

OCTOBER 2016  
FALL FISHING



# ODU MAGAZINE™

FISHING TOPICS:  
WALLEYE FISHING  
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BASS FISHING  
ICE FISHING  
AND MORE...

**Decoy  
Tricks  
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**ICE FISHING ZONE  
HUNTING ZONE**



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## EDITOR'S LETTER

Fall fishing and fall hunting are the activities I look forward to each year and what makes the fall the most anticipated season for me. The lakes and rivers are emptying of traffic, the woods near me have less hikers, mountain bikers and campers; and all animals are on the move. This is also the time of year where many of us are thinking about cold weather, the holidays and for this year specifically, November 8<sup>th</sup>, the presidential election.

Lately talking about the presidential election gets people really anger, and for good reason. Turn on the TV at your peril. But here is my take. So it will be either a Trump or Clinton in the White House as our new President and that is a fact. You're dreaming if it is going to be a Libertarian or Green Party nominee. We need to break it down to the two likely *candidates this cycle*. So we as outdoorsmen need to think of us first and how do we do it when the mudslinging has grown to epic proportions; where no one can even remember a similar time in our countries history that this has happened.

How do you cut through the lies, innuendo, and sarcasm?

Stick to the issues and assume the lies, innuendo, sarcasm and mudslinging have some factual basis and some pure fiction.

Which candidate stands for what should matter? What will each candidate tell you they will do should matter? I can tell you this, as you have heard already, that this upcoming election means a lot to the United States and our friends/neighbors, and most likely will result in changes either way.

Do you want our free market society to flourish or do you feel that more taxes and regulations are needed? Do you want an open border or do you feel we need to be a bit more skeptical of who wants into our country? Do you feel the trade deals the United States has are fare, or do you feel we need to see them changed to benefit our citizens more? Do you feel we need more gun ownership regulations or do you feel we have just enough? Is Obama Care the right direction for our national health care system? Is our military strong enough or does it need a serious upgrade? Is the VA working right, or does it need to

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be evaluated and changed to benefit our current and retired warriors?

*“Is this a question of the lesser of two evils, or is this a question of who has the people’s best interests in mind?”*

These questions will define who we are in three months and where as a country we will head. I ask you to make your decision on who will be better as our Commander and Chief based on their platform. PERIOD! Staying home on November 8<sup>th</sup> is not the answer. *Go and vote.*



In July the sportfishing industry held its annual ICAST Show and hundreds of new products were shown off. Just in case you missed it, ODU was there and we chose our Top 25 Products of ICAST, which was published in our last magazine. Here is a link to see what you may have missed: <http://www.odumagazine.com/Magazines/ODU-Aug-SeptFishing2016/#p=56>.



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This edition of ODU Magazine is a read around the world of hunting and fishing. Our anglers and hunters are being served very well with this edition, which includes topics in fishing, ice fishing and hunting.


Thank you to all who have contributed to make this edition a success!

And please, enjoy the outdoors.

Larry Thornhill and William Schwarz  
Co-Founders of ODU Magazine



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# **“DOG DAYS” BASSIN’ SUCCESS GOES WITH THE FLOW**

By Bill Vanderford





Plenty of grumbling and excuses are heard when serious bass anglers start talking about catching “dog days” bass. Complicated-sounding terms are heard like: ledge fishing, locating structures with electronics, thermoclines, night fishing and deep water sanctuaries. Such tactics and the various hardships associated with finding bass in the main lake portions of most large reservoirs is not necessary.

All major man-made impoundments possess at least one larger tributary or headwaters area where current flow is evident and a different set of bass fishing methods can be successfully applied. This part of a reservoir normally includes the upper reaches of any tributary flowing into the lake. Fishing these





upper sections of a reservoir requires an angler to employ tactics and techniques that are used on free-flowing rivers and streams. Therefore, current, channel location and visible structures are keys to finding bass.

One should concentrate most efforts on those banks against which the current flows, and look for any type of cover that breaks the path of the moving water. Bass in flowing water will generally be found around cover that provides relief from fighting the current, and puts them in a position to dart out after food being washed downstream by the moving water.

Obvious places are freshly fallen trees, rocky outcrops and old logs. Other hotspots can be underwater ledges created by channel bends, an underwater intersection of the river and feeder creeks coming into the river.



It is generally best to fish downstream to upstream if the current flow is such that your trolling motor will permit. In this manner, the bait will always be moving in the direction of the current flow and look more natural to the bass. If it is necessary to float downstream while fishing, always cast across the current and allow the lure to work itself downstream on the retrieve.

The shallower depths of most tributaries that





feed reservoirs permit the use of a variety of lures. Plastic worms or weedless jigs are great for heavy cover, but crankbaits, topwater lures, buzzbaits and spinnerbaits can be very productive.

Since the cooler, flowing waters make the bass more active during the warmer months, lures can



normally be worked at a faster pace than in a lake. Also, bass must make instant decisions when trying to grab a meal flowing by them so quickly. These predators are not usually as concentrated as in mainlake structures, but the combination of current, many visible structures and numerous usable lures can prove to be very effective.

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Always work as far up the headwaters stream as the boat will safely maneuver, or hire a guide with a boat that can get you there. Cover lots of water and fish as much visible cover as possible. The ability to make very accurate casts, however, is essential to being successful in a river environment with moving water.

Headwaters bassin' offers an exciting alternative during the "dog days" of summer. Such an adventure is certainly not for everyone, but it can be extremely productive and rewarding!

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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](mailto:jfish51@aol.com) or at his web site: [www.georgiafishing.com](http://www.georgiafishing.com). Images are from Bill V.





# TOP FIVE GUIDED FISHING TRIPS IN GEORGIA, OK SIX

By O'Neill Williams

**CRITERIA: LOCATION, VARIETY, SIZE, RELIABILITY, PURE ENJOYMENT, EDUCATION!**



1. For a fly fisherman's dream trip, it's a full day at **Blackhawk Fly Fishing** on the Soque River nine miles north of Clarksville, GA, only an hour's driving time from Atlanta. Soque is a very pristine trophy mountain stream with easy access and is loaded with 24-inch rainbows and 26 to 30-inch browns. You'll be flyfishing within a corridor of overhanging Hemlocks into gentle pools and long fast runs rarely over 40-feet wide. I advise fishing in the early morning, have a scrumptious "Field to Fork" lunch prepared by proprietor, Abby Jackson, and return to the bubbling waters for more action. Want



to stay overnight in a 1860s restored farmhouse and with lots of character and vintage charm? You certainly can. All the trout are cared for by your guide and returned to the cool waters alive after the obligatory photos. A typical full day's will result in your catch being 20 bows in the 18 to 24 inch range with browns at 26 to 30 inches. Blackhawk is open all year except July and August and is on Georgia's Top Ten Bucket List.

2. Want a biggun to stretch your string? Employ **Captain Mark Noble** in St Simons and follow along one of the shrimp boats as they harvest shrimp from the fertile waters off Jekyll Island. Mark can easily handle a charter for three fishermen with the mutual target being the Spinner and Blacktip sharks that feast on the by-catch as the shrimpers scourer the sandy bottoms of the bay. Using heavy tackle and





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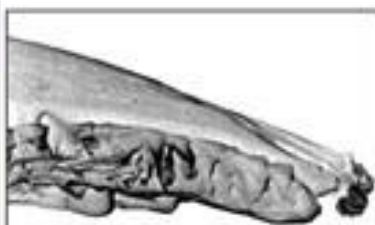
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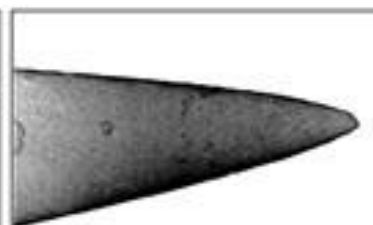
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baited with live baits, you will hook a shark in the territory of 30 to 100 pounds on every cast. Every pass behind the trawling nets will yield all fishermen a hookup. Yes, every cast. These rascals are heavy duty fighters and will truly give you an exciting day. You and your party will likely have had enough back breaking, line stretching, bulldogging by lunch time. Did I say Tarpon? Should have. Mark Noble is the number one Tarpon Guide on the Georgia Coast and the summer months are the most reliable for the silver sided giants. Jump 6 to 10 per day, hook, catch and photo 150-pound trophies. After an hour's fight, I know you'll be tired but still smiling.



3. How about fresh water stripers? Telephone **Mack Farr** at Lake Lanier and enjoy an ongoing lesson in angling. What's your ticket, spooning, trolling, live bait, top-water? The seasons dictate the tactic and Captain Mack Farr is a master in generating many big hook-ups. Surprisingly so, the hot summer just may provide the most reliable action but no matter when, for an easy reach for one of the biggest gamefish in the waters in Georgia, Lanier and Mack Farr can make it happen. Mack has guided on Lanier for over 30 years, so his experience is easily conveyed and understood. This is a terrific charter to bring along a youngster. Usually, there is little casting and reeling involved so even a youngster can handle the rod for an exciting hookup with Mr. Linesides in the territory of 6 to 20 pounds.





4. Want to fill a cooler full of tasty Crappie filets? Telephone **Al Bassett** at Lake Oconee. Big Al's been providing tubs of Crappie for client's live wells for decades. No matter what the season, Al has the Crappie school's locations all figured out and will place you in the vicinity on short notice. Trolling, jigging, docks, summer time flats, shallow spawning, Al will escort you to the fertile areas and harvest a bunch. Light tackle, light line, jigs and live bait, old 'paper mouth' is in big trouble when Al has a charter. Bring a big cooler and fill it. With a limit of 35 per person, a big wiggly pile of crappie is gathered in short order.

5. For my final pick, there is no guide involved nor is one needed. But here's how you can make family memories that will last a lifetime. For many anglers, fond childhood fantasies involve a family fishing trip resulting in a stringer of bream. So,

don't delay – take them fishing today! Where to go? Visit a nearby public fishing area provided by the **Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Wildlife Resources Division**. The DNR currently operates and manages ten PFAs across the state in an effort to provide the best possible fishing and access for family-friendly outings.

Bluegill and Redear Sunfish, both part of the bream family, are stocked on nearly every PFA pond or lake. Bring along a few cans of Fisher's Choice crickets, meal worms and shrimp. Each has been cooked

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and is preserved but smells, looks and works just like a fresh bait, is easy to use and lasts and lasts. Want to make the adventure fulfilling? Take your family to a Georgia State Park with a public fishing area contained, watch the light tackle floats disappear with a big old bream tugging it down and photograph your child with a never ending smile.



6. We really shouldn't leave out the big lake fly guys. **Henry Cowen** is the guy for Lakes Lanier, Allatoona and Hartwell. Spotted Bass, Stripers, Hybrids, you name it, Henry is always in touch with the surface feeding critters and how to catch them on the fly. Brace yourself.....he's a Brooklyn, New York, transplant of almost 20 years but a good old Southern Boy he has become. What's the key? Henry fishes every day, every single day, and truly stays in touch. If you want to venture into the world of big lake fly fishing, Henry's your guide; 8 pound hybrids, 25 pound stripers and 5 pound spots all on the fly. Give Henry a call, but be alert, the Brooklyn accent will startle you, but relax and enjoy a great day with a great guide.

So, there you are. Why not try them all? Kind of a bucket list for you and your family.

Blackhawk Fly Fishing, Abby Jackson – 706-947-3474, [www.blackhawkflyfishing.com](http://www.blackhawkflyfishing.com)

Captain Mark Noble- 912-638-7673, [www.goldenislesfishing.com](http://www.goldenislesfishing.com)

Captain Mack Farr- 770-271-0851, [www.captmacks.com](http://www.captmacks.com)

Al Bassett - 706-485-1280 or 706-473-7758, <http://oconeal.com/index.aspx>

Henry Cowen – 678-513-1934, [www.henrycowenflyfishing.com](http://www.henrycowenflyfishing.com)

<http://www.georgiawildlife.com/fishing/public-fishing-areas>

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## Fishing Boat



## Fish Catching Boat



# Fishing With Billy "Hawkeye" Decoteau



## Hooked on Crappie

By Billy 'Hawkeye' Decoteau

For several years now a group of my colleagues and I have traveled to western Pennsylvania's Pymatuning Lake, Conneaut Lake and Shenango Reservoir. From my personal experience three of the most productive multi-species lakes in Pennsylvania. Offering anglers trophy size Smallmouth, Largemouth, Walleye, Northern Pike and Crappie! This year my goal was to target Pymatuning and Shenango Reservoir's Crappie.

Our base camp was Jamestown, Pennsylvania's Pymatuning State Park in Crawford County. The availability to rent year round cabins within Pymatuning State Park, makes for clean comfortable cabins, easy accessible launch ramps, and best of all an easy drive to Conneaut Lake and Shenango Reservoir. (NOTE: Pymatuning has 16,349 acres with a 20 horsepower limit on outboard motors. However, if your outboard horsepower is above the 20 HP limit you may still launch your vessel and utilize an electric trolling motor. For more information visit [www.VisitPAparks.com](http://www.VisitPAparks.com)).



**Black Crappie**  
**Shenango**



PA Guide and Outdoors writer Darl Black and his wife Marilyn organized our Pennsylvania fishing adventure. Darl's fishing agenda had me focusing on brush piles, laydowns and transitional highways. To heighten my excitement the Pymatuning Lake pairings listed me with local guide and tournament angler Hooker Brakeman. Hooker is one of the most knowledgeable Crappie guides on Pymatuning Lake. When he's not running Hill's Country Store, Brakeman can be found on Pymatuning Lake running 'Hooker's Fishing Taxi'.

As fate would have it windy, damp, wet conditions and scatter showers greeted our late morning launch on Pymatuning. With the weather forecast calling for thunderstorms, Hooker decided it was best to concentrate on





**Road Runner "No Bling" Jig Head  
Bobby Garland Mo'Glo Slab Slay'r  
Blue Ghost**



brush piles and laydowns close to the ramp.

Much to my surprise each of these areas looked like prime largemouth bass habitat. According to Hooker crappie school up and occupy the identical cover and structure, as do largemouth bass. "On many occasions while fishing brush piles, stumps, weedlines and even lily pads for crappie I've hooked into some quality largemouths. You would be amazed how catching largemouth bass on small crappie jigs with ultra light line and tackle has made me a much better bass angler!"

After three-hours of casting slip bobbers and vertical jigging Road Runner jig heads paired with Bobby Garland Slab Slay'R's, thunderstorms had us running full throttle back to the ramp. But, not before we managed to catch 12-15 White and Black Crappie and a few nice largemouth bass.

Next stop Shenango River Lake an Army Corp of Engineers magnificently clean and outstanding facility. Running approximately 11 miles long, large coves, flats, rock bluffs, shallow and deep downed timber, plus submerged roadbeds offer anglers a wide variety of structure changes.

