

February 2016  
Ice Fishing  
Into Spring  
Fishing

# ODU MAGAZINE™

LEECH  
LAKE  
PERCH

I'm A  
Bluegill  
Panzie  
Contact  
Sport  
Walleyes

SOLVING  
SONAR

INTERFERENCE

Open Water Coverage, Pg 70  
Hunting Coverage, Pg 94





February is that month where anglers start preparing for spring fishing. This February particularly we find ourselves in the midst of a mild winter throughout and many of us getting a jump start on spring.

After you work your way through cleaning up your lures and tackle from last season,

don't forget that last ICAST had a huge selection of product to improve your day on the water. Click this "[LINK-ODU ICAST 2015](#)" and see what 25 products we selected at ICAST 2015 for our readers.

A special word to our friends who count on strong ice fishing weather. Hang in there my friends, this season will soon be in the past and 2016/2017 will be stronger. Count on ODU to be here to promote, share, show case all you have to offer next season.

Ice anglers throughout New England are facing ice conditions that produce opportunities for poor decisions. If you are venturing out on New England waters and many Midwest lakes and ponds please bring an ice chisel to test ice thickness.

Expos are in full swing and for those of you who have a chance to visit these events there are several 2015 and future 2016 ICAST tackle products to keep an eye open to fill your box....

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**Thank You All!**

Look for these and we are sure you will improve you hook ups and catches!

**Bass fishing:** Bill Lewis Lures Echo, Snag Proof Lures Wobbletron, Savage Gear Soft TPE Lipless Crankbait, Megabass Eeler, Divinator Compact, SPRO BBZ Rat 30, Berkley Rib Snake, UV Tightlines Bubba Craw, Picasso Special FX Shock Blade and the Damiki Air Frog

**Walleye fishing:** Lindy Wally Shad, Lindy Wally Demon, Blakemore Tommy Skarlis Awesome Walleye Runner Head, Matzuo Big Blades Sickle Rig and the Impulse Live Rigged Paddle Minnow.

**Pan fishing:** Savage Gear Mayfly Nymphs, Wolverine Tackle Twin Minnow Fly, South Bend Swimming Minnow, Road Runner Slabalicious, Northland Fire-Fly Jig and the Betts Six-Piece Panfish Popper Kit.





Musky and northern pike fishing:  
Tyrant Jerkbait, Savage Gear Hybrid  
Pike 250, Suick Lures Shack Attack Suzy  
Sucker, Tyrant Dictator and the Bagley  
Ukko.

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This edition of ODU Magazine  
continues our 2015/2016 ice fishing  
coverage touching on walleye, perch,  
bluegill and crappie. There is a small  
section on open water fishing for our  
southern readers with a little hunting  
coverage. Walleye, perch and panfish  
are the predominant ice anglers  
targets and ODU is offering articles  
here to help you increase your late ice  
fishing success and a few reminders on  
ice safety.



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

## ***Did You Miss ODU Magazine's Last Three Editions?***



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

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



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**Ice Fishing Efficiency, Pg 13**  
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# Speaking The Language Of Fish With Your Jig

By Mark Strand

Focus on fine points of ice jigging, including theories and experimentation.

In our last episode, ice fishing legend Dave Genz was talking about the proven magic that happens when you fish a jig designed to ride horizontally in the water on fresh line, using a good jigging rod, with the knot positioned to keep the jig horizontal. It's known as the 'Genz Pound,' or just pounding, and it is the classic presentation that rules over all others in modern ice fishing.

If you did nothing but rotate the knot—all the way—in the direction of the hook point, and became good at rapidly vibrating your wrist to keep your jig looking alive down there, you would have one good day after another out there on the ice.

But let's say for a second that you want to know more. That you want to know what Genz does when the classic

*Photo: When he's figuring out how to trigger fish, Dave Genz experiments with how fast he 'pounds' the jig, and where his knot is positioned on the jig's eyelet, before tying on a new bait. When he gets it right, the fish 'tell him' by biting. (Photo: [www.davegenz.com](http://www.davegenz.com))*



pounding presentation doesn't bring as many bites as it usually does.

"To start out the day," says Dave, "I think about what spots the fish are probably in, and go to one of those spots and drill some holes. Then we fish those holes, quickly, aggressively, looking for fish that are ready to bite. Look for fish on your electronics, and drop a bait down all of them, to see if you can pull fish in, even if you don't see anything right away.

"You use what happens at that first set of holes to decide where you're going to drill your next set of holes. I start off pounding it, and that usually works. When the fish get harder to catch, we move on and drill more new holes. But sometimes the fish don't bite right away. They want something different, so you have to give them something different."

### ***Pacing the Pound***

Any time fish don't pounce on a pounded jig, Genz makes a mental note of that and begins to experiment with the pace of the pound. It's something he has done for so long that it's become a muscle memory, something he hardly thinks about. He just does it.

"Rather than tying on a new jig, or thinking about changing colors," says Dave, "my first reaction is to experiment with the cadence. You can slow it down, which also lessens the vibrations being sent out by the jig. It changes what your presentation looks like, and feels like, to the fish. It has to feel right to them."

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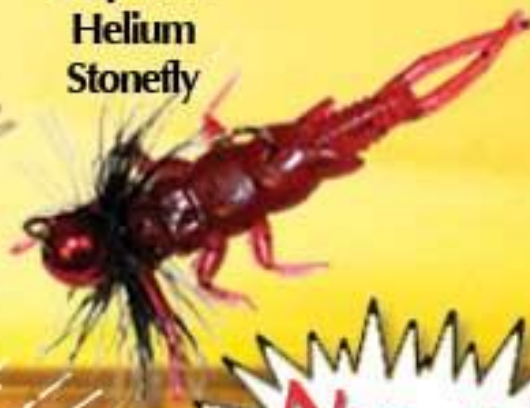
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## ODU MAGAZINE VIDEO BLOCK ([www.odumagazine.com](http://www.odumagazine.com))

Listening to Genz and his friends talk about what the fish wanted at the end of a day on the ice is fascinating. And carefully watching Genz work his way through various cadence routines can be instructional. Pat Smith, a deadly ice fisherman himself, jokes about how Genz would probably take out a restraining order against him if he knew how much time he spends just watching how Dave experiments with this important speed factor.

“What you want to avoid,” says Genz, “is sitting there too long experimenting with presentation. The Winter Fishing System is built around the idea that you should stay mobile and go find fish that are ready to bite. If the fish don’t bite, go to a new spot and drill more holes. Don’t give up on the idea that there are biters somewhere. But the longer you go into the day without catching fish, the more you should be changing how you’re working the bait. It can make a difference when the bite is tough.”

### ***Dial in the Knot***

In addition to varying the pace of the cadence while presenting a jig, Genz has also begun to experiment with moving the position of the knot to different angles on the eyelet.

“When you bring the knot all the way around on the eye, toward the hook point,” he says, “that gives you the most vibration. That’s the position I use most of the time. But now I’m working on what happens when you dial the knot to different positions on the eye.” Maximizing vibration, keeping that jig fishing in a horizontal posture, creating that buckin’ bronco kick to the hook end (which causes the



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maggots, plastic, or other add-ons to pulse around enticingly) will produce really well on most days, as we've already said. Attention to detail in this regard, according to Genz, is one sign of an accomplished angler.

"Rotating the knot on the jig eye has to become a habit," stresses Genz. "Last winter, watching my brother, Jerry, who's 80 years old, he automatically rotates the knot each time, before putting the line down the hole. Even though he's one of the oldest guys out there, many times he has the best quality fish at the end of the day."

But, as Genz points out, there are times when fish don't bite well on the go-to presentation. That's when it's time to experiment. In addition to changing up the speed and style of his cadence, Dave has been playing with the position of the knot to alter the motion and vibration signature, to look for what triggers fish on any given day.

"I think of the jig eyelet as the upper half of a wheel," says Genz, "and I move the knot to different positions on the wheel to see what it does to the presentation, and how fish react to it. I'm fairly early in my time of doing this, so I'll have more to report as this winter goes on, but it's an interesting variable to test."

If you look at the entire eyelet and think of it as that "half wheel," on which you can place the knot at different positions, it's easy to imagine the possibilities. When the knot is all the way toward the hook point, that forces the jig into more of a horizontal swimming attitude, and produces the maximum vibration with each "kick" as you rapidly move your wrist and the rod moves up and down.

At the other end of the "wheel" the jig assumes a vertical posture. This is the position it takes every time you catch a fish or snag on something and have to pull free. While Genz stands by the notion that rotating the knot all the way toward the hook point will catch you more fish on most days, there are times when a vertical jig carries the day.

"Sometimes, fish like the lure rising up off the bottom, looking like it's swimming to the surface," explains Genz. "This is something fish have seen, when insects emerge and rise up. When they want it rising, having the jig hang more vertically is important."

To test whether this approach will be effective, Genz moves the knot away from the hook point, so the jig hangs vertically. "I rotate that knot around," he says, "drop the jig to the bottom, pound it into the bottom a few times, and start rising it up with a swimming, kicking motion. If they want that, they'll bite it. It's

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another method to try when fish are down there and you're struggling to get them to bite."

Between these two extremes, the "wheel" offers other knot positions to experiment with.

"So many people are quick to change the color of the lure, or tie on a different type of bait," says Genz. "That's not wrong to do, but by altering how you're presenting the jig you already have on there, you can do a lot of testing before you change color or tie on a different bait.

"Besides doing this, make sure your plastics are on their straight, so the jig can work properly, and if you're using live bait, make sure it's fresh. Make sure there's fresh juice coming out of those maggots, before you start thinking about changing jig colors."

Every day of fishing is a big experiment, where you are asking the fish what they want by showing them things you think they might want. And now you know a lot more about what Dave Genz does, in addition to drilling more holes. "Some of those little things you can try," he says, "make a big difference on some days."

Here's to your winter of experimentation with cadence, pounding styles, and knot positions.

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

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# ICE FISHING EFFICIENCY



**By Tom Gruenwald**

Depending on context, an efficient ice fishing approach can take on various connotations and meanings, because there are multiple, complex facets to the overall process. But as with any complicated task, often the best way to attack it is to break the mass into components and tackle each element one piece at a time, beginning with the basics.

One of the most elementary, yet critical parts of efficiency on the ice is simply being organized—and this is much easier said than done. In today's world, using mobile devices, the internet and various forms of social media, information travels faster than the speed of light and must be instantly heeded. If you're truly dialed in and maintain an educated network staying on the cutting edge--working diligently to track hot bites as they develop and relying on instant communications--properly staying on top of this game requires an immediate and proficient reaction.

Time is of the essence. Impeccably maintained equipment must be efficiently prepped, with ATV's or snowmobiles fueled and trailered, equipment gathered, electronics charged, reels spooled, tip-ups rigged, swivels and lures tied, hooks sharpened...and all essential gear systematically stowed, ready for action. Historically, these key essentials were often some of the most difficult to keep



organized. Things such as tip-ups and jig rods would simply be dropped into plastic five gallon pails, where, minimally, lines, rigs and lures might hopelessly tangle, or worse yet, end up damaged or broken.

Fortunately, a solution has been created: Protective gear bags. They're available in both hard and soft-sided varieties and an assortment of styles, designs and sizes. The least expensive, lightweight and typically most versatile are padded, multi-pocket "soft-sided" versions. Molded "hard-side" cases unquestionably offer better protection, but come with increased cost, usually added weight--and often, a loss of versatility.

A few manufacturers have played the middle, developing soft cases featuring rigid



frames, hardened sidewalls or protective tubes--a great compromise that provides the benefits of both worlds.

For most outings, soft-sided models are my usual go-to choices. They're functional, versatile enough to accommodate either combos or tip-ups, plus are lightweight and economical. HT's RLD-2 rod locker, for example, retails for around twenty dollars. An extra-large, zippered central storage compartment easily accommodates several tip-ups or combos up to 32" long—while two spacious secondary zippered compartments and an easily accessible outer webbed pocket make it possible to organize and stow not only tip-ups and combos, but skimmers, tools, line, assorted tackle and other accessories, all in one convenient case. You'll also appreciate



the padded shoulder straps, meaning you can transport the entire bag hands free, backpack style!

Should you be packing longer rods, Polar Fire features a couple slightly upscale carry packs, beginning with the PFLX-43 Xtreme tackle tote. This model holds tip-ups or rods up to 42" long, and the lined padding is a bit thicker, too. Best of all, the inner compartment contains rigid tubes that provide excellent protection for fast action, solid carbon or thin tipped micro rods, while two "open concept" secondary compartments provide ample space for ancillary gear. Again, this case features padded shoulder style carry straps and handles.

If you're looking for a case that's lightweight but provides a more rigid structure, consider the Polar Fire PFTC-100. For all practical purposes, this would be defined as a soft case, but features formed "hard-side" edges to contribute additional strength. Additionally, felt padded, fully adjustable divider strips allow customized storage configurations for assembled combos--or the ability to securely pack rod and reels separately—thereby offering flexibility in terms of inner organization by allowing you to create perfectly sized compartments custom placed to specifically meet your needs. This model readily fits both tip-ups and/or rods up to 36" long.

For uncompromising anglers who want traditional tube style hard cases, Polar Fire also offers the PFLT-43 Polar Fire Xtreme rod combo case. A 3 ½" tube accommodates two rods (depending on guide style and size) up to 42" long, and an expanded cushioned reel pouch provides protection for attached reels. Two outside zippered accessory pouches provide ample storage for additional tackle.

Since each design offers its own set of advantages, I own multiple models, and divvy up my gear between them. Tip-ups are separated from rods, then arranged so tip-ups rigged with heavy lines, leaders and larger hooks for pike are broke out from those rigged lighter for walleyes, trout or pan fish—and for easy identification, I always hang luggage tags labeled with the exact contents outside each respective case. Furthermore, every tip-up is individually marked with the applicable leader type and hook sizes. Now, whenever I receive notice about a tip-up bite, I need only grab the bag(s)





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appropriately set, quickly review leaders and hooks, and after re-rigging as necessary, am ready to load and go!

Rod combos are similarly situated. If a favorable report involves bluegills, I grab my rod cases marked micro or ultralight, and after a brief inspection to ensure my line and leaders are fresh, simply rig a few lures of the style, size and color my informant has recommended. Should the bite be stocked trout or walleye, I reach for bags marked medium-light or medium, respectfully, and go through the same process, right on down the line based on the situation at hand.

Bottom line is, by keeping all my equipment AND essential gear well organized, clearly labeled and easy to locate, I make myself just as mobile and ready to move on the preparatory end of things as I am while actually working the ice—a basic, yet crucial element that has proven to be a critical component within any truly efficient, modern ice fishing approach! This is a [HT Enterprises](#)

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# *I'm a* **bluegill** **panzie** *& sometimes crappie too!*

*by Mike Borovic*

I got ants in my pants! And dancing around the kitchen like a fool is quite the norm.

Why?

Because it's just about that time; time for bluegills once again through the ice!

Ring-a-ding a dingle-ing!

I've said it before and I'll say it again, "I've been a bluegill bum since the day I was wiggling my willie! There is no fish that I can think of that's flesh is so sweet, flaky and firm, yet so rewarding and for the most part, relatively easy to catch".

Well sorry to poop on the party, but we all know that (easy) is an understatement come midwinter, right? Those "once upon a time" feisty little freshwater piranhas sure can stubborn-up like an old mule come mid-season. Mid, meaning that inevitable time of waning oxygen levels and loss of green to brown (reference to the weeds that is).

So most of us know by experience; what worked for us on first ice really isn't going to work so much for us throughout the remaining winter. Although lots of folks will continue fishing the same way, they will be hard-pressed to continue hauling in



these pan-fish.

When it comes to midwinter, the fishing ~~can get tough~~ will get tough without a doubt, especially with any length of a season and even more so on a shallow body of water. When it's time to get down to business, you are gonna have to finesse your way to get those gills in the middle of winter. Those shallow bays and flats you been fishing and using them traditional little ice jigs certainly ain't gonna do it anymore. When I speak of shallows, I truly mean shallow, like around 2 – 5 foot and don't think for a second that's too shallow. I've caught bluegills through the ice in a water column of no-more than 18 inches once. I sheet you not! Eighteen inches!

My old stomping grounds, also known as "the middle grounds" are just outside the Bass Haven cut in Mitchell's Bay Ontario and where all my sparkling teenage ingenuities were tinkled with. It was here that I first discovered sight fishing. It didn't take long to figure out what the guys laying belly down on the ice were doing especially with their fur-trim parka hoods over their heads. These were the fellas who





always had fish flopping around them on the ice. Even the one-person shanties had gills and crappies flopping around them and neither were ever within the pack

of fish coops. These guys were always a distance away from one another and yet they were the only ones who consistently had fish in the bucket at the end of the day (gee, there might be a pattern developing here guys).

