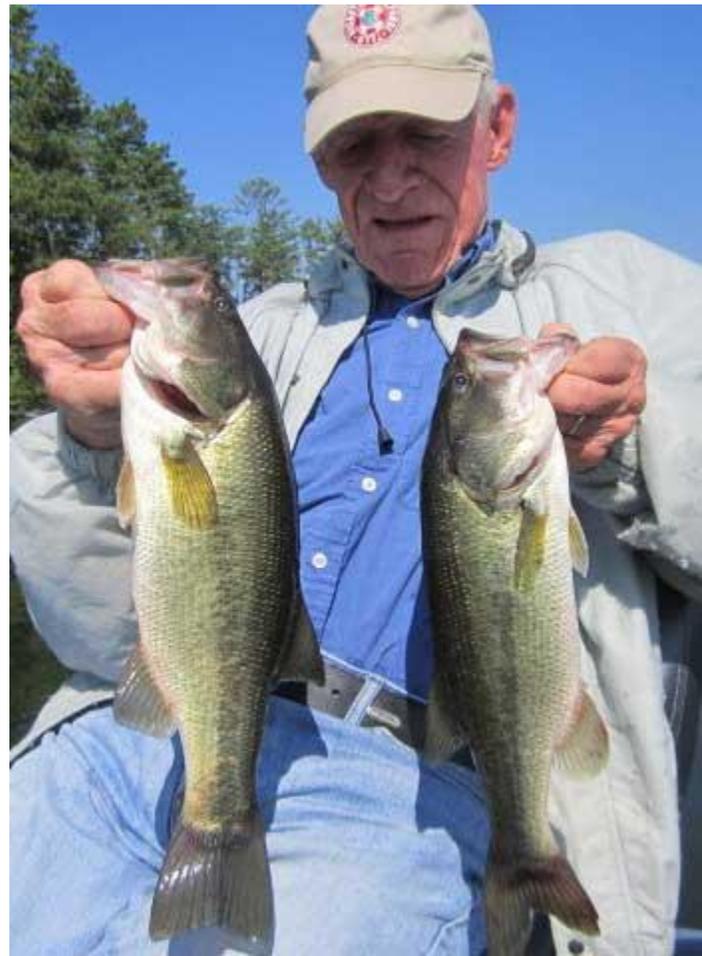
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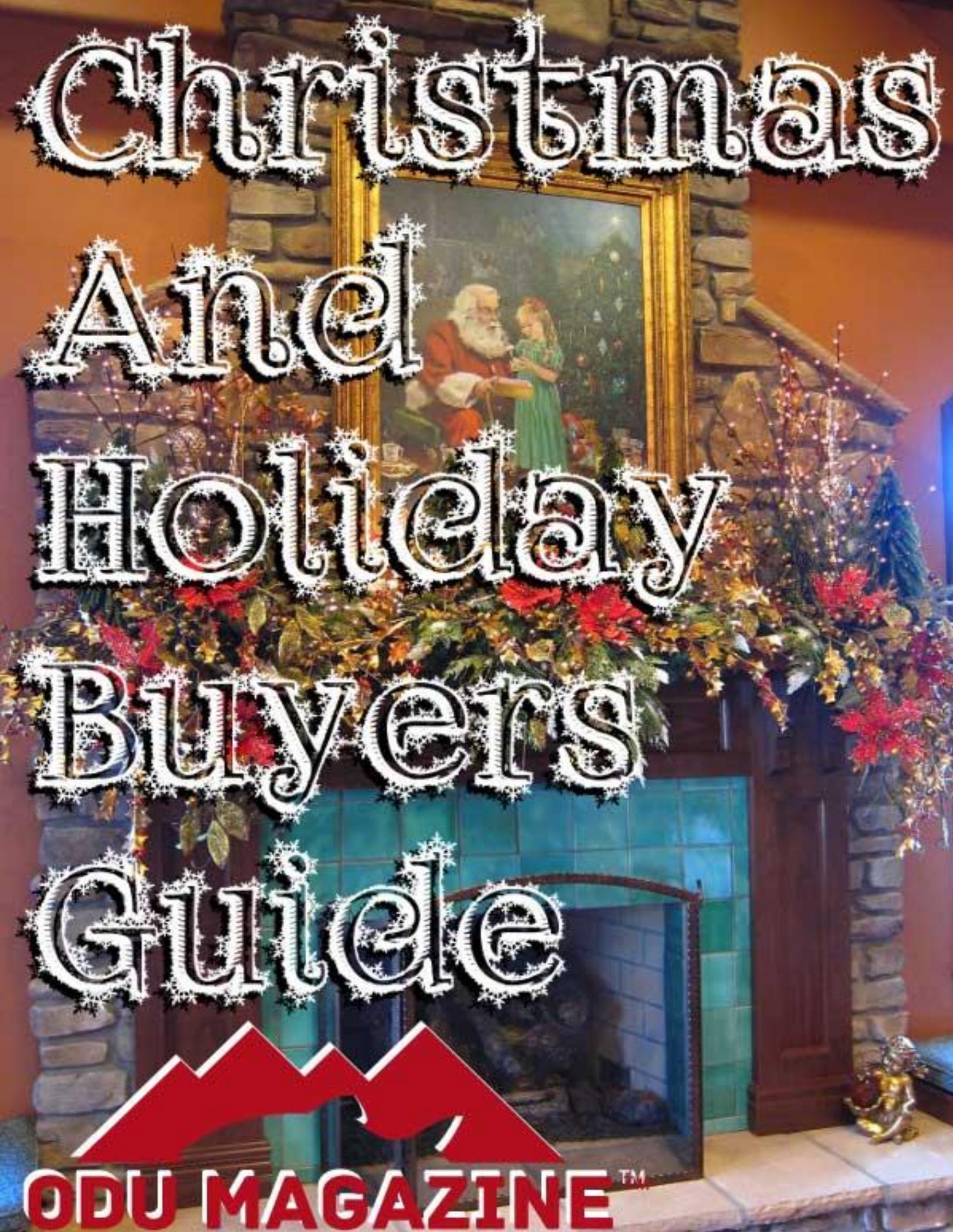
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Christmas
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Guide



ODU MAGAZINE™

What could you add to your favorite fishermen and hunter's gift list for the holiday season? ODU has gathered a short list of great gifts that would make fine gifts for all.

Clam Dry Skinz Gloves - Exclusive to IceArmor™, the NEW Dry Skinz gloves are a seamless waterproof glove with superb dexterity. They are constructed with a waterproof, breathable membrane. Snug fit with extra long cuff for complete protection and performance. Ideal for a variety of outdoor activities and will keep your hands warm and dry. Link - <http://goo.gl/Shaz0U>



Casey's Classic Runner by Road Runner - Three hundred thousand dollars is a lot of money. That is exactly how much Casey Ashley won at the Bass Master Classic. His lure was a homemade "Road Runner". His dad handed him a dozen of them before the tournament. Casey thought to himself "I won't need these". He did.



It was so cold boats froze to their trailers. Winds whipped about. Ashley covered himself in Simms gear and pressed on. He found bass in 30-40 feet of water. Ashley fished the homemade baits rigged with Zoom, Fluke Juniors to win.

The confetti flew. The trophy was kissed. Ashley was three hundred thousand dollars richer.

The Blakemore Lure Company called Ashley a few days later for a meeting. Ashley brought his dad's lures with him.

How do you improve on a three hundred thousand dollar lure? Put three lure designers and Ashley in the same room.

One of the improvements includes a chrome over brass blade for extra "thump". Five of the seven new colors sport a halo finish. All feature prism eyes.

Even Casey's dad Danny, approved the updated lure. Link - <https://goo.gl/M8RpDh>

Ascend D3000 Daypack - Built to handle a full load in its 3000 cubic inches of space, the D3000 features a PE board and aluminum stay bar behind its padded back panel with airmesh pods for great

support and load stability. The contoured and padded shoulder straps with sternum strap and padded, wrap-around waist belt provide easier, more comfortable carry when the pack is loaded down. The D3000's roomy dual panel-loading main compartments feature internal mesh organizer pockets and an internal padded sleeve for a laptop or tablet, making it a great everyday carry choice as well. The zippered front pocket features an organizer panel. Compression straps on the side and bottom help lock gear in place for smooth hauling. Pack also features dual side water bottle pockets (bottles not included). Durable pack features tough 600D polyester, 420D nylon, and 1680D ballistic nylon fabrics, YKK® zippers with string loops, and Nifco and Duraflex hardware and buckles. Link -

<http://goo.gl/2Oebpl>



RedHead Ultimate Flannel Shirts for Men- Great for those "work around the house or out hiking" days, our RedHead® Ultimate Flannel Shirt features soft and durable 100% cotton combed yarns that resist pilling and are virtually shrink-free. Classic detailing includes a button-down collar and single patch pocket at the left chest. Link - <http://goo.gl/3vNc1i>

Many ice anglers showed their love for **Vexilar's FL-22** when it first came onto the scene in 2012—and understandably so, as this was the first unit engineered by Vexilar specifically for shallow water use!