A new day paired with a new technique was about to unfold. 'Spider Rigging' with team 'Crappie Country'. Two-time Angler of the Year National Crappie Team Tournament angler Dan Dannenmueller, AKA Crappie Dan, and his partner Nashville, TN Country Music Star Garrett Steele. ([www.CrappieNow.com](http://www.CrappieNow.com))

My Crappie Country mentors gave me a quick overview of 'Spider Rigging'. This technique consist of multiple rods, the number of rods depends on two factors, number of anglers fishing and state



regulations, while 8 to 10 rods is not uncommon. Spider Rigging Crappie rods usually 12', 14', or 16' are mounted at the bow with a fan shape arrangement. According to David Baynard, President of Driftmaster Rod Holders, "The most critical component for Spider Rigging is the rod holder system. Our Driftmaster Pro and Li'l Pro Trolling systems are designed as a total strong quality, dependable adjustable system to meet the requirements for specific boats and anglers alike. It is imperative Spider Rigging system adjustments can be made quickly and easily. Driftmaster systems do both plus the entire system can be removed when not in use!" ([www.Driftmaster.com](http://www.Driftmaster.com))

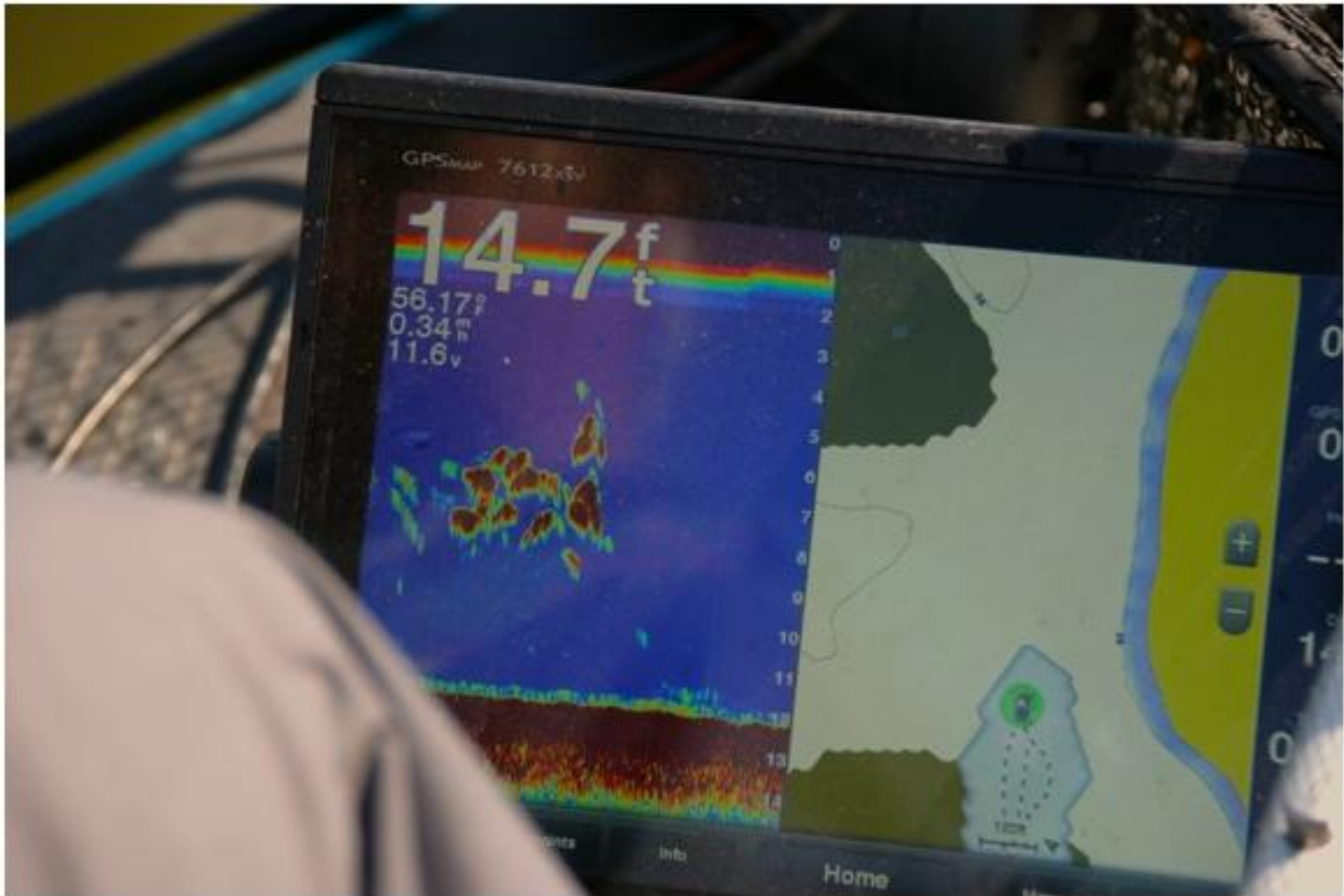
Professional Crappie Anglers, take their competitive team competition just as serious as do Bassmaster Elite Anglers! Team 'Crappie Country' travels the National Crappie Masters trail supporting their sponsors with a very impressive matching Bobby Garland wrap on their tow vehicle and 21' Ranger. When it comes to equipment and preparation Dannenmueller and Steele's coordinated effort is second to none!



"Before we ever place a bait in the water we start by mapping the area while idling. Concentrating on water depths based upon seasonal transitions, logging water temperatures, isolated cover, structural changes and of course always looking for schools of Crappie," instructs Crappie Dan. Steele quickly adds, "Our next step is then to take readings with our Color Selector for the most dominate bait colors based on the prevailing water clarity."

With precision timing Dan moves to the bow lowering the trolling motor, then sets up his 12" Garmin sonar into three split-screens. Garrett fans out eight 16' B'n'M trolling rods within their Driftmaster Pro





Rod holder, placing four to the left and four to the right of their trolling motor. Moving a minnow bucket to the bow Steele attached an oxygen bottle. Dan replies, "Oxygen keeps our live-bait healthier and more active longer."

"Our rods are numbered from left to right. In this situation we have eight rods, I'll man the left side and Garrett will handle the right side. However, both of us are always keeping an eye on all the rods. When a bite occurs we simple say 'Pole #3', and the angler closest prepares to set the hook,"

Each rod/reel combination looks exactly the same. Mitchell Pan Fish Reels spooled with 10 lb. high-vis Gamma, attached to a 360-degree 3-wqy swivel, 8 lb. Gamma Fluorocarbon leader.





Two-drop baits one plastic and one live-minnow with a heavy weight at the bottom to keep the line vertical when trolling at .4 to .7 speeds.

Calling my attention to their Garmin 12" screen, Crappie Dan explained, "Garmin's Pantoptix and Live-Vu technology. "We are traveling within a creek channel of the Shenango Reservoir, a US Army impoundment. My split-screen shows a Live-Vu below the boat and our Pantoptix is a Live-Vu forward. The Garmin HD-Mapping allows me to color and map our route."

The angle of the Spider Rig spread pattern allows accurate coverage depths along contour lines all at one time. Something casting cannot do! All rod tips are kept at the same height off the water, allowing for a clear focused view to detect the slightest movement.

Constantly adjusting depths on each rod, monitoring their Garmin Live-Vu screen, changing baits to the most productive colors, steering their trolling motor along productive contours, this is no sit back and enjoy the weather trolling. This is high percentage Professional Spider Rigging Crappie!

The excitement of just watching was overwhelming as Dan and Garrett continued to follow the old roadbed, catching crappie after crappie. Utilizing a long net to reach the end of their 16' B'n'M rods, team Crappie Country simply lifted the rod up as the net was placed under their crappie, then slowly pulled the net back on an open bale. "This is much harder than you would expect," echoes Crappie Dan.



"A sudden jerk on the rod could tangle all of the lines together, and that is one huge mess you never want to be in!" And, with that statement Garrett added, "Now it's your turn to try 'Spider Rigging' take the front seat next to Dan!"

Walking me patiently through each hook-up Crappie Dan was able to assist me in avoiding hard hook sets, tangle lines, dragging lines on the bottom, keeping my side of rods at equal heights

off the water..... And, to date the largest crappie I have ever caught! Yes, you may very well say 'I'm Hooked on Crappie'!

Follow Country Crappie on Facebook @ [www.facebook.com/crappiecountry](https://www.facebook.com/crappiecountry).

(To schedule your Pennsylvania fishing trip contact Darl at [www.facebook.com/Fishing-with-Darl-Black](https://www.facebook.com/Fishing-with-Darl-Black) or [www.blackwolfcommunications.com](http://www.blackwolfcommunications.com))





# ***BEST SMALLMOUTH BASS TRIP EVER***

By Bob Jensen



In thirty five years of fishing all over the Midwest and much of North America, I've had the good fortune to get in on some outstanding fishing action for a wide variety of fish. In narrowing that down a bit, I've had some memorable days of catching smallmouth bass. I have fond memories of outstanding smallmouth catching on the Rainy River with John Peterson, with Toad Smith on Rainy Lake, Jim McDonnell on Lake Erie, and all by myself on the Shellrock River in north Iowa. But on Monday, October 10th, on Kabetogama Lake in northern Minnesota, I experienced what was most certainly the best smallmouth bass fishing of my career on the water. We caught big ones, little ones, and lots of in-betweeners. Big ones being legitimate six pounders, in-betweeners being three and four pounders. Here's how that trip unfolded.

I've been fishing Kab for years, almost always for walleyes, and have always had very good success. Last year on my annual trip to Kab I met Tim Snyder. Tim owns a resort on Kab and also guides a bunch. Tim said that next time I come to Kab, we should chase smallmouth: He said the bass action was pretty good in the fall. Understatement!

When autumn rolled around this year, Tim and I made a plan to get together to create an episode for Fishing the Midwest television featuring Kabetogama's smallmouth bass. I asked if I could bring Mike



10 hours on the water with one bite would be a pretty unproductive day for most bass fishermen.

But what if that bite was a 12 pounder?

For die-hard swimbait fishermen, chasing that one day-defining bite is all that matters. Some may call them crazy, but they're the ones out there breaking lake records, and chasing the next "Dottie".

Whether they're crazy like a fox, or just plain crazy, our all-new Denali Swimbait series is designed specifically for the dedicated big-bait angler.

With three models rated up to 12 ounces, the Swimbait series is built to easily handle even the heaviest swimbaits. Whether you're slinging a Hudd, winding a Slide-Swimmer, or twitching a Roman Made Mother, the Swimbait series is up to the task.

In addition to specific big-bait focused actions and powers, the Swimbait series also features super tough components and our signature aggressive styling, in the lightest package possible.

It's hard work slinging a 5 ounce chunk of plastic all day long – why make it harder with a heavy rod?







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**Aaron Martens**  
Professional Angler



## SHOCK BLADE

Frisch along. Mike is an outstanding multi-species angler who really likes to catch smallmouth. Tim said "bring him along".

We got on the water about two in the afternoon. The weather was beautiful: A light breeze, sunshine, maybe sixty degrees. Even if the bass didn't cooperate, it was a nice day to be on the water. However, the bass cooperated.

We headed for a hump that topped out at about fifteen feet of water and was surrounded by forty feet of water. The aSeries Raymarine sonar revealed that there were fish on the hump. While Tim and I were putting minnows on our jigs, Mike made a cast with his drop-shot rig. Before Tim or I could cast, Mike said "Got one". First cast! Like most smallmouth, this one did not want to come to the boat. Mike had his hands full, and when he finally got the bass boatside, it was easy to see why he had his hands full. It was a twenty one incher, and almost that big around. Six pounds easy. Nice start!

While Mike was unhooking his fish, Tim made his first cast. Fish on, and it was another big one. When I finally got to make my first cast, no kidding, I got bit and put a four pounder in the boat. I don't know how many bass we caught in the next couple of hours, but it was in the dozens. We caught several over twenty inches, lots of sixteen to eighteen inchers as well as some small ones, which indicates a healthy fishery.

Most of our fish came on drop-shot rigs with Impulse Smelt Minnows and Fire-Ball jigs with minnows. When our minnow supply ran low we put the Impulse on jigs and caught 'em just as good.

Kabetogama is a world-class smallmouth lake for a couple of reasons: First, it's got all the qualities necessary to produce world-class smallmouth.

Second, and just as important, they take care of their smallmouth at Kab. In the fall, when these bass are so susceptible to fishing pressure, you can't keep any. Catch all you want, but you've got to put them back. If you ever get the chance to experience this smallmouth action, it's an annual occurrence, Tim said what we experienced wasn't unusual, you'll understand why it's so important to release the bass and you'll gladly do so.

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





# Fall Fishing Hit List

**By Jason Mitchell**

For diehard anglers, fall fishing may be the most coveted time of the year. While every angler seems to participate for season openers and early season weekends, many anglers put the rods away and park the boat during the fall so the mystique of fall is not only great fishing but also fewer people. Even on good bites on well-known fisheries, boat ramp parking lots sit relatively empty. For hardcore anglers who are obsessed with fishing, fall might be a favorite time of the year.

I have often felt that fall fishing is the exact opposite of spring but there are many similarities. Some of the same locations often produce and many shallow patterns come alive again as water temperatures drop. Like the spring, late afternoons can often produce better as water temperatures can





bump up a degree of two. The mornings often require gloves and the boat is often covered in frost. Here is where the spring and fall however are very different. Spring bites often get better when water temperatures progressively warm up and slow down if the temps fall off after cold fronts. Fall bites seem to get better as water temps fall and get worst if a warm spell progressively bumps water temperatures back up. Cold fall weather seems to make the fishing better while hot unseasonably warm weather often sends the fish patterns into disarray.

What is also neat about fall fishing is that everything seems to be biting. Fall is one of the best times to target trophy walleye, musky, bass and pan fish. If there is one sure fire pattern for bass and panfish in the upper Midwest, focus on deep break lines that have good green weeds. Deep coontail that



grows two to four feet off the bottom along a sharp breaking drop off is a magnet for fish in the fall. Weeds also don't always have to be green to hold fish in the fall however. Many of the pondweed and cabbage species do die off and brown up after they seed out by late summer but brown weeds will still sometimes hold fish if there is good water circulation. The key for brown and down weeds to hold fish in the fall is close access to deep water and good water circulation. These weed patterns can also be hot walleye and musky locations as well. What makes fall weed patterns different from spring patterns is that spring weed patterns often also correlate with warmer water. Spring finds us finding fish over large shallow flats and protected bays that warm up faster. Fall weed patterns often occur over sharp breaks and exposed areas that have that good water circulation.

Another top location for both big walleye and musky are shallow boulders and rip rap. Big rocks seem to attract fish any time of the year but really seem to become even more important in the fall. On some fisheries, fall-spawning baitfish like tulibee concentrates along rock and rip rap





creating a prime feeding opportunity for larger baitfish. Some anglers sometimes overlook this fall-spawning baitfish connection. Baitfish that spawn and concentrate in the fall include ciscoes, whitefish and tulibee. Many of these fall baitfish spawning patterns need rock and are also heavily influenced by wind. Can remember situations where I found almost all of the baitfish and relating predators concentrated on one specific spot on the spot that seemed influenced by wind. Some baitfish seemed to stack on the downwind side of the reef for example in the calmer water where as the upwind side was completely dead of life. When the wind died, that specific spot dried up and the activity shifted. Shallow rock patterns also seemed to pick up as dark approached as these baitfish moved up to spawn after dark.

Deep reefs that combine sharp break lines and a hard bottom are classic fall walleye locations on many natural lakes. Can't talk fall fishing for walleye without mentioning current and bottleneck areas. River systems also come back to life with fish movements that recharge some holes and troughs where some of these fish will hold through the winter.

Regardless of water and species, I have often felt that some of fall fishing's best and most consistent bets are simply community spots. Community spots are typically really good locations that get ruined by the sheer number of boats. In the fall when so many people quit fishing, these are some of the best locations. No secrets, no need to outthink other anglers. You simply have to commit yourself and long after the crowds are gone, you can find some of the best fishing of the entire season for a variety of fish on a variety of water.





# THUMB TYPERS

By John Simeone



8 year old Rayne Murphy is considered by many as the fastest Karate girl in the world, her many awards include a world championship. Jason and Damian Reslier nailed these two big catfish at Sunrise Catfish. All are students of Uncle John.



There are more injuries associated with inattentive driving due to texting, than with hunting, fishing and martial arts combined.

When I became a national outdoor writer with [www.foremosthunting.com](http://www.foremosthunting.com) they ran a survey that discovered seventy percent of my readers were women. I was puzzled for a time and inquired to my publisher, knowing first hand it was not my good looks that were attracting the ladies. It was discovered that single

mothers with both sons and daughters are finding hunting and fishing that adventure the parents are looking for to get the kids out of the house and away from the video game syndrome. Also martial art training is the indoor adventure that works in the same manner.

Kids really like Outdoor activities and Martial Arts while many of the video games they play depict the same activities they want to do but can't, as they search in vain for a real adventure. Our children become lost in a fantasy electronic world of the video game adventure, while being over mothered and under fathered. But why not learn hunting, fishing and martial arts for real? You can't find a better place than this area. Unfortunately fewer and fewer people take to the field. Video games give the image but the body becomes lazy and no skills are developed except thumb typing. Those parents that realize this either seek the mentorship of a Male outdoorsman or Sensei or try to learn it themselves. This is why Uncle John got so popular with the female readers.

Hunting, Fishing and Karate; well that's what I have done since I was 9 years old so over the years many a family have asked my advise on the subject or have become a martial art student.

Many feel they don't have time to learn for real, or they think it's too expensive. The negative results of not getting your kid out of the house far outweigh the investment. At one time a rite of passage into responsibility was a new shotgun or your driver's license, now it's a cell phone with internet. The real problem is with personality disorders. If you sit and thumb type all day it becomes all you know. I'll stop right there and let your own observations tell you the truth; Reality and Responsibility seem to be lost in the American culture.

I encounter a lot of ADHD students. Karate helps in this area depending on the instructor, but it takes a lot of time and becomes a distraction for other students in the class. It takes time but I never give up.





I'll have to say fishing really works to develop concentration. First of all you don't have to have a sixty thousand dollar bass boat to take a kid fishing, that's a male ego thing to keep up with the Jones'. Next you want to go to a place where your outdoor kids will catch a good fish, not little blue gills. Then from start to end of the trip remove all electronic devices. This will be difficult as this causes the youth who is hooked on thumb

typing to go into immediate withdrawal and the results are as grievous as removing heroin from a drug addict; do it anyway. Subsequently you must have something of value to replace it immediately.