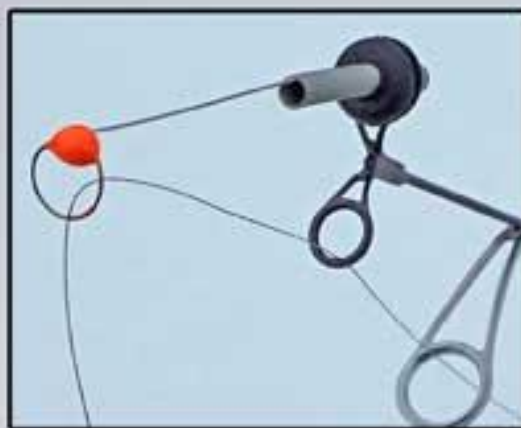
Well let me tell ya, my momma didn't raise no fool, nor did she wear rubber boots in the shower, so I saved up all my pennies and got me self into one



one of those fancy dancy Dave Genz Fish Traps for the following season. Damn, those first ones were as heavy as a porcelain coated steel bathtub too! But guess what? I was now catching fish, first ice, mid ice and last ice. If it weren't for sight fishing, there's no way I would know the things I know. I've learnt a great deal about bluegills just by watching them respond to various baits and lures.

Of course sight fishing has its limits to depth and water clarity but when those first Aqua-Vu under water cameras hit the market... well, I got me one of those too and into the deep I went.

So for what its worth, here I am, many years later on a sheet of ice in a galaxy far far away (sorry, just saw the new Star Wars flick and couldn't resist, let's try that again). So here I am, many many years later on a





sheet of ice, fishing the exact same way today, as I found to work best for me then. Can you believe that?

I think the most solid piece of experience I can pass on is to stay away from the "shanty town" crowd. Last season I was lucky to find some amazing crappie lairs but I was totally amazed at how spooked they became when another angler walked by my hut at merely 20 yards away. I'm not kidding and I ain't exaggerating. The ice was about 20 inches thick, completely snow covered and I'd be looking 6 feet down the hole watching a 14-inch crappie eye-balling my jigging spoon. Someone from 30 yards away would begin walking towards my



My favorite for aggressive crappies is a Northland Forage Minnow Spoon in their smallest size, 1/32 oz with a # 14 treble hook tipped with 1 or 2 spikes (this will also get you some bigger end aggressive gills). If things are slow, I may use a single # 2 or 4 sized hook with a small Thill float and minnow on a dead-stick rod set 1 foot below the bottom of the ice. When crappies go lethargic on me, I'll usually just remove the treble hook from the spoon and use the hook by itself. JB Lures also offers glow painted treble hooks in size 12 if you want to have some attracting color.



general direction and I would start seeing dozens upon dozens of even LARGER crappies frantically swimming in the opposite direction of the trudger, like a herd of buffalo on a stampede from a pack of wolves. I couldn't believe it. I never seen anything like it. And it happened each and every time from the direction any noise was coming from. Stay away from the business areas on the ice and move with a little stealth.

You can't catch bluegills if you can't find fish, so being mobile is important. Now that doesn't mean drilling a hundred holes and hopping all around like a horny little squirrel. You have to give each hole sometime to be fished. What it means is keeping an open mind to know when it is time to move and your gear preparedness.



If it takes you 10 minutes to pack up your arse to make a move, then you're not likely to move too often are you? If it takes less than 2 to grab your (dirty word) and slide over 20 yards or a mile... your mobile. You will be more inclined to make many more moves and stay on fish then you would if you weren't mobile ready.

My ice hut is my castle. It keeps me comfortable in sub-zero temperatures. It importantly blocks the wind and becomes a crucial piece of equipment for helping me catch fish, especially when those nipping winter winds start to howl. I benefit the most from the darkness of the shanty when I'm sight-fishing. Blocking out all the surrounding light is essential for me to be able to see down the hole and through the water column. On that original Fish Trap of mine, it was a heavy canvas fabric that made up the covering portion and it blocked out almost all the light, making it nearly black inside. Today I have the Clam Yukon TC, the covering is a tough 600 denier thermal fabric which is much more efficient in many ways over the old. However it does allow more daylight to penetrate but blocks enough allowing me to do what I do. My Yukon is a two-seater and not without reason either, I just happen to enjoy the extra room it offers, and sometimes company is good. Visually learning is priceless and without a doubt it has helped me a little along the way.

Sight fishing is a proven ancient technique that's been used forever and works amazingly well in shallow clear water but what about in deep or stained water? That's where my Marcum comes in. By using my camera in a "down viewing" orientated way, I can obtain deep water viewing in pretty much the same way as peering down my hole in shallow water. Needless to say, you can also use your underwater viewing system to scout 360 degrees out to the sides of your hole as well... no better way to find green weeds and structure. Last season while putting time in on the throne, I remember reading a magazine article telling about "up viewing" which reveals the dark silhouettes of fish against the white underside of the ice. Watching a little TV can have its advantages.

Before "super lines" ever became available to us, I was using mum's sewing thread. I can't stand monofilament or fluorocarbon line, it's like a rubber band, stretching away all that feeling and power. Braided line is very soft, super tough, amazingly sensitive, thin and the best part is that there is no coiling. Quality sewing thread is amazingly tough and thin. It's a good second choice for in the shanty use. Its crazy cheap and I



Obtaining that deep water viewing with a MarCum.



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Ever been on a hot date with a school of bluegill and run out of bait? Always wise to carry along some back up.



Essential tools of the trade are forceps and line clippers. Cuda makes an awesome scissor.

love that I can switch it up and match thread colors to the different water environments.

Would you like a pickle with your sandwich? I can't believe how many choices we have in ice rods today! When I first started to ice fish you simply just made your own from the components of a previously broken rod. There wasn't much in the way of an ice fishing market; ice fishing today has a much different feel to it than it did 30 years ago. Ice anglers were definitely the DIY old schoolers of their own gear and we have come an extremely long way from the days of a wooden stick and cotton string.

A stroll through any well stocked bait store across the ice belt today will leave your head spinning. Rods today are manufactured and specialized for targeted species. We are in an era of graphite and carbon fiber where there are literally dozens of companies, who have given us a hundred choices to choose from. With several quality hobby kits available, making your own custom rod is still an option for many. It's about having a rod that you have confidence in, your personal preference and your particular taste. So if it's the "Green Hornet" you're after? Then quit being a grumpy old man and get busy!



## The Green Hornet Strikes Again!

For the first 20 years of my fishing life my favorite panfish ice-rod was a \$6, 8-inch fiberglass ultra-light, cork-handled no-namer matched with a \$2, plastic bait cast reel (checkout cash register countertop deal), spooled with sewing thread. It might not be the "Green Hornet" but it too has caught more fish than John Gustafson has ever lied about!

I hate spinning reels! Period. Probably more so then panfish themselves. It's inevitable, with a spinning reel you are going to get line-twist which





is going to cause your jig to spin around and around... spooking all the fish. And that is why I loved that little junk of a reel I had; because it stored line in a way that it eliminated the line twist and everything just worked out fine.

I've taken a little step forward since then and today I'm holding a 17-inch St Croix Legend Silver teamed with a Frabill (fly-style) 101XLA reel. We've been together for a little while now and we're still in love. My other love muffins are worth some notoriety and they are Jason Mitchell's Elite 17-inch sight fishing rod and 19-inch UL Wicked ice rod by 13FISHING.

How many ice lures or jigs does one really need? Because there are thousands! And then another thousand to go along with that thousand. Whoa, there's a lot of damn jigs out there. Be careful when standing in the lure aisle... all those pretty colors and shiny things can make your head spin and cause fleeting blindness. I'm glad I'm not one of those guys. Don't get me wrong, I like to look at all those shiny things but I'm proud to say I only need what works and I barely have a handful of lures that I actual put to use. And as a matter of fact, my go-to

favorite for bluegills isn't even a jig or ice lure... it's a plain hook!

When mid-winter gills get finicky stupid on me that's when I look to my go-to and that is a #14 or 16 size hook tipped with a single spike for bait and that's it. That is my secret. It works every time, all the time. It is so lethal it should be illegal! Even the stubbornest "bullgill" slurps up this morsel with no hesitation.

You should see this thing dance, so tantalizing, literally just floats in the water... makes me tingle from head to toe. It is almost weightless and that is why you can't use anything other than sewing thread or the smallest of super braided lines.

I can't use it all the time because like most things, it has a flaw. It's best executed and manageable in shallow water and therefore limited. It is for sight fishing only. It is a slower process as opposed to a weighted jig and best done within the confines of a warm shanty. This is what I call finesse fishing.

It can be said that bluegills are the easiest to catch of any fish but we "fish bums" know that's far from the truth, because there are bluegills and then there a Bluegills.



Mike Borovic

vforvenison@outlook.com



# ONE-TWO PUNCH PERCH AND WALLEYES

By Dan Johnson Featuring Ice Team Pro Scott Seibert

Yellow perch and walleyes are two of ice anglers' most popular targets, and there's no reason you can't double your pleasure and catch both species in one trip.

Aiding such endeavors, Ice Team Pro and veteran guide Scott Seibert has crafted a "one-two punch" approach that makes it easy to enjoy fine fishing for jumbo perch and golden-flanked 'eyes.

"It starts by choosing lakes that offer good populations of both species," he says, noting that Minnesota's Leech, Winnibigoshish and Mille Lacs; Devils in North Dakota; Gogebic in Michigan; and Waubay in South Dakota rank high on his Upper Midwest hit list. "I look for large lakes that have plenty of big perch along with solid walleye fisheries."

Such sprawling systems are typically better picks than smaller bass-panfish type lakes, which offer low walleye numbers, limited structural opportunities and scads of stunted perch.

"You usually don't see a lot of 10- to 12-inch perch where there's intense competition for food or high mortality rates from predators such as northern pike," he explains. "Big lakes that offer perch enough time, elbow room and food to reach jumbo proportions are your best bets."

Certainly, flowages and river systems such as the Mississippi River near Grand Rapids can be sleepers, as







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can shallow, fertile fisheries where perch wax fat and fast. Particularly where the population is on the rebound from a winterkill. In such waters, biologists note that perch can reach 12 inches in length in just five grow-ing seasons — much less time than it takes in most classic northern perch waters.

After selecting a destination, Seibert scans a good hydrographic map of the lake for prime perch and walleye habitat. “They’re generally not in the same area,” he says. “I look for perch in deep mid-lake structure such as holes and mud flats. Transitions between soft and hard bottoms can be dynamite, but you have to scout around to find the fish.”

Seibert’s perch searches entail punching numerous pilot holes and looking for fish on sonar, then dropping fish-attracting lures like a Clam Speed Spoon tipped with a minnow head. “A Speed Spoon drops quickly and creates a lot of flash and commotion, which can tell me if hungry jumbos are roaming the neighborhood,” he says.

Once perch are pegged, Seibert siphons up the most active fish with the spoon, then switches to a tungsten Clam Drop XL jig tipped with a Makiplastic and trio of maggots to milk the most fish from the area before moving on. He notes that his favorite colors are gold and glow red.

“Perch often respond to a bottom-pounding presentation,” he says. “So don’t be shy about dropping







your spoon or jig and stir up sediment to imitate a bug coming out of the mud. If you see fish move in on your Vexilar sonar but they don't bite, raise the jig to pull the biggest fish up and out of the school. In fact, fishing two to three feet off bottom after kicking up a little dust tends to produce the biggest perch."

Seibert also advocates a mobile mentality. "Keep moving," he says. "Drill lots of holes in promising areas, and don't spend too much time in one spot."

Seibert typically targets perch during the day, then shifts his focus to walleyes for the evening bite. "In the afternoon I look for areas where walleyes move up to feed at twilight," he says. "Gravel bars and rock piles adjacent to deeper water are two of my favorite spots."

Seibert often works Clam's Rattlin' Blade Spoons tipped with a minnow head in one hole and deadsticks a Blade jig tipped with a shiner, suspended under a 5-inch Ice Buster Bobber, in another. "The rattling

brings them in and the dead stick is the one they bite sometimes," he says. "Small crankbaits like a size 5 Bagley Balsa Shad rigged with a Clam Crank Weight are also worth a shot, especially for big walleyes."

Seibert experiments with a variety of jig strokes, building on a basic lift-fall-hold routine by adding twitches, shimmies, bottom pounds and other maneu-

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vers to the mix until the walleyes let him know he's got the right cadence for the conditions at hand.

He notes that the right rods can make a huge difference in your catch rates. Go-to perch sticks include a soft-tipped, 24-inch Jason

Mitchell Meat Stick for finesse and dead-stick applications, a light-action, 26-inch Clam Legacy for jigs and a medium-light version of the same rod for spoons.

"For walleyes, I favor a 32-inch, medium-heavy Clam Dave Genz Split Handle Ice Rod for crankbaits, a 28-inch medium Clam Legacy for spoons," he says. When fishing spoons, he adds a swivel 24 inches above the lure to limit line twist.

All rods are strung with Berkley Micro Ice line: 3-pound-test for perch, 6-pound for walleyes.

Armed with the right gear and strategies, Seibert says you can enjoy banner days double-dipping portly perch and tasty walleyes from first ice all the way to season's end.

Scott Seibert of Minnesota is a professional fishing guide and a leader in outdoor promotions. Seibert is one of the original Ice Team Pros and has several ice fishing tournament wins under his belt. Scott spends a lot of time mentoring the youth of our sport. [www.sksguides.com](http://www.sksguides.com). This is a [Clam Outdoors](#) and Ice Team sponsored article.





## ***SOLVING SONAR INTERFERENCE***

In the world of marine sonar and the modern day angler, there is no doubt that as the electrical systems in today's boats get more complicated, the chance that your electronics will experience interference problems increases. Interference shows itself on the display of your depth finder with varying degrees. Minor interference, or noise, can be stray signals that can look like actual targets. Severe noise can completely fill the screen, making simple depth readings impossible. To combat interference, you must first identify which type of noise is giving you trouble. Also, understand that although most noise can be eliminated with fairly simple techniques, some can only be reduced to a more acceptable level.

First off, understand there are five different types of interference problems you may face. They will all look similar on your screen and distract from your ability to get a clear picture of the bottom below, but the remedy for each is quite different.

Acoustical Interference is caused by faulty transducer installation. You will see this noise on the screen only when the boat is traveling across the water, at or beyond the plane speed of the boat. It's caused by an uneven, or turbulent, water flow across the face of the transducer. This applies to transom and in-hull mounted transducer applications.



Sonar Cross-Talk Interference is created by another sonar of similar transmit frequency nearby. It will show itself as lines rotating around the dial of a flasher or diagonal lines across the screen of a graph. When two depth finder's transducer cones intersect, each unit will get confused as to which signals are which.

Ignition Interference comes from engines that introduce ignition noise



into the power circuitry. These are power spikes that travel through the power wiring and into your sonar, causing noise to be displayed on the screen or heard in your radio.

Conducted Interference is usually caused by electric trolling motors that incorporate Pulse Width Modulation (PWM) in their speed control. This noise will be evident only when the trolling motor is activated and can vary in intensity through the range of motor speeds. The noise is conducted through the power line and enters your depth finder through the power connection.



Electromagnetic Interference (EMI) is created by the powerful electric trolling motors on the market today. EMI is radiated from the trolling motor's lower unit and power wiring into the air. It is then absorbed into the transducer cable that's attached to the trolling motor. This is a relatively new problem. As trolling motors get more and more powerful, the noise gets worse and worse, overwhelming the cable shielding and noise reduction circuitry that used to protect sonar from this type of interference.

\*Being able to pinpoint the type of interference you have will be the first step in getting a clearer sonar signal in all waters and conditions. Here are some simple and easy to follow steps to target and then address the problems you may be having.

## Acoustical Interference

If your transducer is mounted on the transom or glued in-hull for the purpose of reading depth while the boat is traveling across the water, you may be subject to acoustical interference being displayed on your depth finder. This type of interference makes reading the bottom almost impossible, once you reach a certain boat speed. The screen often is a total clutter of bad signals with a total loss of bottom signal. This noise can be reduced a great deal by adjusting the water flow rate over the transducer surface. This can be done by re-positioning the transducer.

## Transom Mounted Transducers

If you do not have enough of downward slope to your transducer, turbulent water will develop under the face of it. Increasing this angle by lowering the back of the transducer will help. Additionally, lowering the whole transducer can help you get down into a more smooth water flow area. However, going down too low can cause the transducer to shoot up water in a "rooster tail". If you have adjusted the angle and not gotten much improvement, then the transducer has been set in a position of what we call dirty water, where bubbles are coming off the hull due to a rivet, bad weld or bend in the hull. You'll need to remove the transducer and reposition it in another location on the transom where the water flows more smoothly. Many newer hulls have very steep keel angles, so mounting a transom style transducer so you're shooting at a downward angle can be a challenge. Generally, you want to mount as close to the keel line as possible, but you'll have to balance performance and location. Be sure to follow your transducers mounting







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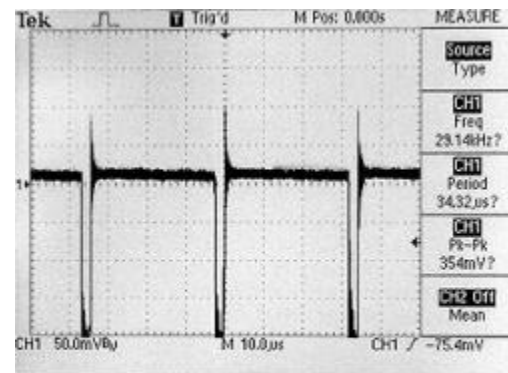
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instructions carefully.

