

March 2016
Pre-Spring Fishing



ODU MAGAZINE™

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BAITS**

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Perch
Jerker**

**MARCH
ON
THE ICE**



**ICE
ZONE**



**HUNTING
ZONE**



March marks the imminent end to ice fishing and the start to open water fishing. Anglers in the south are prepping for different spring spawning seasons and northern anglers are just getting their gear ready to hit the local ponds and streams. What are you getting ready to do?

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Thank You All!

This edition of ODU Magazine is the third of fourteen 100% digital fishing and hunting magazines we will publish in 2016. We are touching on all sorts of outdoor activities in this one. Spring bass fishing, walleye fishing, catfishing and crappie fishing are all touched on to follow. Ice fishing is not completely done, so we have late ice fishing articles that ice heads can take advantage of to make those last moments out successful. We rap up with gun maintenance, goose hunting, a little on bears and predator hunting. We think we have you covered in this edition.

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

Did You Miss ODU Magazine's Last Three Editions?



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Outdoors Man Needs Your Help

By Ted Takasaki and Scott Richardson

There comes a time in your life when a person comes into your life and you have to wonder why you met them. Was it meant to be or was there some sort of purpose? It is our belief that all of us attract particular individuals and if you allow it, that person can be the best thing that ever happened to you. A person recently came into Ted's life a short year ago but we have valued his friendship and the name of that individual is Scott Bauer. Not only is Scott truly one of the nicest persons you could meet but he is also one of character and conviction.



Scott is a 43 year old man who absolutely loves the outdoors. The definition of 'love,' in his case, means that he could fish and hunt all day and every day! There are very few outdoorsmen who are willing to take their love of the sport to the level that Scott does.

Now with most of us, paying the mortgage and taking care of a family is typically a priority so hunting and fishing cannot be all consuming. Scott is no different as he makes his living as a Sioux Falls Cartridge World franchise owner. Now, owning a small business can be difficult and it can also give you tons of freedom. The challenge is giving it enough attention so that you can find the time to get away. Over the years, Scott has worked his business to the point where he has been able to get away in order to chase some whitetails and walleyes, which are his passion.

This past November, we went on a deer hunt of a lifetime to Saskatchewan, Canada. Scott has been going up to Saskatchewan for many years and shot the biggest buck of his life up there last fall. This buck was a gorgeous 13-point trophy which scored almost 180 inches. Anyone who hunts at all would be very proud of this deer. While we were up there, we were all excited about coming across a monster deer, and as the time flew by, we kept strategizing about what we were going to do when that gigantic buck would step out in front of one of our blinds. We did eventually shoot our bucks but they were well below expectations. Nonetheless, the bond of our friendship was sealed on this trip.

While we were in Canada, he kept talking about a nagging stomach ache which he had been having for a

while. Asking if he had seen a doctor, he immediately replied, "There no way that I wasn't coming on this deer hunt with you guys, but I'll make an appointment as soon as we get back home."

Along life's path, God has a way of throwing curve balls at you. It always seems like just when you have things going well and life is good, a challenge is put right in front of you. We believe that how we handle those challenges is what makes us stronger.

Well, Scott has been given the challenge of his short life. When he got in to see the doctor, he was diagnosed with stage 4 colon cancer, which is an advanced stage of cancer. This means that it has grown and spread to other organs. This is what makes this stage of cancer extraordinarily difficult to get rid of. People at the age of 43 just don't get colon cancer! We were absolutely stricken with disbelief, then overcome with shock and anger. How can this possibly happen to such a young man and close friend?

This is precisely where the outdoorsman, Scott, has raised the sword and gone into battle. He calmly pronounced that we are to stay strong and he is not going anywhere without a fight. In fact, for his teenage son, he wants to set an example that quitters never win. This is why he has chosen to endure months of chemotherapy and the agony which awaits him. And along this journey he has also committed to keep doing what he loves to do... hunt and fish.

It was then that we could comprehend the enormous character, optimism, and perseverance that real outdoors people possess. If you think about it, this optimism and perseverance is needed while pursuing wild game or wily fish. This is exactly why outdoors people are often successful. This is the strength that Scott is going to need during this journey to live another day.

What You Can Do

You can help Scott Bauer with his cancer battle, by becoming his friend on Facebook. He is at: <https://www.facebook.com/scott.bauer.9889?fref=ts>

Also, there will be a fish fry/game feed benefit for Scott and his family at 5 p.m., Feb. 18 at the Fraternal Order of Police facility east of Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Free will donations are also welcomed, and you can call Mike Tietjen at 605-695-2705.

Please wish him well and send him prayers for strength, and to encourage him to keep on living. We thank you in advance.



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BE A PERCH JERKER

By O'Neill Williams
O'Neill Outside

It's warming up fast and the Crappie are biting. Up the rivers at West Point, Sinclair, Oconee, lots of lakes and reservoirs across the entire South, the time is right for you to get in gear and round up the tastiest little fish in Southern waters. Well, maybe a Walleye is better, but not by much and anyway, there's lots more crappie available than Walleye. In Georgia the daily limit is 35, I believe, so that's an indication that there are plenty to be had for all.

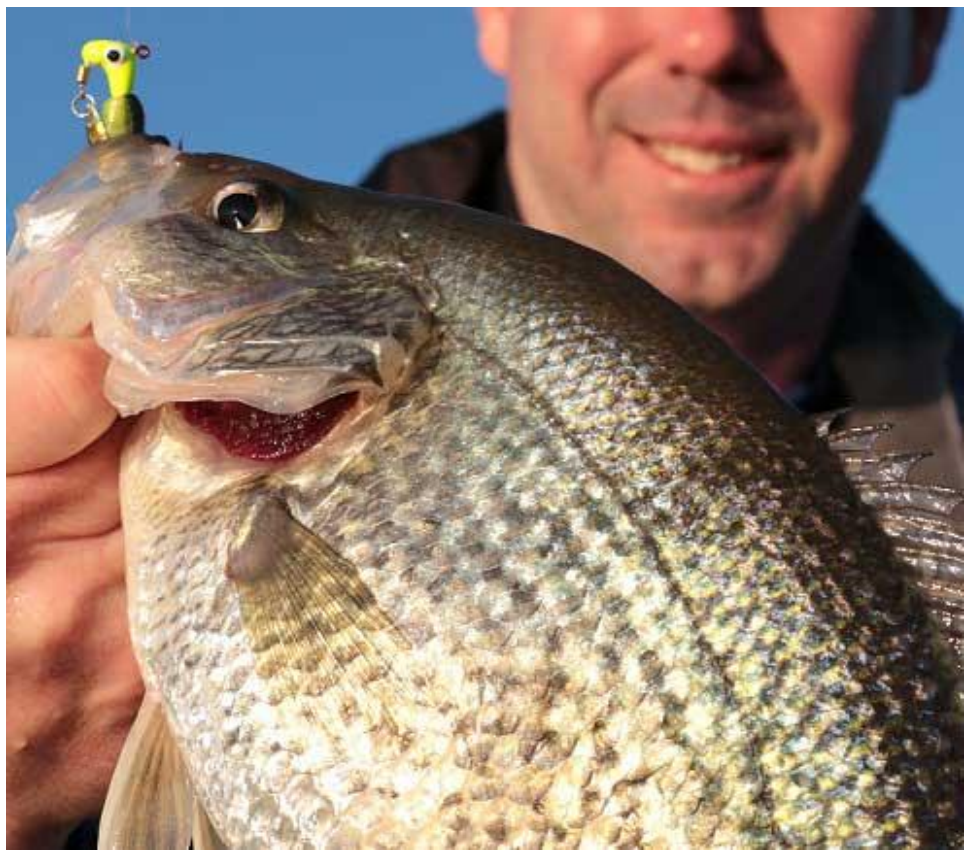
As an example to be applied to most of the Southern reservoirs, if you'll just motor up any major river that feeds and lake, like the Oconee River above the I-20 Bridge and turn right into the main river and follow the mobs of boats, you'll just naturally round up with a cooler full of scrappy Crappie. Remember the waters are still cold so move slowly, give the critters lots of colors to choose from and before you know it, you'll be an expert perch jerker.

Have you seen the really tricked out crappie rigs? I have one friend in Alabama, well actually more than one but a few. He is a perch jerker supreme and has a fully rigged Ranger all set for Crappie



fishing. It's impossible to describe but I'll betray a confidence here and tell you that he paid \$78,000 for it. OK, he was a friend and now you see why. I don't have to trailer my simple little rig to Alabama to fish for Springtime Crappie. He has it all..... Multiple rod holders out front of the bow and behind the engine, long willow branch rods with soft ultra-lite tips fashioned with super light line and tiny little multi-colored Road Runners. I have to tell you, it's really impressive. He says the key is to move ultra-slowly. Early season Crappie are slow to bite but they will. To my surprise, he also says that once they spook a bit and stop biting, go elsewhere for a few minutes and return for another half dozen or more. Keep a cooler with ice instead of just your live well. They clean up better and taste better by doing that.

Never mind those high and mighty bass boys in their quick start boats that you'll see flying up and down the lake. They're fast and famous, but take heart in the knowledge that during dinner soon, while you're enjoying some sweet tasting fillets, that bass jumper'll be washing that expensive personality extension.





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Every season as we get deeper into the winter or early spring bite we all have to learn to deal with the wind. Your chances of getting on the water during this period and not contending with some wind is very low; you must learn to deal with it or your day will be very frustrating and you will go home missing fish.

The wind actually has some hidden powers that can enhance your day on the water if you just change your attitude and believe the wind can actually help you. The key is to be aware of what the wind does to help you. One of the first things you will learn is that the wind creates current and because of that it helps position the fish into the current. This alone allows you to position your boat around structure whether visible or not. If you know the structure is on the bottom you can easily position yourself to drift your bait in front of the structure and feel assured that the bass are positioned where you are fishing and dropping bait into their face can be great benefit to getting bit. Many times the bass will position into the current yet behind the structure; this allows your bait to move around the structure to where the bass are sitting.



The Power of the Wind

By Captain Mike Gerry

It is also true that the wind helps bunch up the bait and push the bait to the corners or edges or into grass hence bringing the bass to follow the bait and bunch up allowing you to make several casts into the same spot and continue to catch fish. Bass follow the bait most of the day and if the bait is bunched up so are the bass; find the bait you find the fish. It is also true that wind acts very much like current, creating water movement around d edges, corners, visible structure; these cuts or turns in the water current always hold fish and as I described the bass will position into the wind so fish them and make sure you work these directional changes thoroughly and you will find the bass.

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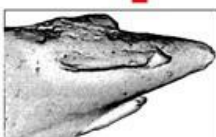


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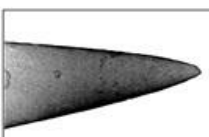
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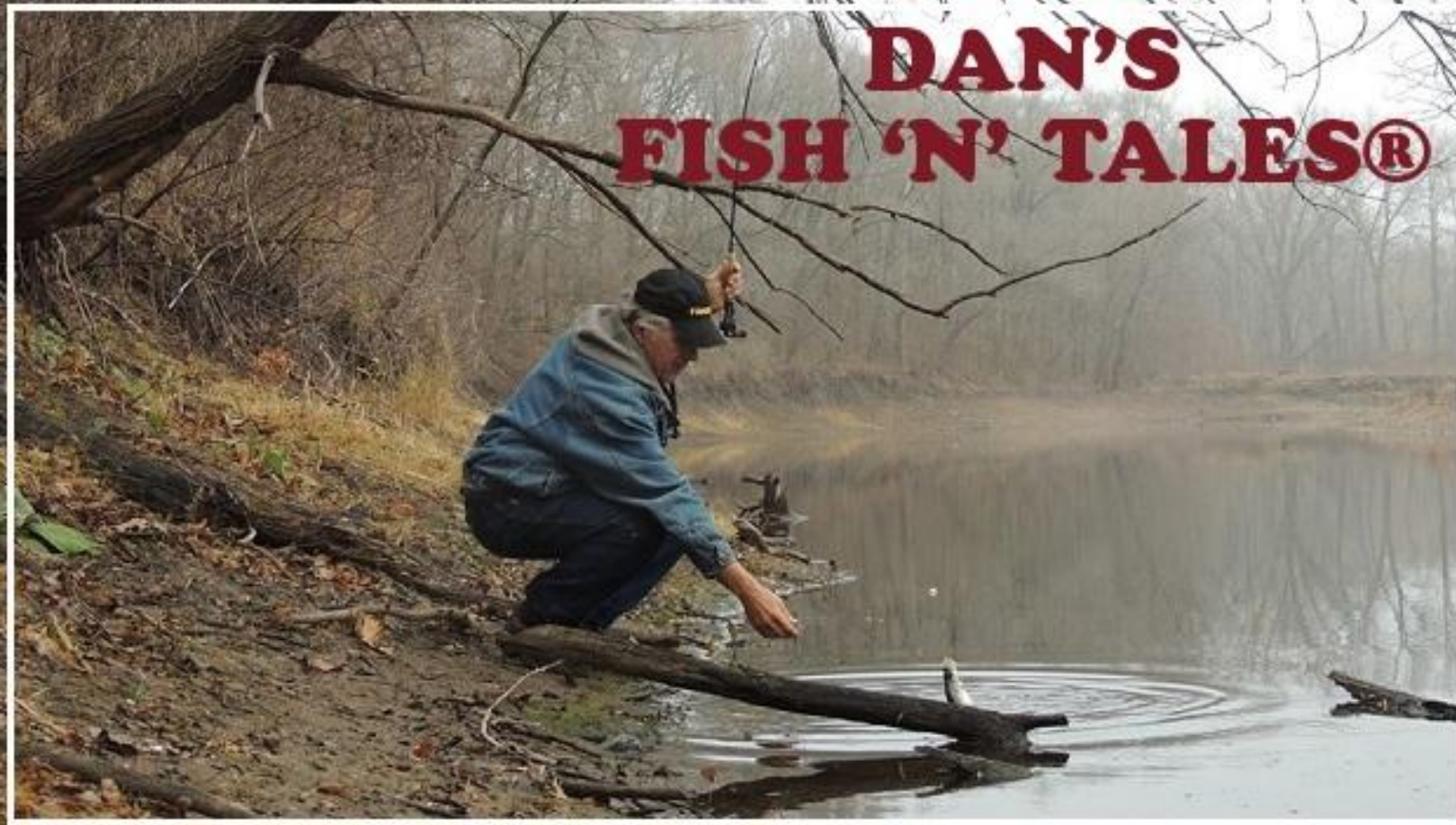
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DYING SHAD PATTERN FOR BASS

By Dan Galusha

Early spring is one of those times of the year when fishing can be a bit unpredictable. It is always best to locate an area with the warmest water, or find a good pattern that may carry over from year to year.

Such a pattern that usually holds for a variety of bass is dying shad. This is a prime food source for this time of the year in many bodies of water. Looking in to a lake that has crystal clear water, a person can see millions of twisting and turning shad that makes it look like someone has dumped a load of sequins in the water. Locating these shad infested areas is a key to success.



Once the shad are located, the next step is to simulate the action of the bait. For this purpose eight lure choices (longbilled stick minnow, suspending stick lure, Rat-L-Trap, Road Runner/Casey's Runner Head, Blitz Blade, Power Jerk Shad, tube, and jigging spoon) will be the best with which to start. All of these lures can be

worked in some manner to create a twist and/or flutter action, or some other action that will produce a strike from a feeding bass.