I have pushed kids kicking and screaming to Sunrise Catfish, 8 miles South of Deridder, Louisiana. Convinced by their so called thumb typing friends fishing was ridiculous, the new fishermen found it was so much fun the parents had to drag the kids away from the ponds or go broke. When you catch a 3 to 9 pound catfish every cast that's positive peer pressure. It's not catch and release and there is a fee; you will find out the results are well worth it.

Hunting is different, this requires a youth who has demonstrated great respect and understands responsibility from the start. Hunting requires an expert mentor on the subject with the ability to patiently teach the youth how and why then supervise, even from a distance, for about two years. Safety is paramount and the NRA Hunter Safety Course is mandatory and wise for all those to get a Hunting License born after 1969. I will add everybody should take the course even if they don't hunt, it keeps the woods safe and it works.





Hunting cannot be pushed on a kid, it is a true personal choice, not to be dictated by age but more the acceptance of reality and responsibility; hunting is real and not a video game. Its usually a son or daughter wanting to be like Dad, not to mention the many hunting Moms out there. If there is no Dad, it must be a very



trusted mentor; these are hard to find. My father knew nothing of hunting but learned to shoot in the Army. The good old boys in Arkansas taught him and I followed gradually. My mother was a friend of the famous outdoor writer Robert Ruark and she read me some of his books at an early age, this is what developed the interest in hunting with me.

Both a Sport and means of self defense Martial Arts are a proven developer of youth character. The true main stream martial arts for kids are Karate, Tae Kwon Do, Kung Fu, Judo and Jujitsu all of which came from parts of Asia and have been modified into the American culture; not to be confused with MMA or UFC which is more of an adult sport of full contact. Leesville is home to one of the top youth Karate schools in the Southern Region and is run by yours truly, neither expensive nor dangerous. This school and others like it provide the individual with a means of self defense, self esteem, respect and responsibility. When asked about being a Cheerleader our female karate kids said they would rather be

a "Wolf Girl." This doesn't surprise me several are Regional and World Champions.

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You will find that hunting, fishing and the martial arts will in fact cure thumb typers. The hunters and fisherman will fill up the freezer at home, while you might have to add an extra room to your house to put all the karate trophies in. It's all right here in Leesville, Louisiana if you just ask around. So if your boy or girl seems board or lazy and is getting a little round around the edges. Find yourself a Hunting, Fishing or Karate mentor and see if they will....Pass it on.





# Winter Is Coming

**By Captain Mike Gerry**

As we see the water temperatures start to drop below 60's we will see movement of the bass toward their winter locations. As in any lake the bass will locate near the deepest parts of the lake. That doesn't mean that the bass will travel miles to find deep water in fact quite the opposite. Bass are not a species that will migrate several miles to find deep water; in fact they most of the time won't leave the longer wider creeks, they will just find the locations of deeper water within the creek they exist in.

One of the reasons certain areas of the lake become easier to find fish as we approach winter over others is exactly this fact. The long elongated creeks like the upper river "Town Creek," the bass will not migrate far enough to leave the creek area, so they find deep water within the creek and this might be just 10 feet of water. To these fish channel areas, may just be deep banks or original creek paths along the edges of the creek that form points or old farm ponds where you have a depth change. As we get into winter food is not the driving factor of where bass locate themselves, as a bass consumes far less food in the cold water than they do when the water temperature are warmer.

One thing I find especially in early winter or late fall is that there are areas of the lake that can be significantly colder than other areas. Sometimes it's just how the north wind hits a certain area of the water. When this occurs use your temperature gage to locate some warmer water it could be the key to finding early winter bass. Sometimes it is just on the other side of an island or around the nearest point, the bass will move to the warmer water especially if there still in the feeding process as we get into winter.



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## **When to Put Down a Frog... Cold Weather Froggin'!**

**By Glenn Walker**

The topwater frog is a main stay lure for bass fisherman during the summertime and early fall months, as this is when it can be fished over thick mats of vegetation. Despite cooler times in the fall months, the topwater frog still resembles a real life forage item bass eat and when a big bass is hungry, they'll come up and eat a topwater frog. As the sun begins to stay overhead in the sky longer, it's powerful rays will beat into the water and gradually warm those water temperatures up to a level where fishing a topwater frog isn't out of the question. So when doing any late or early season frog fishing, look super shallow to areas that the water will be significantly warmer, or areas where dead vegetation has piled up along a riprap bank. The rock bank will absorb the sun's heat and transmit that into the water, again increasing the temperature.

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





# CATCH & RELEASE CATFISH

*Tips to assure your trophy catch will be caught again*

**By Ted Pilgrim**

Days afloat America's preeminent channel catfish stream, Captain Brad Durick sees a little of everything. One client, a self-proclaimed 'fishing expert,' reels with the rod upside-down. Another customer continuously misses bites, jerking back against a self-setting circle hook rig, despite continued pleas to the contrary. A bass oriented dude gets his thumb chomped while attempting to lip-lock a 20-pound channel (big catfish bite back, à la snapping turtle).





Durick fields his share of questions, too.

“Can catfish sting with their whiskers?” (No.)

“Are catfish poisonous?” (Negative.)

“I heard they eat puppies and unsuspecting swimmers. Is that true?” (Possibly, if they weighed 200 pounds.)

To the Red River, North Dakota-based guide’s credit, Durick simply chuckles and patiently answers each question in turn, even if it’s the 957th time he’s heard it. Teaching moments, Durick calls them. When you boat over 1,500 big channel cats, as he does each season, you’re presented with plenty of opportunities to learn.





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His most valuable message?

“Catch and release works,” Durick says. “But only if you learn to properly handle your fish. We post a lot of photos on social media, so it’s not just my clients who pay attention to how we treat our fish, but often thousands of other online observers.”

### **Scoop, Grip and Grin**

“First thing I tell my clients is to get a good net; one with micro-mesh that won’t harm a catfish’s delicate skin. Unlike most species, cats aren’t armed with skin-protecting scales. Instead, they secrete a viscous substance that acts as an antiseptic. So you want knotless netting that won’t abrade skin or remove their vital slime layer. And you also want a net with a flat bottom panel, that will gently support the fish without contorting its body in abnormal angles.”

Faced with an absence of catfish-specific landing nets, Durick came across Frabill’s 5521 Pro-Formance Halibut Net. “Not only is the micro-mesh easy on catfish skin, it’s the only net that won’t

allow sinkers to drop through openings and become tangled. That’s a nightmare with other nets. More and more cat guys are using this net. It’s got a collapsible slide handle, too, and Frabill’s super tough Pow’R-Lok yoke withstands the torque of giant fish.”

When faced with double-headers—a common occurrence on the Red—Durick offers another tip: “A lot of anglers will land one fish, and then dump it on the boat floor until they net the second fish. A wild catfish on the boat floor is asking for trouble—broken equipment, sprained ankles or injured fish. It’s why I like to double net. Dip the first catfish, and leave it in the net in the water until you finally net the second fish. The big Frabill easily accommodates both cats at once, and keeps them nice and healthy.”



Typically, the net's also the right place to remove hooks, again, keeping catfish in water for as long as possible. "When you're ready to snap a photo, we'll often use a Rippin Lips Big Fish Gripper. Lock onto the catfish's lower jaw and lift, while supporting the rest of its body by reaching around its tail."

The Big Fish Gripper, Durick notes, is perfect for folks unaccustomed to dealing with big fish, or nervous about the sharp pectoral and dorsal spines on those fins. "Smaller cats have especially prickly spines," he says, "making a fish gripper a valuable tool for protecting both fish and angler."

### **Slimy Solutions**

Durick adds interesting advice for remedying cuts on hands and fingers, should you receive a spine to the thumb, or other minor scratch. "It's an old catman trick, but it works—rub a little catfish slime on a fresh cut. Folks are amazed by how quickly this natural "medicine" stops the sting.

"Catfish slime seems to be a powerful, almost magical healing agent. You should see some of the nasty wounds on spawning catfish each year. Often, we'll re-catch the same fish several weeks later and all the wounds have completely healed over."

Interestingly, Durick and other anglers use another natural curative agent not exactly designed as such. "No Trace is a benign scent eliminating spray we use to mask fish-repelling unnatural odors (bug spray, gas, human pheromones, etc.) from our hands. Turns out, the stuff is also a natural antiseptic, preventing infections on minor wounds. No one would mistake me for a doctor, but both these remedies work for catfish anglers—and have worked—for many years."

From human health back to the well-being of catfish, Durick notes another catfish-handling no-no. "Vertical holds are out. You want to fully support the weight of the fish with both hands. We often keep hands away from gills and gill openings, too. If you look at the photos we post, you see that we grip the narrow body section just





below the tail with one hand and then basically cradle the fish's head and shoulders with the other, avoiding pectoral and dorsal fins completely. If the fish decides to shake, you simply keep a firm grip on







the tail and keep its head balanced until it calms down. It's an safe, easy grip that just works."

### **Full Circle Conservation**

As to the process of actually catching catfish, Durick discusses his choice in hooks, and why they're a huge part of his catch and release program. "Just yesterday, we gut hooked our first catfish of the season," he says. "Using our Tournament Grade Circle Hooks, that puts us at just under .1-percent for the year."

On the positive side of the equation, Durick has successfully hooked over 99-percent of his catfish neatly in the corner of the lip, thanks to his specialized wide gap circle hooks. "By now, most folks know that circle hooks work brilliantly without setting the hook. But they're also awesome for avoiding deep-hooking fish when presenting livebait or natural cutbait. Truth is, too, once you hook a fish with a Tournament Grade Circle, you rarely loose it. When I'm just out fishing for fun, I'll often mash down the barbs on my hooks, and still almost never will a catfish shake free.

"Circle hooks are a guide's dream for hooking catfish safely and securely. But you really need to examine how each model is made before choosing the right one for your fishing. The Tournament Grade hook I use is designed just for catfish—has the optimal offset angle and gap to pivot and penetrate a cat's thick, bony jaw, nearly always in the corner of the mouth. Makes my job exponentially easier—and safer for everyone."



Back afloat the Red River of the North, where all catfish over 24-inches must be released (on the U.S. side of the river), Durick continues to see the positive proof of catch-and-release catfishing. “Small cats make for wonderful meals. But the bigger fish go back. It’s what makes this river so special—really the most unique channel catfish stream on earth.”

Just initiated this past year, a comprehensive catfish tracking study has put tags into 14,000 Red River channels. Beyond monitoring the astounding long-distance movements of these catfish, the study is proving the efficacy of catch and release. One particular fish, tagged in Selkirk, Manitoba last June was caught by Durick in Drayton, North Dakota this May; the same fish was caught, reported and released again from the Grand Forks stretch in June—a nearly 500 mile upstream journey. Several other tagged fish caught by Durick have been re-captured by other anglers up to three additional times.

It all helps explain and prove why trophy catfishing is as “red” hot here as it’s been for nearly four decades.



# Does this lure make my Bass look fat?

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## Fall Funnel Walleye

By Jason Mitchell



Current attracts walleye any time of the year and what might surprise many anglers is just how much current affects walleye location and movements throughout the season. Even large natural lakes have currents that occur as wind pushes water to one side of the lake. Even after the wind lies down, there can be current that is created as the water levels off and moves back the opposite direction. The current factor on reservoirs and flowages is even more obvious. Of course rivers always have obvious current.

Current can be a big drawing card for walleye throughout the season but current can be one of the most important variables for quickly finding walleye in the fall. Walleyes love current in the fall and often congregate into any incoming tributary or river system thus becoming more accessible to anglers. Many anglers have referred to this fall run in rivers and reservoirs as a false spawning run as this movement resembles the same spring migration of fish but I don't believe this movement of fish is simply practice for procreation. The amount of



baitfish that concentrates in current when the temperatures fall is incredible and walleyes are simply opportunistic. These fall migrations are all about forage.

Walleyes running up river systems in the fall is a classic fishing opportunity but some of the most overlooked and sometimes productive fall walleye fishing patterns happen on natural lakes and flowages where walleye concentrate around bottlenecks and funnel areas that concentrate current.

On many lakes, causeways and bridges that are built between lakes focus a current that attracts walleye during the fall. Many narrow gaps that connect lakes are prime fall walleye locations. If there is any depth and moving water in these types of locations, there will almost always be walleye around.

Other top locations that enhance or concentrate current can be bottlenecks that are created by islands or points that basically neck down the water to increase the current flow. If there is visible current, there is enough current to attract walleyes and we have seen good locations that range between five feet of water to thirty feet of water. What makes these locations so good is the simple fact that these spots keep recharging with new fish and this can often be a big fish location... some of the biggest walleyes caught each fall come from these scenarios.

Presentations and fishing strategies can run the gamut but fall walleye fishing can often revolve around jigs and cranks. Some fisheries produce after dark bites for big fish where shallow running stick baits can be either trolled or cast from shore or by using waders. Anchoring or slipping the current with jigs is another proven strategy. Daytime bites often occur in deeper water whereas after-dark patterns often happen in shallow. Some incredible bites can develop particularly after dark for anglers either fishing from shore or with waders. Many of these locations can be fairly unassuming to anglers not in the know, simply a small bridge connecting two lakes is all that it takes.

People often tout spring as one of the best opportunities for cracking a trophy caliber walleye arguing that spring spawning conditions concentrate fish and the simple fact that big female walleyes are at their heaviest prior to the spawn. Fall fishing opportunities around current can be just as good. Fish are often in prime condition from the ample fall feeding opportunities, females are starting to carry egg mass and the fish can often be concentrated. Trophy walleye hunters covet the fall.

As a general rule of thumb, fall presentations need to be bulked up in the fall. Shallow running suspending stick baits and swim baits shine in less than seven feet of water. Larger stick baits like the Salmo Suspending Sting have loud rattles and two larger treble hooks (which work well for keeping big fish pinned up). Large four to five inch swim baits can also work extremely well. From my own experiences, I have often done better throwing the swim baits during the day and have done better on shallow running hard baits after dark. Swim baits like the Kalins Sizmic Shad with large thumping paddle tails are usually the ticket.



Deeper patterns can also occur depending on the location and jigging below the boat was often productive whenever working



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specific current seams or troughs that

combined depth and current. There are times where the fish would be laying out in front of the current in the deep hole or break line in front of the bottleneck. These fall funnel locations are not necessarily always shallow or right immediately in the bottleneck. For numbers of fish in particular, the deep water close to the moving water often loads up during the fall. Since these locations can be tight and small, staying over the top with a jig can be very efficient.

Because of the competition outdoors with so many facets of outdoor activities, fall walleye fishing opportunities can often be overlooked once hunting seasons kick in. Pressure falls off drastically as many outdoors enthusiasts trade in fishing rods for shotguns but for the committed anglers still fishing through the fall, these current patterns can produce some of the best walleye fishing of the season and some of the biggest fish are a real possibility.







Brad Wiegmann Photography

# THE ULTIMATE FISHING KAYAK

By Brad Wiegmann

Until just a few years ago, anglers wanting to fish out of a kayak had to settle for a recreation kayak. However, it's all changed now because of the influence by Eric Jackson over the kayak industry. Jackson, the president of Jackson Kayak, wasn't going to settle for anything less than the ultimate fishing kayak.



Of course, Jackson or EJ as he is known by brings a wealth of kayaking and fishing knowledge into every fishing kayak built by Jackson Kayak ([www.jacksonkayak.com](http://www.jacksonkayak.com)). “The true fishing kayak is a new phenomenon and really started just around five years ago. What makes these a fishing kayak compared to other kayaks? A true fishing kayak you can stand up in and has a high seating platform improving the angling ability of an angler,” said EJ.

Popularity of kayak fishing and even kayak fishing tournaments has multiplied exponentially as fishing kayaks evolve in to the ultimate fishing vessel. Typically, fishing kayaks don’t have an outboard gas engine and rely on an angler to propel them to one fishing hole to another. While this may seem like a disadvantage it’s not; in fact, it’s an advantage as kayak anglers can go to more secluded areas to fish less pressured areas.

The design of fishing kayaks has improved over the past five years, however, it’s the never ending options for fishing kayak accessories that has taken kayak fishing to a new level. One that Jackson Kayak has taken to heart and incorporates in to all the different models of fishing kayaks they sell.