With this mounting application you have limited adjustment options. The key is to make sure you choose a good location and get a good installation in the first place. However if your puck is already stuck to your hull, than it's time for some rework to get things right again. Before you get out the hammer and chisel, see if you can improve the reading by changing the weigh distribution or modifying the trim setting of your boat. Getting the bow to run a little lower may help things considerably. If not, then you'll need to remove the transducer and reattach it in a better location. Usually, dead center, about a foot from the transom, is best. But if there's a strake or a bad spot in the fiberglass there, you'll need to work around that. Testing the location, by setting the transducer in about a half inch of water while you run across the lake, is good way to find the best spot. Doing this is easier said than done and may require ingenuity or a willing helper in some cases.



Actual view of EMI signal as measured in air near the trolling motor.

If your unit has interference with nothing other than another sonar running in your boat, then you have sonar cross-talk interference. For most depth finders, the only real solution is to move the transducers further away from each other. This can help keep the transducer cones from intersecting, but because cones get wider as the depth increases, the problem can not usually be totally solved by position only. Changing one of the sounders to another model that runs on a different frequency than the first will solve the problem. Some modern depth finders, like the Vexilar FL-12 and FL-20, have interference rejection technology that will permit you to simply knockout the interference by pressing a button repeatedly until you see the cross-talk signal disappear on both units. These depth finders can have transducers mounted right next to another unit that runs at the same frequency.

Ignition noise can be a sign of problems with your engine. However, if it seems to be performing well, or you would just rather run her 'til she blows, a Ferrite Core can stop the noise from getting into your depth finder. These are small parts that you pass the depth finder's power wire through, often wrapping it through several times. Contact us here at Vexilar to get one.

## Interference from Electric Trolling Motors

Whenever you use an electric trolling motor on the same boat as a depth finder, you are likely to see noise from the motor on the display of your sonar. Today's high-tech motors perform better than ever, but can be very unforgiving to other electronic devices in the area.

If you disconnect your transducer from your depth finder and you continue to see noise when the trolling motor is running, then you are dealing with conducted interference coming in through the power connection. This can happen when the boat's electrical system does not have one common ground that connects to the water. Using a multi-meter, available at places like Radio Shack, check for proper grounding in your boat's electrical system. Set the meter to measure resistance or continuity. Then connect one lead to the negative battery post that connects to the trolling motor and the other lead to the negative post on your starting battery. The reading should show zero and the meter may beep. Also, check between the negative starting battery post and an unpainted portion of the



outboard motor, like the prop shaft or trim tab. You should also measure a complete circuit here as well. If the ground connection is missing between the trolling motor battery and the starting battery, add a small gauge wire, about 18 AWG, with a 1 amp fuse. This will complete the ground connection here. If the ground to the outboard motor is missing you should take your boat into a service shop to see why the ground is missing. All outboards should have this ground. If yours is missing something is wrong. If all grounds are in place, but noise is still a problem, a Ferrite Core can solve the problem.

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While your electric trolling motor is running, disconnect your transducer from the back of your unit. If the interference goes away, then you have EMI created by the rapidly switching voltage and powerful DC motor in the trolling motor's lower unit. Proper grounding and Ferrite Cores can be a good remedy for this type of interference. First, be sure your system is grounded properly as described above. Incorrect grounds are a common source of problems. Vexilar has even incorporated a very unique grounded puck transducer in our sonar systems that will insure the electrical system is grounded to the water at the point of the interference. This helps keep EMI under control, but may not eliminate it completely.

\*By knowing how to identify interference sources, you will be able to eliminate or greatly reduce the troublesome noise that can render your electronics worthless. It may take a little time and effort in some cases, but it will let you get the most out of your sonar in all conditions.

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## Ice Fishing Means Safety First

By Dan Galusha

The old saying “safety first” strongly applies to ice fishing. There are many concerns related to the sport, ranging from ice thickness to keeping warm.

When ice safety is mentioned most anglers immediately think of ice thickness. This is the first thing that should be checked whenever venturing out. A basic guideline from the Iowa DNR says good, clear-blue ice that is two inches will support one individual on foot; three inches will support a group of people while moving; five inches will support a snowmobile; seven and one half inches will support an automobile (two-ton gross); and 12 inches will support a heavy truck. My recommendation is to have at least three to four inches before going on the ice with all of the fishing equipment normally used.

The strongest ice comes after a prolonged period of freezing temperatures. Still, there can be weak spots. Snow cover will insulate ice and not allow it to get as thick. Areas with current, such as in a river, will be 15-percent weaker. Routes of repeated travel, warm water discharges and underwater springs will also weaken ice. Ice will be weaker, and thaw quicker around objects sticking above the ice, especially rocks and those made of concrete, which warms quicker with the sun. Sheltered ice, as is most often found under a bridge, is normally weaker.

Some warning signs of dangerous, or weakened ice are dark spots, water on top and flowing through

cracks, and a honey-combed texture. I've found honey-combed ice 6 to 9 inches thick that has broken through, and have heard of as much as 15 inches giving away under the weight of a person.

To check the thickness drill a pilot hole fairly close to shore. Drill other holes further out, and check thickness throughout the day, especially during a thaw. Some anglers have actually waited too long and found their way back to shore had melted to the "danger" point.

People walking together should stay at least 10 feet apart, and one should walk slightly ahead. Single file formations are often best.

It is advisable to carry a rope (at least 30 feet long is recommended) in case one of the parties falls through. If a rope is not at hand, improvise with whatever is readily available. A belt will work, but don't stand near the break when using it to pull the person from the water. Lay flat on the ice and toss the end to the person in the water. If there are enough people a human single-file chain can be made to pull the person from the water. Remember, to keep it single-file - too much weight by the break can result in more people breaking through.

Another device, which will help extract a person from the water, is made with two handles and spikes. The two handles slide together and cover the spikes for protection, or have retractable point guards. This is then draped around the neck with a cord, where it is readily accessible. They should also float in





case a pair of the picks has to be tossed to a person. The ones that I use are produced by Frabill.

To extract yourself from the hole take a handle in each hand and jam the spikes into the ice, alternately, to hand walk out of the hole using short reaches in a swimming type motion. Too long of reaches will not only exhaust a person quicker, but also make it possible for a large chunk of ice to be broken off, resulting in the loss of a safe edge to use.

After reaching a safe/solid edge continue pulling with the spikes and crawling until safe ice is reached. Never stand up too quickly, as this could result in another break, which many times is much more difficult to get out of.



Once the person is out of the water it is extremely important to get him or her into a warm enclosure, dry clothing and drinking warm liquids (NOT ALCOHOL) as quickly as possible. Hypothermia will set in quickly, and as everybody knows this is a critical situation.

Drills also provide hazards. One which is common to both hand and power models is the blade. Blades are extremely sharp and should be kept covered when not in use. Several stories have been heard of anglers falling on an exposed blade, causing serious cuts. One such occurrence was a gentleman who trip on a hole, slipped, and then fell with his face striking the blade of a hand drill. It slit his face from the corner of his mouth to his ear, resulting in several stitches to close the wound.

Hand drills provide the perfect opportunity for over-exertion. This combined with the cold temperatures may cause a heart attack. To avoid this possibility take frequent rests. Also, it will help to use as small a diameter drill as possible (5 and 6 inch are best).

A power drill will eliminate most of the hard labor, but there are other factors to consider. First, and the most obvious, is the whirling auger and blade, which should be watched very closely, and not allow someone to walk into it. Review operator manuals thoroughly, don't let children operate the drill, and be sure that any adult operating the device is fully instructed first. Shut the drill's motor off whenever it is not being used to drill holes. Never carry it with the motor running. The newer electrics, such as the K-Drill, are safer to some extent, but still have whirling blades.

Since many power drills are run on gasoline another concern is present - fire. Here are some good rules to follow as put forth by Jiffy Ice Drills: never set the drill or fuel container near an open flame

or heater; use an approved fuel container for storage; don't remove the fuel cap or add gasoline to a running or hot engine; fill the fuel tank only outdoors; and wipe up any spilled gasoline.

If using a propane model, such as the Jiffy Pro4, make sure the propane cylinder is fastened properly, and that the drill is set with the correct side up, which is indicated on the drill.

With some models reopening an old hole with a power drill can be very dangerous. The auger can catch and jam into the old area, throwing the handles out of the operator's hands and possibly causing injury. It can also damage the drill.

Slipping and falling injure many people. The use of some type of "ice creeper" is highly advisable. These are also very important to be worn when drilling a hole on smooth ice, as they will provide safer footing. Hypothermia was mentioned earlier in conjunction with falling through the ice, but this same condition can take place in the person who is not dressed properly. The best system is to wear layers of clothing. As a guideline this is a list of clothing items: thermal underwear; hockey socks; chamois or flannel long-sleeved shirt; thermal jeans; hooded sweatshirt; down-style vest; snowsuit or parka and bibs; pack-style boots; waterproof Thinsulate gloves; and stocking hat or insulated winter cap. All of my ice fishing clothing consists of Vexilar and Frabill sweatshirt, parka, bibs and gloves, which are some of the best on the market, and will provide warmth even in below zero temperatures. I've even worn my Vexilar parka and Tundra bibs in a freezing drizzle without getting wet.

Along with the normal equipment it would be a good idea to add a weather radio, as with any fishing. This can alert you to any severe weather approaching, as heavy snow and high winds can be a major hazard when caught a long distance out on any body of water, not to mention for getting back home once shore is reached and you are back in the vehicle.

Never let your guard down when on the ice. Remember, "safety first". As has been said many times on the RED GREEN SHOW, "keep your stick on the ice".



If you have any questions about this, or any other fishing subject, drop me a line through the Dan's Fish 'N' Tales® website at [www.dansfishntales.com](http://www.dansfishntales.com), which provides a link to the Dan's Fish 'N' Tales® Facebook Page, or go directly through [www.facebook.com/dansfishntales](https://www.facebook.com/dansfishntales).

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



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# Real or Not?

## Let the Fish Decide

Intelligent ice anglers are having success combining traditional live bait tactics with the use of realistic artificial lures

Times are a changin'. Used to be when we went ice fishing, our presentation always included a jig tipped with some type of minnow or hunk of meat, no matter what species of fish we were targeting. As the fishing tackle industry has grown, companies have found ways to make better baits that work in all seasons for all species of fish.

Today, ice anglers can use a blended approach, combining live bait tactics with artificial applications. Maybe work a soft plastic swimming lure in one hole while monitoring a live minnow and bobber in another. And all this while a nearby tip-up deploys yet another minnow, likely something larger. The options are endless.

The following are a few jigging and rigging techniques using artificial lures that have proved effective used in conjunction with a live bait program.



### Dropper Rigging Stocked Trout

Brookies, rainbows, splake and the like are all suckers for aggressive presentations during the ice months. These fish are very inquisitive and can be called in from long distances. The thing is, they can be picky about what they eat so give them a 1-2 punch by using a dropper rig. The rig consists of a spoon with the treble hook removed and in its place a short 3-5 inch section of monofilament is attached leading to a small ice fly, like the feathered Spider Ant or new Scud Bug from Bro's Bug Collection. When jigged aggressively, the spoon will dance, while the small jig pulsates and beckons these stocked beauties to bite. This rig is especially effective early in the season when these fish are in their most aggressive state.

### Bug Up Perch

Our lakes are alive in winter with bottom hugging larvae, bloodworms and crustaceans. All species of fish exploit these tasty offering but none take advantage of the potential feeding frenzy like perch do. Much of this action takes place in the mud-bottomed basins on the lakes we fish and this is the best place to find massive schools of perch. Ice fishing guru, Brian "Bro" Brosdahl has designed a



series of specialty jigs and soft plastic tails for Northland Fishing Tackle that are effective on all panfish, perch included. I used some of these jigs last season for perch and lit them up using a technique that Bro taught me. “Bro's Mud Bug” is a new jig that has a “fat-head” that anglers can shake and bounce in the mud to imitate hatches coming out of the bottom. Tip this jig with one of the new plastic tails – like the Bloodworm, Slug-Bug, or Scud-Bug – and you have an offering that perch flip over.

## **Metallic Walleyes**

Spoons are available in all shapes and sizes from various manufacturers and they catch walleyes throughout the winter. In fact, I fish spoons almost exclusively for walleyes during the winter months. Spoons are good because they have superb attracting abilities and can call fish in from a long range. They can also be shaken lightly to entice “lookers” that are in close range to bite. I just about always fish a Northland Buckshot Rattle Spoon and use a “jerk, jerk, shake” cadence. I'll jig the spoon more furiously if flasher screen is bare and then begin jigging softer sequences when fish appear. One last “triggering” trick to make lookers turn into biters is to slowly jig your bait and lift your rod at the same time, making the bait rise in the water column. Walleyes are more likely to commit to if they get teased up off the bottom a bit.

## **Swimbait Lakers**

Everybody knows that lake trout are suckers for plastic, minnow imitating baits like tubes and jerk shads. They catch fish on a consistent basis and have for years. A trend for winter trout fishing is working baits that trigger bass during the open water season. One of the hottest new styles of baits in this category are swimbaits. Gaining popularity for largemouth bass in California, they are now being used by bass anglers all over North America. If you haven't used them for lake trout, you're missing out. The Slurpies Swim Shiner is a great example, Silver Shiner and Emerald Shiner being a couple of the hottest colors. The key is to keep it moving. I will jig these baits in 3-5 foot lifts and cover the entire water column. You will call in big fish while showing them something they probably haven't seen before.

The key with artificial baits is to use them to call fish in to your presentation. If you can do this, there is always a high percentage of fish, no matter what species you are targeting, that will bite. Spend some time this winter using artificial baits in tandem with typical live bait techniques and you will see your catches improve. Every time you do something different than the norm, you learn something and in the end this will make you a much better all-round angler.

This is a [Northland Lure](#) sponsored article.



# LATE ICE FORTUNES

By Jason Mitchell

The last period of safe ice typically offers some of the best ice fishing of the year for panfish like bluegill and crappie. For crappies in particular, we often find fish shallow and the fish can often be fairly aggressive. The locations to find crappies is often a matter of connecting the dots. On most lakes and flowages, crappies will suspend out over holes and basins through much of the winter. Crappies will then set up in shallow protected bays, marinas and creek arms that have a few feet of water to spawn. So we know where the fish were and we know where they are going to be in less than a month, the key now is finding structure between point A and B. More specifically, look for soft bottom locations and if you can find weeds present, even better.



From my own experiences, I have found crappie over rock bottoms through the summer and early ice but not so much at late ice. The deep lip at the mouth of a shallow bay or a saddle separating the basin from shallower backwater is a prime starting point. Any soft bottom point, hump or lip that lies between the basin and the bay is a good candidate for searching. As mentioned above, if you can add weeds to the location... better yet.

As a general rule of thumb, crappie will often keep pushing shallow and further back towards these



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spawning locations as the late ice season progresses. There are two things I really keep an eye out for when looking for fish. Look for any weeds sticking out of the ice or in the ice. When weeds reach the surface, you will see weeds frozen in the ice and these locations will often reveal where the best stands of weeds are. As winter gives way to spring and the days begin to get longer with a higher sun, weeds right under the ice will often green up and become vibrant again and these weed stalks hanging out of the ice will often hold fish. As ice conditions deteriorate, crappies will often concentrate around pencil reeds as well but also remember that anything sticking out of the ice like pencil reeds, cattails or timber absorbs heat from the sun and the ice will often be more hazardous in these locations.

Besides weeds frozen in the ice, the second thing I look for is open holes. When the days warm up and water starts flowing into old open holes, crappies will often stack right underneath. The more holes and the bigger the holes the better. Look for the foam. The old hole pattern often picks up intensity as the day progresses because as the sun climbs high overhead and the temperatures warm up, the water begins to flow. Look for crappies to roam right under the ice. There are often situations where you can actually watch the fish and sight fish for them.

Long days, green weeds and highly oxygenated water flowing down open holes often makes fish aggressive. Not always of course but some of the most aggressive crappie bites we see each winter often happen during this period of time. There are times when finesse presentations are needed but don't overlooked larger and more aggressive lures for finding and triggering these fish. A great search lure for calling in big crappie is a size 3 or size 4 Salmo Chubby Darter along with size 1 and 2 Northland Fishing Tackle Puppet Minnows. Spoons like a 1/16th ounce Northland Fishing Tackle Forage Minnow tipped with wax worms or spikes also get seen from a distance and work well.