Stick style lures are the most popular. With the longbilled minnow, I crank it down about ten fast turns of the reel handle and then start either a slower steady retrieve, or a jerk/rip-and-pause. Many times the hit will come as the lure starts to be jerked/ripped after the pause, which makes it feel like it is hung up on something. Stopping for a few seconds and allowing the lure to float towards the surface can also be a deadly method. Using this method requires close observation of the line, as many times the strike is only indicated by a twitch of the line. I was taught this technique on Table Rock Lake and Bull Shoals Lake by one of the best at using it – the late Virgil Ward.



The suspending stick minnow lure is fished quite similar to the longbill. However, it will not dive as deep, but will stay at a specific depth when paused. Suspending either the longbill or a floating minnow lure can be achieved by weighting. I've found Storm's Suspend Dots and Strips to be very useful items for this purpose, which are weighted, thin, stick on strips of metal.

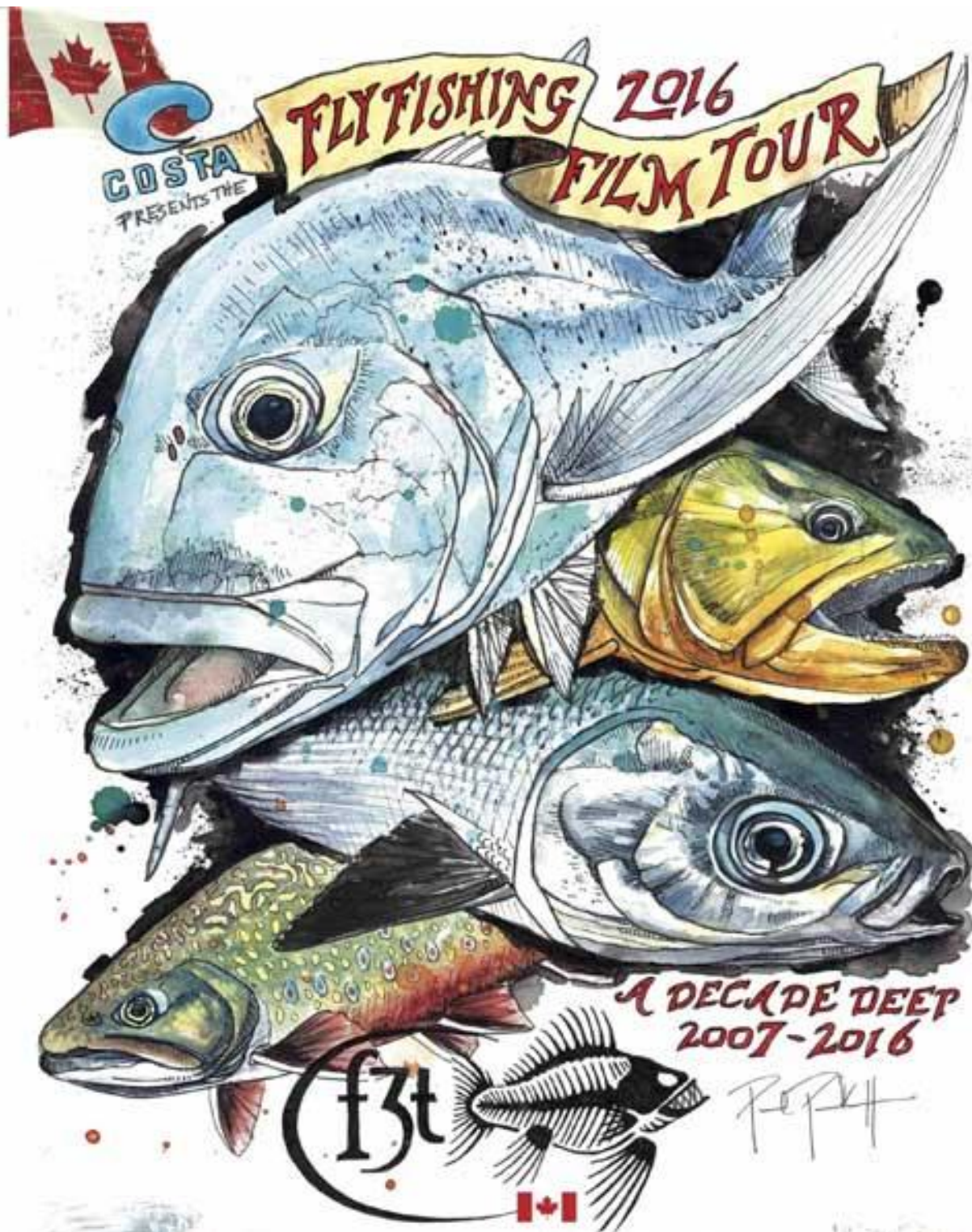
Again, similar techniques are used for the Rat-L-Traps. Allow these to sink to whatever depth is needed, and then use a quicker rip-and-pause retrieve, than the one used with the longbilled minnow. These are also excellent lures to use if shad busts appear, and will be the best lure for any white bass in the area.

Road Runners are a perfect lure to cover many species, including the occasional crappie that will be mixed in with the bass. I like using the 1/16, 1/8 and 1/4 ounce (match the baitfish size) Pro-Curly model with a Bleeding Bait Hook, which has the willow leaf blade for fishing these shad situations. Road Runner heads in this same style can be purchased separately, and used with a 1.5, 2 or 3 inch (depending on head size) Gulp Alive Minnow or Power Bait Minnow as a body. The new Casey's Runner head is another great option, especially for using with a lure like the Zoom Super Fluke Jr., which was the combination on which Casey Ashley won the Bassmaster Classic. The lure is retrieved with a slow-



even motion, with or without a pumping action. When the pumping action is applied the blade will flutter on the downfall, at which time many strikes occur. This is where the Casey's Runner will show its best with the larger willow blade and ball bearing swivel.

Jerk worms, for which I use a Power Jerk Shad, are one of the best lures around for simulating dying shad. They can be worked at a variety of depths. The lure has a natural fall, but inserting a nail weight, wrapping the hook shank with a weight strip, or using an adjustable weighted



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Daiichi Butt Dragger, Bleeding Bait Copperhead hook can increase the rate of fall. At whatever depth is used, the retrieve is a simple twitch and pause. The pick up will be a line movement to the side, twitch, or solid slow pull. On all strikes do not set the hook immediately. Treat it much like a top water lure, and wait until there is a solid pull on the line.

Another lure with a built in fluttering action is the jigging spoon. It has a faster fall, and is idle when positioning the boat directly over a feeding school of fish in deeper water. It is also great for working along a deep bluff wall, where the fish may be suspended out from the wall. The technique is very simple. Drop the spoon to the desired depth and jig upward approximately 3 feet, allowing the spoon to flutter back down to the original depth, or slightly below, on a straight line. Strikes will often come on the fall (feels like bumping a limb or rock), or lift (feels like a snag).

The tube is the most versatile of the eight lures. It can be rigged Texas style (with or without weight), Carolina style, as a cover for a jigging spoon or with a lead head. It can also be used with the Road

Runner, especially the Casey's Runner. All of these rigs, except for the lead head, work best with a thick-walled tube. This bait can be crawled on the bottom to attract fish that may be heading for a quick snack of a crawfish, or swam and jerked, as with the Runner head, for suspended fish feeding on the dying baitfish.

I kept the Blitz Blades until last because they can be used with almost any of the retrieves mentioned. The best is a stop-and-go, but the constant slow retrieve, with an occasional pause also works. Another option is to fish it similar to the jigging spoon. While I would use the ½-ounce most of the time, the new 1-ounce would be a great option for long casts and getting down deeper and faster in large reservoirs like Bull Shoals Lake. In fact, Bull Shoals would be a super place to go for this type of fishing, and for using this lure.

For color choices, try chrome/black back and shad types for the longbilled minnows, stick baits, Blades and Rat-L-Traps; shad, white and pearl for jerk worms and Road Runners; chrome for jigging spoons; and smoke, pearl, white, green pumpkin; pumpkinseed/chartreuse and black for tubes.



ODU MAGAZINE VIDEO BLOCK (www.odumagazine.com)

To find the best locations look for the warmest water, keep an eye open for feeding gulls, and use a depth finder. The backs of creek arms, bluffs, riprap, sandy beach areas, coves and gravel points are all prime locations.

While most of the species caught will be largemouth, smallmouth, Kentucky Spotted, and white bass, there is always the chance of walleye, drum and catfish, which also feed on these dying shad. A trout is not out of the question on lakes stocked with that species.



If you're ready for good early spring fishing for bass, start looking for areas with dying shad, and give some the described lures and techniques a good workout.

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

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Black Friday Rainbow

By Dana Benner

I don't know if I have ever gone fishing on Black Friday, but here I was. While my wife joined the hoards at the mall, I headed to Lake Massabesic. The lake which is located on the Auburn/Manchester, New Hampshire line is usually crowded during the warmer months; with the exception of a few kayakers I had the entire lake to myself.

This was a spur of the moment thing. I was originally toying with the idea of going hunting, but when I awoke to 50 degree temperatures and climbing I opted to grab the fishing gear instead of the shotgun. Last year at this time we were covered in ice and snow and even during "normal" years we usually have ice forming on the lakes and ponds. I couldn't let this opportunity pass.

Many people don't realize that many of New Hampshire lakes and ponds are open for fishing year round. Check the New Hampshire Freshwater Digest for a listing of lakes and ponds that are not open to fishing. It is a much shorter list. If you don't see your lake or pond listed under "Special Rules" then it is probably open. You also need to check about which species can be caught. Under general rules it states that trout can be legally taken ice-out to ice-in. No ice meant I was good to go. Grabbing my "official" Plano trout tacklebox and two rods that I have been "playing" with; a Quantum Telecast light action spinning rod coupled with a Quantum Fire 10 reel spooled with 8 pound test Berkley Trilene XT line and a R2F medium-light spinning rod with matching reel spooled with 6 pound test line, I headed out.

I arrived at the lake not really expecting to catch anything, but it was great just to be out there soaking up the warm weather. This is New Hampshire and the weather could change at any moment, so I



enjoyed it while I could. Besides, anything is better than shopping. Because the law allows anglers to use two lines at a time I rigged the R2F rod with a hook, worm bobber and one small split shot. The Telecast I rigged with a yellow ¼ ounce Little Cleo spoon (pictured). Casting out the line with the worm I just let it sit and do its thing. I then picked up the set up with the spoon and started casting.

After about a ½ hour of casting there was not even a strike. I was about ready to change spots when I looked over at the bobber, or rather where the bobber should be. I lifted the rod tip and set the hook. There was a sudden pull back and the line started going the other way. When I got the fish in closer to

shore I could see that it was a pretty nice rainbow trout, but I didn't know how nice until I landed it. Measuring a little over 16 inches long and weighing a strong 2 ½ pounds it was the largest trout I had ever caught out of this body of water. It also was the most vibrant, with the cheek patch and the lateral line being the brightest red I had ever seen.

I stayed for another ½ hour or so because I don't leave fish to find fish, but nothing further happened.

The morning's kayakers were starting to come in so I decided that this was my cue to reel in my lines and call it a day. Who would have ever thought that I would be open water fishing for trout on Black Friday? Even odder was the fact that I didn't need to bundle up against the cold to do it. If someone had told me this story I never would have believed it, but here I was. With fish in hand I headed for home to eat leftover pie, watch football and a story to tell that nobody would ever believe.



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Bottom Bouncing with George Young

By Ron Presley

Most catfish anglers have their own favorite way to fish. For B'n'M pro staff angler George Young Jr. it is a method referred to as bumping. It is an active method of fishing where the angler always has the rod and reel in his hands and he controls the placement of the bait.

River fishing is a natural thing for Young, who grew up in NE Arkansas. "All we had available to fish were small rivers like the St Francis, the Tyronza and the Black, said Young. "We mostly caught flatheads and channel cats, but there were a few blues too."

Young recounted that his daddy, uncles and cousins didn't know any other kind of fish existed. "When someone said, let's go fishing we all went catfishing. Today, that's about the only kinda' of fishing I do and the reason is simple. They are the biggest fish around and they provide me a challenge I don't get from other kinds of fishing. I love to fish big rivers like the Mighty Mississippi. I know the big ones live there and if the Lord is willing I hope to beat my personal best, which is 78 pounds."

The B'n'M prostaffer fishes both local and national catfish tournaments. "It is a learning experience,"

said Young. "I have fished with some of the best cat anglers in the world. They willingly share information and techniques on catching more and bigger fish. I hope I can pay them back by sharing what I have learned to the benefit of the sport. I would like to see it grow."

Bumpin' as Young calls it is also known as controlled drift fishing. "It is without question my favorite way to fish for ole Mr. Whiskers," revealed Young. "Controlled drift fishing does not fit the traditional cast, sit and wait approach to catfishing. If you are anchored down you have to rely on the fish's sense of smell and taste to find your bait. Drifting allows you to take the bait to the fish. It is an interactive approach that allows you to cover different depths and different locations quickly."

Young uses a trolling motor to control the drift. "Point the bow into the current and use the trolling motor to control your backward drift," instructed Young. "The river current may be 3 MPH but you slow your drift down to about 1 MPH. You are always holding the rod and always fishing. Using this method I

have fewer hang-

ups and a better strike to catch ratio." Young's rig consists of tying the 65- to 85-pound HI-SEAS Grand Slam three-way swivel he makes himself. He adds a 12- to 15-inch drop pound test Grand Slam leader for his weight. "This step is instructed Young. "First the straight through connection is the bottom and feel it better as you feed line and bait down you can break the sinker drop and save the rest of the rig. and you are back to fishing."

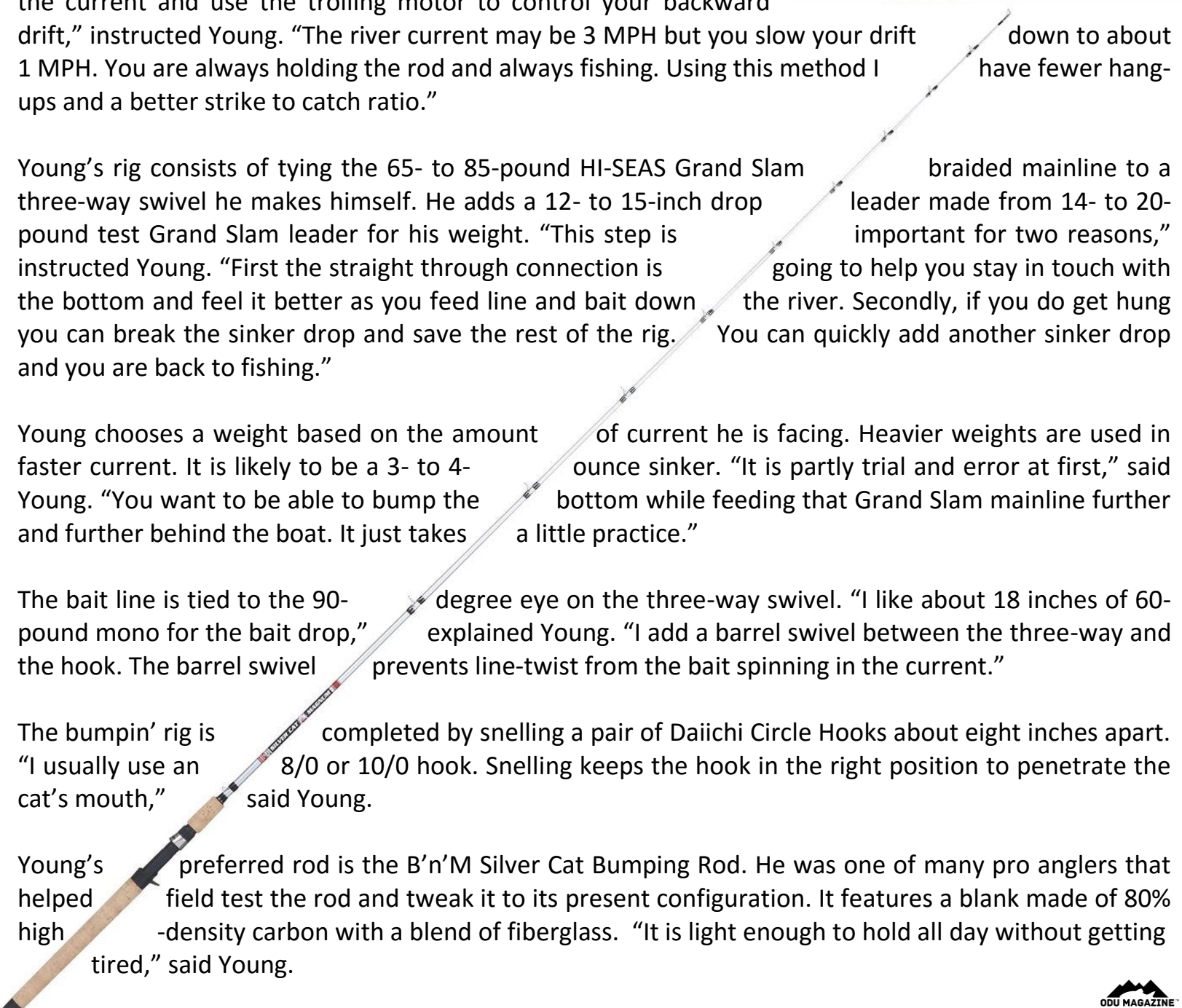
braided mainline to a leader made from 14- to 20- important for two reasons," going to help you stay in touch with the river. Secondly, if you do get hung You can quickly add another sinker drop

Young chooses a weight based on the amount of current he is facing. Heavier weights are used in faster current. It is likely to be a 3- to 4- ounce sinker. "It is partly trial and error at first," said Young. "You want to be able to bump the bottom while feeding that Grand Slam mainline further and further behind the boat. It just takes a little practice."