The concept of having 10 foot ranges and a maximum depth of 60 feet made the FL-22 popular with serious ice anglers desiring better

resolution and target ID when focusing their efforts in less than thirty feet of water, especially in areas with heavy concentrations of weeds.

The FL-22 offered other popular Vexilar features, too, such as two zoom zones, low power setting and a night mode, but what truly set the FL-22 apart was the amazing shallow water resolution. For this reason, the FL-22 was a highly desired model for two seasons, however, with the introduction of the revolutionary FLX-28 in 2014, Vexilar decided to limit the total number of models it offered and pulled the FL-22 from their product line.

Due to popular demand, however, the FL-22 is back!



“Everyone here knew we had created something special,” stated Vexilar Sales Manager Tom Zenanko, “yet in all honesty, I made the mistake of misjudging the tremendous following the FL-22 had garnered in just two years. However, granted that recognition, the FL-22 is now back!”

This means Vexilar will now be offering the FL-8, FL-12, FL-18, FL-20, FL-22 and FLX-28 for the winter 2015-16. To learn more, visit www.vexilar.com.

Bass Pro Shops Johnny Morris Signature Series CarbonLite Spinning Reel

- Go carbon, and you'll never go back! These Spinning Reels are loaded with carbon enhancements to give you an extremely lightweight, beautifully balanced reel that punches like a heavyweight. It starts with the radical, minimized design, which uses strategic cutouts to minimize overall weight while maintaining core strength. The entire frame, rotor, and spool are made of carbon a rigid, uber-light material, ensuring exceptional performance. A lengthened arbor on the long casting spool reduces the angle of the line on the spool's lip to minimize friction and resistance, greatly increasing casting distance. The stainless steel bail wire is capped by a titanium nitride-coated line roller for fluid, twist-free retrieves. Inside features a hard brass pinion gear, with an utterly smooth 8-bearing system that includes Powerlock™ instant anti-reverse. All bearings are made of stainless steel, and the entire system is sealed tight to keep out sand, salt, and other contaminants. The powerful drag stack features alternating Teflon® and hard aluminum washers, for a unique feel that's devoid of chatter no matter how heavy the load. The solid aluminum handle features an EVA paddle-style knob that provides a comfortable, non-slip grip at all times. Converts quickly to left- or right-hand retrieve. Link - <http://goo.gl/iQgKGW>



The **Picasso Shock Blade** is manufactured to bring you the very best in innovation and technology. The Patent Pending design creates a lot of thumping vibration and hunting action even when reeled at a very slow retrieve. The 1.5oz and 2oz come with the option of a larger size blade that creates a hard thumping vibration with a wider wobble, while the standard blade creates a very tight/quick action and vibration that can be “burned” or ‘ripped’. Our unique design helps to keep the lure down in the strike zone longer without rising which is a common complaint of other bladed swim jigs on the market. Staying in the strike zone means more fish in your live well. Constructed around our popular Smart Mouth Plus Jig Head with its concave belly that gives an added “wobble” action that fish can’t resist. Equipped with a double bait keeper, one on the collar and a wire barb on the hook shaft prevents hook



slippage and will keep your soft plastic secure cast after cast. Blade options include black, gold plated, nickel and painted blades that will produce strikes in all types of water clarity and light condition. Offered in a wide range of sizes from 1/4 oz for shallow water application up to a hefty 2 ounces for fishing off shore deep water ledges and creek channels. Comes equipped with a super sharp 5/0 Mustad Ultra Point hook. Made in the USA. Link – <http://goo.gl/g9lwgK>



Snag Proof's Wobbletron. A hollow-bodied frog that our performs all others. Tested by ODU and it is a game changer. Yes bass will hit just about anything that looks good that is floated above them. BUT. What happens if you are not above the bass and you need to bring her closer? The Wobbletron has the action and sound to do it. The body is the most durable on the market and pleasantly soft for easier hook sets. I real one two punch for frog fishing. Do you have a frog throwing

bass angler in your family? Click the link to the Wobbletron - <http://goo.gl/pHonNu>

Bass Pro Shops Next Generation Adventure Kit - A Bass Pro Exclusive! The Bass Pro Shops® Next Generation Adventure Kit has what you need for outdoor activities, all in a convenient carry bag. This is a great starter kit for young outdoor enthusiasts. The Bass Pro Shops Next Generation Adventure Kit Includes: 8x21mm compact binoculars, compass, LED flashlight (uses 2 AA batteries - not included), whistle/thermometer, magnifier, and carry bag. For ages 8 to adult. Link - <http://goo.gl/rzTrWe>



Tackle Tek™ Nomad Lighted Backpack - The Nomad is Wild River's soft tackle "single solution" bag. It has an integrated LED light system that allows you to see into the bag or your work area when natural light gets scarce. It also features a large upper storage area with a removable divider which can convert this bag to a full-size backpack for holding larger items. The Nomad has the capacity to hold up to six 3600-series and four 3500-series trays. Also available in camo color (Item # WCT604). Link - <http://goo.gl/iuhWPW>

HT'S "Arctic Fusion TX" Spinning Combos - HT, the industry leader in innovative ice tackle design for over 40 years, introduces yet another revolutionary industry

first, the Arctic Fusion TX ice combos!

Arctic Fusion TX rods feature premier composite blanks, tapered to perfection in a variety of unique actions, each precisely engineered to provide superior presentation control and unparalleled sensitivity for a variety of specialized ice fishing applications. The patented "TOTAL TOUCH" handle and reel seat system enhance transfer of lure motion and cadence through the line and back to your fingertips by keeping them in direct, simultaneous contact with both the blank and line, providing unsurpassed control and a sense of feel unmatched by any other ice rod. Lightweight, single-foot easy ice-out guides



are appropriately positioned to enhance not only the transfer of even the slightest lure movements, but any interruptions that reveal strikes from even the fussiest, lightest-biting winter fish!



Each Arctic Fusion "TOTAL TOUCH" system is matched with an ultra-smooth, three bearing, infinite anti-reverse front drag spinning reel with anti-twist bail roller assembly, machined aluminum spool and oversized paddle grip. For more information, write: HT Enterprises, Inc., P.O. Box 909, Campbellsport, WI, 53010, or visit us at WWW.ICFISH.COM.

The Battle Bug - Big Bite Baits announced the first signature bait from its newest Big Bite Pro Staff member Mike McClelland called the Battle Bug.

The Battle Bug is 4" in length, comes with a segmented body shape with legs, craws, and antenna appendages. The craws are made to have a natural crawl movement and action in the water giving the Battle Bug a true crawfish looking presentation.

The Battle Bug can be Texas rigged on a worm hook, or can be rigged onto a heavy cover hook to be used in a flipping or pitching presentation. The Battle Bug can also be used, and rigged as a jig trailer as well with its true crawfish action. The Battle Bug will be offered in 10 of Big Bites top fish catching colors and come 8 to a pack. Link - <http://goo.gl/ojNLZ3>



Kut Tail Worm by Gary Yamamoto Custom Baits - What could be better than a finesse rig? A "hefty" finesse rig! It may sound like an oxymoron, sure, but the new 7.75" Kut

Tail provides anglers the best of both worlds. Its thicker body simply screams "Texas-Rig". It is a subtle presentation yet it displaces a lot of water.

"Tournament fishing for a living, I visit a lot of lakes - more and more these lakes are being managed by top-notch fisheries biologists and they're producing bigger and bigger fish. Those big fish are looking for big bait which is why I've been re-designing some of my smaller, finesse-style baits to give those bigger bass the bigger meals they're looking for." - Gary Yamamoto. Link - <https://goo.gl/cElmFX>

Oculus Pro Team HD Binoculars - Combining cutting edge technology with proven, hunting-friendly design, Oculus® Pro Team HD Binoculars put top-of-the-line glassing performance in your hands. Dielectric prism coatings, and fully multicoated HD glass lenses work together to deliver a crisp, bright, razor sharp view. Lightweight and durable polycarbonate frame features a tough rubber armor



exterior for durability and easy-to-hold grip. Nitrogen filled for dependable fog proof and waterproof performance, even in extreme weather conditions. 3-position, twist-up eyecups and right eye diopter for individual adjustment. Center focus wheel. Comes with lens caps and carrying case. Link - <http://goo.gl/nz1KSb>

LIVETARGET Magnum BaitBall Crankbaits - New for 2016 is a Magnum Series of crankbaits from



LIVETARGET built on the award winning design of the BaitBall lure concept. With a compliment of Squarebill, Rattlebait, and Deep Divers, this series offers a tournament winning profile built with the amazing detail in colors and anatomy that Match-the-Hatch[®] to natural baitfish. The Deep Diver (pictured) comes in three sizes including a 5/8 oz. model diving to 12 feet; a 1oz. model diving to 16 feet; and a 1 3/8 oz. version that will dive to 20+ feet. For each lure size there are eight color patterns that will provide a solution for every water color and daylight condition.