When crappies are shallow and right under the ice, they really seem to go for the horizontal gliding





action you find on lures like Salmo Chubby Darters, Puppet Minnows and Jigging Raps, with that being said I also like to fish horizontal jigs and soft plastics this time of year so that they glide and swim like a small minnow versus quivering like an insect or invertebrate. My favorite jig for a glide and slide look is a Northland Tackle Hexi-Fly rigged with an Impulse Smelt Minnow. To get the jig to slide out on the stroke, use a palomer knot and slide the knot towards the hook. This combination offers a nice profile that fish can see against the ice and can be fished aggressively or much more subtle depending on the mood of the fish.

The hardest part of fishing for late ice crappie is knowing when to quit. The fishing will often keep getting better each day and the ice conditions get worst each day. Ice safety is paramount. Being safe starts with knowing when to say no and not pushing your luck. When the shorelines start to go and the ice starts sagging with each step, you are on borrowed time. Also be prepared for the worst by having ice pics, rope and floatation. Just an inflatable personal floatation device like the Onyx A/M 24 Automatic Manual PFD is dependable, comfortable and doesn't inhibit your movement. Even if holes are still open from previous days, still make a point to drill a few holes through the day because this is a good way to monitor the condition of the ice. When ice begins to chip and come up in chunks when you drill a hole, the ice is not as strong.

The dawn of winter, the eve of spring... whatever you want to call the magical time frame of late ice is some of the most productive and funnest fishing of the winter. Long days, aggressive fish and weather where you can fish without gloves and wear a sweatshirt is all part of the allure when we know another season is coming to an end. Be safe and focus on some of the locations discussed in this article and I am confident you will experience some great late ice opportunities for crappie.





# Leech Lake Perch

By Brian 'Bro' Brosdahl

One of the best perch lakes in Minnesota is Leech Lake, with its' many bays, plentiful forage and wide variety of both shallow and deep habitat.

Leech Lake is not only a great lake for perch. The wide variety of habitat in Leech Lake also provides





great fishing for walleyes, muskies, northern pike, large and smallmouth bass, crappies, sunfish and even whitefish and eelpout.

Leech Lake is a gem of a lake, no matter what time of the year and what species anglers decide to pursue. Perch are one of the most prolific species living in Leech Lake, with many anglers fishing

for walleyes during prime time in the mornings and evenings and then fishing for perch during the daylight hours, when the walleye fishing slows down.

Perch are capable of living in a lot of different environments, as long as they can find a suitable food source. A healthy population of perch provides food for just about everything else in the lake, with plenty of perch left-over for anglers to harvest.

Most good perch lakes have decent growth rates, with perch reaching a harvestable size of eight to nine inches around year seven of their growth cycle. The best perch lakes usually have several age-classes of harvestable perch at any one time and seldom have large gaps between age-classes.

Perch will travel in huge schools during the winter if food is plentiful and concentrated into specific areas. If the forage is more scattered, the perch will likely break down into smaller groups as they search for food.

Fishing for perch can provide anglers with great action during the winter if they are able to locate and pattern the fish. Once anglers catch a few “keeper-sized” perch, their odds of success go way up because they are usually close to a good school of perch if they can fine tune their location.

Schools of perch are usually split between two or more patterns during the winter. The majority of the perch are often using one main pattern, with the rest of the perch split between one or more other

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patterns.

Food is usually the key factor in perch location, regardless of the time of year. Whatever food source is most abundant and easiest will usually attract most of the perch.

Insects, minnows or freshwater shrimp are all viable food sources for perch during the winter. Crayfish are almost always a preferred food source for big perch, so the largest perch may be doing something different than the bulk of the perch population.

The bulk of the perch population in Leech Lake late in the winter is usually relating to the chara covered weed flats that are so prevalent in the large shallow bays.

If there are perch in deep water in Leech Lake, they are usually somewhere in the 20s close to the drop-off, rather than in 30 feet and beyond like they can be in many other lakes during the winter.

Shallow perch are usually feeding on minnows, crayfish and a few insects, while perch in deep water are

almost always feeding on some type of insects like mayfly larvae and bloodworms.

Perch are opportunistic feeders and seldom feed on just one thing. They usually have a main course and then supplement their diet with whatever else they can find.


The shallow flats on Leech Lake are often covered with chara, which is a hard stemmed weed that stays green all year long. Chara does not have roots, so gets blown around the bottom by waves during the summer and collects in mats like underwater tumble weeds.

Chara beds are full of insects, crayfish and can hide minnows and smaller fish, so the schools of perch swim over the top of the chara beds and hunt for anything they can find.

When perch are actively feeding, they can be pretty easy to catch and almost anything will work. The tricky part is catching perch when they are being finicky, so it takes some extra finesse to coax the perch into biting.


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When perch in deep water are inactive, they often lay so tight to the bottom that their bellies are actually toughing the bottom. I can still see the separation between the perch and the bottom when I zoom in on the bottom with my Humminbird Ice Helix 5.

If I need to see the area with my own eyes or want to watch the fish when they take my bait in shallow water, I have a AquaVu Micro 5 rigged right with my sonar so I can down view at the same time I am fishing.

Downsizing is usually the key when perch are tough to catch. Sometimes I will go all the way down to a 1/16 ounce Northland Forage Fry Spoon with a 3 pound test fluorocarbon "Bro-Dropper" to catch the perch if that's what it takes.



I will usually use a 1/64th ounce Northland Tungsten Fireball Jig on the “Bro-Dropper” tipped with as little as a single maggot or half of a wax worm in some situations.

Another “go-to” presentation for tough biting perch is to use a Frabill Bro-Series “Dead-Stick” with the new “Bro-Band” rigged with 3 pound mono and a Northland Mud Bug tipped with a single wax worm or 1 to 3 eurolarvae.

I like to pound the Mud Bug into the bottom and then set the rod on a bucket to hold it still with the lure set about an inch from the bottom. I watch the rod tip for a little bump knowing that the line will release from the Bro-Band if a fish hits the bait too hard.

Shallow perch are usually more active and often more willing to bite than perch in deeper water. I like to use a Northland Buckshot Flutter Spoon tipped with a minnow head and let it shoot out to the side of the hole when it drops and then walk it back into the center of the hole, which is deadly on perch.

If the shallow perch get a little tougher to catch, I usually have a rod rigged with a Northland Helium Fly and tipped with a couple of eurolarvae or a wax worm. The Helium Fly drops much slower than tungsten lures and has that floating action that can be so deadly on perch and other gamefish species.

Leech Lake is spread out over 120,000 acres, so there are many access points on all parts of the lake. It has become one of the true destination areas in Northern Minnesota, with dozens of resorts catering to anglers and visitors during all seasons of the year.

Brian ‘Bro’ Brosdahl is a multi-species fishing guide and Touring Walleye Pro and one of the top names in Ice Fishing. Bro and his wife Heather make their home in Max Minnesota. Bro’s sponsors include Plano/Frabill, Northland Fishing Tackle, AquaVu, Humminbird, MinnKota, Ranger, Nils Augers, Costa Del Mar, Ranger Boats, Evinrude Motors, Cannon & Lakemaster.

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First there's ice, then there isn't. I promise, ice is on the way. When it gets here, if you keep the following reminders in mind, you'll catch more fish through the ice.

On early ice, it's very important to keep quiet, and also to keep movement to a minimum. Early ice will be thin, it will be clear, and there probably won't be much snow on it. This is especially important when fishing in shallow water. You're fishing straight down, so the fish will be within just a few feet of you. Fish in shallow water don't like movement from above, and they don't like noise. Get to your spot, drill a few holes, and hunker down.

Drilling will probably spook the fish for a little while, but they'll come back. You need to sit on a spot long enough to let the fish settle down, forget about the noise you made, and get ready to eat again. Different anglers have different ideas of how long "long enough" is, but give a hole at least fifteen minutes before you quietly move to another hole that has already been drilled.

If you're fishing early ice, and there is some scattered snow on the ice, fish the area that has some snow. The snow will hide your movements and muffle any noise that you might make. If, for instance, you're fishing panfish on a large weedbed, and the ice over the part of the weedbed is snow-covered and part of it isn't, fish the snow-covered area.

Pay attention to your depth-finder and do what it "tells" you to do. Today's sonar units that are made for ice-fishing are remarkably sensitive and will enable you to catch more fish. If you see fish coming in and looking at your bait but not eating it, do something else. Maybe move it slower or faster. Try a different color or size. Go to an entirely different bait. Go from tipping your bait with plastic to live, or go from live to plastic. If none of that works, try a different area: Sometimes the fish just don't want to get caught. However, if they're willing to take a look at your bait, they're usually willing to eat it if



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Keep your bait above the fish. This is another depth-finder function. Keep an eye on your bait via the sonar as it goes toward the bottom. Stop the bait several feet above the bottom: You don't want it to go all the way down. If the water is twenty feet deep, stop your bait at the fifteen foot level. See if any fish come up to it. It works better to have them come up to your bait: That's the sign of aggressive fish. Catch the aggressive ones. When they quit coming up to it, lower it closer to the bottom and catch the ones that aren't so willing to get caught. When you quit seeing them, move to a different hole. Vexilar is the pioneer and leader in sonar technology and makes a unit that is just right for any ice-angler, novice to expert.

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Last thing: Not liking the cold is no longer a valid excuse for not going ice-fishing. Today's outerwear and footwear make it possible for anyone to spend at least several hours on the ice and stay warm. Cold feet in particular can lead to a short day on the ice. Cabela's has created a boot called the Inferno that will keep your feet warm, but are also surprisingly lightweight.

Ice is coming to more areas of the Midwest: If you keep these ice-fishing reminders in mind, you'll be more successful when it gets here.

To see all the most recent episodes of Fishing the Midwest television, new fishing related tips, and fishing articles from the past, visit [www.fishingthemidwest.com](http://www.fishingthemidwest.com). If you do Facebook, check us out for a variety of fishing related things.



# ***The High Road For Panfish***

**By Jason Mitchell**

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

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

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



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a foot wide a few feet under the ice.

Sonar is fast and nimble where you can run and gun easily but underwater cameras like the Vexilar Scout can also be really deadly for figuring out high fish. Panning with an underwater camera is a great way to look for fish that are hanging below the ice, perhaps the best way. For actually catching fish, hang the lens so that it down views and just lower the lens in the hole far enough where you can essentially sight fish without needing a dark house.

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

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

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

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

Crappies are notorious for riding right under the ice but there are also times when we have seen sunfish and perch ride this highflying pattern as well. Pressure ridges and ice heaves often attract fish. Frozen weed fragments hanging from the ceiling of ice are also sweet spots. Not every day necessarily do you find fish a foot or two under the ice but it happens enough that it should definitely be a pattern to check as you search for fish. When fish seemingly disappear from the water column as the day progresses or don't show up in the usual locations, take the high road to some of the biggest panfish caught each winter.





# A GUIDE'S PERSPECTIVE ON ICE FISHING ELECTRONICS

By Maynard Lee





The frozen surfaces of lakes, rivers and reservoirs across the ice belt represent the final frontier in angling. Ice thicknesses that are often measured in feet, air temperatures that hover near zero, and frigid winds that often carry frozen precipitation all represent physical and even psychological barriers to ice fishing success. Over the last 5 years, however, advances in marine electronics that were initially designed to assist open-water anglers have begun to breach the final frontier, providing shelter-bound ice anglers the technological advances they need to enjoy sustained success throughout the months-long hard water season. As the first intrepid anglers begin to creep onto frozen lakes this season, we caught up with noted guide and angling technology expert Dr. Jason Halfen, to tap his insights on how marine electronics can best be applied to ice fishing situations.



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## The Trifecta

“Whenever I lead groups onto the ice, we always carry a set of three tech tools to help us find and catch fish. This trifecta includes a portable, digital sonar/GPS combo with an installed GPS mapping chip, mechanical flasher unit for each angler in the group, and set of underwater cameras to visualize activity beneath the ice,” began Dr. Halfen, who owns and operates The Technological Angler ([www.technologicalangler.com](http://www.technologicalangler.com)), a company dedicated to providing technology training to contemporary anglers.

“Each component of the technology trifecta has a specific purpose, and this unique combination helps my groups find and catch more fish throughout the season.” We continued our conversation by exploring the role of each component of Halfen’s “Tech Trifecta” in more detail.

## The command center

Dr. Halfen explains, “A portable digital sonar/GPS combo, like the new Humminbird ICE HELIX 5 SONAR GPS, is the command center for my groups of ice anglers. The GPS feature, combined with digital cartography from my Humminbird-LakeMaster chip, helps us to rapidly identify key locations to target panfish by day, and other areas to chase walleyes during low light periods.



“For example, we use the LakeMaster-exclusive Depth Highlight feature to identify key basin areas, 25-35 feet deep, which are filled with crappies all winter. Likewise, the precision depth contours provided by my Humminbird digital cartography allows me to find distinct breaklines that separate the basins from shallow weed flats, transition zones where walleyes hunt as the sun hits the treetops.”

However, the advantages of the ICE HELIX 5 SONAR GPS extend well beyond cartography. Dr. Halfen continues, “one thing I really like about the new HELIX is that I can move it seamlessly from my boat to the portable ice shuttle, using the same convenient set of power and transducer connections. Why does this matter? It allows me to take my HELIX on the water, before the lakes lock up, and drop waypoints on key “spot-on-the-spot” locations where I will turn to put fish on the ice, and smiles on anglers’ faces, all winter.”

During my conversation with Dr. Halfen, it struck me that nearly all anglers are already carrying a GPS device with them, right in their pockets: their smartphones. So, I asked why anglers should consider a dedicated marine GPS for their ice fishing needs, rather than just rely on their phones. His rapid response makes a LOT of sense. “First, recognize that plotting your GPS position on your phone, any displaying any available mapping, really chews up your phone’s battery. Coupled with typical cold air temperatures, using your phone’s GPS feature will dramatically reduce your phone battery lifetime while on the ice. Second, have you noticed that your smartphone is smaller than the holes you are fishing through? I’ve seen enough phones fall through the ice to know that phones belong in pockets, not in gloved hands trying to locate waypoints. Avoid sending your new smartphone to a watery grave by relying on your HELIX 5 for all of your GPS needs.”

Once likely spots are located and holes are drilled, the ICE HELIX 5 SONAR GPS command center seamlessly transitions into sonar mode to help anglers monitor fish, and baits, beneath the ice. “All Humminbird digital sonar/GPS combos feature a dedicated ice fishing mode, which displays 2D sonar data on the traditional, circular “flasher wheel” display that we all grew up with during ice fishing’s infancy. However, the ability of the ICE HELIX 5 SONAR GPS to also display that same sonar data in a standard, open-water type display that provides current AND historical sonar information can be

invaluable for identifying exactly how fish are responding to particular jigging motions. That historical information can make all of the difference on a slow bite day, and that’s an extremely valuable insight that a mechanical flasher cannot provide.”

### **The workhorses**

Every army needs both a commander and a set of highly trained foot soldiers. In Dr. Halfen’s “Tech Trifecta”, the Humminbird ICE HELIX 5 SONAR GPS is the commanding officer, while a platoon



of Humminbird ICE 55 and ICE 35 flashers carry the tech burden of finding and catching fish onto the icy battlefield. With such a heavy emphasis and reliance on the HELIX, I asked Dr. Halfen why he would outfit his clients with mechanical flashers like the Humminbird ICE series, rather than handing each their own digital fish finder. As always, his answer is rooted heavily in the exacting physics of sonar science.

“It’s really all about the sonar frequencies that each unit is transmitting. Put too many units, all transmitting the same sonar frequency, in too small an area, and nobody is going to be able to see anything as all of the units will be interfering with each other. My HELIX 5 sonar/GPS combo transmits standard open water sonar frequencies of 200 kHz and 83 kHz. In fact, if you look across all of the ice fishing sonar units available today, nearly all transmit at 200 kHz. This leads to a heavy reliance on noise filters and interference rejection schemes, which sometimes work, but oftentimes don’t. I prefer to address the problem at its source, rather than try to eliminate pesky, and persistent, sonar noise.



One particularly compelling feature of the Humminbird ICE flashers is that they transmit a pair of frequencies that are unique in the ice fishing world: a wide, 240 kHz beam and a narrow, 455 kHz beam. This means that an angler using a Humminbird ICE flasher simply can’t interfere with an angler using the ICE HELIX 5 SONAR GPS because the two sonar units are transmitting completely

different sonar frequencies. Moreover, I can add a third angler with an ICE flasher into the mix, and as long as one ICE flasher is transmitting at 240 kHz and the other is transmitting at 455 kHz, all three anglers can catch fish all day and never interfere with each other.”

Imagine, three guys in one Frabill hub shelter, each with their own sonar unit, and absolutely zero interference. Not a single blip. It’s not fantasy, but rather the science of modern ice fishing.”

## The spies

As valuable and irreplaceable as sonar is to contemporary ice fishing, visual information from underwater camera systems can help elevate the stream of insights delivered to the ice anglers to an entirely different level. Dr. Halfen refers to his Aqua-Vu underwater camera systems as his “spies”, covertly delivering tactical ice fishing knowledge that sonar systems cannot.