The bait line is tied to the 90-degree eye on the three-way swivel. "I like about 18 inches of 60-pound mono for the bait drop," explained Young. "I add a barrel swivel between the three-way and the hook. The barrel swivel prevents line-twist from the bait spinning in the current."

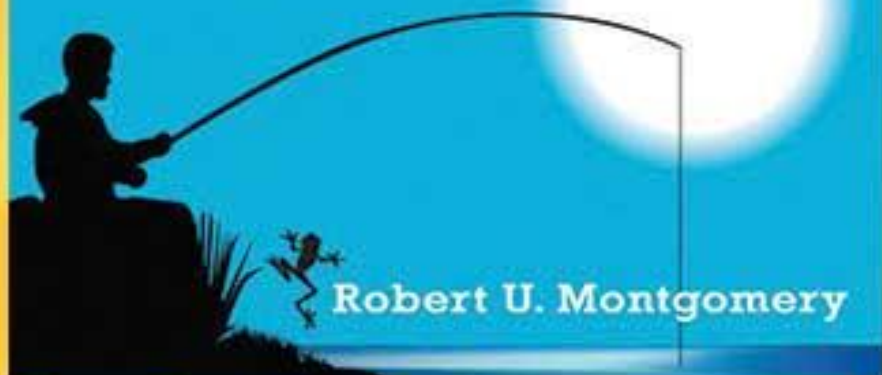
The bumpin' rig is completed by snelling a pair of Daiichi Circle Hooks about eight inches apart. "I usually use an 8/0 or 10/0 hook. Snelling keeps the hook in the right position to penetrate the cat's mouth," said Young.

Young's preferred rod is the B'n'M Silver Cat Bumping Rod. He was one of many pro anglers that helped field test the rod and tweak it to its present configuration. It features a blank made of 80% high-density carbon with a blend of fiberglass. "It is light enough to hold all day without getting tired," said Young.



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“The B’n’M Bumping Rod also has stainless steel guides to prevent braided lines from cutting into the guide,” informed Young. “The tip allows me to lift my weight and still let me feel the bottom as I bounce along. The rod also has a strong backbone with plenty of power to bring the fish to the boat.”

The number one most important element of bumping is the presence of current. That current can be in the form of a river current or a current created by electric generating facilities on various reservoirs. The current is needed to push the bait downstream, further and further from

the boat.

Catfish like to hang around structure like logs and rocks. They like ledges and drop-offs too. Young uses his sonar to locate structure and contours that he can target with his bumping technique. When structure is known to exist the boat is set up above the structure and the bumping technique begins.

Controlled drift fishing allows the angler to be in constant touch with his surroundings. The rod is held by hand to bump the bait along the bottom as the boat drifts slowly downstream. “I am feeling every rock, log and contour down there,” said Young. “If the bottom comes up you have to reel in some line to stay in touch. If the bottom drops into a hole you have to let some line out.”

“If you lose the feel of the sinker hitting the bottom just reel it up and start over,” instructed Young. “If you are not feeling the bump you may be dragging and letting out line in a big loop, or you may be hung. Either way you have to get back to feeling the sinker hit the bottom.”

The more distance you can get behind the boat the more bottom you have covered and the more likely you are to put a bloody chunk of skipjack in front of a Mississippi River Monster.

“It is when you feel a rock or a log that you expect a bite,” suggested Young. “Those fish are using the structure as a current break, just waiting for their next meal to come by. Often as you drop that bait to the backside of the structure you feel the bite and the fight is on.”

Young offers this advice on landing a big catfish. “Always use your rod to land big catfish. You don’t crank them in with the



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reel. Pump the rod and reel down to put line back on the reel, but never allow slack in the line. Have your drag set to where the fish can take line easily if it decides to make a run. To put it simply, never get in a hurry to land a big fish."

Epilogue:
Young's passion for catfishing has led him to create a new catfish tournament.



Mississippi River Monsters (MRM) will debut on September 9

and 10, 2016 out of Memphis TN. "I wanted to do something big to help the sport of catfishing grow and get recognized," offered Young. "The Mississippi River seemed like the perfect place to do it."

The original goal of 100 registered boats has already been exceeded and some prognosticators suggest a total of 200 boats are not out of the question.

Young has secured the help of other catfish anglers, including Bill Dance to help him plan, promote and stage the tournament. MRM originally posted a First Place Cash Payout of \$10,000. As of this writing

that amount has grown to \$14,000 and could grow more as additional boats are registered.

The total overall payout is \$30,000 in cash and prizes. The Big Fish prize has been sponsored by Whisker Seeker Tackle and will pay \$1,000 in cash and an additional \$750 in prizes.

Where else can you compete and get paid for finishing 100th? The family owned business, Warrior Cat Tackle, is paying \$1,000 to the team that finishes in 100th Place.

The Captains Meeting and the weigh-in will be held at Bass Pro Shops at the Pyramid in Memphis. For more information visit the MRM website or Facebook page.





Being A Fishing Guide Has been Magic!

By Bill Vanderford

The pain that flowed from the center of my spine like a molten river of lava slowly convinced the rest of my body that I was hurting enough to sink to my knees. Only moments before, I had been casting the quiet shoreline with a client and his son, but the youngster had made a mistake that I was paying for in a big way!

It was a morning that started with tea and toast until the phone rang. A special client and his teenage son wanted to spend a few hours fishing, and being in the service business, I had little choice but to hastily put my gear together and rush to meet them at the lake.



Since we were casting heavy jigs, I instructed my clients on the importance of casting overhead to avoid hitting each other. They seemed to be doing well, so I let my guard down. For some unknown reason, the youngster decided to make a sidearm cast with plenty of “bat speed,” and when the big jig struck me in the middle of my back, I learned a lesson about being alert that I’ll never forget!

Being a fishing guide on Lake Lanier for 40 years has taught me numerous lessons, but has afforded me the chance to experience hundreds of memorable moments...both good and bad. Nevertheless, I wouldn’t trade my chosen profession for anything!

My education as a guide started during one of my first outings. I had picked up an angler from Minnesota with a huge tackle box and a big saltwater rod and reel. Plenty of eager bass were devouring plastic worms, so when he tied on a topwater lure that looked big enough to catch a marlin, I made a statement that I would never make again... “You ain’t gonna catch anything with that big ugly plug!”

Even though the large wooden bait hit the water with enough splash to frighten a beaver, and the

St. Jude Bass Classic 2016



Minnesota tournament angler and contributor (Glenn Walker) to ODU Magazine and his fishing partner are participating in the 18th Annual Dick Hiley/St. Jude Bass Classic to benefit St. Jude Children's Research Hospital on May 7th and 8th, in Wabasha, MN, with the tournament taking place on the Mississippi River. This duo has been fishing this event since 2012 and in those four years, they have raised over \$13,000 for St. Jude's and have been part of the record setting event fundraising total every year, with last year going over the \$316,000 mark!!

"This fishing tournament is by far the most inspirational and unique fishing event I participate in throughout the year. Our team goal is to raise, at least, \$4,500 which will help the organization move closer to their fundraising total from the 2015 event," said Glenn. "Hearing the stories from St. Jude families at the Saturday night banquet truly does inspire you to get out there and make a difference."

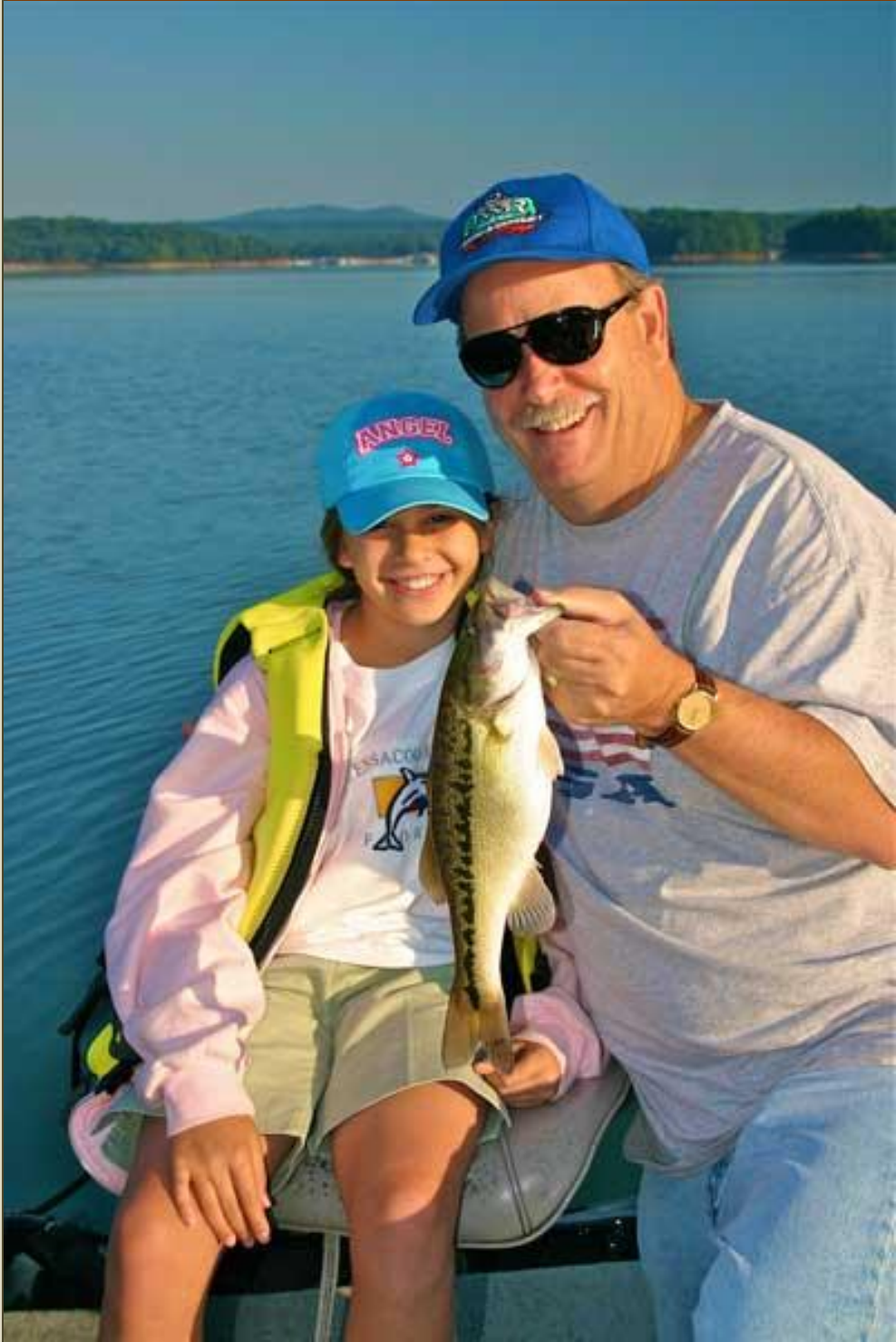
St. Jude is the single largest center in the US for the research and treatment of childhood catastrophic diseases. St. Jude has treated children from all 50 states and no child is ever turned away because of a family's inability to pay for the lifesaving care at St. Jude, which is why fundraising efforts like the St. Jude Bass Classic are vital to the success of the hospital.

To make your tax deductible donation head to this link: http://fundraising.stjude.org/site/TR?px=3319378&fr_id=47420&pg=personal

The weigh-in is open to the public and is located at the Wabasha Municipal Harbor (Ike's Park) in Wabasha and will begin at 3:30 pm each day. If you are in the area your support is welcomed and much appreciated! We look forward to fishing against not just other anglers, but helping to fight childhood diseases, by partnering with St. Jude!

"Please feel free to pass along this information to your family and friends, as we are all working together to raise money for a great cause. Thank you again for your support of St. Jude!"

ensuing wake looked like a small motorboat, an over 8 pound bass found something so appealing that he tried to inhale the ugly lure. I had to "eat crow." From then on, I



modified my statement to: "That lure looks great, but you might do better with one of mine."

Sometimes things work out even better than the imagination. One of those times occurred on a cold February morning several years ago. Two clients from Florida were staying at a Lake Lanier Islands resort and had booked me for an early morning trip to catch striped bass. I awoke that



morning to howling winds and below zero temperatures, so I called their room and tried to discourage them, but they wanted to go anyway.

Just making it the several miles across the water to where I wanted to fish was excruciating, and casting became another problem. After every cast, the water passing through the guides on the rod would freeze and have to be cleared before another cast could be made.

Nevertheless, striped bass always seem to have a strange agenda. When humans are miserable, these big linesided fish

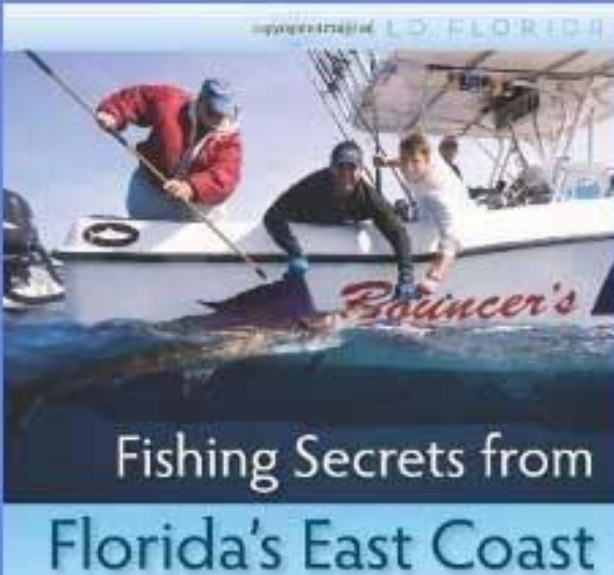
sometimes feed frantically. So, despite the extreme cold and our casting problems, the stripers were eating everything in sight. We must have hooked more than a dozen huge fish that morning and landed five that tipped the scales at more than thirty pounds each. Our bodies may have been cold, but the adrenaline rush had our hearts and spirits burning!