The Magnum Squarebill versions come in two sizes, a 5/8 oz. lure that dives 4'-5'; and a 7/8 oz. model that tracks to 6 feet in depth. LIVETARGET's ProStaff anglers help design a portfolio of seven colors that will solve any shallow cranking water type. These crankbaits produce maximum water displacement, a deep thumping action, and are made with a polycarbonate lip for maximum feel and deflection properties.

The Magnum Rattlebaits will present anglers with a unique size and action for trophy size bass. With a 'one-knock' rattle sound and big profile, these baits are serious big fish baits. Offered in two sizes, weighing 1 5/16 and 1 7/8 oz. these rattlebaits will get down in the water column and work on deep ledges, heavy current, and the deepest grasslines. There are six color patterns to choose from that will suit all water color conditions. For more research on LIVETARGET lures and to view color patterns and lure descriptions in more detail visit: www.livetargetlures.com

The **HydroWave H2 Crappie Edition** is an Electronic Feeding Stimulator based on the reactive senses of crappie and other predatory fish, the HydroWave H2 Crappie delivers the latest in patented, sound-emitting technology, effectively imitating the audible underwater sounds of baitfish and fish feeding activities. Research has proven these sounds stimulate feeding impulses in game fish. The HydroWave H2 Crappie Electronic Feeding Stimulator builds on the success of the original HydroWave and HydroWave H2, and now offers several key upgrades. HydroWave H2 Crappie has 9 new sound loops, 5 pre programmed delays, 16-bit sound, expansion port, Omni Directional speaker and 2.5" LCD display. The Tactile Sound Transmissions emitted by HydroWave H2 Crappie Edition's finely tuned amplifiers are different from ordinary sounds because they are the sounds and vibrations that you can actually feel. Tactile sounds are what fish respond to. The unit emits sound waves that predatory fish feel, hear and sense as natural baitfish activities – to "ignite a feeding frenzy". Link - <https://goo.gl/k6U1Pg>



ICE FISHING INTRO FOR 2015



TACKLING TOUGH TIMES

By Gruenwald

Over the past several winters, I've spent some time deliberately fishing highly pressured waters and acutely "educated" fish, often during arduous conditions, attempting to get a bead on tactics that would consistently perform.

Here are a few things I learned.

LINE

Carefully choosing what connects our above water world to the presentation below was unquestionably the most critical factor.

Thin, sensitive, low-stretch lines that hang straight are necessary to maximize contact with the lure and ensure the most diminutive, nit-picky pokes from light-biting fish are transmitted in noticeable fashion--and even when using the finest compositions, requires the recognition of a keenly trained eye.



Although many ice anglers turn to low-visibility lines to reduce spooking under tough conditions--especially in clear water--high-visibility colors actually perform better for detecting subtle takes. I resolved this issue by combining premium, high-visibility backing with a relatively long, low visibility leader connected via a small, lightweight swivel.

LURE SELECTION

The next challenge was determining the best receptors on each end of that line.

For the terminal portion of the presentation, this essentially meant using unique designs the fish hadn't likely seen before. Downsizing and changing color played roles too, but lure style consistently

DEPEND ON IT.

Guaranteed against freeze-ups, Polar Thunder Tip-Ups are your trusty sidekick—always ready for that next fish. With a telescopic flag wire, a high-visibility reflective flag and a glow-in-the-dark shaft mechanism, you will always be alerted when a fish takes your bait—even in low-light conditions! The adjustable flag wire provides multi-level tension settings for every size fish and bait. Polar Thunder Tip-Ups feature a large capacity 500' spool with handle and a lightweight, slim profile for easy transporting and storage.

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HT  
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desirable blend of fish attracting qualities with minimal movement.

I had particularly good results with two lures meeting these criteria: HT's Marmoska Dancer, a very controllable, non-twist, low-profile bullet shaped tungsten design with a

minute dancing action; and Snyder Lures' size 10 Big Shaker Spoon, a versatile little bait featuring two nested, hammered blades of contrasting colors combined with a pair of tiny flippers attached via split rings at top and bottom.

Both relatively small-profile baits were heavy enough to drop down efficiently, and with just a hint of movement, provided an outstanding balance of subtle, fish-attracting motion, flash and vibration.

MAKING SCENTS

A trace of natural scent was also important. When fish are "skeptical," everything must appeal to all of the fish's senses—especially when dealing with older, larger, more educated fish. Thus, adding a wiggly maggot, tiny, lively minnow, minnow head or thin strip of cut bait was often helpful—but sometimes still too much for light biters. Squirts of fish scent applied on thin plastic tails seemed a practical solution, problem was, most scents dissipated rather quickly, making frequent re-application necessary.

I solved this by using small, thin-tailed soft baits like Berkley Powerbait Ice designs, often trimmed to super-fine, micro sizes. These scaled down, naturally textured plastics sweetened with natural, fish-attracting scents and flavors not only feel, but apparently smell and taste real, causing fish to hang on longer, allowing improved hook setting reaction times.

Similar products, such as Berkley Gulp or HT Ice Scentz, also feature intense fish-attracting compounds, but since they're made from water-based resins, allow more effective scent dispersal and appeared to attain slightly better results with slow-moving ice presentations.

ULTIMATE BITE DETECTOR?

On the other end of the connection, intimate contact with the strike-transmitting line was critical. A fast action rod or spring bobber was



certainly helpful, but closer examination revealed it wasn't these things that truly identified light bites—it was the line itself!

I discovered the best way to detect light strikes was by working my presentation with a constant, regular rhythm, looking straight down at my line and focusing on a spot below the waterline where it was unaffected by wind, then watching closely for any interruptions in my established cadences. Using the line to note any deviance provided the ultimate light-bite detector.

All considered, this makes perfect sense, after all, line comprises the direct connection to your lure. Should your line slip sideways, float up unexpectedly, hang straight when it should be slack, curl when it should straighten or straighten when it should curl, drop that rod tip, reel down and set the hook.

If you can't see your line well enough to watch for unusual movements indicating a strike, try using your fingers as a direct connection bite detector. By holding the line gently between your thumb and index finger while gently jiggling the bait, you'll sense things not revealed by even the lightest spring.

This technique has even led to the development of a unique ice rod advancement by long-time ice tackle innovator HT Enterprises. Called simply "total touch," this system transfers lure movements directly from the line to your fingertips, compliments of a custom engineered handle that conveniently

positions your thumb and forefinger precisely where the line extends under the blank at the fore grip.

Perfect!

WORKING THE BOTTOM

Another decisive key to the system was working the bottom, using it as a triggering point.

S-L-O-W-L-Y working the lure down seemed to be an effective way of getting even the most lethargic fish to follow;



ODU MAGAZINE VIDEO BLOCK (www.odumagazine.com)

once the lure settled, rocking the presentation in place, barely shaking the bait or nearly allowing it to essentially sit idle while inducing only the slightest breaths of movement were typically triggers causing fish to turn downward and take the bait directly off bottom.

Such bites were nearly impossible to consistently detect using standard methods, but again, by ever-so-gently lifting my presentation delicately with the line gingerly pinched within my fingertips, I learned to sense a difference when a fish picked up the bait—and this translated into more hook-ups. The technique isn't something easily explained, it's a sort of sixth sense developed exclusively through practice and concentration. You must wait until you first feel weight, but since light-biting winter fish can reject offerings surprisingly swiftly, also be quick to react.

This response requires carefully determined timing, gained and refined only through experience--but once mastered, becomes remarkably effective!

SUMMARY

Every situation is different, so these tips certainly aren't meant to be all-encompassing, but rather, provide a foundation of solid principles. Recognize and incorporate them into your finesse techniques, and you'll find yourself becoming increasingly productive when tackling tough times.

Tom Gruenwald has contributed to the modern "ice fishing revolution" over the years by authoring hundreds of magazine articles and four books on the subject, all while spending countless hours promoting the sport through his seminars, appearances and award winning television program, "TGO, Tom Gruenwald Outdoors," now airing on Sportsman Channel, Wild TV and Midco Sports.



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Advanced Vexilar Strategies



By Garrett Svir

I've gained a lot of confidence in plastics the past couple years, so if I run out of bait on the ice I'm usually covered. The one factor that will cut an ice fishing trip short for me is a dead Vexilar battery. I consider my Vexilar Flasher my eyes and ears below the frozen tundra. It not only alerts me where fish are located in the water column but it also allows me to read the mood of the fish and adapt my jigging cadence to match the mood of the fish. The technology we have available to us today as anglers has truly changed the game of ice fishing forever. We can now spend less time fishing and more time catching. It's also made ice fishing more fun as this information allows you to search out new unexplored water and look for fish instead of just heading to the local community hot spot. Spend enough time throughout the winter staring at a flasher display and you'll speak Vexilar as a second



language. I'm going to try and explain some of the details and advanced Vexilar strategies as learning to better interpret the display on your flasher will help you put more fish topside this winter.