“We use Aqua-Vu camera systems exclusively, in part because of their convenience and ease of use, but also because they offer us distinct advantages for finding and catching fish. First of all, systems like my Micro 5 fit completely within the front pocket of my Frabill I4 bibs. Their internal Lithium battery



packs outlast even my longest days on the ice. And they weigh next to nothing, especially when compared to other camera systems on the market that seem to come with their own zip codes.

“When it comes to finding and catching fish, my Aqua-Vu camera allows me to conclusively identify bottom substrate, like telling the difference between sand and mud, which is a significant advantage

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when we are chasing perch that forage on mudflats. My Aqua-Vu is also the primary tool that I use to distinguish between healthy green weeds, and their lifeless, brown counterparts.

“One thing I really like to do, especially when tip-up fishing for walleyes, is to deploy an Aqua-Vu Micro 5 a few feet away from my bait, so I can visually monitor it during the day and into the evening. The first time I did that, I was SHOCKED at the number of fish that inspected my baits but refused to bite. My Aqua-Vu Micro 5 alerted me to the fact that fish were present and active, but perhaps not responding well to the sucker minnows I was using for bait. This was my cue to switch over to shiners, and that little change was all that was needed to start putting white tips on the ice.”

### **The science of modern ice fishing**

Ice fishing has evolved well beyond its early days of chisels to cut holes and lead weights to estimate depths. The technology explosion that has revolutionized open-water fishing now stands on the threshold of frozen lakes, fishing’s final frontier. These tech tips from Dr. Jason Halfen will help you to tap into that torrent of electronic fish-finding information, so that your ice fishing adventures this winter are met with a bounty of hard water success. Learn more about the ways that modern technology can improve your fishing by visiting [www.technologicalangler.com](http://www.technologicalangler.com).

# BEST BITES EVER

By Bob Jensen

Every now and then I get nostalgic and start thinking about past fishing trips. This is one of those times. In the following I'll share some memorable fishing trips by species.

Gotta' start with walleyes. This is a tough one, because I've been in on some outstanding walleye bites. I've had the good fortune to share a boat on Green Bay with Bruce DeShano and Dean Arnoldussen when the bite for big ones was tremendous, but I think the best walleye bite for truly big walleyes occurred on the Red River near Selkirk Manitoba. It was in the early 90's, I was fishing with Larry Rasmusson and Neil King for catfish: There's big catfish in the Red River, but we kept catching walleyes on catfish baits, so we tied on crankbaits and started trolling. The bite was incredible, and the walleyes were big. We got bit every fifty yards. It took us longer to land the fish than it did to get another one to bite. A small one was twenty five inches, and the biggest one was thirty three or thirty four inches: I can't remember the length and it doesn't matter. I just remember it was the biggest walleye I've ever caught. Memorable!

My best northern pike memory took place on Upper Red Lake in northern Minnesota. I was fishing with John Peterson and we were throwing the new at-the-time Magnum Reed-Runner spinnerbait. The water on Upper Red is quite stained. The blades on the Magnum are big so they throw a lot of vibration which helped the pike locate our bait. We could feel the big blades throbbing as they came through the water. Quite often we would feel the blades do something different. It was almost as if they just quite turning for a second or two. A savage strike usually came right after this. Eventually we realized that the pike were swiping at the





bait but missing it, which caused the blades to change their frequency. If we just kept reeling, the pike would almost always return and get the bait the second time. We took numerous pike over thirty six inches that afternoon, with several that stretched to forty two inches. Memorable!

Back in the mid 80's I worked with fishing legends Gary Roach and Randy Amenrud. We hosted a lot of fishing trips on Rainy Lake near International Falls Minnesota. Today Rainy Lake is an outstanding walleye fishery, back then it wasn't as good. We went to Rainy for the crappies. They were abundant and they were big: Two pounders weren't common, but we caught a few, and we caught lots and lots of fourteen and fifteen inchers. On one particular outing we located a school of crappies that were a couple feet off the bottom in thirty feet of water. Back then our sonar units weren't as revealing as they are now. We were vertically jigging and the plan was to let our jigs fall to the bottom, then reel them up a couple of feet to get them to where the fish were. That plan didn't work. For much of a two hour span in the evening, our jigs usually didn't hit the bottom: They were intercepted by hungry crappies before they could arrive at the bottom. Memorable!



## **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.**



I have lots of other wonderful memories of times on the water when the fishing was exceptional that I will share in the near future.

I also have wonderful memories of times on the water when the fishing wasn't so good but the day or the trip was memorable for some other reason. I'll share those in the near future also. For now, I would encourage you to go fishing and make some wonderful memories of your own.

To see all the most recent episodes of Fishing the Midwest television, new fishing related video tips, and fishing articles from the past, visit [www.fishingthemidwest.com](http://www.fishingthemidwest.com). If you do Facebook, check us out for a variety of fishing related things.

# CONTACT SPORT WALLEYES

By Jason Mitchell

Catching walleye through the ice consistently often means finding the point of contact. The edge or structural element that funnels and pinches fish movements so that when fish move through a particular location, they pass through or over a location. Amazingly, these fish movements are often very precise where most of the fish will come through a location passing along the same route often from the same direction.

The beauty of fishing walleyes is that walleyes love structure and when you have structure, the fish movements and locations are seldom random. With the accuracy of map chips and lake contours, finding and understanding structure is no longer a guessing game and our ice fishing can be amazingly accurate.

On so many lakes, walleyes can really roam during low light periods or after dark. On some locations, fish will loaf and lay off the structure over the deep transition or bottom of the break and then





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slide up on to the structure when they get active. This shift or movement when walleyes slide up or through a piece of structure is an opportunity. Identify this contact point where these fish travel and you are on the fast track to catching more walleye this winter.

To visualize these locations, picture a deer stand for bow hunting. You know where the deer are bedding and you know the cut alfalfa field that the deer will walk out into after dark. Now picture the travel routes and pinch points that deer will use to get from point A to point B... walleyes operate very similarly. Both critters are very edge orientated.

On many lakes and reservoirs, this prime time movement is often near or around sunrise and sunset. Some bites happen well after dark. With that being said, if the fish are moving... you can set up over a good spot and contact fish. When the fish are not moving, the only way you are going to catch fish is to keep moving.

This winter of 2015-16 has been somewhat unique in that we haven't had a lot of ice. As I write this, we are still hanging on 6 inches of ice on many locations across Devils Lake and what has made this winter somewhat different than past winters besides the fact that we have less ice than most winters is that the fish have been much more spookier.

Much banging around right now or walking around and the fish just seem to shut down. The best program I have found so far this winter for catching nice walleye has been to get to a spot, pick the "x"

and set up over that one hole waiting out fish movements without doing anything to disturb the spot by excess walking, driving or drilling.

There are times when the fish seem oblivious to what is going on above them and there are other times when some activity seems to stir them up and gets them swimming around where they become catchable. This winter, these fish have been much spookier than normal so the program has been to drill and fish a few holes on a prime spot and wait out the fish where the activity comes in pulses as schools of fish cruise through.

When walleyes shut down from activity, sitting on the sweet spot becomes crucial but the spook factor can vary from water to water. We have seen situations on the Fox River Chain for example in northern Illinois where anglers used tip ups in four or five feet of water over large sand flats and waited on shore because walking on the ice shut the fish down.

We have seen situations with panfish where the fish wouldn't swim under an ice shelter and we had to use long rods to effectively catch fish. On other water, anglers routinely use dead sticks deployed with Arctic Fisherman or tip ups just to spread lines and fish water remotely. Every body of water will have its own nuances and less ice seems to heighten some of these nuances because the ice not only serves as a buffer from human activity above but also enables much more light penetration.

Regardless of ice conditions, however, there is a lesson to be learned. Spend some time to really study contour maps and learn how walleyes are using that particular piece of structure. The only sure way to really get an understanding of a location is to put in some time on the spot but the key is to identify where the fish lay or scatter when they are inactive and where the fish roam when they become active. Find the edges and contours that walleye follow and ambush them this winter.

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**OPEN  
WATER  
SECTION**





By Captain Ron Presley

# ***Crankbaits For Crappie On The Home Of The Three- Pound Crappie***

Summer like weather across the nation have some folks thinking about summer fishing. If they are, their thoughts may go to crankbaits for crappie. More and more anglers are turning to the crankin' critters to catch crappie.

It may be winter, but John Harrison will talk about crankbaits any time you ask. Harrison is a 45-year veteran of Grenada Lake crappie fishing. He operates JH Guide Service on Grenada, Sardis and Enid Lakes.

The B'n'M Poles pro staffer has been guiding crappie anglers on Grenada for the past 15 years. When asked his favorite months to fish he named January through December, but when pressed for favorites he named July and August, pulling Bandit 300 crankbaits.

Grenada Lake used to be a summer fishery according to John Harrison. "When I started fishing with my grandmother in the early 70s it was



summer and spring fishing. Nobody fished in the winter, they was all huntin'. My grandma and I would just walk out on the riverbank and fish with cane poles. We had it all to ourselves."

Harrison describes the Grenada watershed as unstable with fishing depending on water level. The impoundment is a flood control lake constructed and managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. "In the spring of the year the rains come and the lake comes up," states Harrison.

"They try to keep the water pulled down to what they call summer pool, which is 215 feet above sea level. They will let it get a little above it, maybe 216 or 218 feet. If it gets any higher they start pulling it down to keep it in line with that 215 until August 1. The first day of August they start what they call the winter draw down. They will open the gates and pull the water down to the winter pool at 193 feet above sea level. That is pretty dry, you will see mud flats all over."

Water level, water temperature and food source are three variables in Harrison's crappie catching formula. Water level determines what cover is available, water temperature determines how deep the fish will be and food source determines where they will congregate.

When the water level is low you can identify the timber that will be under water when the water is higher. "We have a lot of stake beds, all manmade," says Harrison. "Most of the natural wood is up the Yalobusha River and the Skuna River. There used to be a lot of snags and sticks, but there is not very much of that left anymore. Man-made stuff is basically what you have for the crappie."

The food source is doing well at Grenada. "We have a lot of algae bloom and run off that gives the fry a good food source," explains Harrison. "It all starts right there. The small fish I have been catching, those little 8 and 10 inchers, are fat and healthy. There is more shad in the lake than I have seen in my life. If this lake were calm and we bumped the side of this boat they would shower out there as far as you can see."

Harrison's explanation of the fertile waters of Grenada Lake make it perfectly clear why it bears the moniker, "The Home of the 3-Pound Crappie," and why folks travel from miles around for the opportunity to catch a trophy fish. "Grenada is a great place to fish if you want to catch a big





crappie,” adds Harrison. “No one can guarantee a 3 pounder, but if you want to catch one this is a good place to try.”

Those early days of fishing with his grandmother instilled a liking for all types of crappie fishing, but over the years he developed a penchant for catching crappie on crankbaits. “This is my favorite fishing, especially in the summer, because you can cover a lot of water and catch a lot of fish. I have had a lot of good days pulling crankbaits. Maybe they weren’t all keepers, but catching more than 100 crappie a day is just plain fun.”

After years of trial and error Harrison has the crankbait technique down pat. “The secret to crankbait fishing is how far back you troll the lure,” instructed Harrison. “Fishing depth is controlled by how much line you let out. The more line out, the deeper the lure runs.”

Harrison uses B’n’M Pro Staff Trolling Rods. “Crankbait rods need to be a little stiffer than spider rigging rods,” explains Harrison. “I use two 8s, two 12s and two 16s when fishing two anglers. All you are





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allowed here on Grenada is 3 poles per person. All are set in Driftmaster Rod Holders. To begin trolling I put the short one out first and run it at 125 feet. Next I set the 12-footer at 100 and the 16-footer at about 75 feet. Now, it is trial and error. If I catch a crappie on the 100-foot drop I will change the others to match it."

Attached to his B'n'M rod is what he calls the most important piece of equipment for crankbait fishing. "I use a line counter reel spooled with 10-pound test Vicious fishing line. I like the hi-vis line because it helps me see that bite a lot better. You are controlling depth by the amount of line you have out and you can be pretty precise with a line counter reel."

No line counter means guessing to Harrison. "If you don't have a line counter reel you are just throwing it out there and guessing. When you catch one at a certain distance you ain't never gonna' get the bait back to that precise depth. With a line counter reel you can. I want to know how much line I have out there and at what speed I am trolling so I can duplicate it once I catch a fish."

Harrison generally fishes faster when crankbaiting. "When I am spider rigging I like about .8 to 1 MPH trolling speed, but with crankbaits I like about 1.7 with one exception. When the water gets stained, like it does in the fall and winter you have to slow your presentation way down, maybe to about .3 MPH."



Color selection may be the most difficult part of Harrison's equation. "I have found solid black or pink and black to be good colors, but as far as colors go, they might be hot one year on pink, the next year on black and the next year on orange. You can never have enough colors of crankbaits." Color selection is a trial and error process. If the bite is not happening he advised anglers to change colors until they find the one that works.

He normally pulls the Bandit 300 Series in 10 feet or more of water. He ties a snap swivel on the mainline to make experimentation with colors and changing sizes easy. "When I see those fish at 10 feet and less, I go to pulling a 200 series because I don't have to be so deep. Catching crappie is all about the depth of the fish which you can generally determine using sonar. If you don't have sonar you vary the depth you are fishing until you start catching them."

Harrison has one other trick up his sleeve to control depth. "Sometimes, when I need a little more



depth, I will use a ¼-ounce Road Runner about 24 inches above the crankbait. The Road Runner will keep that crankbait down there just a little deeper and may be the difference between fishing and catching. It also presents another option for the fish to bite and once in a while you catch one on it.”

Water clarity is another important factor to Harrison. “As a rule of thumb, if I can see the prop on my motor it is clear enough to catch em’ on crankbaits. If the water gets stained really bad it becomes much harder to catch them on crankbaits.”

Like so many other types of fishing, high winds make it difficult to fish crankbaits. “Speed has to be controlled,” says Harrison. “Wind can make it hard to fish. I have 2 log chains that I drag out the back to cut down on the speed of a drift when it’s windy. You either have to do that or get a store-bought wind sock to slow you down.”

As a final piece of advice Harrison reminds crappie anglers to be patient when landing a crankbait caught crappie. “Crappie are often hooked in soft tissue. Take your time and bring them in slowly. The result will be more crappie on the dinner table.”

Harrison’s sponsors include B’n’M Poles, War Eagle Boats, Southern Pro Tackle, Driftmaster Rod Holders, Minn Kota, Blakemore Road Runners, Vicious Lines and Cannon Motors. He can be reached at 662-983-5999 on a phone that stays on 24 hours a day. He can be emailed at [jhguideservice@yahoo.com](mailto:jhguideservice@yahoo.com).