Most of the experiences of being a fishing guide on Lake Lanier have been wonderful. Being a guide has allowed me to watch my children develop their outdoor skills, and gave me a place to share my Dad's last days. Just being out on the water during the seasonal changes with colorful sunrises and sunsets has been fantastic! I guess Jimmy Buffett said it best when he penned the words, "Some of it's magic and some of it's tragic, but it's been a good life all the way!"

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

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grow on trees
and it doesn't
float either!**

**A LITTLE
ABOUT
DRI-DOCK,
FLOWFOLD AND
PEPPERS
EYEWEAR**

By Danny Barker

True story.... A Guide by the name of Dean Headman (One Cast Away) asked me if I wanted to take my boat to a new private Fishing lake, I said "twist my arm " LOL He would take his boat as well that way we could cover the water separately to see how good the fishing really was. As a good will gesture I



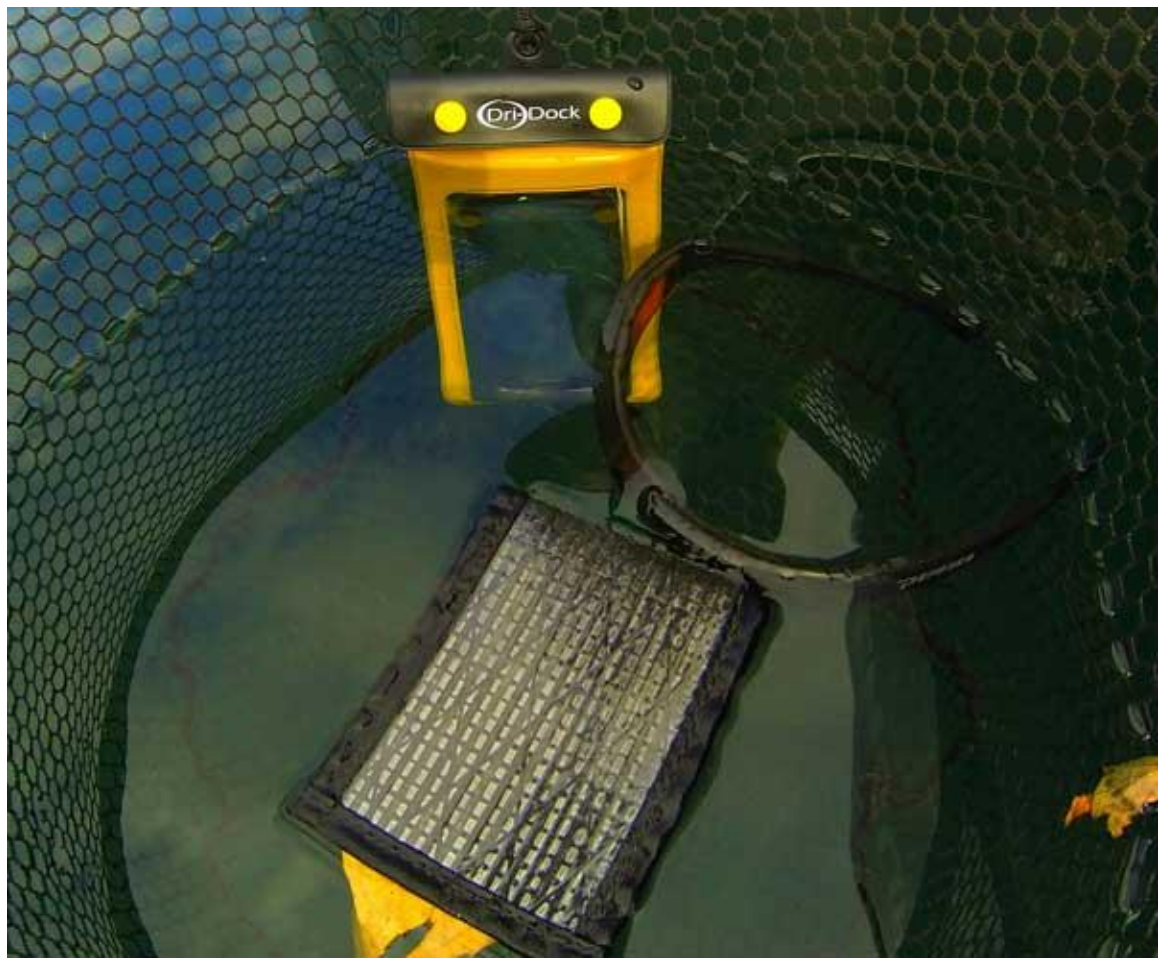
told Dean Lunch was on me.....just withdrew a crisp 20 dollar bill for the occasion. The place looked killer, it was a bit windy but we both caught some nice fish About half way into our trip I needed to get something out of my briefcase that's when that 20 bucks comes out flying and goes into the lake! I'm thinking ok I'll

just spin around and retrieve it.....that's when I found out money doesn't float by the time I got turned around with the net in my hand ole Andrew Jackson was sinking ever so slowly and my net ran out of length.....Lunch was a distant memory LOL Now here in lays my bases for the "Flow Fold "Traveler Wallet, keep in mind I'm not a wallet kind of guy. Guess what they float plus they're very thin and durable. Here are some details to check out:

DiamondFiber is developed with the same technology that revolutionized the performance of multi-million dollar racing boats like those in the America's Cup. With a higher tensile strength than steel, it is remarkably durable due to an inner diamond pattern of Kevlar or carbon fibers. These are the toughest, lightest and most resilient cloths in the world due to high strength to weight ratios and ideal modulus of elasticities.

The cloth used in Flowfold wallets are carefully drawn from scrap, blemish, and discontinued stock. As flowfold production grows, so does our use of cloth that would otherwise end up as pollution. We are proud to continue the tradition of American-made quality and solid craftsmanship.

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- Great for the outdoors:
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camping, running,
hunting, fishing,
skiing, surfing,



snowboarding, sailing, biking

- EDC wallet for tactical everyday carry
- Vegan wallet made from repurposed, reclaimed, unique materials
- Made in America, handmade in USA, Maine made wallet
- Ultra lightweight carbon fiber or Kevlar, better than leather wallet
- Tough and durable design with a lifetime warranty
- Water resistant, floating wallet

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Along the same line comes my cell phone story which involves another deep blue ending and a much more costly replacement..... Fishing in FI with the constant thunder storms and the issue of it getting wet plus any involuntary reactions sending it over board comes along a company called “Dri-Dock” Here’s quick overview: Compatible with all iPhones and similar sized Smart Phones, you can relax in the safe knowledge your gadgets are fully protected from Water, Sand & Dust while maintaining full functionality.

Key Features

- Designed for all models of I/Phones & most Smart Phones
- Patented easy to use “Triple Ziploc Roll Seal”
- IPX8 Certified to a depth of 10m (30ft)
- Maintains Full Touch Screen Functions
- Crystal clear rear panel for taking photo or videos
- 3.5mm External Jack to listen to music



PICASSO

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- Ideal for snorkeling or shallow dives
- Strong adjustable neck/wrist Lanyard
- Floats safely if dropped in water
- Water, Dust & Sand proof
- UV Protected PVC
- Just 10% loss of sound as you speak through the PVC
- Supplied with desiccant Sachet to absorb moisture
- Available colors: Clear, Yellow, Blue.

On a side note I've added a GoPro The Bobber® for added floatation to save your cell if dropped in the water Check em out....

Last but not least the same ole scenario about losing sunglasses. I'm fishing a swimbait and hang it up on a tree limb so I go over and in the process of reaching for it I lose my balance. You guess it in the drink I go only to resurface without my 250 dollar RX Raybans, I've been known to fall out of boats once or twice LOL. Another question, how many pair sunglasses have you lost while hulling down the lake at 60 plus miles per hour? I'm guessing a bunch well "Peppers Eyeware" has come out with the UNSINKABLE EYEWARE "The FRAME FLOATS" Check their description:

TAC-tical POLARIZED LENS

Tri-acetate polarized lens features 2 acetate lens with a polyvinyl acetate layer sandwiched in between.

100% UV Protection. Meets or exceeds ANSI impact resistance standards
 Buoyant Foam Chamber - H2O Floaters
 Frames for total durability and flexibility.
 BTW you're going to love the styles and price point of these cool Polarized Glasses by Peppers.

Finally there you have it three great outdoor products that will save a ton of money while you're enjoying the great outdoors, check out their web-sites below CHomp On friends!!

1) Flowfold.....

<http://www.flowfold.com/company>

2) Dri-Dock..... <http://www.dri-dock.com/>

3) Peppers.....

<http://www.peppersusa.com/>

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I am more than a weekend warrior.

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

I am a steward.



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MY FAVORITE SEARCH BAITS

By Captain Mike Gerry

Time changes so many things in the sport of fishing, and baits have been the leaders in that category. There is no doubt in my mind that if you blink you may miss a change in baits or new baits as selections are an ever moving target. However there are some constants and it seems that at least the search baits have some consistency and years have made them better than ever.

We reached the time of year where finding fish is key, forcing you to cover a lot of water and make many casts to pick up a pattern or find a school of fish; with today's crowded lakes the thought of going back to the same fish every day is just a wild chance that they will still be there. Making search baits more important than ever; thus making the search baits that I depend on are more important than ever. Search baits start with the most reliable bait ever that being rattle baits, for me that say's SPRO Aruka Shad rattle baits (pictured) they are a main stay in my tackle box and have been for a long time. Their unique nose design and water movement as well as vibration has been one of the most productive baits ever made. The next search bait for me is a new sponsor to my tool box that being Picasso Lures, they have changed the chatter bait world with their Shock Blade jig jumping out into the lead with creativity and movement like no other I have seen. Picasso has developed these with heavy weighted heads and a wide variety of skirt colors allowing you to fish them to the deepest depths with big hooks or lighten them up and work shallow. By far the best and most innovative development, in the chatter bait world, than ever before. I am also extremely impressed with the attraction of the Shock Blade to big fish. Lastly the mainstay of Swim Bait technology has not only improved but become search baits that find fish 12 months a year just adding to its spring attraction; the leader for me is the Missile bait Shock Wave swim bait it has great tail action and attracts fish in a life like way. Rig your favorite "Shock Wave" swim bait, rig it on your favorite swim head and you have a killer combination for the spring.



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In Pursuit of a Double Digit Bass

By Rafael Vargas

In January 2015, I left cold Midwest waters to drive 800 miles south in search of a double-digit largemouth bass. Nebraska is full of quality fish, but the lingering cold temperatures rarely present the right conditions to produce ten pounders. I vividly remember the snow finally melting from my Hobie Pro Angler 14 halfway through Arkansas.

My eyes lit up when I saw the Louisiana state sign after nearly 13 hours driving. I had three months to accomplish my bucket list. I figured the warmer water temperatures and spawning season would help me achieve my goal.

I didn't come to the south as a stranger. The charming state of Louisiana was my home for nearly ten years. Cypress trees, swamp waters, wasps and gators were no surprise. The quick growth of kayak fishing in the South was awesome. The fact that some of the friends I hadn't seen in years are now 'yak anglers was absolutely fantastic.

When I arrived the January waters were in the forties and fishing was slow. I had to dig into my Midwest fishing bag of tricks. I gave into the dreaded drop shot to entice some suspended bass.

As February came around, my hopes for warmer weather intensified. The fish grew more active as the water temperatures climbed into the mid fifties. I connected with a few four and five pounders and plenty of dinks. Then, the unexpected. A winter Armageddon hit the South with freezing temperatures and snow in Louisiana. I left Nebraska in hopes to get away from the snow and instead, it followed me across the state lines. I started to wonder if I was going to see spawning season at all during my short stay.



Schools, airports and many roads were all closed. I spent endless hours in my hotel room staring at my rods. Then I ran into a Facebook post from a fellow Hobie Fishing Team member. He was holding a trophy bass caught in Texas while prefishing for a Kayak Bass Series tournament scheduled that weekend. Surprised, I realized the lake was only two hours away. I registered and drove the icy roads, arriving just in time for the

captains' meeting.

Everything happened so fast, I'd had no chance to look for a hotel. I had no option but to rough it and sleep in my truck. I spent the night cranking the engine to get some heat.

There was no time to scout. I only knew that Sam Rayburn reservoir has over 114,500 acres of fishing spots. I fired up my Lowrance Elite 7 CHIRP and saw a submerged road with significant drop-offs that could potentially produce fish on a Carolina rig. I'd have to pedal my Pro Angler four miles to get to it. It was a plan.

Four o'clock came fast. I brewed some coffee, threw a couple of candy bars and bananas (bad luck right?) into my H-Crate and drove off to the Harvey Creek Park ramp. As I reached the end of my long four-mile pedal, I was disappointed to see several bass boats stacked on top of my submerged road. I felt a bit angry. With the water temperature in the low forties I knew the bass would be deep.

I had no option but to start the morning on gentle drops with Rat-L-Traps, chatterbaits and jerkbaits. Then I noticed hundreds of coots floating near the point where the coveted submerged road comes into the lake. Could there be grass under them? I moved quietly in and quickly confirmed that there was indeed grass in the whole area.

Skeptically, I worked a Texas-rigged baby brush hog in watermelon red (pictured) through the three- to six-foot shallows. After a few casts, I felt a strong jolt. I gave the fish a second and set the hook like my life depended on it. I couldn't believe the depth of the bend in my rod. A big yellow fish briefly flashed in



the stained water. For a second I thought I'd snagged a carp. Then the bucket mouth breached the water. I kept my 65-pound braided line tight. I couldn't let this beast spit the hook.

I reached down, still wearing my old-school leather gloves, and grabbed the bass by the mouth. I could not believe that in one hour and a half I already had a giant in my yak. My heart was still racing and my hands shaking. I still had to photograph this mobile cinder block on my measuring board. The fish didn't cooperate, but I managed a few good pictures. He measured 22 inches and weighed in at six pounds. After a successful release, I was pumped and ready to give my fellow anglers a run for their money.

The next few hours proved to be very challenging. I was about to give up. With exactly five minutes left, I caught my last fish. It took the quickest catch, photo, and release of my life, but I just made it.

At the award ceremony, the tournament director called my name as the third place angler as well as the Big Bass winner. With no time to prep or pre-fish such a big lake, I couldn't believe my good fortune.

March came with more cold fronts. I never did see a spawn during my three-month quest for a double-digit bass. As I headed back to Nebraska, I was far from sad. That shot-in-the-dark shallow water six pounder was a fish I could never forget.



We often talk about fishing techniques and fish location and things like that, and sometimes we forget about the nuts and bolts of fishing. A regular reader of this column contacted me recently and suggested I talk about the baits we should keep in a tacklebox, and I thought that was a good idea. Jigs are perhaps the backbone of many anglers fishing, so let's talk about jigs and another time we'll cover other types of lures for fishing. First though, jigs.

Jigs are effective all year for a wide variety of fish. Many anglers have a tackle box dedicated just to jigs. In fact, lots and lots of anglers have containers dedicated to just one style of jig. For instance, they might have a box just for jigs that they use for live-bait, and another for jigs that they use when they're tipping with plastic. Some jigs are best for live-bait, others are better for plastic: There truly is a difference.

Let's start with walleyes. A jig and minnow is about as popular as you get for 'eyes. You'll want a few sixteenth ounce, a few eighth ounce, and a few quarter ounce jigs. If you fish in rivers or deep water a lot, some three-eighth and half ounce jigs will be necessary. Day in and day out in most walleye waters, eighth ounce will be the most popular.