Start with the basics

Start with the basics when hitting the lake to ensure you are getting 100% out of your electronics this season. I always start my day by wiping off the bottom of my transducer. This removes any ice build-up along with dirt and debris that may have accumulated. I then set the self-leveling float so that my transducer hangs just below the ice. There is no right way to do this but for me it's a confidence thing. When your transducer is located inside the hole you will see some interference at the top of the water column. Last season during a late ice trip on Lake Osakis I found crappies coming in right below the ice. These fish were invisible on the flashers of my fishing partners, hidden in the interference at the top of their flasher displays. I nearly brought my limit topside before letting out my secret. After

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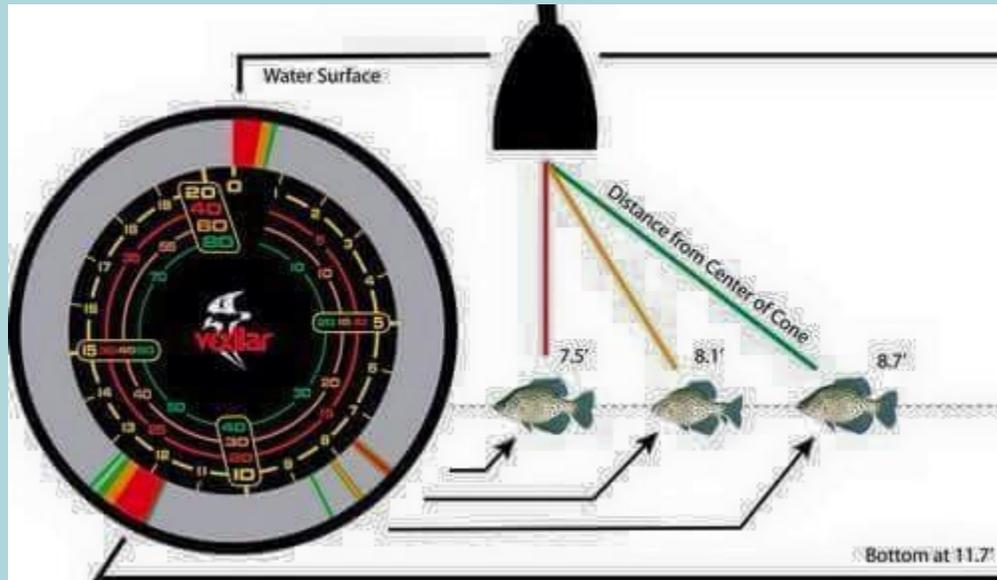


FL-8SE
Genz Pack

dropping my transducer in the hole, I always start by setting my depth range and finding the bottom. I then turn the gain setting all the way down to zero and drop my jig down, slowly increasing the gain setting until my jig shows up as a narrow green line. Depending on the jig you are using and the depth of water you are fishing gain settings need to be adjusted slightly. To attain maximum sensitivity you want the smallest target you are going to be looking at, your jig, to show up in green. If you are experiencing interference from a nearby unit press your gain knob to find a different channel.

Where are they coming from?

A common fallacy is that a line approaching your bait is a fish coming up in the water column. In actuality what you are seeing is a fish coming from the outside to the inside of the cone angle on your flasher. Think of your flasher transducer as a traffic cone extending down into the water. Fish on the outside edges will show up as green or the weakest signal. As the fish travels farther inside the cone angle, the mark will turn orange. As the fish approaches the center of the cone angle, the mark will turn red. Distinguishing that fish are not necessarily coming up in the water column and may be traveling straight toward you is important because you may not want to always start lifting the bait right away as fish approach. Sometimes I will jig a little faster and not lift, especially when dealing with stubborn bluegills. Sometimes I will switch from a pounding action to a smooth swimming action. Sometimes I will continue to jig the same and not lift at all. Lifting can be a good move but keep in mind that the fish are not always approaching from below and up is not the only move. The past couple seasons I've been running the Vexilar FLX-28. This unit offers a few additional colors to give the angler a little more detail. In five color display mode this unit will turn red as a fish approaches the center of the cone angle and then white when the fish is directly in the center. These extra colors have taught me a bunch about fish posture and how I can adjust jiggling cadence to match the mood of each fish individually which is really the greatest thing a flasher can do.



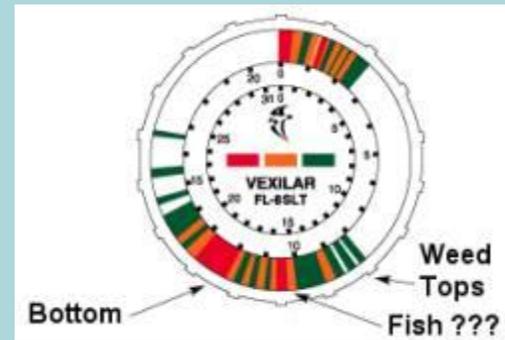
Different strokes for different folks

Several different transducer options are available for anglers such as the 9 degree, the 12 degree and the 19 degree, depending on how deep you normally fish. In depths 30 ft deep or less the 19 degree transducer is a great option. The 12 degree transducer is better for depths to 45 feet. In water deeper than 45 feet the 9 degree is an ideal transducer. If you are fishing 20 feet down with a 12 degree transducer you are seeing a 4.3 foot circle below you. This is a simplified example that doesn't account for several factors like the secondary cone angle, what happens when fishing on a drop off, and the nature of transducer crystals but use this as a general rule of thumb to help you pick the right transducer. The past few seasons I have been using the new Pro View Transducer from Vexilar. The Pro View Transducer has worked incredibly well for me. It offers a primary cone angle of 40 degrees down

to 30 feet, where the secondary 9 degree cone angle takes over, offering the best of both worlds.

Welcome to the Jungle

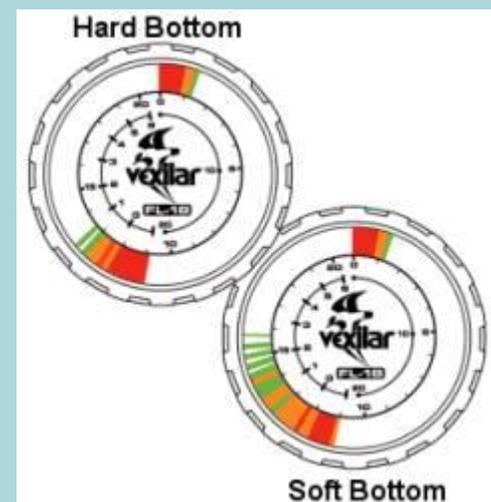
Being a trophy bluegill hunter, I would be lying if I told you that I didn't spend a lot of time searching for fish in the dense jungle. If you were to only let me fish one spot on a lake this winter, I'd find the weeds. Bluegills find everything here from food to cover from predators. Fish will use weeds until they die off and start to use oxygen instead of producing it. This past winter near my home in



Central Minnesota lack of snow cover kept weeds alive for the majority of the winter. Bluegills stayed in the healthy cabbage in 5-7 ft of water on many lakes all winter long. Savvy anglers plucked big bulls out of the cabbage when others struggled seeing few signs of life over basin areas. The only down side of weed fishing is that it can provide a confusing and cluttered sonar display that takes practice to figure out. The Vexilar FLX-28 has a weed mode that has really helped to lessen the interference from weeds. Anglers without this feature can add an S-Cable to lessen power and achieve similar results. Turn the gain as low as you can so the weeds show up in green. Drop your jig to the bottom and slightly increase gain until your jig is visible. Weed fishing is the one time I take a bottom up approach instead of a top down approach, as it makes finding and seeing your jig much easier. The key is to learn to interpret the flickering orange and red signals you will see amongst the green weed signals, these are fish. Keep in mind that the cone angle is narrow in shallow water so you will not see fish from as far away as you do in deeper situations. Each hole almost has to be fished briefly and not just checked. In a perfect situation fish will show up as a red or orange band amongst the green weeds but often times what an angler will see is a flickering orange or red, and then a bite. Practice on clear lakes where you can sight fish while using your Vexilar flasher by looking back and forth. The details in becoming a good weed fisherman lie in the flicker and practice makes perfect.