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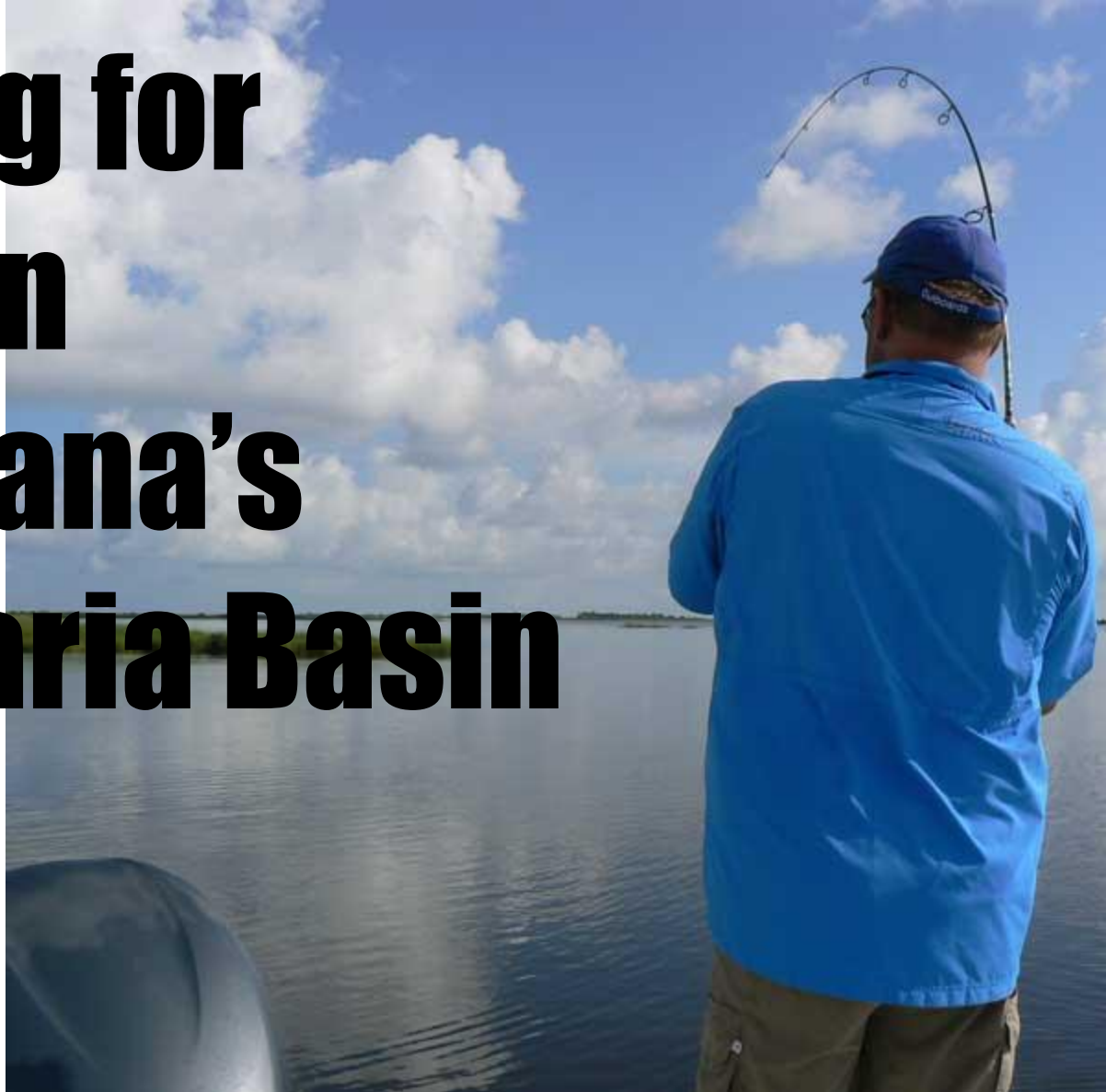


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# Fishing for Reds in Louisiana's Barataria Basin



By Dana Benner

It was about 4:00PM when the taxi picked me up from the airport and dropped me off in the Garden District of New Orleans, Louisiana. My

base of operations on this trip was the Avenue Plaza Resort. Not my usual accommodations for a fishing adventure, but then again, this was no ordinary fishing trip. I was here in Louisiana to fish for redfish (red drum), speckled trout and flounder with Captain David Bourgeois of Big Dog Fishing Charters, which is located south and west of New Orleans, in Lafitte, Louisiana. This was my first time in Louisiana and my first time going for “reds” and “specks”.

Susan Bourgeois picked me up at my hotel at 5:00AM and we began the one hour, or so, ride to Lafitte. When we pulled into the parking area at Sea-Way Marina, David had the 22 foot Ranger Center Console ready to go. In no time we were heading out into the Baratarian Basin. As we went, David gave me a rundown of the area. First of all, everything around here is called a “lake”, even though they really aren’t lakes. This entire basin is made up of bays, both large and small, surrounded by bayous. This is brackish water caused from freshwater, mainly from the Mississippi River, flowing into the Gulf of Mexico. For the most part this is shallow water, ranging from three to four feet deep. The area we were concentrating on were the numerous bayous that run along the edge of the Basin. Here is where a good guide is a must. There is no way that I could find my way in, or out, of the areas we were fishing.

Here is Louisiana, the earlier you get out the better. Not because the fish stop biting, because they don’t, but instead that by noon the heat and humidity is so intense that it saps all of the energy out of anglers, both locals and visitors alike. Nobody is immune and hats and plenty of water is a





must. Another thing about fishing this area is that you never know what you will get into, one minute it could be redfish, the next it could be speckled trout (which by the way is not a trout at all), black drum or even flounder. They are all aggressive fish and will eat whatever comes their way. This means that the angler needs to be prepared to switch up at a moment's notice. While David had live bait onboard, namely shrimp, we started the day

casting gold Johnson Silver Minnow spoons as this was what the redfish had been hitting for the last few days. As it would turn out, it was all we would use.

At our first location David quickly picked up a small redfish, but it was short so it was thrown back. Here in Louisiana each angler is allowed to keep five redfish with a minimum length of 16 inches. Of these five fish, only one can be 27 inches long or longer. David told me to cast out and then reel in with a steady retrieve. This was actually more reminiscent to fishing for largemouth bass or northern pike in freshwater than it was to any saltwater fishing I have done lately.

It didn't take long for me to get a fish on. During the retrieve my spoon stopped dead in the water. Upon setting the hook, the reel started screaming as the redfish started taking line. We were using six foot, six inch medium action spinning set ups with the reels being spooled with 30 pound test braided Power Pro line. While I could really muscle the fish with this set up, and the fish had the rod bent in half, David instructed me not to horse the fish. Just keep the rod tip up and if the fish wanted to take line, let it. All of the fish we were likely to encounter today have teeth. They all feed mainly on other fish and shellfish. This means





that besides teeth they have powerful jaws, which are capable to breaking the line. As I fought to keep this fish under control and out of the prop, my rod tip broke. The fish was still on so I had no choice but to bring it in, minus my rod tip. It would turn out that my first redfish ever measured 27 ½ inches and weighed close to 10 pounds and was the largest fish of the day.



Staying in the same spot David hooked into a 26 inch red and immediately I hooked into a fish that measured 22 or 23 inches long. Then just as suddenly as it all started, it stopped. Cast after cast produced nothing. During the lull in the action David explained to me that redfish travel in schools and these schools are comprised of fish that are all about the same size. That means that if you start catching big fish, your chances are good that there will be more. The same goes if you start catching shorts, you will continue to catch shorts until the school moves on. The closest fish that I can compare this to is yellow perch and in some cases walleye, both



freshwater fish. In this particular case what probably happened is that we hit a small school of fairly large redfish and then they moved on.

Captain Bourgeois decided to hit another location, but all that produced was a number of short fish. Fun to catch, but not what we were after. This new location did produce our lone speckled trout of the day, a short one measuring about



nine inches and surprisingly enough, it hit the large spoon I was throwing for reds. If we had decided to pursue “specks” we more than likely would have switched over to the shrimp, but the reds were willing to play and so we decided to stay on them. The minimum size for speckled trout is 12 inches with a daily limit of 25 per day.

We decided to move one last time, this time back to where we started. It paid off once again. When we moved into the area I noticed a great deal of activity in one pocket. I made a cast into that pocket and actually hooked into a 26 inch red. David made a cast into the same area and hooked into another 27 inch fish. This was our second for the day and thus the last one we could take. It was now about noon and we had been on the water since 6:00AM. We had eight keepers in the cooler, two of which were 27 inches, or as they call them in Louisiana, “bull reds”. We threw back at least as many shorts. We probably could have stayed a little longer and caught a few more fish to fill our limits, but the heat was brutal and eight fish was plenty.

The inland waters of the Gulf of Mexico offer some truly great fishing. You never know what you will catch. The trick is to be prepared for anything. Another thing I suggest is to enlist the aid of someone who knows the area and where to catch fish. Contact Captain David Bourgeois at Big Dog Fishing Charters (504) 416-6260 or [www.bigdogfishingcharters.com](http://www.bigdogfishingcharters.com).



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# Payback

By O'Neill William, of  
O'Neill Outside



Thanksgiving week, then December. Time's a runner. Only a few more days in 2015 to round out the year with some great fishing and hunting. However, that's not what I'd like to talk about this time, it's too easy. This time, I'd like to offer a brief and recent experience and to make a recommendation. What

brought this to mind was a little visit once with some young boys and girls at the local middle school in Georgia.

Actually it was fishing club. Yes, a fishing club at a middle school. Interesting huh?

All the youngsters had to make an effort to be present before regular classes began since our little meeting was early. They sat there wide eyed and interested and, given the chance, they shared their fishing and hunting stories with the invited guest, me. I could certainly wax on and on, and usually do, about the lessons we shared, them with me, me with them, however, what broke my heart was a few little guys and girls that had no story to tell. They, you see, had no parent that knew how to or would take them afield and they wanted to do so badly. It's possible that they were children of a single mom. Could be. No, indeed, they came to hear the tall tales, to try and witness the feeling of being in the wild, to touch the outdoor badge of honor. They sat in silence and when called upon to participate they could only say that they had joined the club so someone would take them fishing. Only one step removed and almost as sad was several who so enthusiastically wove their story only to admit that they'd been fishing only once in their lives. It's a heartbreaker.

All children need something on which to hang their hat so to speak. Everyone can't be the football quarterback, track team sprinter or even the homecoming queen but everyone can be so much more than 'average' with what's to learn in the outdoors.

I was fortunate. I had maternal grandparents who took me to the old places of their youth in the Georgia Mountains. There we, without televisions and computers to while away the hours, roamed the rolling streams and reservoirs my grandfather helped build and usually caught that night's dinner. My



paternal Grandfather was a preacher in Walton County. On Sunny Spring days, we'd accept the kind invitations of members of his congregation to fish the farm ponds and hunt the wild rabbits in brown fallow fields. I'd found my callings.

My friends and I grew up in the mid 50s, in a time when a couple of 12-year olds were safer being alone out roaming the woods scaring up whatever we could find than today's youngsters. Those were peaceful times. Throughout the summer's lazy days and before ninth-grade football practice began we located a neighborhood pond or two to drown some crickets or red-wigglers, attempted to take a squirrel with a BB gun, which we never accomplished, or simply investigated what lived under the rocks in the local streams. Little boys and girls don't do that now, they're on Facebook. I remember hearing my mother's voice....."O'Neillaaaaalllllllll".....,supper time, and my adventure of that day would end knowing there was tomorrow and more to learn outside those doors.

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I wish all of you could have been in that classroom that day to see the faces so empty but wanting to know about wild places and the wild things that live there. If you choose to help with their quest for knowledge and experience, it doesn't have to be for a Whitetail, a Quail or a 10-pound largemouth, simply the beautiful sight of hole in the water where the float was few moments ago, the rings left as a two inch 'punkin-seed' bream dragged it under.

If all this rings the alarm bell for you, it's time you answered it. Watching a young girl or boy learn to appreciate the outdoors is your payback for all the pleasures you've harvested. It's also your payback and obligation. Now go. Commit to a schedule during 2016 to taking a child fishing or hunting.

# MEMORABLE

By Bob Jensen

Open water season in my part of the world is winding down. There might be a couple more trips in the boat, but I'm getting the ice-fishing stuff ready to go. It's at this time of year that I like to look back at the season just completed. Every year has trips that are more memorable than others, for one reason or another. Following are a couple of very memorable trips from this past open water fishing season. My first memorable experience of the year was also my first fishing trip of the year. I was on Sturgeon Bay fishing smallmouth bass with my friend Mike Gottheardt. Mike is a fishing tackle sales rep who is also an outstanding angler. We were going to be fishing smallmouth. I have fished Sturgeon Bay several times and know that it is an outstanding fishery for smallmouth bass.

Our arrival at Sturgeon Bay coincided with a major weather front that brought high winds: Winds so strong that they dictated where we could fish. The first day we fished protected and not so protected areas in the shipping channel. We caught a good number of smallmouth, and they were all of a nice size. However, Mike knew that we could do better, so the next day we decided to fish an area that he felt would hold bigger fish. The only downside was that we would need to run some rough water to get there. We would be traveling right into the wind, and then right with the wind for a mile or two.

We left the boat landing and the water was calm. We went around the point and the water wasn't so calm anymore. We considered turning around, but then remembered there were smallmouth to catch



and we only had to run the rough stuff for a mile or two. It was one of the roughest runs I've ever made, but my boat did an outstanding job, and so did my Guidewear foul weather gear. We got to our spot and indeed the smallmouth were there. And they were nice ones. Mike wasn't satisfied though. This was the first time in my life that someone apologized that the smallmouth only



averaged about three pounds.

Another memorable trip: For the past probably ten years my nephew Sam and I have been making an annual two day trip to Minnesota to fish for whatever bit. It's usually largemouth bass. I think Sam still enjoys this trip, but maybe he's just humoring his aging uncle: I don't know and it doesn't matter.

This year we fished with my friend Duane Peterson. Duane and I have been fishing together for almost thirty years, but it was always business related: We were usually making television shows and there was pressure to catch some fish for the camera. This time we just went fishing and it was wonderful. Duane took us to some of his favorite lakes. When we got tired of catching largemouth bass on jig-worms, we went to another lake and caught them on surface baits, and when that wore down, we went to another lake and caught'em on spinnerbaits. We accomplished nothing from a business perspective and so much from a personal perspective. This was one of the best fishing trips I've been on in many years, and look forward to repeating it in future years.



We go fishing to experience the thrill and magic of catching a fish, but sometimes we get too wrapped up in that. For many of us, if we just think a bit, it's the other elements of a fishing trip that make the trip memorable. Next time you're on the water or the ice, take note of the things other than just the fish-catching and I think you'll enjoy the experience even more.

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](http://www.fishingthemidwest.com). If you do Facebook, check us out for a variety of fishing related things.

There has probably been no bait in the last five years developed from a technology standpoint more than a swim bait head; every manufacturer and every fisherman believes the one they fish with is the best! Well I'm here to tell you, it's not a secret that if you start looking to buy swim bait heads you will find that there are many choices out there and making the right one can be tough.



**By Captain Mike Gerry**

I believe the key is understanding your own fishing style, if you know what you believe in then you will more easily be lead to the type of swim bait head that will work the best for you. You also must be aware that a swim bait head is fished in many different types of situations or presentations; for example it can be fished through scattered grass, it can be fished in deep water, it is a great countdown bait that will help you search different depths. Knowing the conditions you will be fishing in combined with your style of fishing allows you to pick what type of head you need to purchase.

The types of presentations for me is generally fishing it on the bottom, so that it pulls through the bottom grass, bounces off stumps or hard bottom and allows me to work it slowly around cover. To me this pushes my choice to a couple of styles of swim bait heads. The first being the swim jig style head like Tight-Line jigs version it is made with a grass guard that covers the end of the hook, allowing you to pop it through scattered grass and or stumpy bottoms with very little chance of it hanging up. My next choice is working deep structure like 20 plus feet depths where getting to the bottom is key! This presentation leads me to Picasso Lures heavy 1 to 2 oz. swim bait heads with big hooks that drops the swim bait down fairly quickly and becomes great search bait in deep water; combine this Picasso swim head with big 7 inch swim bait and you have a monster rig that will catch some big fish.

If you know the presentation you're going to be fishing and have a belief in how you want to fish it, a swim bait head combined with a Missile Bait Shock Wave swim bait can be a lethal fish catching rig.

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## Seasonal Shift: Jig A 'Wing Where You Last Cast it

When presentations change from horizontal to vertical, there's one lure that makes the transition trouble free – Keweenaw Tackle Company's Fin-Wing

Fall's wicked transformation into winter is the harshest of all seasonal shifts. One night of deep-space temps and the open water you were casting the evening before can turn into a skating rink.

But even though the terrestrial atmosphere has taken on a totally different look and feel, not much has changed below. Walleyes, pike and perch, to name a few, are still sabotaging shiners and young-of-the-year fishes in and around the last green weeds left in the lake.

This makes figuring out where to fish quite elementary – simply bore a hole over the very last place you fished in the fall. And while tactics may have changed from horizontal to vertical presentations, there's one lure that makes a seamless transition from soft-to-hard water – Keweenaw Tackle Company's Fin-Wing.

Right before ice up, casting a Fin-Wing and employing a slow, steady retrieve is a deadly cold-water approach. Even at sluggish speeds, the lure sways its tantalizing swim up and over the vegetation without diving in and snagging. And the "wings" of the lure flash brilliantly, even in low-light conditions, and get noticed from afar.

In addition to the super-sharp, high-quality treble hook attached to every Fin-Wing is a wide-gap single

J-hook that makes the bait even more weed resistant. It's perfect for tipping with a lively minnow or portly soft plastic to bulk up its profile and add fish-tantalizing flare.

Once the water's exterior has frozen over, however, it's time to rotate the presentation and vertically fish it. The jigging motion is pretty straightforward, too, as the Fin-Wing does all the heavy work. Lift the rod tip, drop it quickly and let the lure free fall on slack line. The Fin-Wing will dart up, then literally turn and "swim" nose down until your line's taut. The exclusive action is based on the Fin-Wing's unique shape. Even heavy-duty fluorocarbon leaders of 20-pound test won't impede the lure's action.

If you're a meat lover, consider swapping out the treble hook for the included single hook. Nip on a full live minnow or just the head – dealer's choice. Impressively, the added organic mass has little effect on the Fin-Wing's action, the lure still wobbling wide and diving head first.

Like back when the Fin-Wing was developed in 1948, it is still stamped in the USA using high-grade metal. Today's Fin-Wing is painstakingly finished in a dozen classic colors... 10 with translucent hues. All are tinted with UV paint to accentuate the palette of patterns. The dynamic Fin-Wing is available in 1/4-, 3/4- and 1-ounce sizes to match the scale of nearly any forage with fins.

There's no need to fret when your favorite waterway suddenly freezes over. Just take that Fin-Wing you've been using to fool fish in open water and vertically jig it. The fish will attack it with just as much vengeance.