Color is the fun part of selecting a bait. When the fish are hungry and want to get caught, color often doesn't matter, although often a particular color will catch more or bigger fish.

When the fish are a bit finicky, color can be a very important consideration. There are so many colors and color combinations, it's just not practical or possible to have them all. For walleyes, you need



Jigs In Your Box

By Bob Jensen

chartreuse and you need orange jigs. Black or white or yellow or purple can be productive, but you need chartreuse and orange. Watermelon is another color that is extremely good.

Now about live bait jigs and plastic bait jigs. When using live bait, a short-shanked jig is the way to go. Fire-Ball jigs are a good example of an outstanding live bait jig. When using minnows, put the hook in the minnows mouth and out the hard part of its head. Get the minnows lips right up to the jig head. It will stay on the hook longer and hook-ups will increase when hooked this way. Hook leeches through the sucker, thread crawlers on.

When using plastic on a jig, use a long-shanked hook, something like a Slurp! Jig. Thread the plastic on so the nose of the plastic is next to the jighead. Again, with the hook farther back, the more hook-ups you'll have. Use a head that contrasts in color with the plastic: Orange/chartreuse is a great starting point.

In stained water, a jig with a spinner or propeller and a plastic tail with an aggressive tail action can be deadly. The added flash will help the fish find your bait easier. A Whistler Jig has a propeller, a Thumper Jig (pictured) has the spinner.

And then there are the traditional marabou and bucktail jigs. They've been around forever and they still catch fish. Marabou has a little more undulating action, but bucktail catches 'em good at times also.

When I started this, I thought we could cover jigs for all species of fish. After about two sentences I knew jigs were so versatile we would only be able to cover walleyes. We'll talk about jigs for other species some other time. For now, know that jigs catch lots of fish much of the time. Add jigs to your fishing arsenal if you haven't already done so.

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. If you do Facebook, check us out for a variety of fishing related things.

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Ice Fishing Zone



BLUEGILLS AT THE BUZZER

By Garrett Svir

It's the end of the fourth quarter, you're down by a 10" bull gill but there is not much time left on the clock. Luckily oxygen levels have increased, plankton blooms are now large, and even without much for living weeds the shallows are alive with life again. The mid- winter doldrums are behind us and due to the increase in oxygen levels, aggression levels are high. The lake accesses are now usually empty as many anglers have put ice fishing gear away in anticipation for the first open water adventures of the year. Here are some tips to help you hit that last season winning bluegill at the buzzer.



Go North

When scouting new water at late ice focus on the northern end of lakes. This area is receiving the most sunlight penetration and will have the largest plankton blooms starting the food chain. Some of my favorite areas to look are shallow flats adjacent to black bottom bays. Unlike during mid-winter healthy weeds are not necessary to hold fish shallow this time of year. If you do find living cabbage or coontail in these areas you will most certainly experience some spectacular fishing. If the shallow flats are void of life start following the most direct routes to deep water on your lake map. You may have showed up shallow before the fish. Use the process of elimination to continue your search. Anglers that fish memories can have good outings and bad outings. An angler with a strong process of striking out and finding fish by eliminating unproductive water and working through seasonal migrations will succeed



more often than not. Doing things like finding warmer water, pinpointing spawning and black bottom feeding bays, looking for green weeds with an underwater camera, and drawing some direct routes to deep water near these areas will lead you to late season success.

Be Stealthy

Fishing in the extreme shallows successfully requires a certain level of stealth. When searching for giant bluegills I will often drill holes before the sun rises. Another great advancement for fishing the shallows has been the drill auger. My K-Drill, from Ice Fishing Today, hooks up to a cordless drill and allows me to be quiet and continue to make moves throughout the day. The entire set up weighs only ten pounds and rips through about one

inch of ice per second. If moving through the frozen tundra with the speed and stealth of an arctic ninja is your goal, give the drill augers a try.

Try to limit any additional noise when searching for shallow bulls. Last year on a late ice adventure, I was sitting in my Clam carefully working two giant bluegills for what seemed like an eternity. All of a sudden both fish scattered just seconds before my fishing partner showed up at my window to ask how the fishing was. We were both somewhat surprised how simple footsteps would spook these fish through over twenty inches of ice. We did however learn an important lesson on limiting whatever noise possible when fishing shallow water.

Small Moves Mean Big Success

Bluegills often have certain routes they follow to escape predation and to feed. A few feet can make a big difference. Remember the old adage that big moves find fish and small moves catch fish. Once I've located some shallow late ice giants, I will make a series of micro moves often moving only 5-10 ft. You will be surprised how much this will increase your success rate. For



instance last year on a late ice adventure we had located a patch of green cabbage that came right up to the surface. We found bluegills stacked up in the holes directly surrounding the large cabbage patch. Ten feet away on the drop off leading to deeper water we found the crappies. I fished a tournament on Lake Okoboji in Iowa a few years ago and watched winning bags of fish come from specific feeding lanes when angler's only feet away didn't have a fish in their bucket. While making small moves and sight fishing will teach you a lot about their movements, a camera will shorten the learning curve exponentially. In extreme shallow water the cone angle on your flasher becomes very narrow thus limiting your information to right before fish are in your line of vision. A camera can be quickly deployed, turned, and then picked up and brought over to the next hole. This will provide great information on where to move next. It will show you fish, condition of remaining weeds, bottom composition and sometimes even the food source.

Search Baits and Deal Makers

When I'm in search mode at late ice, I typically set out with a heavier rod and some bigger baits. I simply want to locate fish. Once located you can then figure out what it takes to get bit on that particular day and downsize to small tungsten and light rods. The problem with searching while using micro presentations is that it often wastes time. While in search mode you want something that will get down

to the fish quick and show up from a long distance away. When fishing shallow electronics don't often tell the entire story so spending a few moments at each hole may uncover what you're looking for. One particular search bait that has produced fantastic results for me these past few seasons is the Northland Tungsten Silver Spoon (pictured). The compact design and small hook on this bait makes it a panfish favorite. Pair this with the flash and vibration that this spoon offers and you have the perfect search set up.

The days are growing longer and getting warmer, soon late ice will be upon us. Quick fishing trips after work are now an option. Many days you may have the lake to yourself. While many may choose to spend the days preparing their boats for warmer days ahead this writer longs for a few more meals of skin on bluegill fillets. Be safe and don't miss some of the great opportunities left in this hard water season.

The author Garrett Svir is the owner of Slab Seeker Guide Service

<http://www.slabseekerfishing.com> and specializes in pursuing trophy bluegills.



Well- balanced Presentations Trigger More 'Ice' Fish



*Role of the rod
and line in ice-
fishing success,
plus late-ice*

By Mark Strand

This winter, we've focused on what Dave Genz considers the keys to presenting a bait to fish under the ice. About the effectiveness of horizontal jigs, knot positioning, and cadence of the presentation. To tie a bow around the topic, a bit

about the crucial role the rod and line play in your ability to execute the Genz pounding presentation and experiment with cadence.

Line

The line you use for ice fishing has to be fresh, and has to match up well with the weight of your bait. Everything else you do can be perfect, but if your line is too thick (“heavy”) for the bait, “it won’t hang straight,” says Genz. “Even if it’s just a little too heavy, it robs you of the feel you need to fish the bait and detect bites.”

Genz is meticulous about his line, changing it frequently, and often hand-stretching the first 20 feet or so at the start of the day, to remove any tendency for the line to coil when lowered down the hole. Fresh, limp line matched well with the bait provides you with a direct connection between the rod and the bait. “You can make that bait do what you want it to,” he says, “when your line is hanging straight and does not have memory. If it’s too heavy and has coils in it, you can’t feel much and the bait doesn’t react to what you’re doing with the rod.”

Rod

Genz has spoken many times about his rod preferences for ice fishing.

“They need to function,” he says, “like long rods in miniature.”

Genz prefers ice rods that are relatively stiff and “very crisp,” so that the bottom of each jigging cycle can be felt in his hand. “The right rod,” he says, “allows me to do anything from hard pounding to a softer, slower, smoother presentation.”

It’s well known that Genz does not like spring bobbers, because of how they smooth out and slow down cadence in presentation.



“If a slower, smoother presentation is what the fish want,” he says, “you can easily do that with a good graphite rod. And there are ways of detecting light bites by watching as much as feeling; you’re watching the rod tip all the time, and you can see when the line moves slightly to the left or right, or if

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the rod tip dips slightly. When that happen, you set the hook.”

On light-biting fish, if you miss on the first few hooksets, Genz advises, try dropping the rod tip when you see a bite occur. Drop the rod tip, hesitate, then set the hook. The time, and slack line, often allows the fish (if it is so inclined) to take that “second bite” and get the hook into its mouth. “A lot of times,” says Genz, “the fish will just kind of softly suck at it the first time, and the bait is touching on the outside of the mouth. When you drop the rod tip, if they decide they want it, they will suck it in and you can catch them.”



On most days, a rapid cadence, giving off good vibration, will attract and trigger more fish than a softer, more muted cadence. After all these years of fishing almost every day all winter, Genz has concluded that the biggest mistake anglers make is slowing down or stopping their jigging motion when fish show up.

“You should keep the movement going,” he says. “I see most of the spring-bobber people stop when a fish swims up to it. They just hold it still and watch for the spring to move. But when you do that, if your line has any twist, the jig

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starts to spin. Most of the time, the fish don't like a spinning jig.

"When you're using a rapid cadence, and keep it going after the fish comes in, the lure doesn't spin. And if you keep doing what brought the fish in, and experiment with raising or lowering the jig as you keep it vibrating, it gets more of the fish to bite. And they tend to bite down on it harder, because they tend to chase it more, and work harder at getting it all the way into their mouth."

After each fish or missed bite, when you reel up to put on bait or rotate the knot on the eyelet of the jig, take a few seconds to let the line 'un-spin' to further minimize the curse of the spinning jig.

As we head into prime late-ice panfish time, here's one example of a well-balanced setup, featuring a new rod Genz designed in the Ice Team Professional series. Match the 26-inch bluegill rod with 2- or 4-pound-test line, and the new Dave Genz Drop-Kick tungsten jig (pictured). Any size jig in the series will match up well with this system.

March Ice Fishing

We won't leave you hangin' when it comes to late-ice panfish action. Here are key tips from Genz for catching fish during some of the nicest days of the year.

* First, be safe out there. Across the Midwestern Ice Belt, the landscape varies from ice-free on the southern fringes to thick and sturdy ice in northerly strongholds. Regularly check ice conditions, and

wear a life jacket.

* This is the time of winter when shallow water comes alive, as oxygen returns and water temperatures warm. Daylength increases and the sun eats away at snow cover, especially around shorelines. Sun penetrates the ice, and weeds can even begin to grow again. As a result, shallow spots that held no fish at midwinter can be teeming with life.

* Larger lakes tend to be better than smaller lakes, because, all things being equal, fish come out of the midwinter doldrums in better condition and tend to be more active.

* Head for bays on the north side of these larger lakes. A bay on the north side receives southern exposure, which means it gets more life-pumping sunshine on an average day, as late winter prepares to give way to early spring.

“During the transition between midwinter and late ice,” says Genz, “look for fish to start moving toward the shallows. They might still be in deeper water, but they might be staging close to the shallows. That’s why this can be a tricky time, so you have to look, keep moving, and drill enough holes to find where they are.”

If you don’t find fish deep, look shallower. If you don’t find them shallow, look deeper, especially close to large south-facing bays, inflowing creeks and rivers, manmade inlets and canals. Be extremely careful around current, as you always should.

But get out there and take part in one of the best portions of the ice-fishing season.

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.

Great panfishing days await March ice anglers, as increasing daylength and strengthening sun bring life to shallow water. A well-balanced rod, line, and lure setup allows ice fishing legend Dave Genz to experiment with the cadence of his presentation, and to detect even light biters. (Photo: davegenz.com)



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THE PURSUIT OF BIG PIKE

By Jason Mitchell

The black Dacron line slid through my gloves as it sliced back and forth in the hole. Every time the fish came close to the bottom of the ice, the fish rolled and ran. The power was untamed and unpredictable. There was no doubt that a big pike was on the end of the line but that assumption was confirmed as the long shadow slid underneath the hole. As the fish rolled closer, water rose up and down in the hole, the telltale sign of serious water displacement. Big fish move water and this was a big fish.

For so many ice anglers, pike provide that thrill... the thrill of catching a large powerful fish. Pike are a top of the line predator with dangerous teeth and an attitude to match the intimidating appearance. When pike surpass the benchmark of forty inches in length, the not only inspire awe but they can be a downright handful. A beautiful challenge and photo op for any ice angler.

Big pike can be specifically targeted on many bodies of water right now and the late ice window might

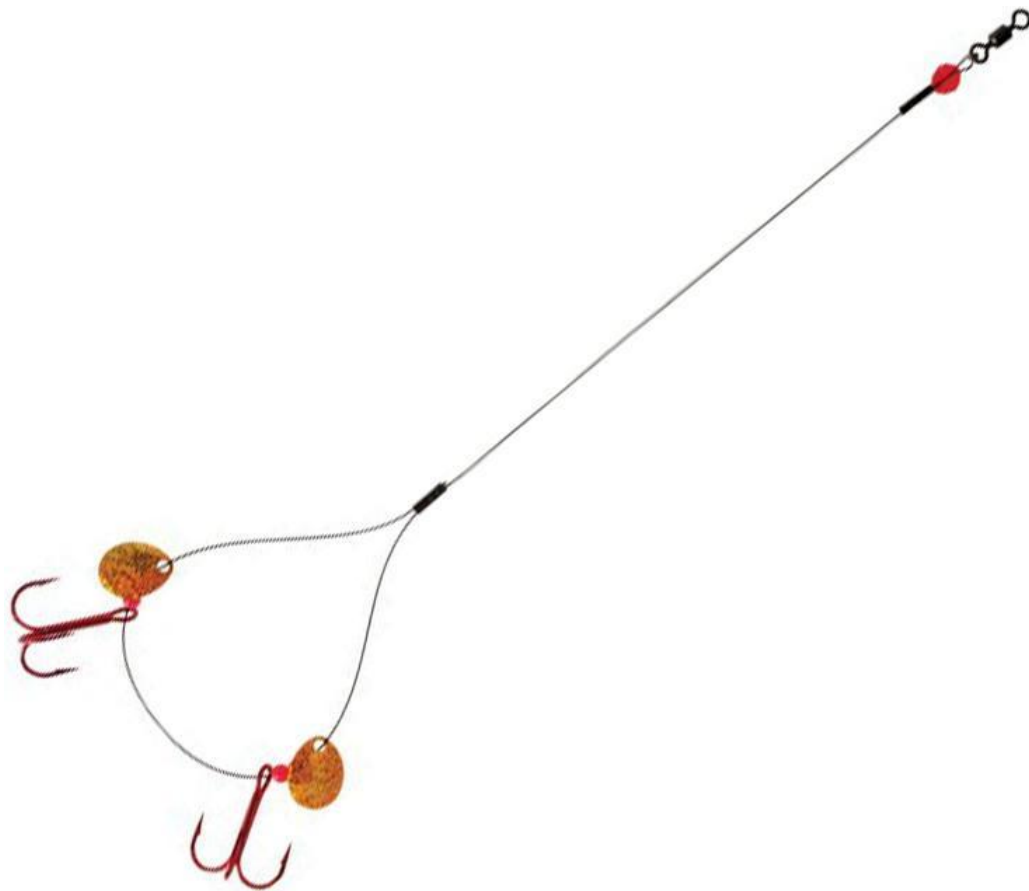
be one of the most coveted prime time opportunities for seeing some of the biggest pike each season. Prime locations right now combine big fish opportunities with open seasons for specifically targeting these species. Top locations include Lake of the Woods and the big reservoirs on the Missouri River like Fort Peck, Lake Sakakawea and Lake Oahe right now. Other notable picks include Devils Lake and Red Lake but there are many more obscure fisheries particularly on smaller lakes that offer great pike fishing at late ice. If I had to pick a top pike region right now with big fish capabilities, I would lean towards the Missouri River reservoirs of Fort Peck, Sakakawea and Oahe. These reservoirs were rejuvenated with strong year classes of pike almost a decade ago from high water and these reservoirs all boast impressive numbers of quality fish with big fish potential. If your quest is to crack a big pike, fish these prime locations at prime time.