Uncovering Transitions

It should come as no surprise that fish of all species like transition areas where the bottom changes in composition to either harder or softer material. Sunfish often gorge on insects in areas where the bottom is a mixture of soft substrate that has collected at the base of a harder bottom drop off. Walleyes also love to run transitions where the bottom changes from rock to softer material... but how does one locate these areas? The first bit of advice is to keep the gain setting on your Vexilar consistent and do not change it when looking for these

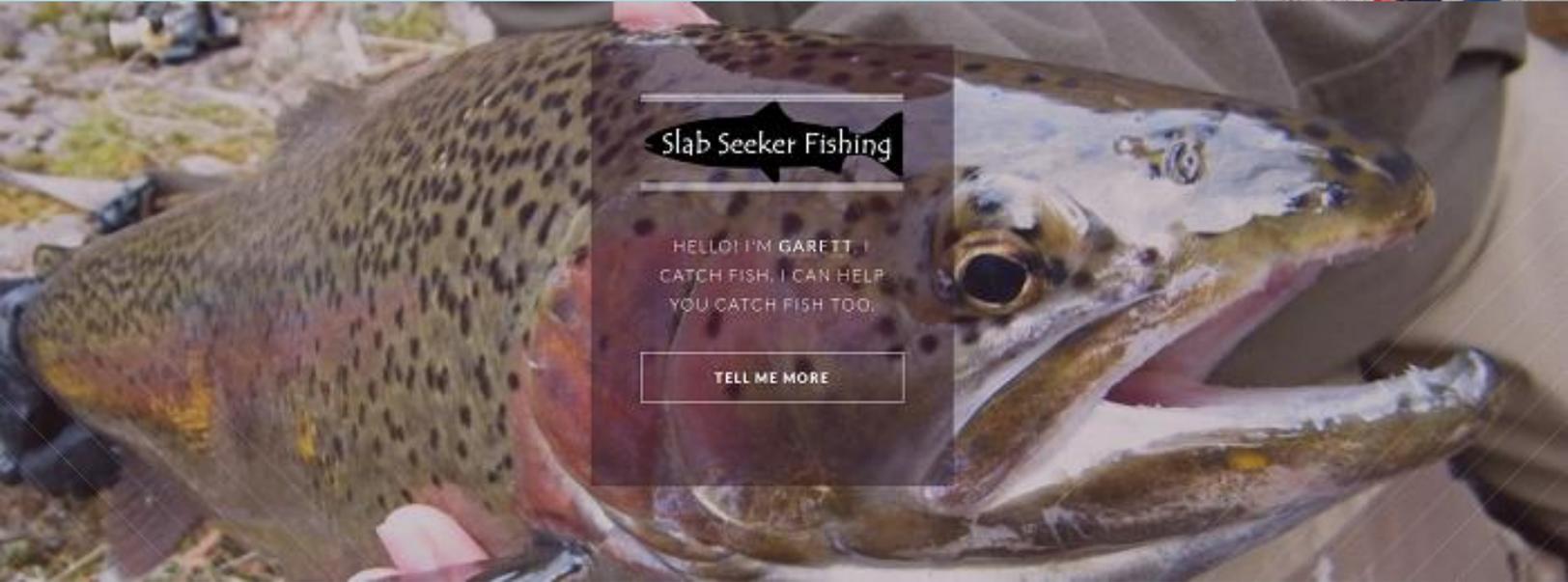


transitions. We are looking for changes and want to isolate the variable (gain switch). Get a baseline of what a soft bottom area looks like by going to a place where you know the bottom is soft (see diagram). This diagram will give you an idea but keep in mind that a soft bottom will look different depending on the gain setting. The soft bottom areas are going to show a bottom display that often has a trailing green or orange band beyond the thinner red band that seems to continue to trail off. The harder areas will appear crisp and will not trail off. Keep drilling down the break lines and pay attention to the lines beyond the red bottom. If you notice the green and orange lines going away and the red band getting thicker you have just found a transition to harder bottom. We will then try to drill holes parallel and outline the particular piece of structure along the transition.

Watching the sun rise over my favorite lake, hearing the hum from my trusty Vexilar and watching a red line come up and inhale my jig are some of my favorite sights and sounds in the world. The time is drawing near; first ice will be here in no time.

Garett Svir is a fishing guide in Central Minnesota that specialized in pursuing trophy bluegills. For more information on using your flasher check out

<http://www.slabseekerfishing.com> or
<http://www.facebook.com/SlabSeekerFishing>.



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ICE FISHING TOOLS

By Ted Takasaki and Scott Richardson

As we look forward to ice fishing, the image of sluggish, finicky fish in crystal-clear water comes to mind. But that's not always true. There are also times when fish are faced with dirty, dingy water or low-light conditions below the hard surface of a frozen lake. This is similar to differing conditions during open-water season. The fish's challenge is to find food no matter what. Our challenge turns toward finding ways to make them bite. New ice-fishing tools can help.

Sometimes all it takes is to sound the dinner bell. Ice anglers can do just that by utilizing sound within their lures. There are many lures available today which feature super loud brass rattle chambers in order to draw fish to the bait.

There are situations (especially in dirty or stained water and in low light), where erratic, noisy baits are best. Despite evidence to the contrary, some anglers cling to the notion that sound scares fish away. But, if walleyes and other fish were spooked by sound, they wouldn't snap at lures trolled in the prop wash of boats during open-water season, which they often do. When sight-feeding is impossible, sound and vibration help them find food with their lateral lines. Fish are curious. They "hear" the rattle as the angler shakes it, and they swim closer to investigate. An aggressive, noisy presentation will often only help to trigger them to strike.

Start ice fishing in the same manner you would approach your

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favorite lake during open water. Check in with bait shops and use a lake map to search out potential spots. For walleyes, check shallow places that feature hard bottoms early in the season. Look for rocky areas near shore with the fastest break to the deepest water in that section of the lake. Later in the winter, move to deeper structure like mid-lake humps, similar to where they can be found in summer patterns. As ice-out nears, check spots near spawning areas. No fish? Don't stick around. The more you move, the more likely you will locate active schools.

For panfish like bluegills, check out basins that still host green weeds early in winter. Jig aggressively for walleyes to prompt reaction strikes. Try quivering your jig for panfish. This makes the jig to appear as though it were swimming. Again, sometimes the fish want it dead still, so a bobber is key. Go through a vast array of different actions to figure out what the fish want that day.

St. Croix has recently come out with some new ice fishing rods that we cannot believe! The Avid Glass series are super limber, but super sensitive rods that are light, yet have strong backbones in order to get the fish in and out of your ice fishing hole. Quivering your jig is really easy with these glass rods and makes the lure come alive! The tips of these glass rods are also ultra-limber, thus acting as a built in spring bobber.

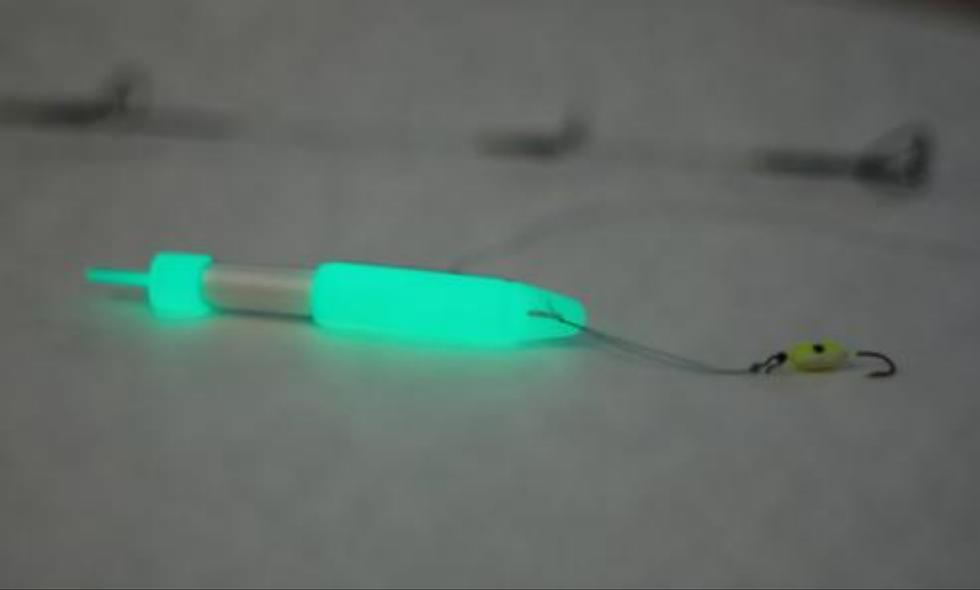


Always use your flasher or other sonar to look for specific targets. Cut your search time even more by using a combination sonar/GPS mapping unit, such as Humminbird's new Ice Helix 5. Use LakeMaster mapping chips as you walk or snowmobile your way to the tip of a point or hump, then start drilling. This will cut your drilling time in half! The Ice Helix features a 5-inch diagonal, 480V x 800H HD display with 1500 nit brightness for eye-popping, crystal-clear images. This new screen gives you easy viewing, even in harsh sunlight so common to the bright winter environment.

Underwater cameras can also help you identify specific species of fish. Instead of fishing marks that are suckers, you can move to areas that have the walleyes that you are looking for. The challenge is that underwater cameras work only when you have a relatively high degree of clear water. They do not work as well in dirty or dingy water.

Fish in cold, clear water are often neutral or negative. Fish in those moods must be coaxed into biting. The best tactic is to slowly dangle a wax worm or maggot in front of their eyes and jig it gently. A fish may watch such a bait for several long minutes before deciding to inhale





it. They may shy away if a jig is presented too aggressively.

When the bite is like that, a bobber rig, that lets the bait just dangle there, can be the perfect presentation tool. Making the bobber ultra-sensitive is often the ticket to coming home with the makings of a fresh fish dinner.