Recently, I caught up with EJ out on the water fishing in a small pond. EJ was in his Jackson Kayak Coosa HD. The Coosa HD comes ready to fish and includes a comfortable Elite Seat 3.0 with improved ergonomics, removable center console, rod tip protector, under-seat tackle pockets with Plano boxes, rod stagers, drag chain chute, two-layer standing pad, heavy duty seat attachment buckle, hull storage, GoPro Gooseneck, flush mount



Brad Wiegmann Photography



rod holders, tankwell, removable skid plate, rod butt stager, adjustable ergonomic foot pegs, day hatch, ergonomic handles, fish grips, line Cutterz and SealLine Seat Pouch.

However, even with all of the standard features the Coosa HD comes with, EJ has pimped out his Coosa HD with even more features. It all starts with his electronics. The Coosa HD is set up to make for easy installation of several marine electronic units including Raymarine. EJ has installed a Raymarine Dragonfly on his kayak. It's a compact unit, but with many of the features found in more expensive sonar units.

To anchor, EJ has installed a Power-Pole Micro Anchor ([www.power-pole.com](http://www.power-pole.com)) on the stern area of his kayak. Unlike the larger Power-Pole, the Micro Anchor's small compact design with easy installation makes it perfect for a kayak. "I can actually install my Power-Pole Micro Anchor in sixty seconds with a Phillips head screw driver or take it off," said EJ.

EJ also has gear tracks on his Coosa HD. "They are designed for the Ram system and utilize Ram Balls where you can use them to hold phones, rod holders, electronics and anything else you want to add on to your kayak. These tracks can be added to the front or back of the kayak," said EJ.

One thing EJ's always added to his kayak is a GoPro camera ([www.gopro.com](http://www.gopro.com)) to video the action. "You know the GoPro slogan; Be a Hero. So, if it's not on film; it really didn't happen right?" said EJ. EJ noted that the Coosa HD does come with the GoPro Gooseneck, but not the camera itself.

Over a short period of time fishing kayaks have changed dramatically. Everything from better elevated seats, padded standing platform and other now standard features; in addition all the accessories available just for fishing kayaks. The end result is now anglers can own and enjoy the ultimate fishing kayak.

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# DEEP DROP PANFISH

## Mr. Bluegill's Late Season Prescriptions

By Ted Pilgrim







After a full summer of chasing ‘glamour fish’—the bass, walleyes, and trout of the world—a dude dubbed Mr. Bluegill is certainly ready to call an audible. Not that Captain Troy Peterson doesn’t constantly keep tabs on resident schools of sunfish, crappies, perch and white bass. With a moniker like his, it’s sort of standard operating procedure. But if you ask the Eastern Wisconsin-based angler about overlooked seasons for hunting down heavy-duty panfish, “right now” might be the appropriate answer.

As it turns out, the reasons for Mr. Bluegill’s post summer panfish proclivities boil down to accessibility, fish activity and, well, fun. Beginning in late August and often lasting all through autumn, patterns for panfish become more or less predictable. It’s a great time to find fish on electronics because they show up clearly on Peterson’s Humminbird screen, as bluegills and crappies position away from heavy cover. Once he locks onto a school, Mr. Bluegill and his clients frequently enjoy fast action, dropping a selection of carefully chosen presentations into the fish’s deeper summer and fall hideouts. Almost regardless of where you live, the prescriptions to follow are sure to put you on a potent panfish bite.

### **The Downsized Dropshot**

While primarily employed by bass anglers, the truth about the dropshot rig is that it can be every bit as effective for other species. Particularly as panfish folks draw on expanding selections of pint-sized softbaits—many of the best ones designated as “ice fishing baits”—dropshotting for other species has evolved into a spectacular system.

“I do a lot of dropshot fishing for other species,” says Peterson. “The rig can be deadly all year, but even



more so as we move into late summer and fall, when vegetation folds over and withers. The beauty of the rig is that you can determine the height of the weedgrowth, and run your bait literally right above the tops of the cover, without hanging up. Fish often position right there, so your bait jiggles directly in front of their eyeballs.”

Peterson primarily employs a 3/8-ounce dropshot sinker or weedless bullet weight at the rig’s base, typically tying a #8 or #6 octopus or dropshot hook 12 to 18 inches above the sinker. He’s a huge fan of a ‘chunk of nightcrawler,’ which remains the star for hooking boatloads of all species. But he nearly always begins by dressing the hook with one or two Nuclear Ant Legs—a spiderlike soft plastic accoutrement from Custom Jigs & Spins that delivers exceptional action to any panfish presentation.

“The Nuclear Ant is like a skirt on a bass jig or spinnerbait,” offers Mr. Bluegill. “It’s almost impossible to keep the little legs from quaking and kicking around.” So while he dresses the hook with a Nuclear Ant collar, it also leaves room to impale half a crawler or a micro softbait, such as a Finesse Plastic or Wedgee, which seals the deal.

“The dropshot is so deadly for panfish because you can drop it to any depth quickly, maintain direct contact and yet, the fish feels no resistance when they bite. In fact, you want to set the hook quick, because fish may quickly inhale the whole works. We catch everything with it—sunfish, crappies, perch, plus walleyes and bass. It’s a sweet trick.”

### Heavy Little Swimmers

Another of Peterson’s favorite late season pastimes involves white bass—a panfish species that’s always eager to bite. “I like to fish underneath bridges and embankments in rivers. Or in lakes like Winnebago, we look for flocks of seagulls, which betray bait and pods of whities below.”



One of the best new methods for quickly boating a ton of bass, he says, involves a bait called the RPM, or Rotating Power Minnow. A 2-inch, ¼-ounce minnow-profile swimbait, the RPM casts a mile and darts and glides randomly on the retrieve. Peterson claims that white bass and pretty much anything else in the area eat it with abandon. “Cast it as far as you want and just start doing an aggressive pop and stop retrieve. You can let it quickly sink to the bottom and work it like a jig, or swim it through open water for suspended white bass or crappies. Perch love this thing, too.”

### Tungsten Torpedoes

Borrowing from another of his ice fishing tricks, Peterson extols the advantages of tiny yet top-heavy



tungsten, a progressive jig material that's perfect for deepwater perch, or for slowly drifting over 20- to 30-foot lake basins for other species.

"When dying vegetation shifts schools of fish into deeper, soft-bottom basins," he says, "little tungsten jigs tipped with a piece of crawler can't be beat. I'm a big fan of a purple and black Chekai Tungsten ice jig. If the water's super clear, white shines. On darker Lake Winnebago, orange is awesome."

Similar to his dropshot rigs, Peterson adorns each jig collar with a pair of Nuclear Ant Legs for extra action, followed by a chunk of worm or a micro softbait. "When fish are in the basin, my Humminbird side-imaging unit is the best way to find and stay on small pods of bluegills, perch or crappies. Once we're on 'em, we'll drop several jigs to the right level, give 'em a twitch or two and then just deadstick them as we slowly drift along. The jigs' extra weight ensures we stay vertical and in constant contact with the slightest bites."

### **Swingin' Spoons**

A final method for slightly shallower panfish still hovering around weedlines or other dropoffs, Mr. Bluegill's favorite is to cast a 1/32-ounce Rat Finkee Jig with a waxworm or 'crawler. For fish suspending just off the edge, he simply drifts the bait behind the boat, intercepting active fish out in "space."

During midday hours, he's also a fan of doing the same thing with a 1/16-ounce Slender Spoon, tipping its #12 hook with bait or soft plastics. Peterson calls it a 'flasher' "It's a super attractor bait for inviting the attention of fish floating around in openwater. During the day, the sun reflects beautifully off the spoon's surface, calling fish from greater distances. You can cast and slowly retrieve the spoon, or just throw it out and drift, giving it little twitches to trigger bites."

One thing's for certain, although Peterson surely pines for bites from big bluegills, the species that comes to the net next is anyone's guess; which can be a bonus in itself. So long as it pulls back and produces grins, everyone wins.





# DROP DEAD DOMINATION

*Dropshot rig places bait with precision; causes chaos in an otherwise calm environment*

*Dr. Jason Halfen  
The Technological Angler*

The dropshot rig is widely recognized as a fantastically effective finesse approach for presenting both live and artificial baits. Originally developed as a technique for targeting highly pressured bass in deep water, the contemporary dropshot rig crosses all species boundaries and dominates in both fresh and saltwater environments. Indeed, whether you chase bass or bluegills, walleyes or red snapper, you will catch more of your favorite fish by learning to fish the dropshot rig.

## **Tie a dominating dropshot rig**

The essence of the dropshot rig is that the hook is positioned above the weight, at a distance that can range anywhere from 6" to as much as 2-feet or more, depending on water clarity and the location of your target fish relative to the bottom. Begin to tie the rig by attaching a length of monofilament or high-quality fluorocarbon leader to your main line. While some dropshot anglers



choose to make this connection with a blood knot, I rely on a small, high-quality swivel to join my braided main line to my leader, which I tie with Seaguar InvizX fluorocarbon. This line has exceptionally low memory for a pure fluorocarbon, which makes for very natural finesse presentations. The swivel cuts down on the amount of line twist that can occur when fishing the dropshot rig, particularly with a larger profile soft plastic or live bait.

Next, affix your dropshot hook to the leader using a Palomar knot. The new dropshot/live bait/finesse hook from Trapper Hooks is an excellent choice. These innovative hooks feature the patent-protected “Trapper Box” at the base of the shank, which helps to ensure that hooked fish remain hooked as they fight their way to the boat, and that rigged baits stay rigged correctly as they are fished through heavy cover. Available in sizes from #4 to 2/0, these ICAST Best-in-Show award winning hooks from Trapper Tackle are appropriate for any artificial or live offering presented on a dropshot rig. Leave plenty of length in your tag line as you tie your Palomar knot, and then pass that tag end down through the eye of the hook.

Complete your dropshot rig by connecting the weight to the tag line beneath the hook at the distance you want to suspend the bait above the bottom. I select my weight and connection style based on the structure and cover at hand. When casting to rocks or particularly snaggy areas, like deep water rock piles or a wingdam on the Mississippi River, I simply tie an overhand knot in the tag line and pinch on several split shot just above the knot. With the rig is tied this way, the weight will simply pull off the tag line in the event of a snag, leaving me with an intact dropshot rig that requires only a new split shot before being returned to duty. In less hazardous areas, I will tie on a compact tungsten weight to anchor my dropshot rig. Tungsten is harder and denser than lead, and as such, the weight provides me with critical information about composition and hardness as it moves across the bottom, allowing me to target productive transitions between hard and soft-bottomed areas.







## Dress for success

The extreme versatility of the dropshot rig is paralleled by the wide variety of artificial and live offerings that can be used to dress the dropshot hook. When bass are targeted, most anglers gravitate toward finesse soft plastics, like B-Fish-N Tackle 4" ringworms, Z-Man Finesse WormZ, or 4.5" Roboworm Fat Worms. Hook these baits once through the nose, and let them ride freely within the Trapper Box of the Trapper dropshot hook. Feeling wacky when you dress your dropshot rig? Grab a Yamamoto Senko and pin it once right through the middle. On a great fluke bite? Tie in a larger size Trapper dropshot hook and rig up a 5" or 6" fluke, hooked through the nose. Other soft plastic styles can be equally effective on dropshot rigs if you pay attention to rigging details. For example, a crawfish-shaped soft bait, hooked through the tail, can be very effective when fished with a short dropper line to the dropshot weight.

Do you have more confidence in live baits? Worms, leeches and minnows alike can be fished very effectively on dropshot rigs. A personal favorite is a very small (1") chunk of nightcrawler pitched on a dropshot rig to the upstream face of a Mississippi River wingdam for magnum summer bluegills. Anglers in large southern reservoirs will dropshot a whole nightcrawler in 30-40 feet of water for fat fall walleyes. Heading out to fish offshore oil rigs? Tie in the biggest dropshot hook in your arsenal and dress it with a chunk of cutbait for snapper, grouper, and other denizens of the deep blue sea...and then hold on!



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

### **Work it, baby!**

While dropshot rigs can certainly be fished vertically, directly beneath the boat, they are perhaps more effective when used as a search tool, cast away from the boat and worked methodically back through fishy habitat. After the cast, most dropshot presentations rely on using the rod tip to impart action to the bait, while leaving the weight largely in place.

Trapper Tackle pro Vince Hurtado offers some excellent tips for working dropshot rigs: “I like to make short casts, often targeting structure or sometimes even shaded areas under docks, in 12-25 feet of water. I keep a tight line on the fall, and let the bait pendulum back towards me. Pay close attention, as a large percentage of strikes happen on that initial fall.”

Once the weight reaches the bottom, shake the rod tip on a tight line with enough action to activate the bait’s motion, but without moving the weight. Then, reel in some line to draw the rig closer to you, and repeat the process on a tight line. Once you’ve reached the boat, retrieve the rig and repeat the process, fan-casting your target zone until you make contact.

The dropshot rig is an incredibly versatile presentation tool that belongs in your bag of tricks. Learn to tie it and fish it for your favorite species and join the tidal wave of successful anglers who dominate with the dropshot.





# Pluckin' Pike From The Weeds

**By Chip Leer, Inside The WildSide**

As fall progresses and water temperatures plummet, deep clumps of coontail become hotbeds of northern pike activity.

Depth is relative to the lake, but 11 to 17 feet is a common range in many Upper Midwestern waters. Keys include finding isolated clumps of still-green coontail offering well-defined edges. Such areas concentrate pike in small areas, and are infinitely easier to efficiently fish than larger weedbeds.

Northland Fishing Tackle's Mimic Minnow Spin is a great option for targeting these fish. Tipped with a 3-





to 5-inch, securely skull-hooked sucker minnow, the jig can be cast or trolled, depending on the size of the weed clump you're fishing.

For larger clumps, slow-troll the jig and minnow .7 to 1.2 mph just above the weed tops and along the edges, so it occasionally ticks the vegetation. When your jig contacts the weeds, snap the rod tip to rip it free. Hang on tight, because the resulting erratic action produced when the lure surges forward, then flutters back down often triggers a strike.





**Ron Presley offers anglers valued fishing insight and information on Florida's saltwater angling opportunities, detailed in the following two books.**

## **FLORIDA FISHING AT IT'S BEST!**



Author and experienced fishing guide Ron Presley offers practical information to anglers of all skill levels and interests in this clear, concise guide. He provides the essential information anglers need both to have a successful excursion and to protect the fishing resource for future generations. Also featuring valuable contributions from twenty-eight local guides and experts—all discussing the communities and waters they know best.



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Secrets from Florida's Master Anglers offers both tourists and natives a fishing resource like no other. Professional fishing guide Ron Presley conducted privileged interviews with twenty of the state's top charter boat captains. The result is this collection of tips and techniques sure to make your next excursion a success whether in Florida or your own home waters.







When fishing a smaller clump, or when pike tuck tight into the weeds following a severe fall cold front, casting is a good call. Cast out, let the jig fall to bottom and methodically retrieve it over the weeds, allowing it to helicopter down into open pockets and along the edges.

You can also position the boat directly over the weeds and vertically jig a Northland Weed-Weasel, tipped with a similarly-hooked sucker minnow.

A medium-heavy spinning outfit spooled with superline such as 15-pound Bionic Braid, tipped with a steel leader, works well with both the Mimic Minnow Spin and Weed-Weasel.

I personally favor 13 Fishing's Omen Black 7-foot, 1-inch rod, which has just the right blank for working the jig, setting the hook and fighting beefy fall pike.

The deep coontail bite emerges in mid-summer and lasts until the vegetation dies off. Take advantage of this overlooked pike pattern and make this your best fall yet.

Based in Walker, Minnesota, noted fishing authority and outdoor communicator Chip Leer operates Fishing the WildSide, which offers a full suite of promotional, product development and consultation services. For more information, call (218) 547-4714 or email [Chip@fishingthewildside.net](mailto:Chip@fishingthewildside.net)





# ICE FISHING ZONE











# New Ice Technique: Bring the Fish to You

By Gary Abernethy

One of an ice angler's first dilemmas... where do you fish? Lake Winnipeg has over 9,465 square miles of ice, Mille Lacs MN is 132,516 acres, Lake Simcoe a huge 725 sq. miles, Lake of the Woods with 65,000 shoreline miles seems to have no end. There are vast choices on where to fish, with miles of ice. But what if the equation could be changed...what if the holes the angler has selected could become more productive? Maybe the odds have changed.

A Canadian company called BaitCloud has invented a novel product that is designed to stimulate both gamefish and baitfish activity surrounding a selected fishing location by stimulating a combination of sensory impulses including sound







(effervesce), visual (Bio-Glitter & bubbles), and scent (fish oil, amino acids, & proprietary attractants). The product is intended to be utilized into a variety of fishing applications, but the impact and solution for the ice fisherman is most profound since the angler is confined to specific locations based on the drilled hole location.