What makes late ice so attractive for pike anglers is that these fish concentrate in predictable locations. The larger bays in the Missouri River reservoirs all have pike populations. Typically, most of the big pike are caught at late ice in the back 1/3rd of the bay. As a general rule of thumb, nice warm weather that thaws and moves water into the backs of these bays will typically pull fish shallow where as cold fronts will push the fish deeper into the channels. A few years back, Jason Votova and myself filmed an episode for our television show in the back of Douglas Bay on Lake Sakakawea. Votova likes to set out tip ups perpendicular across the creek arms and bays to intersect pike as they push in and out of this location. Instead of following a specific contour, Votova maintains that he contacts more pike by cutting across the bay perpendicular with holes so he has baits set at different depths. Some days, the fish might follow a ten-foot break as they slide up the tributary. Other days the fish might be running



deeper or shallower, this mentality and hole placement puts more bait in front of fish as they move.

Jig rods catch pike. Swim baits and large flutter spoons can do a number on pike but day in and day out, there are few things that can rival dead bait below a tip up. Classic Beaver Dams are still one of the best. Pair the tip up with the heaviest Dacron line you can find. Many serious big pike fanatics will use forty pound or heavier Dacron. The reason for the heavy Dacron is twofold; handling big fish but the heavier line also rolls off the tip up spool much smoother and doesn't slice into the bottom of the ice or your hands as much.



Still one of the best rigs for catching large pike is a simple steel or titanium leader with a snap connected to a large size treble hook. Unsnap the hook and push the eye and shank of the treble through a large dead smelt, herring or alewife. After the eye of the hook is pushed through the bait, snap the treble hook back on to the leader. This causes the bait to ride horizontal and the larger hook has a better gap and penetration particularly when dealing with large pike. Less can also go wrong with one big hook, as you don't have a second hook getting caught on the ice when fighting a fish at the hole. Quick strike options that use multiple hooks are also popular and are often the answer when fish start short striking the bait or won't run with the bait. Top quick strike rigs include the Bigtooth Tackle Quick Strike Rigs (pictured) made by Clam Pro Tackle.

Big dead baits typically catch the biggest fish. Smelt are often the most popular and easiest to find but attempt to use baits that are at least eight inches or longer. The advantage of smelt is that they are soft and bend easy in the mouth of fish so the batting average can be much higher with smelt. Some other baits like frozen anchovies and herring however seem to have much more oil and smell and often get more bites. Big dead baits can sometimes be challenging to find so you might have to order them in bulk from a commercial fish distributor on either the east or west coast.

While the big dead baits are usually the best bet, there are situations where downsizing produces more hook ups. There are times especially when dealing with really thick ice where the resistance at the bottom of the ice as fish peel off line produces enough friction where fish will drop the bait. There are also some situations where the fish are running and then dropping the bait because of the line hitting flooded vegetation and debris. Small pike will also often drop big dead baits prematurely. If you are getting flags but just cannot connect or the fish are repeatedly no longer on the bait when you get to the tip up, go down to half a dead bait and try to stick them sooner without waiting.

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A few additional tips for targeting the biggest pike of the ice season. Warm weather increases the amount of runoff and flow into the back end of these major spawning bays and tributaries. If water is moving up and down in the hole, you have water moving. Also watch the shorelines and look for thaw as water seeps into the ice. Typically, this thaw will stain the water and improve the bite dramatically as you work towards the far back ends of these bays. Cold nights and fronts can often halt this process so typically where the fish set up is influenced by incoming flow. When the water starts to move, we often find fish shallower and further back. When the water is not moving, focus on the sharper breaks and slightly deeper water towards the secondary points within these bays.

While pike are fairly abundant across the ice belt and provide ample opportunities, big pike are a special fish and are not as common. Not only does it take the right water to grow big pike but a pike also has to live long enough to reach that trophy status. Pike are such gluttonous predators that we often see big pike fisheries develop because of remoteness where fish can avoid angling for large time frames without getting caught. As a result, catch and release is crucial for preserving big pike fisheries. In order for a pike to measure forty five inches long in most bodies of water in the lower 48, that pike was probably released when the fish was 36 inches, again when it was 40 inches and so on.

Think of good pike releases much like musky angling today. Have your release tools handy. Keep the fish in the water until you can unhook the fish. Pose with a nice picture and get the fish back in the water. There are few moments in ice angling like watching a fish as large and powerful as a forty inch plus pike wave you good by as that big powerful tail kicks as that fish swims away. This season, make some of these memories for yourself and feed your fascination for big fish with these fascinating predators.

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POLAR FIRE

March On The Ice

By Bob Jensen

It seems like February just started and I'm already looking forward to ice-fishing in March. March is my favorite month for ice-fishing. The days are longer, the weather isn't as cold, and the fish like to get caught in March. Following are some things to keep in mind to catch more fish through the ice until the end of the ice season.

First, be safe. The weather can really warm up toward the end of the ice season, and ice conditions can change quickly. Ice that was safe on Friday might not be safe on Sunday. I've seen lots of times when ice that was okay in the morning wasn't at the end of the day. Keep close tabs on ice conditions.

Also keep close tabs on the regulations. Some states close walleye season in February, some states let you fish walleyes year 'round. The regulations are even different within some states. Some areas of the



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state will allow walleye fishing all year while other areas of the state close the season for a while. Know where you are and what is allowed.

The start of the day and the end of the day are the prime times to be on the ice. There will be flurries throughout the day, and weather conditions can create good fishing at mid-day, but much of the time the first couple of hours and the last couple of hours of daylight will be the best. I was fishing with some friends in South Dakota in March a year or two ago and they very accurately predicted when the bite would intensify. The pattern for the last several days had been when the sun got just above the horizon at the end of the day, the perch turned on. It happened like clock-work. Take advantage of that end-of-the-day bite if you can.

Some other fishing patterns get sketchy this time of the year, just like they do at most times of the year. One of my very successful ice-fishing friends says that in March there are lots of bugs and worms and stuff hatching on the bottom of the lake, and that we should use baits that mimic those food sources. We do and we catch fish.

Another very successful ice-fishing friend confirms that bug- life and such is hatching on the lake bottom, and the fish see so much of that bug-life that they like something that looks different. When I fish with that friend, we use baits that look nothing like what the fish are eating, and we catch fish. It's important to remember that we need to show the fish what they want to eat, not what we want them to eat. For fishing success, whether it be under the ice or in open water, we need to keep experimenting with different presentations until we find what the fish want to eat on that day. Their preference will change by the day and by the hour.

With that said, much of the time in March we'll be after perch or crappies. And, much of the time we'll have something like a Mooska Tungsten Jig or a Tungsten Banana Bug tied to the line. Most of the time it will be tipped with an Impulse Bloodworm or Mini Smelt. The tungsten baits enable us to use smaller baits in deeper water, and the Impulse is so much more durable and versatile than live bait.

The month of March signals to most of us that the end of another ice-fishing season is in sight. It also signals some of the best ice-action of the year for many of us. Find out for yourself how good ice-fishing can be in March.

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. If you do Facebook, check us out for a variety of fishing related things.



POINSETT PERCH

**By Ted Takasaki
and Scott Richardson**

After several weeks of sub-zero temperatures, the ice fishing season across the upper Midwest is finally in full swing. We were able to at last get out on the ice a few weeks ago and what a day it was! Warm temperatures in the mid 30s greeted us as we drove out onto Lake Poinsett in South Dakota.

The ice conditions on Poinsett: more than 12 inches. Permanent fish houses and pickup trucks were scattered all over the lake. Large groups of anglers were congregated throughout the basin of Poinsett and it took some time to figure out where to start. We were traveling with my good buddy, Scott Bauer, and we drove our truck outside of and around the packs of ice anglers until we felt the location was suitable for drilling some holes.

Lake Poinsett is one of the largest lakes in South Dakota at almost 8,000



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acres, with a maximum depth of about 22 feet. This lake is located in Hamlin County and has several accesses that make it easy to get out to where the fish are. There is a variety of fish that inhabit this lake, including yellow perch, walleyes, northern pike, smallmouth bass, and crappies. It is one of the best lakes for fishing in South Dakota.

After drilling a few holes at 16 feet along the edge of the mud basin and checking them with our new Humminbird Helix 5 Ice Machine, we found several marks which indicated there were some fish under us.



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Scott immediately caught four jumbo perch and a couple small walleyes, before the rest of us could even get our rods out of our carrying cases! There was no doubt that we were excited about a great fishing day.

The action was tremendous for the next few hours. Another good friend of ours, “300 pounds of Smitty,” joined us, and we proceeded to pound on the fish. We released numbers of smaller fish and kept some of the extraordinarily large perch that Poinsett is famous for.

After talking to some of the local anglers around us, it appeared that the bright, warm, and sunny conditions had really turned the bite on. We didn’t even get there until mid-morning. The extreme early morning bite was tough and the also action slowed down for us as the sun drew closer to the horizon. Ted found that banging the bottom with a spoon tipped with a minnow head or wax worms was the best technique. It seemed like the fish would be attracted by smacking the muddy silt basin bottom. By lifting our lures a few inches at a time, we were able to trigger bites. It is always a good idea to change your jigging motion several times during the day. This allows you to determine what the fish want at that very moment.

Ted was using St. Croix’s new Avid Glass rods and it appeared that they were instrumental in detecting some very light bites. The limber fiberglass tip acts as a spring bobber, which allows you to see very subtle biting fish. The trick to catching the light biters is to see the bite, then let the limber rod slowly bend and then set the hook. These new Avid glass ice rods have just the right action to allow the fish to bite, but not feel the rod above, thus allowing us to get a hook into the fish.

We were very comfortable fishing out in the open on the ice during this warm, sunny day. But having a portable fish house/heater available is always a good precaution in case you are going out in more cold, adverse weather conditions. We believe that when fishing on ice, being comfortable catching fish is much more enjoyable than being miserably cold and catching fish.

So try taking a trip out to Lake Poinsett, South Dakota and enjoy some of the great ice fishing the state has to offer. It is advantageous to check out all of the online reports and then make a decision on where you want to go. There’s always fish to be caught and fresh perch frying on the pan to be enjoyed.

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On Frozen Pond



By Bob Jensen

We're on the back side of winter, and that means a couple of things. We'll probably get another winter storm or two, and we're also entering a period of outstanding ice-fishing action. End of the winter ice-fishing can be productive and enjoyable for a couple of reasons. For one thing, the days are longer. That means more time to spend on the ice.

For another thing, the weather gets warmer, and can also be more stable. That means the fish will be in a biting mood more of the time, and fish that are in a biting mood will be easier to catch.

Small ponds are abundant across much of ice-fishing country. Recently I went fishing with a dad and his young son. We went to a pond on a warm day when the weather had been stable. Largemouth bass were our quarry, although many ponds also have crappies and bluegills and the like. Ponds like these are perfect for introducing someone to ice-fishing. Fish can usually be found quickly in the smaller waters, they're often protected from the wind, and they usually don't get much fishing pressure.

The first task is to locate a pond and get permission to fish. Any information the pond-owner can provide can be helpful. Some ponds have fish, some don't. If the owner indicates fish have never been stocked, continue your search for a pond that has fish.

On smaller ponds, just pop a few holes and look around with your depthfinder. The depthfinder is an invaluable tool any time you're on the ice. On our recent trip, the pond had lots of slimy vegetation on

the bottom. If we let our bait hit the bottom, it picked up the slime. We had to reel in to remove it. By watching our bait on the depthfinder, we were able to stop the bait above the bottom.

The bass we caught on this day were running high. We had to keep our baits above them, and the depthfinder enabled us to do this easily. I shared my depthfinder with my young angling friend and he quickly picked up on how to use it. Seeing his bait, then seeing a fish come up to it and eat it added to the excitement. Young people are into video games, and this was kind of like a video game except he was rewarded with a bass every now and then.

Sixteenth ounce Buck-Shot Rattle Spoons tipped with an Impulse Mini Smelt were the hot set-up. Color didn't matter: These were hungry fish that just wanted something to eat. If we put the bait down there, they would eat it. We shook the rod tip pretty aggressively to get their attention, but once they came in, we held the bait as motionless as possible. Sometimes though, we had to slowly lift it to get them to bite.

When you take a youngster ice-fishing, a couple things are important. First, let them entertain themselves if they want to. Don't force them to fish if they want to take a break and slide on the ice or explore or whatever.

Second, make sure they are dressed appropriately, and when they get cold, go home. The first couple of ice-fishing excursions should be fairly short.

On our couple of hour ice trip, we didn't catch any big ones, but we caught quite a few. The sign of

success was when the young angler asked "When can we go again".

The next month or two will provide good opportunities to spend some time on a pond pulling fish through the ice. I'm sure that if you give it a shot, you'll enjoy it.

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The advertisement features a yellow background with several colorful larva fly fishing lures displayed in the center. The lures have various colored heads (black, red, green, white) and hackles. The text is bold and eye-catching, with a starburst graphic for the 'New for 2015!' announcement.

A large flock of geese is flying in a clear blue sky. In the foreground, several geese are standing in a field of dry, golden-brown grass. The geese are white with dark wings and necks. The sky is a deep blue with some light clouds. The geese are flying in various directions, some towards the camera and others away from it. The overall scene is a naturalistic depiction of a large flock of geese in their habitat.

Hunting Zone



Far too many campers are fair weather campers, especially river campers. Our Ozark streams are a national treasure and attract thousands of floaters and campers during the three summer months. Numbers drop dramatically by September. October brings out the fall color enthusiasts. However, during the winter months Ozark streams are almost void of floaters and campers.

Essentials For Cold Weather River Camping

By Bill Cooper

What a shame. The winter months provide the avid outdoorsman with a much sought after ingredient for floating and camping trips – solitude.

After the leaves fall, whole new vistas appear that warm weather float campers miss. Bluffs, caves, springs, rock shelters and outcroppings, and other interesting geologic features become more visible allowing for extra exploratory adventure.

Too, after the human traffic slows, nature seems to come out of hiding. Bald Eagles hunt for prey along river corridors. Mink, otters, muskrats, and raccoons are seen more often and the Great Blue Herons seem easier to approach.

It is not uncommon to float near a whitetail deer crossing a stream or feeding on watercress. They seem to have forgotten about the hordes of canoes that were present during the summer. The assembly call of wild turkey hens rounding up their poults can often be heard in the fields and forests bordering the river. And, the lucky cold weather floater may get a glimpse of these majestic birds.

One of my favorite surprises is to round a bend and flush colorful Wood Ducks from an eddy or slough. Mallards and Blue-Winged Teal may be seen during the cold months as well.

Those are a few of the benefits of floating and camping during cold weather, now let's take a look at some of the essentials for a safe and comfortable cold weather float and camp trip.

The first and most essential element of such an adventure is the desire to go. Make a trip with an experienced person first, if you can. They can save you light years of experimenting with equipment and food and certainly help you to begin to enjoy the excursions quicker.