My favorite tool for these situations is the Venom adjustable float. By simply moving the foam up or down, you can

easily fine-tune the sensitivity of the float to match the weight of your bait. You can see more about how this works at www.venomfloats.com. (Above images of Venom Floats)

Ice fishing can be an enjoyable way to spend the winter. Try utilizing the “tools of the trade” in order to increase your success!

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WINTER CRAPPIES

By Brian 'Bro' Brosdahl

The best time to search for winter crappies is in the fall, when I can use my Ranger boat equipped with a Humminbird Onix10 CI SI. Once I have the potential winter crappie locations marked on my GPS, the coordinates can easily be transferred to my ICE 688CI unit that I use during the ice fishing season.

If I am not able to do my homework during the fall, then I have to drill out the lake the old fashioned way with my Nils Ice Auger and check the areas with my Aqua Vu Micro 5 to qualify the areas for fish. I use an auger with a 6 inch bit while searching for fish and an 8 inch bit when I plan to fish the area for longer than a few minutes.

Crappies in most lakes will already be near their winter locations by the time the surface water temperatures drop below 50 degrees, so there is a window of opportunity every year to do some "pre-ice fishing season" homework.

Every lake is unique, but there are enough similarities between lakes for anglers to make an educated guess to where the crappies will most likely to be located, based on the type of lake.

Lakes that have plenty of deep water with only one basin area are usually easier to pattern than lakes with several basins in different areas.

Most deep water crappies feed heavily on zooplankton during the winter and supplement their diet with minnows and other insects. The edges between hard bottom and softer mud and turns on the edge of the basin are often the key areas. Crappies also love basin areas near structures or between structures, so they have something geographical to relate to instead of roaming more open water.

Crappies living in shallow lakes usually have a higher percentage of the crappie population feeding on



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minnows and insects and only supplement their diet zooplankton. Shallow crappies are more likely to relate to standing vegetation, shoreline breaks or more subtle structural elements.

Large lakes like Lake of the Woods and Rainy Lake may have crappies seeking out a completely separate bay or section of the lake that has a mud basin and offers the structural elements crappies want during the winter.

Anglers using multi-color sonar units like the Humminbird Ice55 will recognize the blue or green colored layer of “stuff” that seems to lift off the bottom as night approaches.

This “stuff” is zooplankton, with crappies sifting through the thicker areas with the highest concentration of zooplankton. Crappies feeding on zooplankton will have what looks like black mush in their stomachs when they get filleted by successful anglers.

Crappies in deep lakes are usually located in the mud basin somewhere between 25 and 45 feet of water. Crappies in shallow lakes are usually near standing weed edges or along any area with an abrupt depth change, even if it is only a change in depth of a couple of feet.

Crappies in both deep and shallow lakes like “isolated open water”, which means they prefer to use basin areas that are close to some structural element rather than basin areas in the middle of nowhere.

Crappies like to have separate feeding and resting areas and make feeding movements between the two areas when they get active. Crappies in lakes with fewer structural elements can mean they will be more concentrated into the few areas that have the right combination of food and structure.

Lakes with several basin areas and more complex features can still be predictable, but the crappies may be more particular about what type of areas they are using. Once an angler “cracks the code” for the lake, they can use that information to locate other similar areas that may also be holding winter crappies.





Crappies often make their feeding runs at about the same time of day, especially during stable weather. Once anglers find a location the crappies are using, then anglers should be able to pattern the time of day the crappies are using, so they can repeat the pattern. It is often a matter of being in the right place at the right time.

Anglers may have to use trial and error and make multiple moves to find a location that is on the path of the crappies when they feed. Some lakes may be morning lakes, while other lakes may have the best bite in the evening or after dark.

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Crappies usually like smaller presentations. Crappies mouths are soft and tear easy (paper lips), so anglers need to use hooks with some bite or they may lose too many fish.

Northland Fishing Tackle has smaller sized “Puppet Minnows” that often work better than live bait. Anglers with the right jigging pattern can make a Puppet Minnow look just like the real thing, only with super sticky hooks.

Anglers can also use the Northland “Sliver Spoon” which is made of tungsten, so it fishes small but is still



heavy enough to get back down to the fish fast. (pictured below)

Northland also makes an entire series of “Bro Bugs” which are all designed to catch panfish. Bro Bugs can be fishing with scented Impulse plastics or they can be tipped with wax worms or eurolarvae, depending on what the fish want at the time.

When all else fails, crappies can always be caught on a minnow and a plain hook with a split shot under a perfectly matched bobber, so the fish can’t feel the pressure of the bobber when they take the bait.

If crappies will bite on scented plastics or artificial lures without bait, then anglers don’t have to waste time re-baiting hooks after missed bites or after catching a fish. Anything anglers can do to make the process faster makes them more efficient and helps them catch more fish.

Anglers should also match their presentations with the right weight line. My all around favorite is 3 pound test Northland Bionic Ice, which works perfect for most panfish lures.

I have also designed a complete line of 20 New Bro Series ice fishing rods with a newly designed reel that all serious ice anglers should really check out! There is a combo specifically designed for almost every situation anglers will find when ice fishing, regardless of the species they are pursuing.

I usually have my Frabill/Plano hard case packed with several rods rigged with different baits, so I can give the crappies what they want without having any down time switching lures.

Crappies usually start the winter close to the bottom and suspend further off the bottom as the snow cover on the lakes begins to block out some of the sunlight.

Good electronics are essential for anglers to see the crappies and get their baits at or just above the eye level of the crappies. Ice fishing electronic are like a video game for anglers, I would rather go home than fish without my Humminbird.

If the weather is chilly and I want to hunker down on a spot instead of running and gunning, I set up one of my New Bro-Series Hub Houses that are light weight, set up fast, and are insulated to keep me warm even under the harshest conditions.

Have a Safe and Fun Ice Fishing Season, Good Luck & See you out on the ice, Brian "Bro" Brosdahl



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The All new Double Vision by Vexilar will open your eyes to an exciting new way of fishing and understanding what goes on below the ice. For years, Vexilar has been the innovator and leader in three-color flasher sonar technology and truly catapulted modern day ice fishing to what it is today. Vexilar has become a household name with anglers, and to their credit, Vexilar products have stood the test of time as well with over a million units on the ice today and many over ten years old and still working like new. The efforts from the engineers at Vexilar don't stop with just three-color flashers now, the Fish Scout camera systems amazed anglers with the new wide screen LCD color display and the fact that you can use the system for over 12 hours on a single battery charge. With this breakthrough energy efficiency and slim profile it made it possible for Vexilar to create the ultimate



DOUBLE YOUR ICE FISHING SUCCESS

By Matt Johnson

On top of leading the field in efficiency, you also have a lightweight, leak-proof camera capping off a list of elite qualities. This is a system that incorporates a Vexilar Flasher sonar AND a Fish Scout color monitor into one stand-alone system. The Double Vision system gives anglers the flexibility of using either the camera or the sonar to more fully understand what is going on below the ice. And this season the new DTD camera systems have gone to a new level with the first digital Depth, Temperature and Direction display on the monitor so you know exactly where your camera is below you and where it is pointing. Vexilar has answered the call of ice anglers by putting together all the bells and whistles in one exceptional and affordable package.

Benefits of having the Double Vision: Both units are together, making your job as an angler easier and more focused on catching fish. Portability, organization, efficiency these are a just a few simple terms that come to mind. Learn how your flasher works better Understand the many variables with sonar by tying the flasher right into the underwater camera, allowing you to actually see whats occurring in relation to the image portrayed on your flasher. This is education at its finest, and something that anglers of all levels can benefit from. Its entertainment for both kids and adults its no secret that watching fish swim around brings excitement to anglers of all ages, and actually watching a fish eat your presentation jump-starts your adrenaline and makes even the coldest days on the ice seem warm!

There are basically two types of Double Vision packs. One comes with an FL-20 flasher along with the camera and monitor. The other Double vision pack comes without the flasher. So, if you have an existing Vexilar, you can combine your current Vexilar Flasher with the Fish Scout and create your own Double Vision pack. The Double Vision system without sonar comes pre-wired to power either the FL-8 or FL-18 or the FL-12, FL-20 or FL-22 systems. Remember though, you can incorporate any Vexilar flasher into the Double Vision system by purchasing either the FSDV01 or FSDV01DT, which come with your choice of camera but allow for the addition of your favorite Vexilar flasher unit. So, no matter the Vexilar flasher you currently own, you know have an option to turn your system in a powerful one-two-punch! Vexilar is very excited to introduce the new line-up of Double Vision systems and were happy to answer the demands of the modern ice angler. Have fun out there and enjoy your Double Vision system!



DEAD STICK FOR A LIVELY BITE

By Jon Sibley

The old saying “you make your own luck,” rings true.

Increase your catch by increasing your odds. I think this holds true for all things. Put in the work and results will follow as in all aspects of life, and especially fishing.

Those who incorporate cutting-edge fishing equipment into their arsenal often find a big payoff in productivity. This falls into “making your own luck” category.