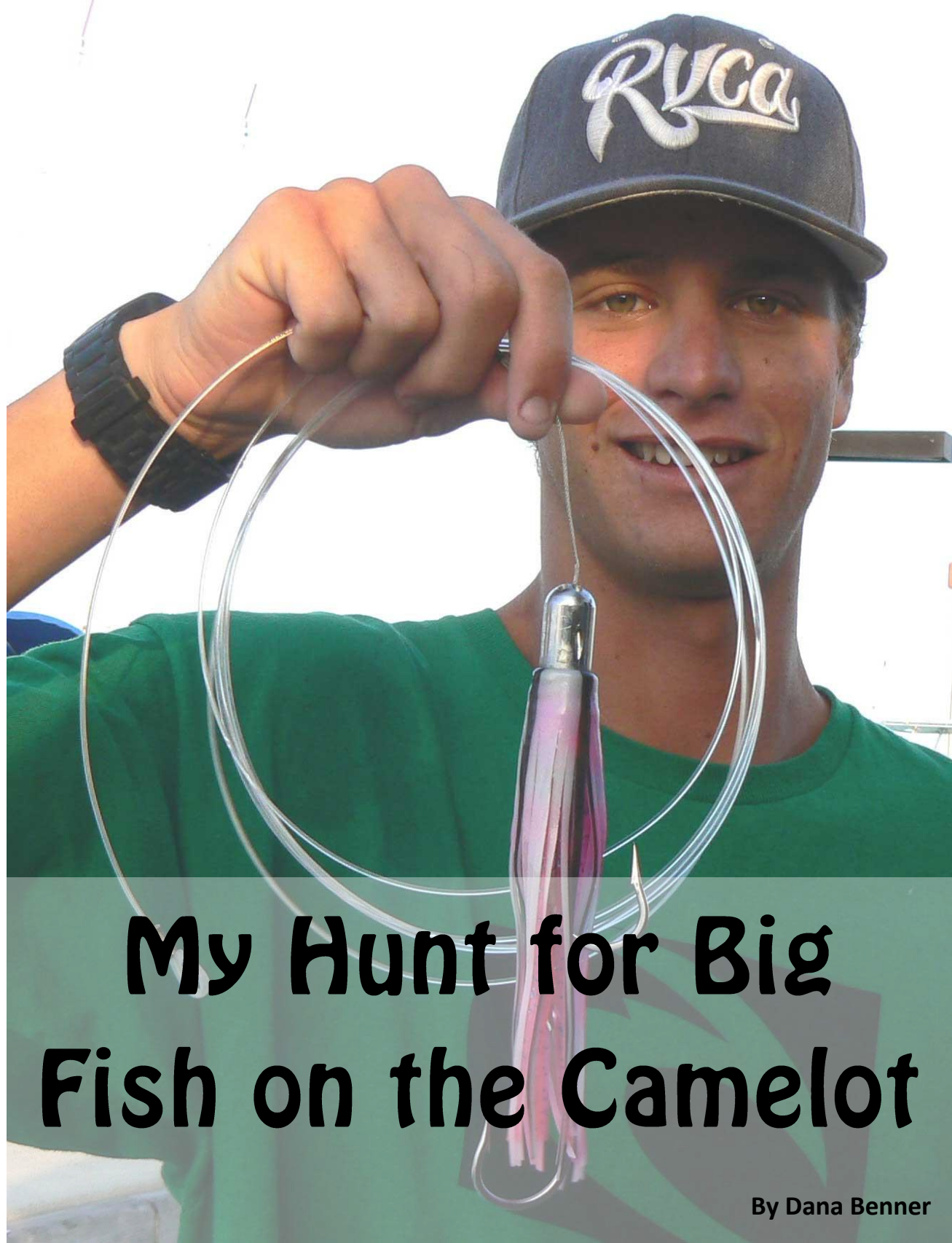




I pen this article while sitting on the lanai of my room at the Royal Kona Resort, my home away from home during my stay here in the Kailua-Kona area of the Big Island of Hawai'i. With a cold Longboard ale in one hand and a pen in the other, I review the morning's events as I watch the waves crash on the rocks below me. Many things brought me here, one of which was the lure of big fish and the thoughts of possibly catching one. I made the dream of fishing the waters off Kona a reality this morning aboard the Camelot.

Based out of Honokohau Harbor, Camelot Sportfishing is just

one of the many fishing services that I could have enlisted, but I decided to book my four hour trip with them for a couple of reasons. My first reason was their reputation of putting people on big fish such as ahi (tuna), ono (wahoo) and of course, Pacific Blue marlin. Second was the fact that Camelot Sportfishing is a family owned and operated business. Both Robert and Cyndee Hudson are licensed captains and have been professionally fishing the waters off of Kona for 25 years. All of their children have worked on the boat as a deckhand at one time or another. On this morning trip our deckhand was Chris Hudson, the son of the boat's owner. Chris told me that he'll be taking the test for his captain's license in the very near future. To have a future captain running the deck is a good feeling. Our



# My Hunt for Big Fish on the Camelot

By Dana Benner



skipper was Captain Carl, who is a longtime friend of the Hudson family. Over the years I have purposely looked for those businesses that are family owned and operated. They have a vested interest in whether you have a good time or not. For months prior to this trip I had been communicating with Captain Robert Hudson, both by email and phone. I liked what I heard and this trip came to be. One thing I really liked was that there was no guarantee of catching fish. Fishing is fishing and sometimes, despite best efforts, it just doesn't happen. Camelot Sportfishing targets big fish, period. If you want to just catch any fish, then this is not the charter for you.

I met the crew and the other five members of today's fishing party at the dock around 6:15am for a 6:30am departure. This was the first Pacific fishing experience for this East Coast boy and there was a great deal of information to take in. Before casting off, our captain went over all of the safety rules and regulations. He also emphasized the ship's rules about getting sea sick. I don't believe I

need to elaborate on this point. While the captain went over the rules, Chris was busy making our gear ready.

The Camelot is a very clean and comfortable 34 foot vessel powered by twin 170 diesel engines. The crew paid special attention to keeping the deck clear and made sure that we all knew what to do if a fish hit. We were allowed one rod per angler and as soon as we left the harbor Chris was running the lines out. Some of the lines were running bait, which included both flying fish and balihooos, while the other lines were rigged with lures made and designed by Chris. Chris took special pride in these lures and told me that all of them have taken fish. Having confidence in your gear goes a long way in my book.

Our equipment consisted of Penn International reels, both 130s and 80s. The 130s were spooled with 130 pound test monofilament and, as you have already figured out, the 80s were spooled with 80 pound test mono. Onto this line was attached a 150 to 550 pound test monofilament leader, the size of the leader depending upon the line size being used and the fish we were after. There were also two smaller Penn reels spooled with 50 pound test monofilament. I had asked Chris why so many different sets being run at the same time? He informed me that off the Kona Coast, you never know what will hit whatever you are offering, so you have to be prepared.

**For more information contact:**

**Camelot Sportfishing**  
**Capt. Robert Hudson**  
[fishcaptain@hawaii.rr.com](mailto:fishcaptain@hawaii.rr.com)  
**(808) 936-9515**

**Royal Kona Resort**  
**75-5852 Alii Dr**  
**Kailua-Kona, HI 96740**  
**(808) 329-3111**  
[HHR@HawaiiHotels.com](mailto:HHR@HawaiiHotels.com)

As there were six rods, each one being rigged a little different and run at different distances from the boat, each of us drew a



number between one and six, with each number corresponding to a certain rod. Every so often Chris would have us rotate rods, thus giving each angler equal time on each rod.

With our lines set, the only thing to do now was wait for things to happen. I took this opportunity to climb up to the bridge and discuss tactics with our captain. Carl explained to me that we were to start by cruising the inner waters, about 2 miles outside of the harbor, searching for ono, mahi mahi and ahi. With that being said, he went on to tell me to be prepared for marlin, as catching one in this close has happened more than once. Our trolling speed was around 8 knots, much faster than what I am used to. Carl explained that the big fish cruise fast and will chase the baits down. While we talked I noticed that Carl kept us in 40 to 60 fathoms of water. With the aid of electronics, we searched for baitfish. Where there is baitfish there are usually other bigger fish that eat them. From our vantage point high above the deck we were also watching for feeding sea birds, another indication of baitfish in the area, and a technique I was used to.



After two hours without a strike, the decision was made to head further out to the four mile mark, into deeper water. It didn't help. In no time our four hour trip was over. Was I disappointed? I would have to say yes. Any angler gets disappointed when they don't catch fish. A true angler knows and accepts the fact that there are going to be days when you will blank out. It happens to all of us and it is part of the game. I was more than satisfied with the effort put forth by the crew to get us on fish. They could not have tried any harder. Carl and Chris were fun to be with and they kept their cool despite the fact that we weren't on fish. Carl was even calling other captains out on the water and they were all having the same luck we were having. If I ever make it back to the Big Island of Hawaii I will certainly book another trip with Camelot Sportfishing as they are truly professionals.

# ***SUPERLATIVES EASILY DESCRIBED: BEST, BIGGEST, MOST, ETC.***

By O'Neill William, of O'Neill Outside

You like superlative descriptions? I do; highest, fastest, biggest, easiest. This sort of thing can and has been had. Yes, indeed. I fished with the best Catfishing guide on the best Catfish lake, caught the biggest Catfish of my life, caught them faster than I ever thought, and finally caught the most pounds ever in one day.



Good Grief, tell me about this you say. I will. Read!

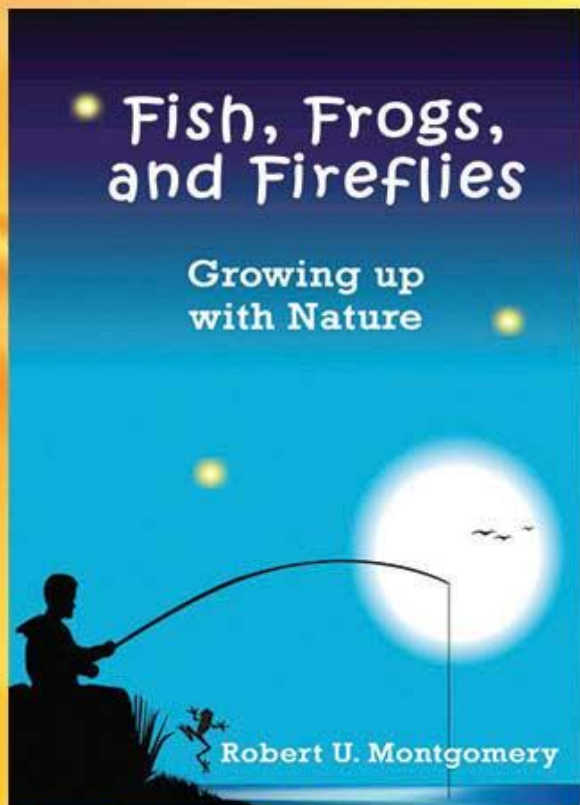
Where? Santee Cooper Lakes, South Carolina. When? Most any month of the year including winter's coldest. With whom? Captain Darryl Smith working out of the Canal Lakes Fish Camp in Cross, South Carolina.

OK, here goes.

Captain Darryl has twenty-three line class world records, usually catches 300 to 500 pounds of catfish with his clients daily out of his 30-foot pontoon boat and has never, with me anyway, has any difficulty fulfilling his promises of a day to remember.

I have fished with Captain Darryl on five different occasions taping "O'Neill Outside" television shows. Each time, whether late Winter, early Spring, Summer nights, clear Fall days, we've swamped the pontoon with 30 to 60 pound Blue Cats. He targets the 'bigguns'. We fished deep structure, shallow lagoons and coves, bumped the old creek channel ledges and drifted the flats. During our most recent jaunt in December of '15, we caught numerous 6 to 10 pounders and topped off the short afternoon trip with double 35s. By the way, from the dock, fishing and back to the dock too only 4 hours. My





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cameraman, Jeff Alligood, and I drove from Atlanta, fished with Captain Darryl and managed to return home before 10PM. For various reasons, that was necessary. You will want to stick around with Darryl and fish a day or two at least.

Take a look at the photos accompanying this column. These were not always with me of course, but chronicles Darryl's delivery with clients over the recent years.

Back to the superlatives. Darryl's biggest; 100 and ½ lb. Blue, most, I guessing here but I'd say over 1,000 lbs. in a day, easiest, never takes more than a few hours if that is what you want, and all from an accessible fishery in South Carolina with cabins, lodges, a restaurant, ramp and a short run to the fishing grounds at Canal Lakes. Makes me what to go there again and soon.

Santee Cooper Lakes, actually Lake Marion and Lake Moultrie,

connected by a canal, total more than 180,000 acres. Let's think about that for a moment. Georgia's Lake Lanier at 37,000, Seminole at 34,000, Clarks Hill at 70,000 and finally Hartwell at 55,000 is about the same as total surface acres as Santee Cooper alone. Hard to prove, of course, but the entire lake is paved on the bottom with healthy, sizeable, hungry catfish.

With Captain Darryl, you don't have to be an expert experienced angler, just watch the rod tips and when one, and often it's more than one at a time, tips toward the water, just start reeling. You will immediately feel the power of the big old whiskered rascals. It's a blast. Incidentally, the sixty-three pounder pictured was caught by a ten-year old. I'm sure he'll never forget it.

Take a look at the photos again and plan a trip to visit with Darryl this year. Look him up at [www.captaindarryls.com](http://www.captaindarryls.com), take a look at the photo gallery and make a plan. Oh, wouldn't wait though as O'Neill has already taped another show that will air in 2016 so Darryl will be booked solid for a couple of years.



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# HUNTING AND CAMPING SECTION

**sako**

# ***SINGLE SHOT WEAPON AND MULTIPLE TARGETS***

**By Jake Bussolini**

My son John started deer hunting with me when he was barely old enough to hold the lever action 300 Savage that he inherited from his Grandfather. As he aged a little he joked with me about the 35 Remington pump that I had used since I was a youngster. He felt that as real hunters, we should switch to single shot weapons to kind of even the odds between hunter and prey. Well, I felt that he was still young with excellent eyesight and I could no longer make that statement about my age or my eyes. I decided to stick with my pump action rifle and he changed to a single shot 308 rifle. For several years he was very successful with that gun and never had any occasion to reconsider his decision....until this year.



We hunt deer every year in the Catskill region of New York. John owns a 135 acre hunting site there that has been transformed into an excellent habitat for deer. A few years ago the New York State Conservation Dept. changed the deer size requirement as part of their deer management program so that any buck taken needed to have at least three points on one side. This made the hunt a little more challenging since hunters had to look more closely at every buck that came into site.

The weather this year was great for hunting. No rain or snow and the temperatures made hunting very pleasant. The only problem was that the Thanksgiving week, the period that included opening day, seemed absent of any big bucks. The first rut had passed and the next one would not come during the rifle season. There were plenty of does around, it was not unusual to see three or four does wandering around as shown below, but the bucks were not interested in them.

The night before the last day we were scheduled to hunt, John was reviewing his days hunt and indicated that he had heard some loud noised near his tree stand that sounded to him like a big bear. We had not seen a bear in that region for many years and sort of passed it off as an unknown.



The following is John's version of what happened on the last day of hunting. "It was a beautiful morning, the freeze the previous night left the leaves on the ground very noisy. I had hardly settled in my tree stand when several small bucks came into sight. The first two were small 4 pointers and not a legal catch. As the two small bucks wandered around, I kept hearing that noise again that sounded like a black bear.

Staring down the hill at my left I saw a small 6 pointer coming towards me. My scope made it clear that this was a legal buck. I decided to let it get a little closer. Suddenly just as I was ready to squeeze the trigger, over the hill from my right walked this huge black bear. I remembered that the deer and bear season was concurrent this year and my license covered bear. Unfortunately, I thought, I



only had one bullet in the gun and would certainly be able to shoot only one animal. This was the first time in many years that I thought maybe I had made the wrong decision buying a single shot rifle. With a quick decision, I swung the rifle to my left and shot the deer. Of course the bear was nowhere in sight as I tried to snap another bullet into the chamber. From the sight of the bear and the droppings that I later found, I estimate that this was at least a 300 pound black bear."

The deer was a young 6 pointer shown below. The shot was placed perfectly above the left front leg, damaging very little meat.

It has been at least ten years since we saw bear signs in our hunting area. We now have a goal for the 2016 hunting season and will be planning the location of a beautiful bear rug.

Jake Bussolini is an outdoor writer who has written seven books about freshwater fishing. His work can be viewed at [www.booksbyjake.com](http://www.booksbyjake.com).

An advertisement for Green Diamond Extreme Frog bait. The main image shows a large, realistic-looking frog in a grassy area. Overlaid text reads: "Green Diamond", "GUARANTEED TO GET MORE STRIKES AND CATCH MORE SNAKE HEAD AND BASS". In the bottom left corner is a small image of the product packaging, labeled "EXTREME FROG". In the bottom center is a "SNAG &amp; PROOF" logo. In the bottom right corner is a Facebook logo and a barcode with the number "20160101". The website "www.greendiamond.jp" is printed at the bottom left.