One of the Company founders, Carl Rudnik describes what actually occurs when the BaitCloud product is used. “First of all, the simplicity makes it super easy to deploy, simply drop a BaitCloud ball into your drilled hole in the ice to stimulate activity and draw gamefish to your location. An effervescent action begins as the BaitCloud ball descends to the bottom, and that process starts to release the proprietary formulation of ingredients that provide the attraction qualities of sound, visual, and scent. A plume of ‘cloud’ activity creates the namesake calling card for baitfish and the following gamefish to become attracted to the location.” Rudnik was quick to emphasize that the product is 100% bio-degradable and includes no fish parts or chum, making it save to use and easy to store.

During last ice season, veteran angler and host of the “Canadian Sportfishing” TV show Italo Labignan was able to research and test the first samples of the BaitCloud product, and found some distinct examples where he could witness the impact of the product across several filming trips. Labignan provided clear details of his first two encounters.

“On my very first use of BaitCloud, we went to a small lake that is known for producing a good panfish bite. When we showed up on the ice, there was an angler present who had been working his hole for a









Contact BaitCloud: Carl Rudnik at 416.529.2454  
[carl@baitcloud.com](mailto:carl@baitcloud.com)    [www.baitcloud.com](http://www.baitcloud.com)

BaitCloud™ designs and manufactures fish attractant products designed for enhancing and stimulating fish activity and bringing fish to your fishing location. Specific formulas for targeted applications and fish species. Product is available at major retailers such as Dick's, Cabelas, and at Independent Retailers in the US and Canada.



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couple of hours with a very limited result, as he had caught just one or two. I asked him if we could put a BaitCloud ball into his hole and he agreed. While we proceeded to move nearby to set up cameras and drill some additional holes, this angler ends up catching five or six panfish in about 20 minutes. He was using a small jig and plastic trailer, and never changed the lure, presentation, or anything else. The hole had been dormant for over an hour, and then produced more bites in a brief 20 minute span than during his prior efforts combined. Safe to say, I got very intrigued from this first encounter.”

Labignan continued to describe his next use of BaitCloud, and this application ended up being a part of what will be an informative pike ice fishing episode that will be Episode #1 on the new season of Canadian Sportfishing to air in early 2017 on WFN in the US and Canada. “We were setting up to try and shoot this pike fishing show on a lake that is shallow and weedy. From past history on this water, we began to drill a series of eight holes in an area that had water depths of about 8-12’. With weeds and shallow water, the pike can’t see too far. We set up to fish the holes with tip-ups rigged with live minnows. We randomly picked one hole, and dropped in the BaitCloud ball, and then started a rotation to fish the holes we had prepared. When the session ended, we had caught eight pike total, but five of the pike had come from the single hole where we had deployed the BaitCloud! We didn’t catch two pike out of any other hole!”

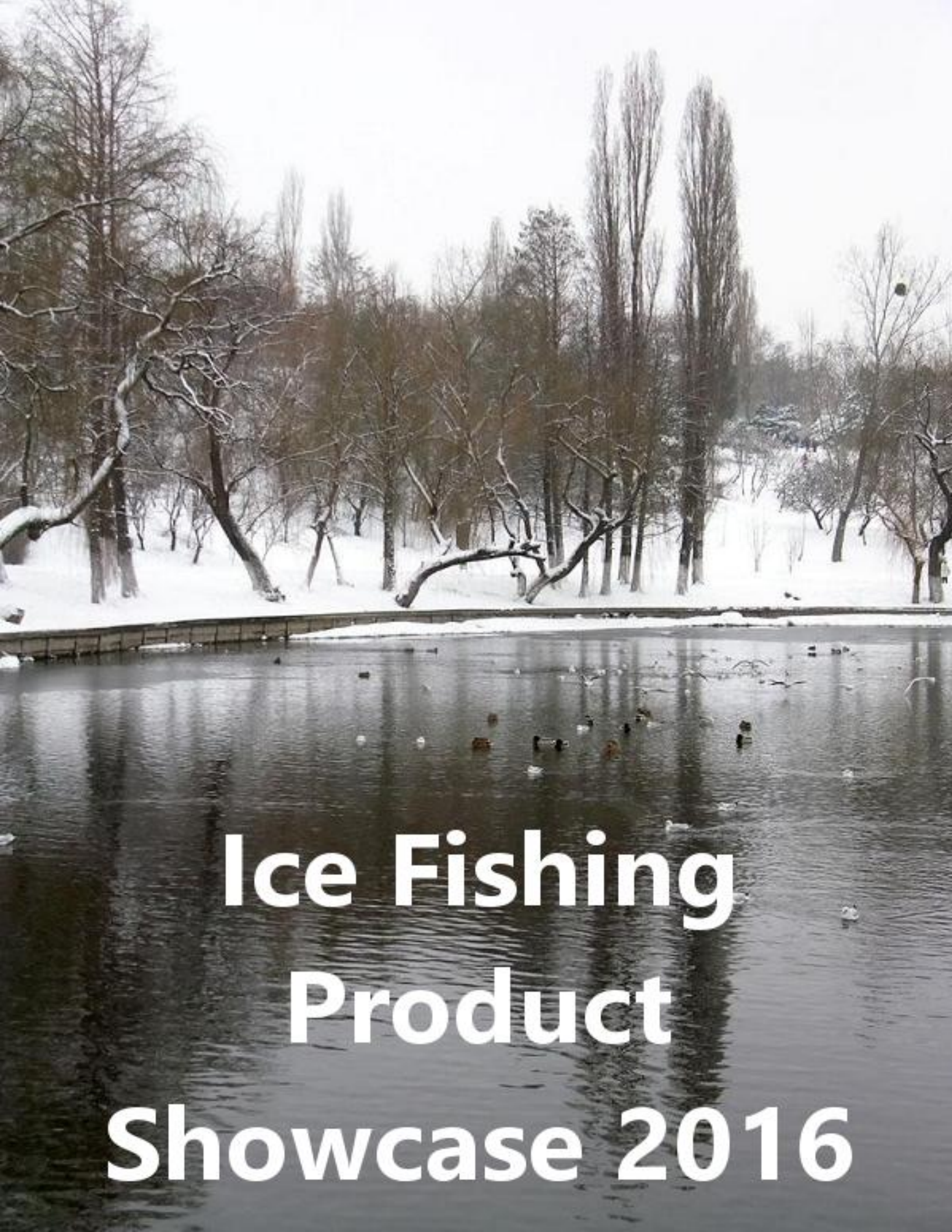
Being in the business of filming fish and fish habitat, Labignan commented on some of the reactions he has seen from fish in the demo tanks often present at consumer fishing shows. “We’ll have a tank that has had fish presented with all types of lures and commotion over several show days. When we drop in a BaitCloud ball and it starts to fizz and activate, the fish do migrate to the ball and become active, it is quite interesting to watch.” Labignan was quick to emphasize, “BaitCloud is not magic or “pixie dust” to make the fish bite, the angler still must be near fish for them to be drawn closer, and must still provide a lure or bait that produces the strike. From what I have personally seen, this becomes a big advantage, especially for ice fishing applications. BaitCloud will readily work in open water applications as well, the ice fishing situation just becomes so logical because of the limited ability to cover water, it is great to have the fish come to your location.”

BaitCloud is a product that is designed to stimulate activity for both gamefish and baitfish surrounding your selected fishing location. For ice fishing, application is very easy, simply drop a BaitCloud ball into your drilled hole in the ice to stimulate activity and draw gamefish to your location. BaitCloud has actually produced a three minute video that has some great views of the product deployed underwater, and how gamefish and forage fish react to it in their environment; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bfUoNuurPY8>.

You've invested in the snowmobile/ATV, a shelter or hut, auger, tackle, and gear. Time on the ice is limited. You've drilled the hole, now you can enhance every spot with the impact of a multi-sensory fish attractant from BaitCloud.







# **Ice Fishing Product Showcase 2016**



**Ice fishing season is just around the corner. Stores are stocking up with the newest ice rods, hardwater baits, augers, shelters, flashers etc. What should you look for when you head out to stock up and add to your ice fishing equipment stockpile? Here are a few select items that will improve you time on the ice.**

**HT Enterprises Elite Mini Baitcast Levelwind Reel** – This, yet lightweight and compact casting reel with high performance at a low price. This reel features a smooth levelwind retrieve, infinite anti-reverse, and a comfortable plastic barrel style handle.

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

- Star Drag system
- Level Wind retrieve system
- Machined aluminum spool
- Oversize Plastic Barrel Handle
- Infinite anti-reverse
- Reel width: 2" (width w/handle: approx. 4")



**Rapala Slab Rap** - This minnow-imitating lure puts you in command of several changes in movement using simple rod motions. Quick snaps of the rod make the Rapala Slab Rap search in wide erratic directions, circling back to center after pause. A lift-drop motion creates subtle vibrations on the rise, followed by evasive side-to-side motion on the fall. Weight-forward design enables a rocking action to trigger indecisive fish. VMC® black-nickel hooks.



**Sebile Flatt Shad** utilize a silent vibration created through the body to provide attraction. Designed to swim at very slow, regular, or high speeds, these baits have a ultra-low center of gravity and high-end hooks. Sebile Flatt Shad come with enhanced cosmetics, improved hardware materials, and a reinforced body for higher pull strength.







**Gear Box Improves Ice Auger Conversation Kit by Clam** - Ice anglers love the ease and efficiency of the Clam® Ice Auger Conversation Kit, but the Blue X Factor™ doesn't sit on its laurels. Always striving for better, now with a Conversation Kit Gear Box, Model #10634 comes with the drill plate, 8" auger bit and gear box for MSRP of \$249.99. Still the same quality drill plate that's lightweight and works with most current 18-volt ½" chuck cordless drills, the conversation kit doubles the torque. With a 2:1 gear ratio to increase torque, the metal gears and quality ball bearings absorb the load from the auger so the drill is only used to spin the auger and not support the auger torque.



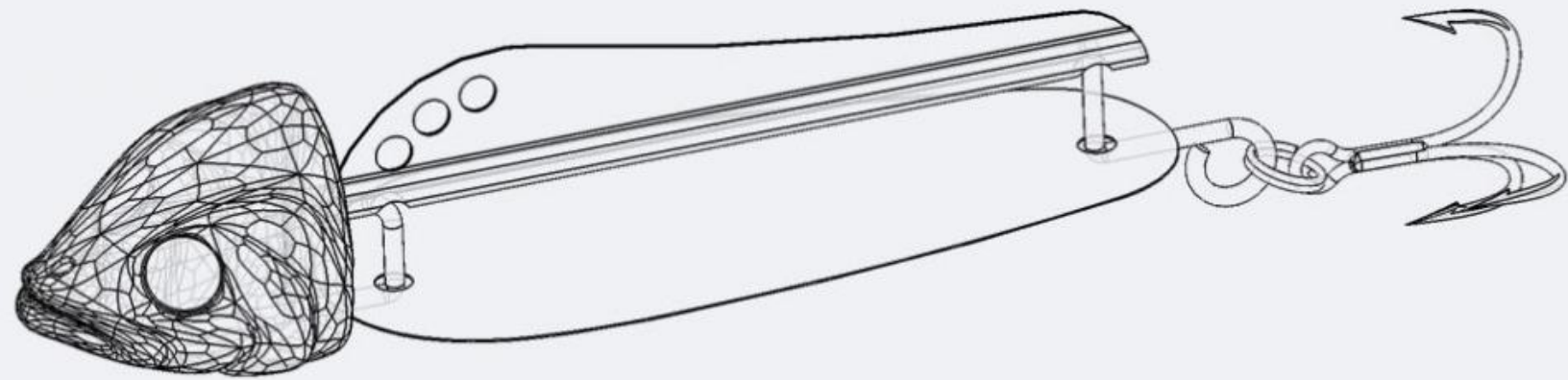
"This Gear Box doubles your torque output," Tom Walter said, research and development manager. "That means anglers can now use 8" and 9" augers for drilling holes, no problem, and there's far less wear and tear on drills."

Designed so it's easy to assemble with no loose bits falling out on the ice, the patent-pending Geared Ice Auger Conversation Kit is no hassle—just pull the trigger, drill and start fishing. The Gear Box is available separately for those who already own the Ice Auger Conversation Kit with Model #10243 for MSRP of \$69.99.

Whether fishing for panfish or walleyes, set up in a portable or a big permanent shack, this auger is the wave of the future. No fumes, lightweight compared to gas augers and no need to worry about fuel. Cordless drills keep getting better and better in quality, and Clam's matched the intensity with the right conversion kit and auger. Test results with a Milwaukee Fuel Drill tunneled through 600 inches of ice with the 8-inch auger on one battery and 480 inches of ice with the 9-inch auger on one battery.

Clam wants anglers to be able to use their drills year-round, and this system allows for that. Just remove and use for construction projects in the summer. The auger bit is a tempered stainless steel 3-point blade system with a location point. Includes a handle for hand auger application, too. Two extensions in 12" and 20" available, #9632 for 12" with MSRP of \$19.99 and #9624 for 20" with MSRP of \$24.99. <http://www.clamoutdoors.com/>





The **Bite Booster** is a lure most every angler has not seen. Initially made for trolling at deep depths, it works incredible well for ice fishing. Are you targeting pike and musky? Are you jigging deep for lake trout or panfish? Do you have walleye not committing to you current bait? The Bite Booster creates active and attractive vibrations for predatory fish species. You can order your Bite Booster in multiple color arrangements as well. We recommend the black nickel head, gold fins and red eyes.





Helping generations of  
anglers catch more fish.



**FLX-28"**  
Ultra Pack



**FL-20"**  
Ultra Pack



**FL-22" HD**  
Ice Pro



**FL-18"**  
ProPack II



**FL-12"**  
Genz Pack



**FL-8" SE**  
Genz Pack







**Vexilar FLX-28 Ultra Pack w / Pro View Ice Ducer** - The features found in the FLX-28 read like the wish list of avid ice anglers starting with digital depth, Auto Range, Two zoom zones, battery status, FIVE color palettes to select from for maximum visibility, five foot depth range adjustments starting at 10 feet, Maximum range of 300, Day and Night display brightness settings, Low power options for fishing in super shallow water, a unique Weed Mode for better performance while fishing in weeds. And to top it all off, the unit even has its own Demo mode so you can show non-Vexilar fans how the system works with a lifelike fish catching simulation to watch. There are more features to the FLX-28 series than ever before inside a single flasher sonar system. When fans of Vexilar say we could never improve the FL-8 that we introduced over 20 years ago, they were amazed when the FL-18 hit the ice in 2002. By the time the new flat screen FL-12 and 20 came out, Vexilar had established a new gold standard in flasher performance. Surely, Vexilar could not improve on this? Welcome to the age of the FLX series! A unique brushless data

transfer design system allows for the creation of a breakthrough flasher display with digital depth and Auto Ranging technology. The features found in the FLX-28 read like the wish list of avid Ice Anglers starting with digital depth, Auto Range, Two zoom zones, FIVE color palettes to select from for maximum visibility, five foot depth range adjustments starting at 10 feet, Maximum range of 300, Day and Night display brightness settings, Low power options for fishing in super shallow water, a unique Weed Mode for better performance while fishing in weeds. And to top it all off, the unit even has its own Demo mode so you can show non-Vexilar fans how the system works with a lifelike fish catching simulation to watch. The FLX-28 is totally revolutionary in the world of winter flasher sonar technology. Vexilar has come a long way from the early FL-8, but Vexilar has never changed their commitment to deliver the very best sonar systems in the world for over 50 years. Performance, quality, innovation and reliability Welcome to the amazing FLX-28. The Ultra Pack is the ideal name for the most feature packed ice fishing system ever offered by Vexilar. The Ultra Pack systems innovation begins with a 12 volt, 9 amp-hour battery enclosed inside the case, so you don't need to connect or disconnect your battery after each use. A master power switch powers up your unit and remote charging posts make it easy to re-charge. The case comes with an adjustable rod holder, cable storage cleats, battery charger and even your own Vexilar tackle box! The super tough Ultra Pack will fit into a five gallon bucket. An optional soft pack carrying case is also available. The Ultra Pack comes completely assembled, individually tested and ready to fish with. It also includes an instructional video. <http://www.vexilar.com/>



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**Northland's UV Puppet Minnow** dances like, well, a puppet on a string. Darts and swims in a semi-circle, causing fish to attack. UV-enhanced finish is highly visible, even if water conditions aren't ideal. Best when jigged vertically or cast and retrieved with a jigging motion.