Anglers should use everything available to them to make the desired result. Hard work and smart work, in various doses, make the winning combination and gets the job done. The ability to accept the new and combine it with the old to make something even better is the foundation for success.

Take the dead stick as an example of an old idea that, in cooperation with new technology, can up the ice game.

The definition of a dead stick is a rod that’s rigged for the sole purpose of increasing the odds of catching fish without constant attention. The rod is set in a holder and, in the past, was monitored visually for a bite. New technology has updated this technique in a fantastic way.

The evolution of the dead stick in ice fishing is an ongoing process with new equipment and techniques under continual development. These are some of the latest and greatest advancements in ice fishing.

Dead sticks now have eyes with electronics that



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transmit a signal to a personal device that lets an angler know when a fish is at or near your bait. This will allow anglers to get to the rod and jig when needed. This is one of those advantages that I mentioned earlier that will affect your productivity greatly. Being able to react immediately to the conditions of the bite is critical.

The evolution of heated boxes that go over your hole and electronics that transmit to a personal device has taken a great leap forward. This is an area that has tormented fishermen since the first caveman decided to chop a hole in the ice and see what would happen next. What happened next? The hole froze over. Not anymore. Now anglers can place a box over the hole, add a heat element and the hole will remain open. Why didn't I think of that? It's a good idea.

The new ice fishing equipment changes everything. This one is not a gimmick and will give you positive results.

I used these two techniques on one of my latest fishing trips for perch and walleye. The bite on this day was slow — yes, even Pros have challenging days on the ice. There was a low pressure system slipping down from the north. The effects of weather on fishing can be very dramatic on most bodies of water and low pressure is bad.

On this particular day, the dead stick method turned out to be deadly. We placed the rods, heated boxes and cutting-edge electronics out in front of our Jason Mitchell shelters. This allowed us to cover as much ground as possible. The result of these new techniques was an increased catch of 40 or more on most species of fish.

When fishing, hedging the odds in your favor is a sure way to catch more fish. As anglers, we are on the constant lookout for new and innovative ways to increase our odds of catching fish.

Panoramic Panfish

By Jason Mitchell



There can be some surprisingly solid fishing for panfish on lakes and reservoirs that might lack the classic weed growth. From an ice angling perspective, good weeds in the wintertime often

correlates with good water visibility. Poor water visibility, turbidity or exposure to strong winds might create panfish water that might offer at least shallow weed beds during the summer but by winter, most of the weed bed is down.

There are also some reservoirs particularly in the Great Plains States built to provide irrigation and the drawdown prohibits good weed growth from ever developing. Many anglers mistakenly believe that most great panfish water has good aquatic vegetation but that is not always the case and lakes that are devoid of any aquatic vegetation often require completely different strategies.

In some ways, water that lacks the classic weed cover can be easier to fish because the fish often concentrate on what cover is present. Some reservoirs have submerged timber that can hold fish. As a general rule of thumb, many flowages, reservoirs and natural lakes that don't have good weed growth often have submerged brush piles or cribs that attract fish. Some of this fish habitat planted by State Agencies actually has GPS coordinates available to the public. The legality of planting brush piles and tree clippings varies from state to state but even on water where it is illegal to plant fish attracting cover, brush piles and cinder blocks miraculously show up on the bottom of some lakes. Typically, this man made structure becomes a lot more attractive to fish if the water lacks natural existing cover.

If you can find these locations and fish them through the ice, there is usually no shortage of fish. The toughest aspect of catching fish in these environments is finding these locations. Perhaps the easiest way to find these locations fast is to run the water during the summer with side scanning. Sunken trees, manmade brush piles, cribs and any other cover that can hold fish shows up fast with side scanning. Mark waypoints and return when the water freezes.

Finding these locations on the ice however can be much more daunting. If water visibility allows, this is a scenario where underwater cameras like the Vexilar Fish Phone can shine. The Fish Phone is an underwater camera that uses your iPhone or Android for the display and is an easy and cheap way to view effectively underwater with recording options.

Typically, good spots hold good fish in that brush piles, cribs and fallen trees that have a lot of branches, variations and size hold more fish and larger fish. Good spots are relative in that we have seen



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.



what looked like fifty or more crappie holding next to one single branch coming off a tree lying on the bottom. That particular scenario had a barren lake bottom that was virtually void of any cover. Water that has more options typically gives the fish more choices and fish have a way of finding the best locations.

Even on a single brush pile, there will often be a sweet spot that really seems to attract the fish. Might be a spot where the branches are higher or denser or could simply be the side of the brush pile facing deeper water.

From my own experiences fishing these types of locations, this is not always a situation where you run and gun hitting several spots but you do often have to drill several holes to get positioned over the spot perfectly and again the best way to do this is by using an underwater camera.

Often, what we find is that these locations will recharge very well if you are alone on the location. That is... set up over the sweet spot and let the fish come to you. You initially catch the fish that are living right below you and new fish seem to set up on the spot to take the place of the fish that were caught.

Because you are stationary over a key location, the location itself is almost surgical. You have to spend some time to figure out where to drill a hole in the exact right spot and then wait out fish movements... a perfect scenario to camp out for longer periods of time with a Fish Trap and underwater camera.

The disadvantage of a camera for ice fishing is that they take longer to set up compared to just dropping a transducer down the hole and sending your lure down. You have to commit to a spot somewhat because of this extra time but this type of scenario is where the camera can give you a huge advantage because you can watch how fish respond to your presentation much more distinctly and you can sort fish more effectively.

On lakes, reservoirs and flowages that are devoid of weed growth or don't offer ample flooded or submerged timber to hold panfish, taking the time to find other cover options can pay off huge dividends. Of course these more barren environments can see fish patterns over soft basins, main lake structure, the sides of creek channels and even rock, any type of cover is a fish magnet in these particular ecosystems when the target is bluegill or crappie. The effort to discover these types of locations is time well spent.



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ICE ANGLING ON THE LEADING EDGE

By Ron Anlauf



The big Ice Fishing Show at RiverCentre has come and gone and has historically served as a proper sendoff to the hard water season. This year's event was bigger than ever with another level added and more manufacturers, more displays, and more people than ever before. They came to see the latest and greatest, see a seminar, maybe buy a big ticket item like an ATV or shelter, or maybe book a trip to a northern destination.

I was there to work the show for a couple of manufacturers that are my sponsors but still took a little time off to peruse through most of the displays. One of the things I noticed was the fact that there was no shortage of high end rods and there was some really cool stuff designed specifically for panfish. The latest trend includes adapting a fly reel to a super light action spinning rod. Because of the way fly reels retrieve and store the line there is no twist added like spinning reels do. Spin or twist in the line will end up at the lure and a spinning bait is an unnatural occurrence that can turn off super fussy bluegills that have monocles for eyes and

spend a lot of time studying a bait before taking it in or rejecting it. The downside is the fact that they're not real effective in deeper water because their retrieval rate is so slow. Manufacturer 13 Ice has addressed the problem with an addition of a fly style reel called the Black Betty 6061 but is geared and retrieves at a rate of 18 inches per turn which definitely opens up its use in deeper water and panfish are often found in deeper water. The bad news is they will be hard to find this year because of their popularity.

Another big hit was a new electric auger called the Ion which makes use of a high speed motor and a lithium ion battery. It comes with an 8 inch auger and a 12 inch extension and reportedly can drill up to 40 holes through 2 feet of ice which would handle most of my needs. There was a video being played that demonstrated the forty holes being cut as well as measuring it up against a couple of brands of gas augers which was rather impressive. Even more so was a live demonstration where an Ion representative actually drilled through an 8 inch block of ice in no time flat. It gives you the feeling that you could be seeing the future of ice augers.

Insulated portable shelters aren't new but there was more of it in more styles. Having fished out of an insulated portable shelter there is no turning back. Last year I used a 949i from Eskimo that was much, much warmer than the standard canvas, was incredibly quiet, and produced virtually no condensation. For this season they've added three insulated flip over models including the Wide 1 which is a rather unique one man. It has an expandable bracket that provides 30% more fishable area with the push of the button allowing you to actually work two holes and still have room for a heater and a depth finder. In fact there is one of them in my garage right now, all rigged and ready to go. See you on the ice.



HUNTING AND WILDLIFE EXTRA





Coming Of The Loons

By Bill Vanderford

As coolness fills the night air each fall, excitement builds from the awareness that soon my annual love affair with a beautiful and mysterious visitor from the North will begin again. Though I've certainly known more than my share of unique Ladies, this one is very different. She can fly, dive, swim faster than a fish, and has a haunting song that penetrates the morning fog on Lake Lanier like the beam of a powerful searchlight! I'm referring to one of the most fascinating birds in the world...the common loon!