Preparations and planning are half the fun. Make lists of what you intend to take along and check it twice. Leaving an essential item at home in the summer may not be devastating, but in cold weather months, that could be a serious mistake.

Research is an important part of the planning process. Find out which river you want to float, where access and take-out points are. Collect maps that point out areas of interest and aide in planning side trips and routes of escape in emergencies.

The Current River, south of Salem, is a part of the Ozark National Scenic Riverways. Access and take-out points are plentiful as are canoe livery operations. Akers Ferry Canoe Rental offers year round service. 1-800-365-2537.

The Eleven Point River, near Alton, is part of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System administered by the U.S. Forest Service. It is my personal favorite of all our Ozark Stream. It is remote, wild, and spectacular



views are the norm. The Eleven Point Canoe Rental in Alton is open year round. Owner Brian Sloss also runs a drift boat, and provides excellent flyfishing trips.

Planning a cold weather trip takes extra care. Hypothermia is a real threat on such trips. Proper clothing, food and shelter will minimize the threat, however.

Sporting catalogs are full of excellent cold weather clothing choices. Polypropylene underwear is still hard to beat. The lightweight material adds warmth while whisking moisture away from the skin. Light weight wool pants and shirts are superb insulators. Top those with GoreTex or some comparable wind and waterproof garment and you can remain comfortable in very cold temperatures. Warm gloves and hats are necessary as well.

Always dress in layers during cold weather so that layers can be taken off or added as needed. A quality set of rainwear as a top layer is the best way to go. Getting caught in a cold rain or snow without protection is very hazardous.

Tents and sleeping bags are a matter of choice, but good gear will be much appreciated on cold nights. Coleman makes some high quality tents at an affordable price. Sleeping should be rated near zero.



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Packing a sheet or fleece liner is added insurance.

Most women are rather cold natured. Dian has a trick that works wonders on cold nights. She packs a few of the HotHands packs for cold nights. She drops one to the bottom of her sleeping bag. Her toes stay toasty all night.



Foods that provide quick energy keep cold weather campers warm and energized. Hot meals warm not only the tummy, but the spirit as well. Giving attention to details and keeping morale and physical strength at peak levels aides' endurance.

Choice of cooking gear is a highly personal matter. However, cooking meals in a Dutch oven over an open fire turns meal times into highlights of any trip.

Camps can be as elaborate as imagination and finances allow. Camp cots, chairs, tables, grill grates, lanterns, coolers, and heaters all add comfort to a cold weather camp.

Canoeing is a fun way to go for a cold weather float and camp trip. I have enjoyed paddling a canoe on such trips for over three decades. However, as I have grown older and endured an arm surgery, I rely more on a small jetboat I can still enjoy floating along quietly, but have the option of using the motor to get me where I need to go with less physical effort. Too, the boat is comforting to have should weather turn bad or an emergency arise.

Too, the 18-foot by 3-foot boat allows me to carry more equipment, which means a more comfortable camp. I enjoy staying in one camping spot for a longer period of time than I did years ago. It is convenient to not have to move camp every day. A jetboat makes that possible.

As I pen this article, the stars of the cold November sky shine overhead. The campfire warms my body and soul. The howls of coyotes echo through the hills. Barred Owls sound off down the river. The smells of a peach gobbler cooking in the Dutch oven over a bed of coals teases my olfactory lobes. The peacefulness of this cold weather river camp I enjoy alone, while most people people are sitting at home watching TV.

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Firearms were used by our ancestors to put food on the table and for defense. Many of us use them for that purpose today. One thing our ancestors knew, and something some people today have forgotten, is the importance of keeping your firearm clean and ready for use. If not well maintained, your rifle or shotgun is nothing more than an expensive paperweight.

I grew up in a household that had firearms, and I

learned at an early age to both respect and to take care of them. I learned to shoot using an old .410 bolt-action shotgun and with that gun I helped put food on the table. I learned to break that shotgun down and cleaned every part after use. Today I own two firearms; a Mossberg 500, 12 gauge pump and a Marlin semi-

Take Care of Your Firearm and It Will Take Care of You

By Dana Benner

auto .22 rifle. I know that shotgun like the back of my hand. I know what it can do, and what it cannot. I hunt deer, upland game and waterfowl with that gun, and believe me, nothing says home defense like a 12-gauge. I rely heavily upon that shotgun. The .22 is used to hunt small game and to teach people how to shoot. I make sure both are properly maintained and ready to go when I need them.

Cleaning your firearm on a regular basis is the easiest and least expensive way of making sure that it will work when you need it to. I know people who only clean their firearms a few times per year, no matter how much they use them. That could be a dangerous and a costly mistake. You have no idea how many times I have seen firearms, either on the shooting range or in the field, malfunction simply due to improper, or lack of, basic maintenance.

There are two types of maintenance for your firearm; field stripping and a complete breakdown.

Consult your firearm's manual before doing either one. Mossberg recommends that gun owner's only field strip their shotguns and leave complete breakdowns to properly trained gunsmiths. Unless something goes wrong with your firearm, there should be no need to do a complete breakdown and if you clean your firearm regularly, there should be not be any major problems. Before I go any further, what I am about to say should be common sense, but I am going to say it anyway. Make sure your gun is unloaded before cleaning it. How many stories are in the news about someone shooting themselves or someone else while cleaning their gun? The excuse is always, "I didn't know it was loaded." That is ridiculous and that person should not even own a gun. Just make sure that your gun is unloaded.



Before you begin cleaning, it is important to have all of your supplies ready. Bore brushes and patches, cotton swabs and pipe cleaners, and cleaning products should be gathered and within arm reach. About cleaning products; there are hundreds out there and some work better than others. Always use a high quality product on your firearm. I have found those products put out by Outer's and by Shooter's Choice work best for me. Hoppe's also puts out a good product.



After a day in the field, whether I have fired a shot or not, I always field strip my shotgun and give it a cleaning. I start by laying a towel or newspapers on the floor. I prefer to work on the floor because you can't drop and lose any pieces if you are already on the floor. Separating the barrel from the rest of the shotgun, I set it aside and begin to work on the receiver. The first thing I do is spray the trigger assembly and other hard to reach places with cleaner/solvent. The spray cleaner cleans out any dirt or fouling that may accumulate

there. Then using a cotton swab or a pipe cleaner, I remove particles broken free by the cleaner. Using a clean cotton cloth I usually take some bore cleaner and clean the receiver. An old toothbrush works well to scrub the crevices. Once clean wipe off any excess cleaner and then put a light coat of gun oil on everything I can get to. I can't overstate the importance of wiping off any solvent or cleaner from the firearm, especially from wooden stocks and forearms, as they will ruin the finish if left on.



Setting aside the receiver, I then begin work on the barrel. If your shotgun has removable choke tubes, remove them and clean separately. I clean the choke tube first and then replace it. Mossberg highly recommends to never clean the barrel without the choke tube in place as doing so can damage the fine threads in the barrel. To clean the barrel attach the bore brush to your cleaning rod, dip the brush into the bore solvent and then run it through the barrel a few times to loosen dirt and fouling. With my .22 I use a device called a gun rope, some companies call them "snakes". I don't like using a cleaning rod with a bore brush on the .22 because it has been found that the fine rifling of the .22 can be damaged by the rod. I don't know this for sure, but why take the chance.

After the bore has been scrubbed, remove the brush and run clean patches through the bore. Do this until the patches come out clean. Repeat this process as needed. Don't overlook the handgrips or forearm stock. Wipe these parts with a clean dry cloth. This is important as dirt does get trapped in these parts. Once clean, lightly oil and then re-assemble. As some parts can be put back wrong, double check your work often and then, when fully assembled, work the mechanical aspects of your firearm



(without ammunition) to make sure all mechanical parts work properly. Lightly oil the entire outside of the firearm and you are done.

A firearm that doesn't function properly when you need it to is basically worthless. A little time spent now is well worth the investment. There is no such thing as cleaning your firearm too much. A clean firearm is a safe one, for both you and those around you. Our ancestors knew the importance of a clean, well-functioning firearm, and so should you.

Winter Predator Hunting in Extreme Temps



“Whaaaaa....Whaaa..... WHHHHAA!” The rabbit-in-distress call echoed through the frozen woods.

I had no sooner finished my first calling sequence when I heard, “BOOM!... BOOM!...” My hunting buddy Jon was shooting at something. As I turned, I caught, out of the corner of my eye - about 80 yards out - a giant coyote doing flips and flopping all over the ground. Wow I thought, That didn't take long...

Although this particular hunt didn't last too long, predator hunting is typically a time-intensive hobby that requires a perfect setup, and the proper gear.

The first thing to understand when trying to successfully hunt predators is their natural tendencies. The animal's instinct is to use their eyes, ears and nose to check for safety. They will always try to get well enough downwind to scent check what's going on before committing. So, the trick to predator hunting is to get close enough to where the animal might be... while being able to get a shot at it when it tries to position itself downwind. Basically be there when it's trying to get downwind of the call, or bait site, or whatever. Instinctively these animals are programmed to grab a quick, easy meal under just the right conditions.

**Still Time To
Find Great
Coyote Hunting
Conditions Up**



The first priority is being quiet and scent free. In the setup I described previously- the coyote had no choice but to come running in. From where he was in a very thick chunk of bedding cover, we got downwind and placed ourselves next to a river. For the coyote to scent check the call- he'd have to go swimming, and he wasn't willing to jump in to the frigid, winter water. I always try to set up with some sort of natural barrier behind me, which will prevent predators from ever even thinking about hanging out downwind. That being said- scent control is crucial. To avoid having to get into the frigid water, Jon and I had to access our setup through the same woods the coyote was in. Winter is one of the hardest times of the year to be completely scent free- but in my opinion it is no less critical. After deer season, I wash all of my gear once again- but don't put it away. I continue to store it in scent free containers and use the same approach I do when deer hunting. And I also keep a second set of scent free gear on hand for situations when I'm bringing a friend hunting. Although my winter scent free methods are the same as deer season, I am generally coyote hunting in the Northern Extreme gear because it is much colder in the winter then it is in the fall. I have killed deer in my Northern Extreme gear before- but this past fall for instance, it never got cold enough to warrant it- so I deer hunted in my Outfitter gear. During this coyote hunting season, with average temps in the single digits, the Northern Extreme gear is earning it's keep. I like it because of the reversible camouflage patterns for snow or no snow, as well as the Trinity scent control capabilities. Also, the Northern Extreme gear is super quiet, allowing me to sneak in nice and tight. I like having an extra set of the S3 Snow Suit on hand as well for the situations when I'm bringing along a partner and they don't have high quality, snow camouflage scent control gear. I



also rely heavily on my Trinity Blast spray while winter predator hunting. It's important to remember to keep the sprays inside so they do not freeze in the cold temperatures. On several occasions I have physically seen fresh coyote tracks in my own footprints in the snow. Before using the Trinity Blast spray years ago I could tell that the animals winded me because they would hit my trail and then panic. Now that I am a loyal scent control disciple, the coyotes usually follow my tracks and use them as a trail!

That's my technique in a nutshell- stay quiet, scent free and sneak in close. If everything is in place- any red-blooded predator will come running in. I have several farms I am allowed to predator hunt, and I just hop around all day and night from setup to setup- maybe spending an hour at each.

Scott Shultz, our fearless leader at "Shield HQ" on the other hand predator hunts in a completely different manner. He also loves to shoot coyotes- but uses a different strategy. Scott focuses strictly on his farm. That being said- his local coyotes are very smart because of the constant pressure they face. Scott also exploits their natural instincts- but he hunts them crosswind over a bait site. Scott had this to say about their natural behavior. "Both rattled-in bucks and called in 'yotes' always try to swing around and come in downwind, so I set up in a field ditch, against a creek or something that restricts them from swinging completely downwind of me before I see them." Scott too relies on scent control, but in his case it is at the bait site and his trail coming back and forth. Using all of the same methods and technology that I do, Scott simply makes sure that his bait sites have no trace of his human presence. He also realizes that the residual effects of un-checked human odors can have very damaging

effects long after the predator hunt is over. Then, when the wind is right, Scott sets up a safe distance away and waits to pick off hungry coyotes with his high-powered varmint rifle at dusk, during the night, or the wee hours of the morning. As he and I were collaborating on this article, Scott told me that he had shot three in the last week.

There are all sorts of reasons and excuses to get out and try hunting predators. Coyotes, bobcats, wolves and other predators are harassing and killing deer all over the continent. Predator hunting is a great way to beat cabin fever and get a jump on the next deer season. By eliminating predators, we deer hunters are ensuring higher fawn survival rates and more relaxed deer herds. Plus, predator hunting is incredibly fun!

Scott and I were talking about our different methods and he wanted to mention what game of details predator hunting is, and the “do's and don't” that help spell success. “At close distances, shotguns with big, heavy shot work best.” (I agree, and personally use Hevi-Shot “Dead Coyote” T-shot) “For longer distances, flat shooting, high power varmint rifle calibers work great.” I know in some states, like mine of Michigan, we can only use rimfire rifles after dark, so many choose to shoot a .22 magnum. “Also, temperatures and wind speeds and directions are always important to consider. Full-moon nights are a lot of fun with greater visibility. It's important to be mobile and cover a lot of ground when necessary.” And... with a grin Scott closed with, “As the old saying goes, there's more than one way to skin a coyote!”

So, get out this winter to try predator hunting and enjoy God's beautiful snow covered scenery. And who knows... with every predator you kill you may just be saving the life of your next wall-hanger buck.



GET REAL



Snow goose guru, Scott Butz, on the changing game of light goose hunting

By Jay Anglin

The air was crisp and still under an indigo sky. Heavy hoar-frost blanketed the stubble corn. It was early March in southwest Nebraska, and winter was slowly releasing its grip on the eastern edge of the Rainwater Basin. In our midst, roughly one thousand snow goose windsock decoys hung lifeless on their stakes. Soon, they would come to life in the stiffening morning breeze.

Shortly after legal shooting time, a single adult snow goose descended from the stratosphere into the decoys. My partner and I rose and fired simultaneously dropping the gorgeous adult snow goose in the decoys only a few feet away.

That lone bird made the adventure worthwhile and kick-started my passion for the sport.

That was over fifteen years ago. It was the first time I witnessed the “smoke” on the horizon, as hundreds of thousands of snow geese approached and eventually streamed past in a raucous



northbound parade. I was hooked. I vowed to never miss the spectacle of the spring snow goose hunting season.

Over the next few years, my hunting buddies and I invested in a few hundred snow goose decoys to build our spread. We also begged and borrowed a hodgepodge of well-used windsocks, along with a few shells. We hit the road every spring to hunt for a few days in Nebraska, South Dakota, Missouri, Kansas or Arkansas. Running and gunning — largely ill-equipped — we killed birds with varying degrees of success. And as we strived to learn the basics of spring snow goose hunting, the game was undergoing a transformation...

Historically, snow geese would decoy to just about anything that resembled a goose. In those days, the cheap “Texas Rag” was standard equipment for many hunters, some hunters even resorting to newspapers, diapers or paper plates scattered in the grain stubble. When the continental snow goose population began to explode, the birds got smarter, rendering such thrifty options much less effective — if not obsolete. As snow goose numbers



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proliferated, the oldest birds became virtually impossible to fool. Traditional light goose hunting seasons and methods were failing to control the runaway North American snow goose population.

A new order and a new era

Congress passed the Arctic Tundra Habitat Emergency Conservation Act in 1999. The Act resulted in a gradual build-up of increasingly liberal hunting regulations propagated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) over the following several years, all designed to bring light goose populations under control and abate destruction of the fragile, Arctic tundra breeding grounds – critical habitat used by a multitude of wildlife species, but being dominated and destroyed by light geese.