- Wild action entices fish to strike
- Darts and swims in a semi-circle
- UV finish makes it easy to see

The **Sébile Vibrato** vibrates when jigged, twitched, retrieved steadily, trolled at any speed, and even on the fall – ensuring you have the attention of every predatory fish in the immediate area.



Its compressed body, wide belly and thin back result in constant vibration, regardless of how it is fished. The slow flutter rate on the fall results in flash and disturbance, and also allows you to target suspended fish by popping the lure on the fall to give the appearance of a wounded baitfish.

Perfect center of gravity delivers impeccable control and action every time. A wire extending from the front hook to the rear hook ensures a tough tie point, while the two super-sharp treble hooks ensure solid hooksets.



Constructed of heavy-duty brass, the **VMC Flash Champ Spoons** hold up to continuous attacks by large game fish or schools of panfish. Beveled edges and tapered design produce an irresistible fluttering action. Glow colors can be charged for up to 15 minutes of continuous glow time.

- Beveled edges and tapered design produce a fluttering action
- Heavy-duty brass construction
- Each kit includes three popular colors

**13 Fishing Wicked Ice Spinning Combos** have the same great blank and guides as the original just with a new evolve reel seat with a white soft touch finish. The solid toray blank rods have evolve carbon divide-2 white reel seat and evolve performance guides. The reels have aluminum spools with fat bail and long stems.

- Evolve carbon divide-2 white reel seat
- Aluminum spool
- Evolve performance guides
- 4.8:1 gear ratio
- 5BB IAR







**HT's Rescue Throw Bag Life Saving Device** - There are some things no serious ice angler should ever be without--and this is an especially critical consideration when it comes to ice safety.

HT's new rescue throw bag is one of these essential items, and something every ice angler should always have readily accessible while on the ice. Haven't seen one yet? They're easy to find! The rescue throw bag simply consists of a brightly colored nylon rope contained within a floating blaze orange bag secured by a draw string closure. One end of the 50' rope is tied into a secure loop and extends out through the base of the bag; the remainder is coiled inside.

Should someone break through an area of thin ice, simply grasp the loop at the base of the bag, slip

open the draw string and toss the bag toward the victim. As the bag travels through the air, the rope uncoils and extends out to the person in the water, who then grasps the opposite end and is pulled back to safety.

The rescue throw bag is a simple, highly effective ice safety item--and something no one should venture onto the ice without! <http://www.icefish.com/>

**HT's Sure Grip Ice Tread Ice Cleats** - Aside from ice thickness, one of the greatest concerns ice anglers face early in the season is a smooth, slick surface of fresh ice—or perhaps worse yet, a smooth, slick surface lightly covered with a thin coating of fresh, wet snow.

Either situation poses a treacherous track that can, and has, caused serious injury when someone slips and falls. Don't take the risk! HT's Sure Grip ice tread cleats are relatively inexpensive and light weight—and best of all, their simple overshoe design secures firmly and easily by just pulling the front over the toe of your boot, then stretching the other end securely around the heel. The ridged metal cleats on the underside will now provide sure-footed traction while you're traversing the ice.



Uniquely, Sure Grip Ice Treads are as easily removed as put on: Simply grasp the back strap and peel them off. And yes, Sure Grip Ice Treads also provide positive traction when walking on icy sidewalks, driveways or parking lots, too! <http://www.icefish.com/>



**Northland Fishing Tackle's new Forage Minnow Dart** swims, jukes and dances up a storm, allowing you to create animated jigging routines that trigger solid strikes from even the most jaded panfish, walleyes and other gamefish.

"This isn't just another chunk of lead," says Team Northland stalwart and decorated fishing guide Tony Roach. "The Forage Minnow® Dart swims in a semi-circle and offers a unique darting action fish haven't seen before."

Designed with ice fishing in mind, the Forage Minnow® Dart excels in vertical hardwater theatrics. But it also shines in open-water casting applications.

Armed with a top-mounted line tie, single tail hook and perfectly positioned belly treble, the Forage Minnow® Dart is ready for battle. "The treble is ideal for loading up with wax worms and larvae, as well as scented softbaits like Northland's IMPULSE® Minnow Head," says Roach. "You can also customize the rig with a single Northland Super-Glo Hook and tip with a wafer-thin IMPULSE® Stone Fly or Water Bug."

The Forage Minnow® Dart is available in 1/16- and 1/8-ounce options. The smaller size is 1 inch long and comes equipped with a #6 tail hook and #14 treble. The larger version stretches 1½ inches and sports a #4 single and #12 treble.

"I like the 1/8-ounce size for walleyes and perch," says Roach. "The 1/16-ounce model is great for triggering slab crappies, jumbo perch and other panfish." Both sizes carry a \$2.99 suggested retail and are available in eight high-vis, UV-enhanced color patterns, including three glow finishes.

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



**Johnson Johnny Darters** are designed to catch top predators, with brass rattles to attracting fish from great distances. They are built with an internal rattle and plastic rear fin. These lures will dart randomly with maximum side-to-side action.

- Equipped with a brass rattle
- Torpedo shaped body and tail fin
- Sold with built-in single wide gap hook and belly treble hook







**VistaLink™ System and Bigfoot™ Garage XL6000T are Building Blocks of Fun on the Ice** - Ever since kids cut windows and doors into cardboard boxes and linked them together with duct tape, we've been building places to play outdoors just right for us. Ditch the duct tape neighbor, Clam® still offers connectivity and creativity. The Link System,™ patent pending by Clam®, connects one VistaLink™ shelter to another. Officially named Bigfoot™ Garage XL6000T, it opens cleanly to the ice on one side (and then zips up again) giving wind-break and dry storage for a snowmobile or ATV. Or, with a particularly nice winter day and a big group, use the Garage as a wind break with the side hinged wide open. Also perfect for wheelchair access as the door swings completely open providing no bump or barrier to entry. These industry-first achievements are testimony to Clam's Blue X Factor,™ pairing innovation and cutting-edge technology with customers' needs.

"This VistaLink system is going to be great for families and for guides, whose group size changes from one day to the next," said John LaHood, engineering project manager. "Buddies can link up and connect two shelters and fish a whole group—together. They're going to love this."

Model #10133 VistaLink shelter is in the popular 6x6 hub-style pop-up design. Made of tough 420 denier fabric and utilizing the super-duty, flex-tested 11 mm poles, this 72"x72" shelter offers 36 square feet of fishable area for two to three anglers. MSRP of \$239.99. Use Hub Link™ Model #10682 for \$39.99 MSRP to link one VistaLink shelter to another. Also available in the VistaLink Thermal in 600 total denier fabric and full Thermal Trap Technology (Model #10134) for a MSRP of \$329.99. Same footprint in thermal or non-thermal fabric, the stylish graphics give the VistaLink series a trendy new look. Also available in the dark house thermal version with the VistaLink Thermal Stealth (Model #10135) with MSRP of \$329.99. Perfect for sight fishing and spearing with Clam's new thermal-warm, patent pending technology.

Model #10682 is the Hub Link™ to connect any VistaLink shelters. Made of 420 denier fabric with heavy duty zippers, the panel links any two VistaLink shelters together. MSRP of \$39.99.



With a larger footprint (and not part of the Link system), Model #10136 Bigfoot XL6000TGarage boasts 112 s.f. of fishable area and seats six to eight anglers comfortably. Set up size is 96" x 168" with a center height of 82" and an all-in weight of 65 lbs. MSRP is \$579.99. With super-tough 600 total denier fabric, this thermal skin retains heat and reduces condensation. Made of the Blue X Factor super-duty flex-tested 11 mm poles with an oversized skirt for ample snow packing. The convenient carry bag is oversized to make stow-and-go a breeze. Hub assemblies on all Clam hub-style shelters are the largest and most durable in the industry.

"Anglers are going to love how the end panel on this garage unzips to hinge open on the side," said LaHood. "It's big enough for snowmobiles or ATVs, even a side-by-side ATV fits. And the versatility to use it as a garage or for fishing with a large group is great, too." <http://www.clamoutdoors.com/>

**Vexilar FishPhone Camera System Complete** - As the name implies, FishPhone turns your smart phone or tablet into a fully functional underwater camera monitor. Now anyone with a smart phone or tablet will get a high quality video image delivered right to the palm of your hand. Using Wi-Fi signal technology to create its own hotspot that reaches out 100 feet in all directions, so you can share your video signal with as many friends as you like or keep it totally secure. You don't need cell phone coverage to use it, the FishPhone works anywhere in the world. The FREE software App is downloaded from the App store and works with both Android and IOS systems. FishPhone is a stand alone, fully functional, Smart Phone controlled system that allows you to record video or still images and easily send it off to your friends in an e-mail or text. The FishPhone comes with a unique holder and battery pack system that makes it easy to carry and manage 50 feet of cable. The portable FishPhone pack system can power your FishPhone for six hours between charging. The camera used in the FishPhone system is a Sony Color/ B&W camera that automatically shifts from color to black and white when light conditions are limited to increase contrast. There is little doubt underwater camera technology is getting lighter and more portable and with the FishPhone, Vexilar will be changing the way people look at underwater camera systems. <http://www.vexilar.com/>

## Features

- Compatible with iOS 6, Android 2.0
- Color/B&W CMOS Camera
- 50 foot lightweight cable
- Six Hour run time per charge
- 12 volt battery and charger
- Ridge case
- Records still images & video
- Full spectrum light level controls
- 100 feet transmit Range Via Wi-Fi
- One Year Vexilar Warranty
- Smart Device NOT Included







Northland Fishing Tackle has added a new supple, scented soft-plastic panfish bait to its legendary IMPULSE® lineup—the new **IMPULSE® Skeleton Minnow**.

Both breakout baits are infused with all the scent and flavor of Northland's patented IMPULSE® Instinctual Attractant, which features a baked-in MicroPlankton formula gamefish can't resist. In fact, rigorous laboratory testing scientifically

proved that IMPULSE® is 143 percent more effective than competitive brands.

Thanks to its slender, segmented tail section, the bare-bones IMPULSE® Skeleton Minnow compulsively undulates in the water, yielding plenty of strike-triggering action with minimal animation from the angler above. As a plus, the ribbed, bulbous body engenders easy rigging on a variety of micro-hooks and jigs.

The IMPULSE® Skeleton Minnow measures 1½ inches long and are available in eight great colors. Suggested retail is \$3.99 per 20 baits, which are packaged in clear, interlocking plastic disks that allow anglers to easily store and organize their cache of these new lethal weapons for panfish.

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

**Marcum PanCam Camera System** - Much more than just a way to view what your underwater camera is seeing, with the Marcum PanCam Camera with WiFi System you can take complete control of your camera's functionality from up to 300' away. Remotely change camera direction with exclusive "Swipe To Rotate" functionality, plus adjust lighting and even capture still images or record videos and instantly save them to your photo or video library or even post to Facebook or Twitter. The new Marcum WiFi System and free Marcum App connect you, your smartphone or tablet and camera into one advanced, integrated system.

The Marcum WiFi System give you the freedom to move around the ice and still keep an eye on the action. Free Marcum App gives complete remote control over all camera functions and even allows networking multiple cameras to one-smart phone or tablet for incredible on the ice coverage.

Features :

- WiFi Transmitter Base (from up to 300 feet away, you can remotely change camera)
- MarCum Manta Camera 1/3" Super HADD II
- 50 ft. Camera Cable
- Built-in Spool Reel for Cable Storage
- Fully Integrated Camera Panner
- Internal Battery (6-8 hour runtime)
- 110V Wall Charger
- The MarCum deluxe padded case features a two way zip and protects, secures and stores the PanCam Camera system
- MarCum Control App (Downloadable) for Android 2.3 and higher and iOS 4.3 and higher
- Download the PanCam App for your Android Smart Phone or Tablet







# ICE TRIX

**By Ted Pilgrim**

So maybe attending a weigh-in at the North American Ice Fishing Circuit (NAIFC) Championship is a little less impressive than sitting in the stands at the Bassmaster Classic. Consider the contrasts: Ice anglers bundle up inside cavernous parkas, don big

***Stone Cold Advice  
from the Hardwater  
Tournament Trail***





boots and carry 5-gallon buckets. Bass-heads sport flashy jerseys slathered with logos, clutch flippin' sticks while standing on the casting decks of \$70-thousand dollar boats. Beyond the other obvious fact that one faction fishes through snow and ice while the other casts to clear blue waters, the two pursuits are almost identical. Right?

Well . . . The truth is, despite a little lack of recognition, anglers who compete on the NAIFC tour might surprise you. These are highly skilled guys and gals who know their stuff. A lot of these ice anglers are so good that at each tournament stop, they regularly fish circles around the best local talent. But take the time to chat with any of the folks who fish this annual ice circuit and you'll surely walk away with some powerful fish-finding and catching advice. Just as in the big world of bassin', competition on ice inspires ingenuity, innovation and brilliant new gear that ultimately benefits the everyday angler.

### **Underwater Investigation**

Among the most interesting outcomes at ice events is the discovery of new spots on lakes that receive regular fishing pressure from local anglers. Wherever tourney anglers travel—to icy venues at Hebgen Lake, Montana all the way to Lake Maxinkuckee, Indiana—the competitors inevitably uncover fresh schools of biting panfish.



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“When we arrive at a new lake, our number one priority is to find fish that haven’t seen lures in a while,” says Brandon Newby, who along with partner Ryan Wilson, captured 3 consecutive NAIFC Team of the Year titles beginning in 2013. “It’s not unusual for us to drill 600 to 800 holes during prefishing. At Mitchell Lake, South Dakota last year, we drilled and scouted with our Micro cameras until we finally found an underwater tree that held some bigger ‘gills and crappies.

“Lots of years, we don’t wet lines before the tournament. It’s a stealth thing,” notes Newby, who often attracts hoards of followers—fellow competitors that know all about the team’s fish finding abilities. “Our Milwaukee M28 hand-drills let us travel light, as do our Aqua-Vu Micro cameras, which fit into our coat pockets. Last year, we also designed a new Pro Viewing Case, which allows us to actually wear our camera around our neck. It’s a huge time saver.

“Often, it’s not enough to find fish. The trick is to keep our spots secret until





game-time.” It sounds slightly like paranoia until you consider the virtual red Xs painted on the dynamic team’s backs, as a result of winning so frequently.

“Last year at Croton Dam Pond, Michigan, we had the tournament winning location entirely to ourselves,” says Newby. “When we arrived this year, a hundred people were already in our spot. It forced us to look to alternative locations, into deeper water, where after drilling for two days, we finally found another untouched school of nice bluegills.”

Two weeks before walking away with their second straight win at Croton Dam, Newby and Wilson notched a victory at Mitchell Lake, thanks to some stealthy camera work and careful study before the tourney. “We like to record what we find on the Micro’s DVR. At Mitchell, we went back to our hotel rooms and studied the footage on our laptops, determining that the fish we found were the right ones—bigger than any of the stunted crappies and smaller sunfish we’d spotted in any of the other 400 holes,” Newby laughs.

“The other advantage to our mini cameras is the built-in depth and water temp functions. You can’t believe how often finding slightly warmer water—say 37 or 38 degrees surrounded by 36—can be the difference that holds fish. Sometimes, we even fish warm water pockets in specific depth ranges. Those are just some of the details that lead us to bigger panfish.”

### Spring in to Action

While Newby and Wilson excel at locating untouched pockets of big fish, tournament colleagues Kevin Fassbind, Nick Smyers and Shawn Bjonfald often dominate the presentation department. Bjonfald, the



group’s ‘spiritual leader’ of sorts, divulges details on rigging the right rod.

Whether he’s wielding a palm rod, Frabill Black Ops or a St. Croix Legend Gold, Bjonfald’s adamant about use of a ‘spring’—street slang for a spring-tipped strike indicator. “It’s not enough to simply slap a spring on the end of your rod and start jigging,” he says. “Especially when you can really up your game with minor, easy adjustments.”

Plastics, for example, call for a different spring strategy than live





bait. “When fishing tiny plastics, you need more precision, more control of jig movement. I can simply slide the St. Croix spring in or out, extending it further for a softer, less precise presentation. Or push it back for a little extra control. For plastics, I adjust the spring until it hangs at 25- to 30-degrees under the load of the jig (in water). For live bait, I prefer a softer spring and a 45-degree angle.

“Remember,” says Bjonfald, “the spring isn’t just about bite detection, it’s also about jig presentation.”

Meanwhile, Fassbind and Smyers stay on point with presentation, always working new ways to induce bites amid intense fishing pressure. For fine-tuned ‘panfish dentistry’ both anglers wield long rods and tungsten Majmun jigs—an innovative Custom Jigs & Spins ball-headed bait that presents micro softbaits at specific, critical angles.