It seems that only a few years ago, loons suddenly appeared for the first time on Lanier's blue-green waters, and it was love at first sight! These gorgeous birds are divers

that normally measure 24 to 40 inches in length and have an elongated body and sharp, pointed bill. They are strong swimmers that propel themselves when diving by using their radically webbed feet. Their legs are attached far back on their bodies, a characteristic that permits ease of movement when swimming, but causes great difficulty when attempting to walk on land. Loons are unique among living birds because their legs are encased within the body all the way to the ankle. They can actually out swim most fish. Loons are also good fliers but become airborne only after an extensive run along the top of the water. I've seen them fly alongside my bass boat at 60 miles per hour, and they are capable of flying great distances without stopping.

In keeping with their uniqueness, loons rarely live or feed in areas that have been polluted by the extravagances of man. These beautiful creatures are also very family oriented, and always mate for life. Often, we at Lanier are privileged to observe parts of their courtship, but they fly back to their homes in Canada, Alaska, or extremely northern areas of our country before laying eggs. During that period of incubation, both the male and female sit on the eggs and help nurture and raise the one or two chicks that they have each year.



It wasn't until the movie, "On Golden Pond", that most people ever noticed loons, and until a few years ago, none were seen in our area. For some unknown reason, these

ancient birds started showing up each fall around mid November and will remain until late April or early May. As a guide on Lake Lanier, bird watchers often hire my services to locate, study, and photograph our transient loon population. It is such a pleasure to introduce these unique and magnificent birds to visitors at Lake Lanier, and even I still look forward to being on Lake Lanier every morning listening to the haunting sounds of loon voices echoing across the fog-covered waters.

When most of the jet skis and mass humanity of summer have gone, and the cooler weather brings a quietness to the lake, it becomes an entirely different environment. The sounds of loons will fill the fall air with a symphony of song and natural beauty that again brings sanity to the beautiful waters of Lake Lanier!

Bill Vanderford has won numerous awards for his writing and photography, and has been inducted into the National Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame as a Legendary Guide. He can be reached at 770-289-1543, at jfish51@aol.com or at his web site: www.georgiafishing.com.

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Niño Ushers In Weird Waterfowling

Observe and adapt for waterfowl hunting success

With regular waterfowl hunting seasons well underway in the northern states and poised to kick off in the south, at least two things are clear: There are plenty of ducks, and weird weather is already affecting local and continental waterfowl migrations.

Buckets of Birds

Smile, wildfowlers. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, breeding duck numbers reached an all-time high this year on the heels of several consecutive years of exceptionally wet weather in the Prairie Pothole Region. Nearly 50 million birds were estimated in the traditional survey area this past spring, representing a slight increase from last year's record total and the largest since the standardized surveys began in 1955.

An abundance of birds is certainly good news for hunters, but as always, weather will play the role of the great equalizer in this year's ongoing waterfowl equation, which includes the El Niño factor – a variable that would likely leave the likes of Pythagoras, Copernicus and Einstein scratching their heads.

Weird Weather

Fueled by warmer than normal waters in the eastern Pacific, this year's El Niño is forecast to become one of the strongest on record, and is expected to influence weather and climate patterns across North America this winter by impacting the position of the Pacific jet stream.

Overall, weather patterns are expected to be less stable than normal, which has implications for waterfowl and waterfowl hunters alike. Already, would-be-typical fall waterfowl migrations have been short-circuited by a prolonged period of near-record warm temperatures across the Canadian prairies





and Midwest throughout much of late October and early November.

Where Do We Go From Here?

As the 2015-2016 waterfowl hunting season progresses – presumably with continuing strange weather – hunters need to observe and adapt to changing conditions.

Birds get “stale” when migrations

are stalled by warm weather. There may be plenty of ducks and geese around, but they can quickly fall into highly cautious patterns – often by communing with those cursed local birds that have yet to leave and know where they’re safe and where they aren’t. Try two primary tactics when birds grow stale.

Add realism to a conservative decoy spread. While large decoy spreads can be highly effective during periods of peak migration, smaller, more detail-oriented spreads can work better when ducks are held up by mild weather. Try hunting with just six to 12 realistic, high-quality decoys like Avian-X’s Topflight Mallards. Mix in a variety of poses, while adding additional detail and some subtle motion. In the Mississippi and Atlantic Flyways, try adding in a Topflight Flocked Black Duck or two. The flocking on these blocks give them a highly realistic appearance. Overall, Black ducks are known as one of the most cautious waterfowl species, which can give ducks the increased confidence to commit to your spread.

Always observe ducks and geese carefully and let their habits and body language tell you what they like or don’t like while calling, but stale birds often respond best to a quiet and especially reserved style.

“In areas where hunting pressure is intense, ducks get wise to calling pretty quickly because they hear it every day,” says Ohio master waterfowler and call maker, Fred Zink. “Aggressive, continuous calling can work in migration areas or other locations where there are large concentrations of waterfowl, but in most of the places I hunt, less is more in regard to calling.”

A top-tier finishing call like Zink’s ATM Custom Double Reed is a great choice in these applications. “The ATM was designed for the hunter who likes the sound of a single reed, but is tired of the ‘over blow squeak’ of a single reed,” says Zink. “The ATM delivers a pure sound, is very user friendly, and is a great choice for close-in calling or call-shy ducks.”

Watch the Weather

Pay strict attention to weather patterns that might result in birds being pushed in or out of your region. While most waterfowlers are aware of the conditions that push new migrants down from the north, many overlook the short-term



reverse migrations that take place during warm fronts and thaws, which get birds moving in different patterns search of new and changing feeding opportunities.

In the the northern portions of the flyways, large lakes, rivers and spring-fed ditches will hold the largest concentrations of waterfowl in the late season. Areas that possess several of these features in close geographic proximity are top spots to hunt, as ducks and geese will use these features in hopscotch fashion as long as food is available. Hunt the larger lakes when the smaller ones start to freeze, then move to rivers once the remaining lakes ice over. Spring fed agricultural ditches are always great options throughout the late season because of their typical proximity to waste grain. Many of these ditches also contain watercress and other late season food sources, making them highly attractive loafing spots.

The Final Thought

Every waterfowl hunter dreams about being in the right place during “the big push” – that special day when a veritable aerial freight train of southbound waterfowl continually dumps into the decoys. But the majority of our hunts simply don’t go that way – especially when extended periods of mild weather cause the migration to stall and ducks to grow stale and cautious. It looks like many areas of the country may experience their share of these less-than-ideal conditions throughout the rest of this waterfowl

season.

Make the most of such conditions through vigilant scouting and hunting even the most subtle weather changes that get birds moving in new directions. Call less aggressively and put out smaller, more realistic decoy spreads to maximize your chances for success.

At least there are plenty of ducks.



It is no secret among hunters that interest in coyote hunting has skyrocketed in the last decade. Why not? Coyotes are more populous than ever, after decades of being hunted, trapped and poisoned. The crafty critters have shown their adaptability to mankind's torments offering a challenging pursuit to hordes of hunters who want something to do in the off season.



So, how does a hunter go about getting into coyote hunting? It is fairly simple to get started. No doubt, the guys who got into coyote hunting early in the game began by utilizing the hunting equipment they already possessed. An individual can still do that these days as well. However, like many other pursuits, coyote hunting is highly addicting. You will most likely purchase specialized coyote hunting equipment once you have given it a try and determined you have become a bonafide coyote hunter.

In the meantime, break out your favorite shotgun or rifle and use it to hunt coyotes. More than once, I have had coyotes come running in while I stroked a slate turkey call or blew a mouth call. Once I discovered it would work, I began using a mouth turkey call to squeal like a dying rabbit. Coyotes responded beautifully. And my turkey gun and heavy turkey loads worked wonders, as well.

GETTING READY FOR COYOTES

By Bill Cooper

Recently, I have discovered that the high-end waterfowl loads serve as great coyote medicine as well. After a recent snow goose hunt , I tried my Federal Black Cloud 3-inch, BBB shot shells on coyotes. I changed the choke in my shotgun from an improved cylinder choke to a full choke and felt good about shooting coyotes to 40 yards.

Calls are a fun addition to coyote hunting. Again, a hunter can use turkey calls or whatever call he has, which can produce the sound of a dying rabbit or some type of distressed animal. Throw in the addition of your favorite camo and you are ready to chase wily coyote.

Scouting is important in coyote hunting, just like any other type of hunting. Public lands normally have ample coyote populations for hunting. Too, farmers and ranchers may be reluctant to let you deer or turkey hunt, but many will willingly allow you on their lands to pursue coyotes. And you may then eventually gain permission to hunt other species.

Visiting a possible hunting area at night is one sure fire way to find out if coyotes are using the area. A simple howler will normally fire them up, if they have not been howling on their own. Otherwise, look for tracks, scat and kill sites.

Once you have determined that coyote hunting is for you, simply visit your nearest Bass Pro Shop. You will be flabbergasted at how much coyote hunting gear is available. Name brand companies like Primos, H.S. Strut, Haydel, Johnny Stewart, Foxpro and others make quality standard calls and electronic callers as well.

My next planned purchase for coyote hunting equipment is one of those slick looking, tricker out, camoed, predator hunting rifles, unless of course, my wife thinks my beginning level shotgun is still good enough for coyotes.

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