The Light Goose Conservation Order (LGCO) was a critical all-out assault on burgeoning lesser and greater snow goose, as well as Ross goose populations – all considered “light geese”. Bag limits were eliminated, shotgun capacity restrictions were lifted and hunting hours extended. Electronic calls were also legalized. Season dates continue to vary by state, but as a rule, spring snow goose season begins as early as February 1st and may run well into May. Some states also simplified their license requirements to boost snow goose hunting participation, further sweetening the deal for hunters.

As expected and intended, snow goose hunting pressure increased exponentially. The geese responded, rapidly acquiring PhD’s in hunter evasion. They started flying higher, and grew increasingly suspect of all but the most convincing decoy spreads. Ironically, the liberal regulations enacted through the LGCO to


help hunters kill more snow geese have resulted in making them harder to kill than ever.

Changing tactics

Savvy hunters adapted. As their tactics became more advanced, so did the tools they'd use. While some hunters continued to deploy spreads of thousands of windsock decoys, many came to the realization that using fewer, more realistic decoys would work better much of the time. Even a couple hundred full-bodies could get the job done on many days. This was a huge shift in strategy for many snow goose hunters who were familiar with hauling around Canada goose spreads of similar size. And while the first generation of modern full-body snow goose decoys were good, they weren't great. There was definitely room for improvement.

A surprising number of snow goose hunters made the considerable investment in full-body decoys. The demand resulted in improvements in design and function.

One of the companies on the cutting edge of full-body snow goose decoy design and manufacturing is Avian-X (www.avian-x.com). Elite waterfowler, well-known call and decoy designer, Fred Zink (www.zinkcalls.com), and Waterfowl Obsession TV's Scott Butz developed Avian-X. Not only do these decoys portray snow geese with striking realism, they are extremely durable and will not crack or shed paint. What's more, Avian-X's simple and innovative motion stakes can be hammered into hard or frozen ground, so drilling isn't required, which makes set-up much more efficient.



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Scott Butz on snow geese

Butz is a snow goose junkie from North Dakota. Today, he owns Snow Goose Warehouse, which sells the Avian-X full body snow decoy exclusively

(www.snowgoosewarehouse.com). This guy has very little interest in ducks or even dark geese.

He is dedicated to hunting snows, and his admiration for them cannot be overstated. Butz truly respects light geese and

possesses a biologist-like understanding of the birds. I ran into him a few years ago while hunting an adjacent field in Arkansas, and was dumbfounded by his regimented approach to hunting these birds. His trailer was impeccably organized and clean, and his seasoned decoys still looked new out of the box.

I recently discussed snow goose hunting with Butz. In particular, I wanted to know how he sets himself apart from other hunters. Not surprisingly, like many elite snow goose hunters, he is constantly adapting to overcome the increasing challenge of harvesting snow geese over decoys.

There remain two competing philosophies when it comes to snow goose decoys – sheer numbers vs realism. It should be no surprise that Butz preaches the realism strategy, as he regularly deploys three to four hundred full-body Avian-X snows in his lean and mean decoy spread.

“Fred and I worked on them for a couple years before they hit the market, and when we were done, I knew we had a homerun,” Scott explained. “We don’t flood the market with them, so we run every year... They are definitely the ultimate full-body snow,” he added.

Snow goose hunting has become big business, and while many legitimate outfitters and guides exist, unfortunately, there is an amazing number of less experienced outfits doing business as well. Scott is adamant that these numerous “uneducated guides” have had a negative impact on everyone else’s hunting success.

“There are a lot of hunters and guides out there making all kinds of mistakes,” said Butz. “They park their vehicles too close to their spreads, use too much motion and hunt stubble that is the wrong height so birds can’t land. These poor decisions lead to even more mistakes... like taking stupid shots at smart birds. Guys just need to educate themselves and understand the birds better. That’s half the battle.”

Butz believes a super realistic decoy with just the right amount of motion is key to consistently finishing snow geese inside thirty yards. “Keep those decoys clean,” he advises. “Scrub them down if they get dirty, and repaint or replace them if you have to.” Avian-X snow goose decoys come with Bird



Vision UV reflective paint technology, which is another reason they work so effectively. “I don’t care what anybody says, snow geese are not dirty as a rule and their vision is most definitely UV sensitive.”

Realistic calling is also critical in today’s snow goose hunting environment, and electronic calls are important tools – if not mandatory – when trying to reproduce the sounds of a few hundred geese.

“They’ve heard all kinds of crummy e-caller soundtracks,” said Butz, who advocates having a high quality caller that plays undistorted recordings of snow geese. “I’ve spent a lot of money working on this, getting the frequency right, using the best sound recording equipment made and then having it mixed in a professional studio and now we stock a custom made caller with those sounds pre-loaded. It makes a big difference,” he said.

“Any edge you can give yourself is going to set you apart from other spreads in the area.”

Realistic motion is another key to any effective snow goose spread, and there are several good options out there. Of course, Butz is well known for his Reel Wings motion decoys (www.reelwings.com), and believes they are the most realistic and effective motion decoys available. Reel Wings are a foam version of a spinning-wing decoy that behave much like a kite that is flown on a string and portrays the illusion of geese landing in the “kill hole”. Obviously, some breeze is required so Butz manufactures two versions, including one for lighter breezes as well as the standard version that can handle stronger winds. Butz prefers 15 – 20 mph winds on sunny days, but he doesn’t stay home when the conditions aren’t perfect. Regardless the type of motion decoy employed, it’s important to adapt on any given day, depending on the weather and the attitude of the birds.

Spring snow goose hunting season has kicked off in select states in every flyway across the country. This unprecedented hunting opportunity yields some of the most memorable sights, sounds and shooting experiences. But the game remains challenging. If you are an experienced snow goose hunter, or even a guide, consider upping your game by enhancing the realism of your decoys and electronic calling. The

everyday hunter can certainly enjoy all the excitement and rewards the sport brings, too, and avoid its significant capital costs by hiring a reputable guide or outfitter. Dozens of top-tier snow goose outfitters exist. Just be sure to do your research and ask plenty of questions about their hunting practices and tactics. Guides or outfitters who fail to provide satisfying answers or appear annoyed by your questions probably aren’t the best choice.





Getting to Know Bears

By Alison Hudson

In most of America, hiking in the backcountry means hiking in bear country. Because of their size and strength, bears have a negative reputation, but bear attacks are relatively rare. To further decrease your chance of having an encounter with a bear, there are a few simple steps to follow, including gaining an understanding of how bears evolved and how they act.

Bear Species

There are three prominent bear species in North America: black, grizzly, and polar. Hiking in polar bear country is a unique endeavor that requires a specialized approach because they are the only species known to hunt humans as a food source. This article will focus on grizzlies and black bears, which are more common and easier to defend against.

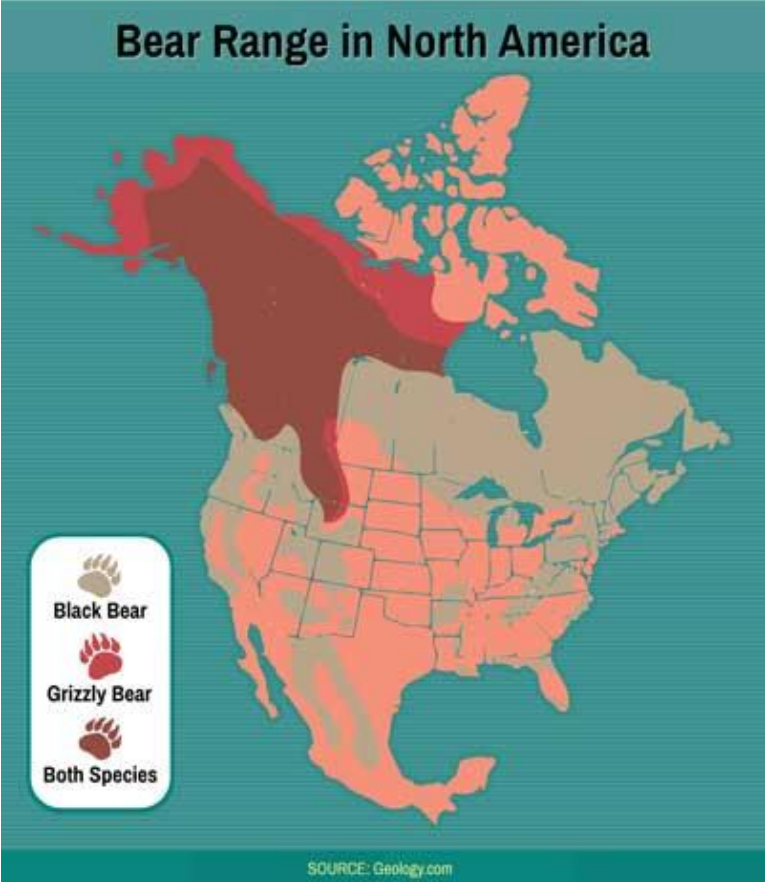
Neither black bears nor grizzly bears are known for hunting humans; most attacks are the result of a startled bear, a sow defending her cubs, or a bear that has been fed by humans searching for more food. Black bears evolved in forested regions where retreating could mean hiding. For this reason, black bears are less likely to defend their cubs by attacking. Grizzlies, on the other hand, evolved in open spaces, such as the tundra and grassy alpine regions, which

Know Your Bears

Black Bear		Grizzly Bear	
Weight: 150-600lbs	Standing Height: 5ft-6ft	Weight: 400-1000lbs	Standing Height: 5ft-8ft

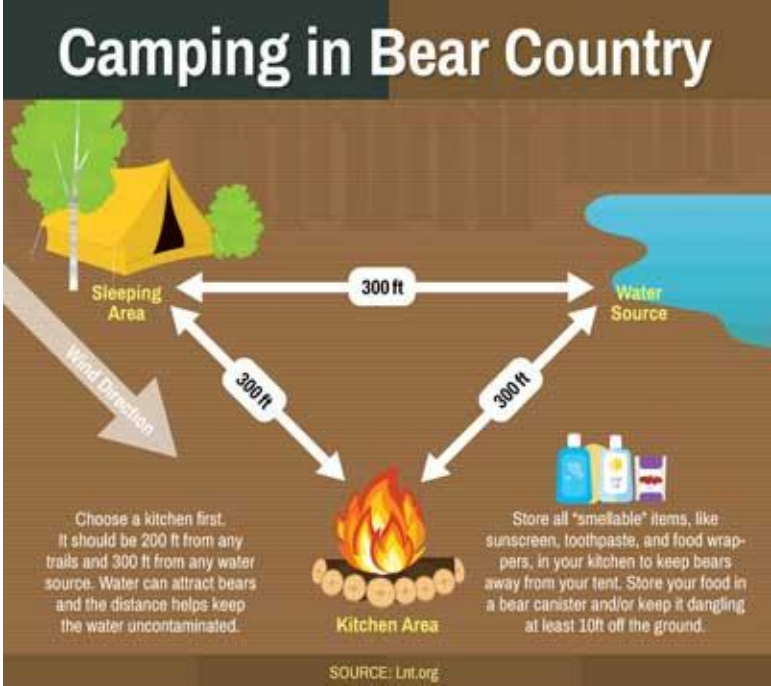
There are a few noticeable differences between black and grizzly bears, but color is not one of them; some black bears are a light brown, while grizzly bears can range from light blonde to dark brown.

SOURCE: Bearsmart.com



affected their flight-or-fight response. Grizzly bears are more likely to defend their young by fighting than they are to flee. For this reason, it's more important to be "bear aware" when traveling in grizzly country. Both species are capable runners; black bears can average 25–30 mph, while grizzly bears can sprint at 35 mph and have been estimated to reach top speeds of 41 mph. To give a rough comparison, 30 mph is equal to 44 feet per second – an unattainable feat for humans.

The most important step toward preventing a bear attack is to never feed a bear. A common saying is "a fed bear is a dead bear." Bears that have learned to equate humans with food become more aggressive and less afraid. Be sure to keep your food in a safe and secure location when traveling in bear country.



While hiking, make sure any bears know you are present before you are seen. A startled grizzly is more prone to charge if it is surprised by your presence. When done correctly, bear calls are an effective technique. It doesn't really matter what you say for your bear call, but most people find that "Hey, Bear" works well because it's easy to remember and it's different from normal conversation. Volume is important. Being loud isn't very comfortable, and the silence of the wilderness is one of its strongest draws, but quiet bear calls are useless. Be assertive – the goal is for nearby bears to realize that a large animal is nearby.

How to Handle a Bear Encounter

If you encounter a bear, back up slowly from the direction you came. Don't continue toward the bear, especially if there are cubs present. Speak in a soft monotone voice and move slowly. Avoid direct eye contact with bear. Do not run!

If the bear makes physical contact lay with your chest on the ground and your backpack on your back. Try to shield your neck with your hands. Playing dead has shown to be effective with grizzly bears. They usually only charge to show dominance.

Do not fight back, unless it's a black bear. In the case of a black bear attack, or an attack from a bear that is acting in a predatory manner rather than one you surprised, it is better to fight back.

When possible, hike in a group. A group of three or more has a larger presence, which will lessen your chances of a negative bear encounter because that number is a lot for a single animal to defend against.

While traveling in open areas where it's more likely that a bear will see you coming (or that you will see the bear), it's less important to make bear calls. Be aware of terrain traps, areas in which a bear might be more surprised because its vision or hearing is compromised. Some common examples are dense shrubs and running water. It's also important to consider your own condition: are you tired and therefore less aware of your surroundings, or did you just come across fresh bear scat and bears are fresh on your mind? These differences affect how often you should make bear calls.

Bear Spray

If you're hiking and camping in grizzly country, invest in a can of bear spray. Modeled after the little canisters that you can carry to deter human or dog attacks, bear spray is a much more powerful concentration of capsaicin that shoots out at a higher speed (~60 mph). Canisters usually cost around \$50, and they cannot be carried on airplanes; however, in some parks, such as Yellowstone, you can rent bear spray by the day. Owning bear spray is only half the battle; it's important to keep it handy while hiking. Do not pack your bear spray in your backpack. Attach the holster to your backpack so the can is accessible. When hiking in areas with a dense grizzly population, consider buying a chest harness for your bear spray and wear it at all times. There's no need to sleep with the bear spray on, but keep it within reach of your tent entrance.

What to Do if You See a Bear

If the bear is far away and doesn't seem to have noticed you, remain quiet and slowly back away. Keep the bear spray handy in case the bear suddenly notices your presence.

If the bear has noticed you, start talking to it and get big. For groups, this means standing shoulder to shoulder, which gives the appearance that you are one large animal rather than a few small humans. Remain calm and stay in one place.

If the bear charges, hold the spray in front of you and remove the safety. Wind direction and rain will affect the spray's effectiveness. If you shoot upwind, you will get the spray in your face. If possible, shoot downwind to avoid being temporarily blinded by the spray. Don't use every can in the group because you won't have anything left if the bear charges again or if you have another bear encounter later in your trip. It often surprises people that bears are attracted to the smell of bear spray, but it's true. This doesn't mean it's ineffective; the speed at which it is expelled makes it a great deterrent. However, any clothes that have spent bear spray on them should be kept with other smellable items, such as kitchen supplies.

Fear of bears shouldn't keep you from hiking and camping. It's more common to see the retreating form of a bear than to have a face-to-face encounter. Sharing wild spaces with these animals is one of the perks of backcountry travel, and knowing how to do so safely will give you confidence on your next trip. If you're lucky, you'll have the opportunity to admire a bear from a safe distance.

Thank you to www.fix.com for adding this great article to our magazine.

How to Use Bear Spray





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