Fixtures atop tournament leader boards, fellow competitors know all too well the team’s talent for icing weedbed-fulls of panfish. One key is the jig combo itself: dressing their Majmun with hand-cut slivers of Uncle Josh Meat, essentially a jig and micro slice of pork rind. The Majmun shines for punching through slush ice and dense cover quickly. The jig also rides with the hook tipped just below horizontal, an awesome assist for consistently successful hooksets. The ultra-soft Meat slivers themselves convert selective sniffers into fish that entirely engulf and hold.

If the bite really erodes, or if the anglers find themselves surrounded by dozens of other anglers—all vying for the same school of fish—they often dig even deeper into the bag of tricks. Adding an softbait





“collar” to the jig, such as Nuclear Ant Legs, provides secondary movement to the jig, a move that keeps the lure’s tentacles quivering, even at rest. The tournament teams keep plenty of other tricks under their fishing hats, but at least for now, they’ll have to wait until the next big win.

“It’s amazing to step back and see how fast this sport is growing,” notes Newby. “In a few short years, competition has increased tenfold. Everyone has a Micro camera now; it’s such a key tool for finding fish; it’s really revolutionized tournament ice fishing. But we can’t give up all our secrets. Ryan and I are working with a new technology right now that could blow the lid off the whole works by the time first ice forms.”







# ICE FISHING FAST WITH FINESSE

## THE ULTIMATE ONE TWO PUNCH

**Custom Jigs & Spins Pro Finesse Drop Chain amplifies nearly any ice lure**

Every action, they say, yields its own consequence. The best things in life, and all that, are not necessarily free. Take the tastiest foods: candy bars, bacon and Big Macs. Not so healthy for the heart. Vacations to Hawaii, Patagonia, and New Zealand are the stuff of dreams, but tend to hit the checkbook rather hard. A lively night on the town is fun while it lasts, but might prove regrettable the morning after.

In ice fishing, a similar action-consequence scenario applies. Fishing inside a big shack keeps you cozy but limits your mobility and ability to stay on biting fish. Bare-knuckling it in the open air is fine for tying knots and detecting bites, but the choice can also distress your digits. Fishing a tiny jig is outstanding for big persnickety panfish, but it often fails miserably in deep water or for attracting fish from afar.

You get the picture.

Which is why rare exceptions to the good-bad adage can be so sweet when you discover them. It's perhaps the perfect descriptor of Custom Jigs & Spins' new Pro Finesse Drop Chain—an exceptional ice fishing trick that adds new heights of awesome to otherwise one-dimensional presentations. A



simple yet refined contrivance, this sparkling, free-swinging lure enhancement solves a common ice fishing dilemma, truly a 'best-of-all-worlds' solution.

Imagine the efficiency and speed of power fishing coupled with the precision and efficacy of finesse. Such an unthinkable pairing becomes reality when you adorn your favorite spoon or swimming lure with a subtle, easy fluttering Pro Finesse Drop Chain.

"A Custom Jigs Drop Chain dangling below a Pro Finesse Slender Spoon is possibly the greatest hardwater perch lure of all time," says Ty Macheledt, ice fishing guide and Custom Jigs & Spins savant. "Drop most spoons into water deeper than 10 feet and you've got a good chance of attracting and triggering the active fish. But what about the neutral and negative ones? That's where the Drop Chain trick kicks tail."





# Northland FISHING TACKLE



## New ICE Products



Forage Minnow® Dart



Bro Bling Jig



Mitee Mouse Jig



Rippin' Shad



Skeleton Minnow



Water Flea

**GEAR UP FOR ICE!!!**

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Even better than a classic case of bait-and-switch, vitalizing any spoon or swimming lure with a Pro Finesse Drop Chain coalesces ultimate attraction with prime bite-inducing qualities—all in the same lure.

“This combo is a panfish-catching machine, really amazing on ice or in open water,” interjects Macheledt. “Drop down fast with the spoon and then lean on the subtle, flashing chain and jewel-beaded treble hook to close the deal. Thing practically hypnotizes fish,” he laughs.

Constructed with an easy-snap lure clip, the Pro Finesse Drop Chain employs an inch-long strand of ultrafine silver chain linked to a tiny split ring and a #10 or a #14 treble hook. Each short-shank, round bend treble is sticky sharp and adorned with a vibrant “jewel” attractor—a glow or fluorescent bead gilded with a luminous crystal attractor. Attractor beads in Red Glow, Hot Orange, Red/Chartreuse and Glow Brite can be instantly mixed or matched to the situation. Chains are sold in handy 4-packs.

“Tipping the Drop Chain’s treble hook with larvae or a small minnow head can yield a subtle and slow fluttering pendulum action that can be key for getting bites from selective fish,” adds Macheledt. “The beauty of this spoon or swimming lure and Drop Chain combo is that it’s so versatile. You can dance it in place, attracting fish with the flash of the spoon, while the chain waves and flickers below.

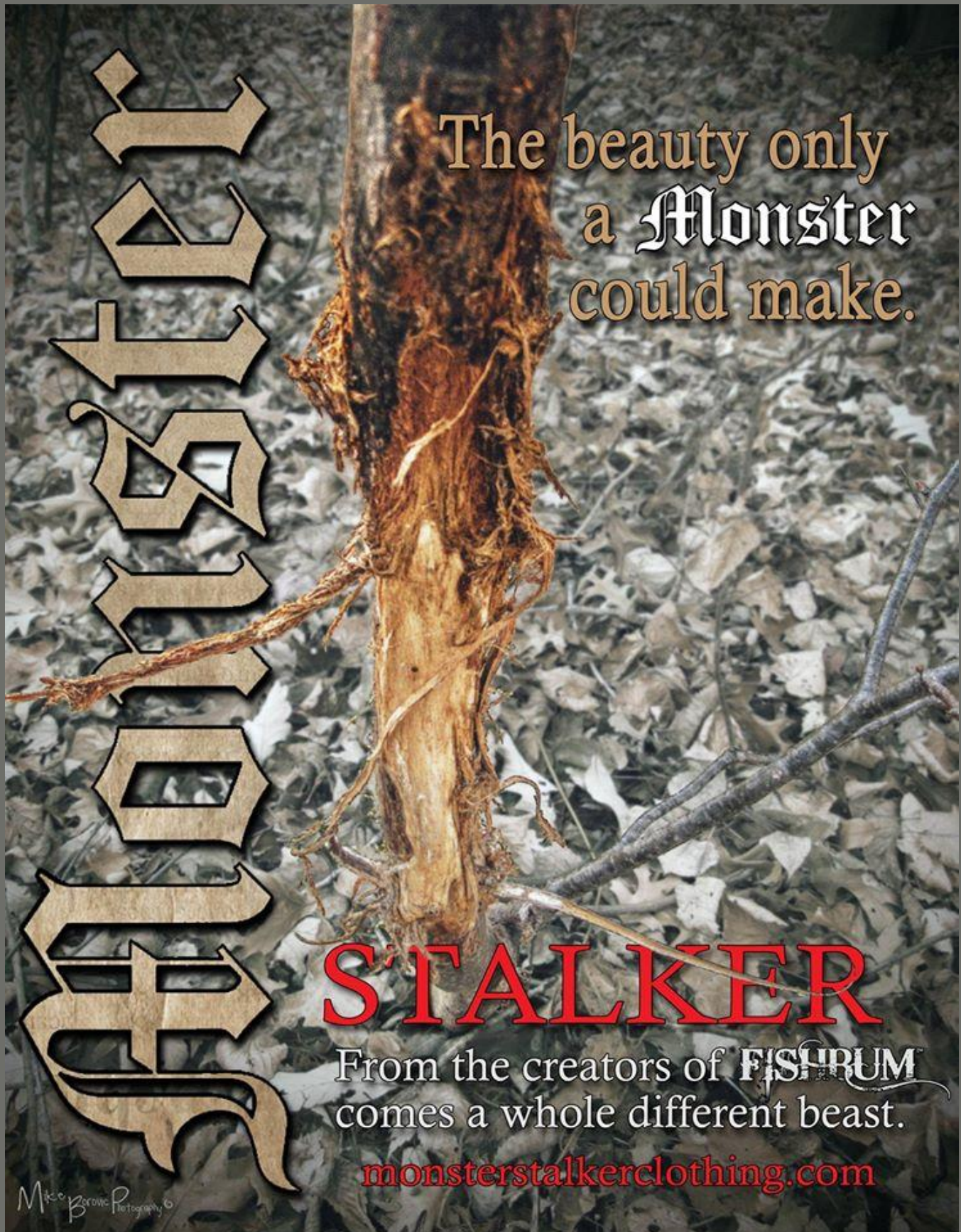
“You can jig aggressively, followed by several second pauses. Even when you do this, the chain continues dancing ever so subtly, so it’s always working for you.

“At times, tightlining the lure on bottom is a great maneuver. You’d be amazed at how often super-



selective perch, bluegills and even walleyes feed on stuff on the bottom. Just give the lure tiny little twitches while it sits on bottom. Causes the chain to undulate and create little puffs of silt down there. Because the Drop Chain is nearly weightless and neutrally buoyant, it's easy for fish to inhale the hook without feeling even a hint of resistance.

"You can put a serious smackdown on perch doing this, and you'll often out-fish your buds 10 to 1. Reason enough, right there."



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Mike Perovic Photography





# *ON THE MOVE FOR WINTER BLUEGILLS*

By Mike Frisch

Last February two fishing partners and I headed to a small local lake rumored to be the home to big bluegills. Without the aid of a lake map, we made an educated guess as to where the lake's deep water basin was and started to "grid search" the area.

Winter bluegills will roam a lake's deep basin(s) searching for insect life which is prime winter forage. This day, we spent a couple hours drilling holes, fishing, and monitoring our sonar screens for fish. After searching for a couple hours, we hit "pay dirt" finding numbers of bluegills and, yes, several were big bulls around 10-inches long! This day led to several more subsequent good fishing outings.

There were two keys to our successful search. First, we were on a lake that has big fish. That may sound obvious, but finding big bluegills, at least in my part of Minnesota, has become more and more challenging. For that reason, we often find ourselves on smaller, lesser-known bodies of water chasing rumors that sometimes result in good catches, but sometimes don't.

Nevertheless, this strategy has paid dividends often enough that my partners and I always have an open ear to "that lake down the road" where someone catches big 'gills off their dock from during spring!

Staying on the move searching various lakes is one key to finding big bluegills, the second key is staying on the move when searching a particular lake. As alluded to previously, we try to identify the deep water basins and then set out working together to systematically search that area. We drill lots of holes and quickly work hole to hole looking for fish.

We only fish a few minutes in a hole as these fish will often reveal themselves quickly when present. Working as a team, drilling and cleaning holes and then hole-hopping, we can cover and eliminate unproductive water quickly.

Two pieces of equipment are vital to our winter bluegill search. The first is using tungsten jigs. Tungsten is denser than lead, so these are small jigs, yet they fish heavy. Heavy is important as these tiny-profiled offerings (often the size preferred by big bluegills) can still quickly plummet to the depths aiding in our quick search method of getting a bait quickly to the depths, fishing for a few minutes, and then moving to the next hole if no fish are present.

Additionally, tungsten jigs don't hang up as easily as lighter jigs in the slush at the top of a hole, so we don't have to be as diligent in cleaning a hole which again is important when we are moving hole to hole quickly looking for fish.

The second very important equipment key is the use of a good portable fishing shelter that allows us to quickly move through an area hauling our gear, but also doubles as shelter from the elements. We use one-man shelters so we can split up in searching an area and, since winter temperatures can be downright brutal, it needs to be warm! I've been using the new Otter XT Hideout and can say



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

this is a true “run and gun” fishing machine. It has a small footprint, but large fishing area and, features the new ThermalTec layering system which has proven to be very warm even on windy, frigid winter days!

The cold of winter can be a bit of a downer, but this can still be a good time to catch big bluegills, especially for anglers willing to stay on the move searching for fish. Using some of the tips just offered can, in fact, help you get in on a good ‘gill bite this winter.

As always, good luck on the ice and remember to include a youngster in your next outdoors adventure!





# FINDING HARD BOTTOM



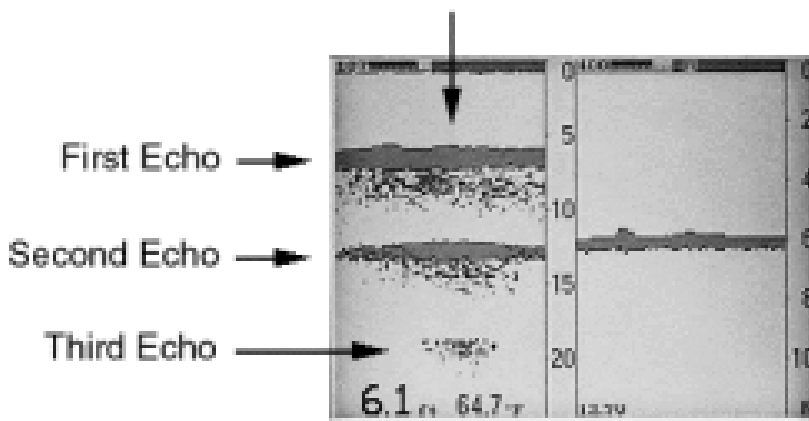
**By Team Vexilar**

One of the things that can be key to finding fish is identifying the bottom content. Certain fish prefer certain types of bottoms at certain times. Which fish prefer what type when will be left up to you. This article will only help you understand what your depth finder is telling you about the bottom conditions below.

To be able to tell at a glance at your depth finder that you are on sand or gravel is asking a lot. If you get really good at reading your unit and you get to know a particular lake very well you may eventually be able to do this. Realistically, you will only be able to determine if the bottom is harder or softer than the area you have just moved over.



### Hardest Point on the Bottom



There are two ways in which your sonar will show you changes in bottom hardness. One way is by a difference in the appearance of the bottom signal. As the bottom gets harder below, your sonar will show the bottom band getting wider or stronger. If you know the bottom is relatively flat, you can use this information and feel fairly confident in what your unit is telling you. However, if you're not sure how flat the bottom is, you can be misled because a bottom with a steep slope will also

show as a wider band than a flat bottom. The other, more reliable, method to use is to notice the changes in the second or even third echoes beyond the bottom.

An echo is created when the unit transmits a burst of sound and that sound is reflected back to the transducer. When this sound pulse reaches the transducer, it hears the sound, the unit calculates how long it took for the sound pulse to go down and back, and displays the result as bottom. But the actual sound doesn't stop there. It is reflected by the surface of the water and the bottom of your boat back down towards the bottom. The sound is then reflected upwards again. When it reaches the transducer this time it is much weaker. The sonar also notices that it took this sound pulse twice as long to get back to the transducer. The result is a second echo. This repeats over and over. The sonar unit will display as

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



many echoes as it sees. At some point, the return echoes strength will be so weak that the unit will not display it.

To read these multiple echoes as a bottom hardness indicator it is important that your sonar be set up properly. The first thing to do is to set the unit for manual range control. In order to see these echoes you need to have room on the sonar display for them. A second echo is always twice as deep as the first echo, or bottom. Say the depth is 25 feet and your depth finder is set to a 30 foot range. The second echo, at 50 feet, will not be displayed. However, if you manually change the range to 60 feet, the second echo will now be visible. To see a third echo, you will need to have the unit set to a 75 foot, or greater, range.

Now that you can see the echoes you are ready to determine the bottom hardness. A harder bottom will reflect sound much better than a softer bottom. The more echoes you see and the stronger they are the harder the bottom is. This hold true as long as the depth stay similar. If it gets quite a bit shallower or deeper, you'll need to adjust the gain accordingly. The figure shows what you will see.

Another thing you need to do with your sonar set up is make sure that the gain, or sensitivity, control is set to manual. Automatic gain control allows the unit to adjust the gain level to keep a good signal of the bottom. As the bottom gets harder or softer the unit will make small adjustment in the gain level. This is not what you want it to do when you're looking for bottom hardness. Set the gain on manual and turn it up enough so you can at see a second echo clearly.

Although the entire line of Vexilar Flashers can detect bottom composition, the Vexilar Edge3 is about the best there is for finding hard bottom. The Automatic Range Mode setting lets you tell the unit that

you want to make sure that there is room for a second or third echo on the display. It will automatically adjust for depth changes, but will make sure the multiple echoes will fit on the screen. And with the full-color, dual sonar and split screen operation you can have one screen showing you echoes and the other set for the best view of the bottom. Also, the auto-gain and range buttons are right on the front of the unit. There are no menus to go through to turn these features on and off.