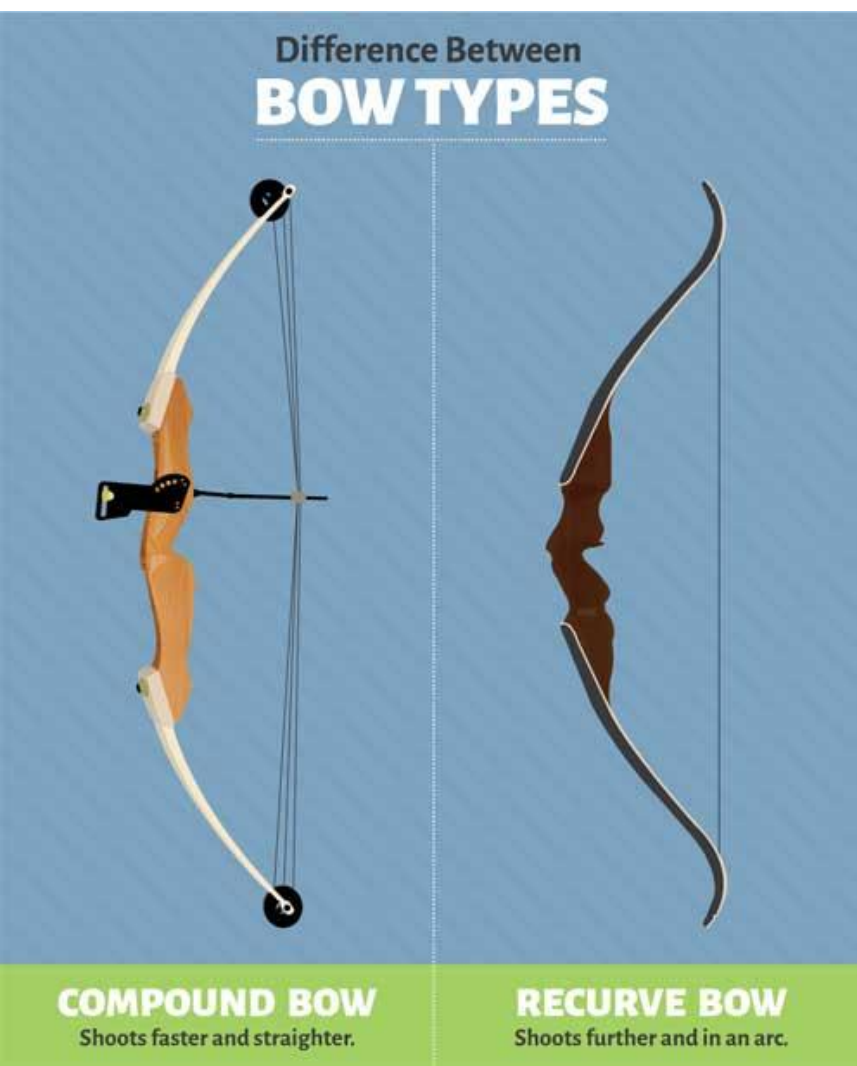


# Why Archery is the Hottest Sport Right Now

Written by Amy Whitley

Archery is for everyone: it's an easy sport to get involved in and is fun for people of almost any fitness level. Target-shooting stations can be set up in almost any large backyard, and more and more wilderness resorts are including archery in their lists of activities.

## ***Getting Started***



**Grab a Bow  
and Learn  
to Shoot it  
Like a Pro**

Beginning archery enthusiasts will want to start with target-shooting practice. Go into any outdoor gear store, however, and you'll find several types of bows used for target shooting. What's the difference?

1. Compound bows: Compound bows are the most technological of your choices, identified by the string and pulley system and they way the bow curves back toward the shooter. They shoot faster and straighter than other bows. Most are lightweight and made of carbon.

2. Recurve bows: Recurve bows are named for the way the tips of the bow curve away from the shooter. More traditional-looking than compound bows, recurve bows have



fewer moving parts and shoot in a higher arc (allowing you to channel your inner Katniss). They can be made of traditional wood or high-performance carbon.

Which is best for beginners? It depends. Compound bows are easier to shoot for most beginners because, while they take significant force to begin the draw (say 70 pounds of force), they take significantly less force to complete and hold the draw (maybe only 30 pounds). This means that the shooter can focus more on aiming than on straining to hold the bow back. Recurve bows take the same amount of force for the whole draw, which means that beginners have to concentrate on holding their draw and aiming simultaneously. However, depending on the bow size, recurve bows may be easier to use all around (and may be best for children).

Definitely go to an outdoor store to size bows so you can try out multiple bows. Have an expert measure your arm length. It needs to be compatible with the bow's draw length, which is simply the distance measured from a bow at rest and a bow drawn. It's also important that you choose a bow with a draw weight that you can manage. You want to choose the highest weight you can shoot comfortably. If it's a big strain, it's too heavy a weight. It is especially critical that children have the proper draw weight. Finally, ensure that you have the correct brace height. If the grip of the bow is close to the string, you'll have more speed but less forgiving accuracy, and vice versa.

What about arrows? Arrows can range in price, and almost all are made of carbon or fiberglass. More important than the materials, however, is that the arrows selected coordinate with your bow. Purchase arrows made for use with the bow you chose.

## ***Making and Setting Up a Target***

## What's in a Name: **BOW DEFINITIONS**



### **1: DRAW LENGTH**

The distance between the bowstring at rest and the bowstring at full draw.

### **2: DRAW WEIGHT**

The actual amount of weight you feel when you pull the bow back.



### **BRACE HEIGHT**

The distance between the bowstring and the grip.

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After selecting your bow, you'll need something to shoot at. The easiest targets to make or buy are block targets.

1. Make your own: To make your own target, start with an old hay bale. Bales that have been used for harvest parties or as decoration can often be found free, or they may be available for purchase at most feed or farm supply stores. Place your bale on a wooden bench or chair, and then either spray-paint or attach a paper target. Bales will begin to fall apart after multiple arrows have landed, but you can expect to get several months' use out of them. Paper targets last far less time but are cheap to reproduce.

2. Buy your own: Block targets for sale are made of foam and include outlined targets on the sides of the block. They're designed to be reused again and again, and they will last longer than most homemade targets.

## Archery Basics

Good news... archery is not hard to learn! Stance and form vary somewhat by preference, so feel free to play with your stance until you feel most comfortable. The basics (regardless of bow type) include the following steps:

Step 1: Notch the arrow into the string, letting the shaft sit on the rest. Be sure that the colored feather of your arrow is facing toward you.

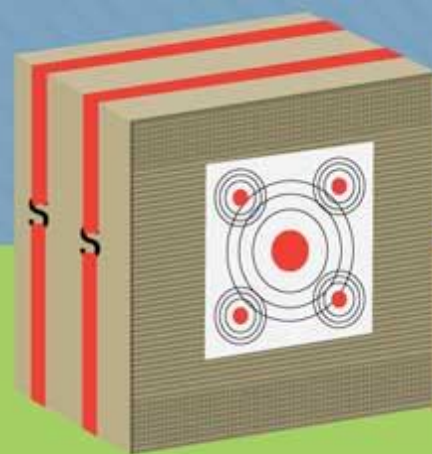
Step 2: Hold the arrow in place with one finger above and two fingers below. Pinch the arrow. (Alternative finger hold: three fingers below and

# DIY TARGETS



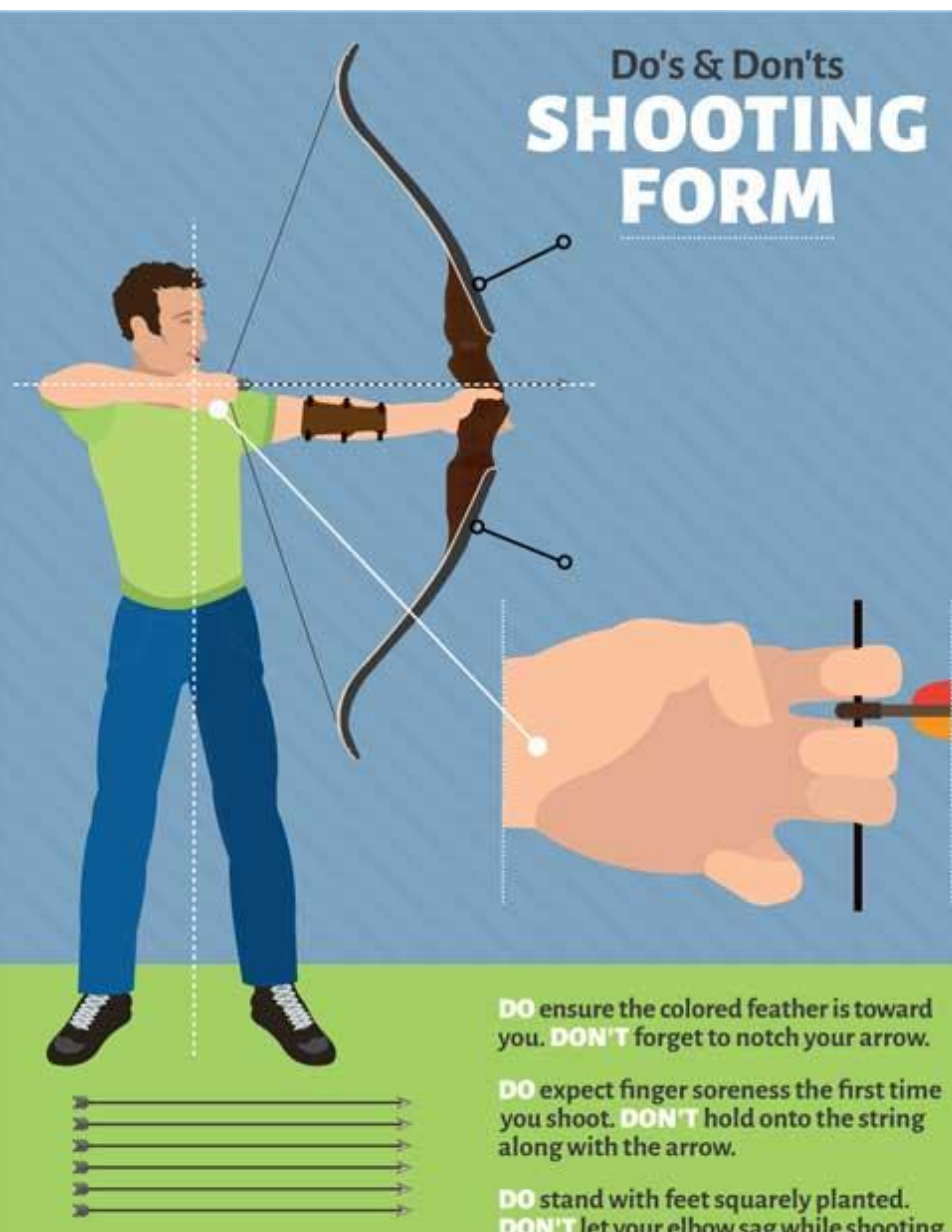
## HOMEMADE TARGET

All you need is a hay bale, wooden pallet to prop it up, and a paper target or spray paint.



## CARDBOARD TARGET

It is important to keep the cardboard as compressed as possible. Use a tight strap or a wooden frame with bolts.





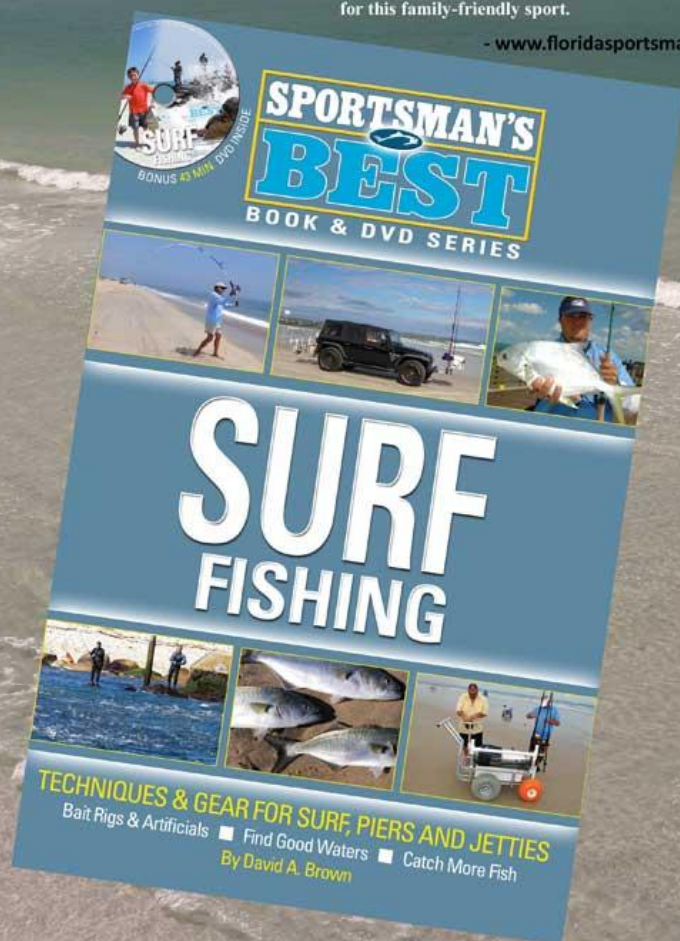
# SEE YOURSELF AT THE SEASHORE

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none on top if you have a guide in your bowstring to hold your arrow in place.)

Step 3: Extend your bow arm out in front of you, and draw back. Draw your bow all the way back to the side of your mouth, ensuring that your elbow is parallel to the ground (it should be sticking out). Your extended arm should be perfectly straight. Keep your fingers clear of the string as you release.

## Try Before You Buy

Want to try archery while traveling before buying equipment at home? Many people, myself included, get started in this way. The best vacation locations to find archery include the following:

Family resorts: Think of outdoor family resorts

as summer camp for kids and parents. Many will have archery included in their lists of activities. Many lodges outside national parks and wilderness areas also offer archery, such as the Tenaya Lodge outside Yosemite National Park, CA.

Dude ranches: With their "Wild West" feel, dude ranches are great places to try traditional skills such as archery. Take advantage of experts on site, who can help you choose from a wide variety of equipment. Take notes, and make purchases at home based on your experience on vacation.

So the next time you encounter an archery range, stop and try it out for a while! You'll be surprised how empowering it is to pick up a bow and arrow, and perfect the art of precision that is hitting a target. Article 1<sup>st</sup> appeared on [Fix.com](http://Fix.com).

## BILL VANDERFORD'S SWIRLEYBIRD SPINNER

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# THE NEW MERKEL PRACTICAL 40E FIELD-GRADE SIDE-BY-SIDE SHOTGUN

Renowned for its elegant, high-performance shotguns, Merkel has introduced the minimally adorned yet exceptionally functional Merkel 40E field-grade side-by-side shotgun at an attractively attainable price. Basically a working-man's version of the 47E but without the rich finish and hand engraving, the

new 40E was designed to be an extremely functional and reliable shotgun that's going to spend its time in the hunting fields rather than stashed away as a safe queen. The 40E shotguns are perfectly balanced when swinging.

The 40E is Merkel's first new shotgun offering in nearly a decade. Light and modestly dressed to provide everything you need and nothing you don't, the 40E sets a new standard in terms of responsiveness. Internally, the 40E boasts the precision hand fitting of old-world German craftsmen and features a very reliable Anson & Deeley boxlock action with a Greener cross-bolt locking mechanism and double under-lump locking lugs. The 28-inch barrels are cold-hammer-forged and cold blued and polished. The barrels are assembled on the proven monobloc construction, and a solid sighting rib tops the pair. The 40E also features selective automatic ejectors.

The steel receiver of the 40E is finished in silver nitrate with simple, full-coverage Arabesque engraving, and an automatic safety is mounted on the tang. The Turkish walnut stock and foreend are finely checkered and have open pores with a single oil-and-sand finish. Unlike the 47E, which has filled pores and more than six oil-and-sand cycles for a glass-like finish, the finish on the 40E is such that minor dings and wear won't be as noticeable, and any necessary refinishing will be simple. While custom stock sets are available, the standard stock on the 40E also has a "made-to-measure" fit.

Weighing in at approximately 6.2 pounds, the new 40E is available in 12- and 20-gauge with either double triggers or a single-selective trigger and the choice of a straight, English-style stock or a pistol-grip stock. A 28-ga. version with a single-nonselective trigger and built on the 20-gauge frame is also available in limited quantities. The 12- and 20-gauge shotguns have 3-inch chambers, while the 28-gauge version has 2 3/4-inch chambers. The integral chokes are Improved Cylinder and Modified. The suggested retail price of the Merkel 40E is \$4,595.

For more information, contact Steyr Arms, 2530 Morgan Rd., Bessemer, AL 35022; call (205) 417-8644; or visit [www.merkel-usa.com](http://www.merkel-usa.com)