You can find hard bottom while ice fishing with your flasher too. You'll need to have a number of holes drilled. Turn the flasher on to a deep range and set the gain up high. Now when you move from hole to hole, take notice of the strength of the multiple echoes.





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# SURF FISHING



**TECHNIQUES & GEAR FOR SURF, PIERS AND JETTIES**  
Bait Rigs & Artificials ■ Find Good Waters ■ Catch More Fish  
By David A. Brown



# Stay Mobile and Catch More Fish



By Cory Yarmuth

***The fish's major driving force for moving during this time of year is the search for food. If you can find the food source you will also locate the fish.***

Ice fishing isn't for everybody, but for some it holds a special place in our hearts — including my own. There is something about walking out onto the frozen surface of a lake or pond that sparks a fire deep down inside. This fire is fueled by the sound of an auger chewing through the hard sparkling ice.

Armed with a good set of Kahtoola MICROspikes on my boots and a warm IceArmor suit, I find myself hitting the frozen surface more and more every year. These trips are spread out on many bodies of water and in several different states. My key to all of these trips and to catching fish is to make myself as mobile as possible.

Often I will see guys set up camp in one area and spend their day on these one or two holes and catch only a few fish. They may be satisfied with these odds, but I'm not. If anglers want to increase the odds of finding fish and staying on them, they have to remain mobile and able to move when the fish move.





It is not uncommon for me to drill 40 holes in a matter of a couple hours while looking for fish, structure, weeds, or changes in the water depth. Those who do not move and search may miss out on

a bite that can happen in small windows of time. Some people call this method “ice trolling,” which sums it up pretty nicely.

There are a few things to keep in mind when employing this technique. It is rather simple, yet too many people tend to overlook the reasoning behind this moving. Fish are not creatures that will stay in one spot for very long. They are moving to find food, oxygen and cover.

“Cover can be as simple as a small depression in the bottom that allows the fish to avoid predators that may swim right over the top of them,” says Ice Team Pro Dave Genz, a man whose knowledge and experience surpasses anything I could hope to achieve.

The fish’s major driving force for moving during this time of year is the search for food. If you can find the food source you will also locate the fish. One way to take advantage of this is to study the movement of fish and how it relates to different structure at different times





during the day. Another way is to use mobility to stay on top of the fish.

Mobility is important for the ice angler and there are several important items that will assist in the pursuit. Most anglers likely have most of what they need; the key is to use it to your best advantage.

The first key for staying mobile is to pack light. There is no need for extra gear like tip-ups or minnow buckets if you are only targeting bluegills. Pare your gear down to the species that you are after.

Genz also says to limit your rods to the species of fish you are in pursuit of. There is no need to carry every rod you have if you are only going to need a couple that will do the job for you. A great way to carry your rods and keep them out of harm's way is in a good sturdy zippered case, such as the IceArmor case with a tough denier outside that is light enough to carry alone or in a sled.

Speaking of sleds, this is a great tool that will allow you to remain mobile, yet have a way to carry gear, take a seat or take cover. A nice one-person, flip-over shelter such as the CLAM Kenai or a CLAM Scout works great for this application. The shelter allows you to get out of the wind if you need to or it allows you to block out the light on those high sky days. This often can mean the difference between active and inactive feeding fish.

If you are using a sled or a small shelter, make sure you use one of the CLAM pulling harnesses or a long rope that you can put across your chest. This will allow you to use your body to pull the sled and leaves your arms free to drill holes or drop your Vexilar transducer into the holes as you move along the frozen surface.

Keep your auger small. Stick with a 5-inch auger, as the amount of work to drill is directly related to the diameter of the auger.





This size is plenty large to pull up a nice slab crappie yet small enough to use little effort when making multiple holes. In some of the more southern areas of the ice belt, where ice does not get as thick, a good hand auger is light and sufficient. An even better option is a portable drill attachment and a couple spare batteries. This will drill more than 100 holes without worry.

Every ice troller should carry a good flasher. Genz recommends a good quality flasher such as the Vexilar. Vexilar is top of the food chain when it comes to flashers and this is such a great tool to help you in your quest. This tool will help eliminate “dead” water and to allow you to locate fish and other structure. It only takes a few seconds to dip the transducer into a newly drilled hole to find out if you should make a move or sit tight for a bit.

Genz had a very interesting point about fish and their habits during the winter. “Often, fish have wintering spots that you will find them holding all season,” he says. The key is to make big moves to find the fish.

“Once you find the fish you can make small, subtle moves to stay on the fish,” Genz says. “You may end up starting with 10 holes in an area and when the bite dies then start drilling holes between your existing holes.” This will keep you on the fish. You can always backtrack as you follow the fish and hit the holes you have already drilled.”

The use of electronics has grown leaps and bounds over the years and with today’s technology you can even incorporate a good, handheld GPS with mapping chips to allow you to follow the contours of the lake. These chips will allow you to plan your attack while you are on the move.

Staying mobile is easy, yet very important. Keep it light and pare your gear down. Keep drilling until you find fish. After you find them, be ready to move again when they move.

Trolling isn’t just for the open water anglers. Use this approach on the ice and you are sure to find the fish you are after. Keep it simple and keep it light and you are sure to have a great time on the ice.



## **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.**





# HUNTING ZONE





# The Right Call Can Make All The Difference

By Dana Benner

I have been hunting waterfowl for about 40 years. Over that time a great deal has changed for me, most for the best. I remember my first hunt. I was about 10 years old and I was hunting with my brother-in-law. We had no decoys and one lame, no name call that sounded more like a party favor than it did a duck. Needless to say, my first outing was not so great. Like I said, a lot has changed.

About 20 years ago I teamed up with perhaps the best waterfowler and caller I have ever known, Bill Saiff III. Bill operates Seaway Waterfowl Professionals, located in upstate New York. It was Bill who introduced me to the Haydel DR-85 double reed mallard call. It was in a marsh in New York when I saw what this call could do.

After a back breaking paddle into the marsh, it didn't take long for Bill to start calling in the birds. The mallards came into range like they were tied onto a string. I was sold. No more of the off the wall calls for me. I had to get one of these DR-85s. Before I left New York I had one in my hand. It is not enough to have the best call; you also have to know how to use it. While I was still with Bill, he spent some quality time teaching me how to use it. With that instruction and a copy of Bill's "Calling all Mallards", I began spending day after day practicing calling mallards.





That was 20 years ago, and this is now. While I still use the DR-85, there is a new kid on the block that is now part of my duck hunting gear, the RL-99, or Red Leg. According to Kelly Haydel, I have gone from a camero to a corvette. Like the DR-85, the RL-99 is a double reed call and believe me, it is all duck. While there are other calls out there, as Bill says, "You don't leave the partner who brought you to the dance." Over the past 20 years I have stuck with Haydel calls and have taken what I have learned and put it to good use. My success is due more to a great teacher and a great call than it is to my "expert" ability to use it. These calls even make me look good. Because of all these factors I have taken my fair share of mallards both in New Hampshire and Vermont.

One trip to Vermont was particularly rewarding. I was hunting with a friend on a very small pond located on the back edge of a farm in the southern part of the state with a friend. To get to this body of water we had to hike a good distance, in



the dark, across a farm field, in waders. The sun was just breaking the horizon when we finally got to the pond. This meant that we had to work quickly. After setting out a half dozen decoys, we sat back in the brush and waited. With no dog to retrieve meant that we had to get the birds in close enough to drop them where we could wade out to get them. This is where the DR-85 came into play.

The first pair of mallards flew over, but not where we wanted them. A couple hard notes on the DR-85 hooked those mallards right around. I thought one of them was going to break its neck after I hit the call. Just like with Bill, those mallards came right in. Two shots later both birds were in the bag. Those two mallards were only the beginning. More birds were called, and a few more were taken. Many more were not.

There are a couple things that make Haydel's calls so special. First, they are made in America, by waterfowl hunters. Second, all of their calls are factory tuned so they are ready to use right out of the package. Besides the DR-85, which is their number one selling "meat call" and the RL-99 Red Leg, Haydel's produces call for every species of waterfowl you can think of. From mallards and wood ducks to Snos and Canadas, they have the calls you will need. If you are looking for a quality call, Haydel's has it. In fact, I will be using their H-81 Canada Honker this September for resident Canadas in New Hampshire and Vermont and the SN-04 Snow Goose Call for some of Vermont's migratory Snow geese later in the fall. Thanks to these calls and a little luck from the gods, I am predicting these hunts should both be very productive.

Bottom line, it is not enough to get yourself into a prime location with the best shotgun available. If you can't convince the birds to come in close, then it is all for naught. A Haydel call will get the birds to within shooting range. It is then up to you to bring them down.

For more information on Haydel's Game Calls visit [www.haydels.com](http://www.haydels.com)



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**When you pull up to the gas station, look before you pump.  
Protect your investments. Choose E10 or less for your  
outdoor power equipment and marine engine products.**

Most gasoline now contains 10 percent ethanol (E10). But, you may see higher ethanol blended gas available for sale – such as 15, 30, 50 or 85 percent ethanol gas. They may even be cheaper than E10.

However, these higher ethanol blends are not meant for small engines, marine engines, utility vehicles and outdoor power equipment including boats, mowers, garden tractors, chainsaws, snow throwers, trimmers, generators, power washers, blowers and more.

**Gasoline containing greater than  
10 percent ethanol can damage or  
destroy these valuable investments.**

In fact, using any gas that contains more than 10% ethanol is harmful and illegal to use in outdoor power equipment and in marine engines.

Today you may come across a gasoline blender pump, which dispenses various ethanol blends, and you might be tempted to buy the least expensive fuel – which may likely contain higher ethanol content. But, price is no longer the way to choose your gasoline safely. You have to choose the right fuel.

Read the equipment's operating manual for specific fueling requirements, and select the correct gasoline for that specific product.

When you pull up to the gas station, look before you pump. Protect your investments. Choose E10 or less for your outdoor power equipment and marine engine products.



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For more information, visit [www.OPEI.org](http://www.OPEI.org)





# SPARROW HAWK

*The CZ-527 Carbine 7.62x39 in practical review*

**By John Simeone**

Shooting over the heads of his Marine recruits "Gunny" Hightower stated, "This is the AK-47 the preferred weapon of your enemy; it makes a distinct sound when fired at you." The AK-47 and the SKS are not the American choice for a military weapon although they have become quite popular among the civilian populous as a home defense gun as well as a fun gun at the range. After 20 years in the Army and another 20 years as a military and civilian rangemaster I have seen and done a lot of shooting with these rifles. I have a good buddy that works in the Pentagon who thankfully is on our side, but at one time he wasn't. A Lt General now, he swears buy the AK over the US M-4 or M-16 with the key word being reliability. For the record the AR-15/M-16/M-4 is about as accurate as a battle rifle gets.



My research and observations tell me that individuals do in fact hunt with these guns in a semi-automatic version. Some states have 5 round magazine restrictions, while my home state of Louisiana has no such rule, so you can hunt with a 30 round magazine if you want to. Ironically you have to 3 shot plug a shotgun for everything.

Chances are you will get some looks if you show up in Deer Camp with an AK, maybe not so much with an SKS as it looks a little more like a conventional hunting rifle. Not to open old wounds, but one outdoor

An advertisement for the Ground EFX MX50 metal detector. The detector is shown on a sandy beach with a dramatic, cloudy sky in the background. The detector has a large, multi-lobed search coil and a control unit with a digital display and buttons. A gold banner at the top left says "NEW GROUND EFX". The text "DISCOVER LOST TREASURES." is prominently displayed in the lower left. At the bottom, the "STORMY MX50" logo is shown next to a list of features.

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- QUICK RELEASE EXTENSION ROD DESIGN, ADDS UP TO 14"
- 8" SUBMERSIBLE COIL

WWW.GROUNDEFX.COM

writer once called these two weapons and the AR-15 terror weapons and got himself excommunicated from most of his sponsors. I wasn't impressed with him myself as I have hunted with an SKS and no one said a word.

The beautiful setting of the Louisiana State Rifle Range at Woodworth (Indian Creek Park) was a great place to range test Sparrow Hawk. Hunting the way I do I need accuracy instead of power. Sometimes it's like shooting through a wicker basket. This rifle is an "eye" shooter it's a CZ not an AK.

Enter the CZ-527 Carbine in 7.62x39 sometimes called the 30 Russian. I have been a big fan of CZ-USA ever since I found out about these outstanding firearms. I once carried a CZ-75B in .40 SW on duty. My entire Rifle Team had CZ-452 22 rifles, while a CZ-Combination gun 12/30-06 was found to be an outstanding Louisiana deer rifle. But I



had to have a CZ-527 like a woman addicted to shoes.

The little rifle is just plain beautiful. I over scoped it deliberately for accuracy with a Bushnell Banner 4x16x40 mm CF-500, Burris rings held the scope on very well, the rifle felt sweet in my hands; it wanted to hunt. My style of deer hunting is simple, I bow hunt with a gun. This means I go in the woods with my climber and shots seldom run over 150 yards. With its single set trigger, this little rifle, named Sparrow Hawk, is just what I was looking for.

Is the 7.62x39 powerful enough to humanely kill a deer? The answer is yes. Field results show that it will do anything a 30-30 will do which most likely is an understatement. For those who know about Taylors Knock Out rate you will find it out powers the .243 Winchester 10 to 14 with a 154 grain bullet at 2100 fps. For the non-long range operators like me, this may suit you for your next deer rifle.

Truthfully I have killed deer with just about every rifle you can hunt with. Several were dropped with only one buckshot pellet while a shot from a 325 WSM vaporized the rear end of a doe. So field experience will tell the tale of the tape. I have never been crazy about the .243 but that's another story. For me the 6.5 or 260 is about as low as I want to go with the practical minimum being the 7.62x39 or 30-30. The light rifle for deer at 7mm/08 seems about right, but I like the 7.62x39 right now. Is there anything perfect? No.





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## Are you serious about your guns?

Learn more about Gun Protect at [www.mygunprotect.com](http://www.mygunprotect.com)

Ok, it is cheap to shoot which is a big plus even for non reloaders. I encounter really big hogs in Louisiana and they tell me a bear season is looming in the near future. (Please don't use FMJ bullets for hunting) Most US ammunition companies make soft point bullets for the 7.62x39 in 123 grain around 2400 fps, all have proven very accurate in this rifle. However, I wanted a heavy bullet so I found Russian Tul Ammo 154 grain soft points with steel cases to be my first choice. CZ-USA say Euro ammo is what they recommend, with this they weren't wrong, but US ammo works just as well as Sparrow Hawk turned out to be a tack driver with everything. When you see the price of practice ammo you will be pleased.

A little Tiger Stripe camo reminds us the 7.62x39(L) and the 7.62 NATO (308 Winchester have been at odds with each other since Vietnam. They are both great for hunting provided you know how to use them. In a super rifle like the CZ-527, the 7.62x39 is an MOA tack driver just like the .308.

At 50 yards the 154 grain shot groups you could cover with a dime. If I wanted to use some sort of vice perhaps I could do better. As far as steel case ammo, this makes no difference in a bolt action; they use steel instead of brass for the hard racking AKs.

The CZ-527 in 7.62x39 is a rifle that the whole family can shoot or hunt with. It has a practical range on deer of about 200 yards although I've seen it tested accurately over 500 yards. You will find the way I rigged this little rifle its not that expensive. Women will love the CZ, it doesn't come in Pink, but your daughter will keep you broke shooting it as this puppy is not a kicker. It comes in a regular or youth version, and well, when you get one, all your friends will want one....Pass it on.



# ***DECOY TRICKS FOR EARLY SEASON WATERFOWL***

**HOW TO STAY AHEAD ONCE THE  
PRESSURE SETS IN**

By Sammy Bruce











September is right around the corner, and skies are filling with waterfowl. And, although early season hunts occasionally involve uneducated birds willing to commit to any spread, rarely are things that easy.

It's incredible how fast ducks and geese get wise to hunting pressure. A true credit to the resilience of nature, these birds often change daily patterns immediately with the first sign of hunting and become reluctant to land anywhere but in the neighborhood park.

Hunters can up their odds in a number of ways. Staying concealed is always the first order of business when waterfowl hunting, and accurate gunning is a key component to putting birds on the strap. But first, however, ducks and geese must buy what we're selling, and decoys are central to this grand scheme of deception.

Along with good calling, it's decoys that catch the attention of the birds we hunt. Moments later, the same decoys convince the birds to take a better look. And, in the end, it's our decoys that bring our quarry, feet-down, into gun range.

Today's blocks are the most realistic ever built, but there's more to sealing the deal than seductive poses and pretty paint. The real key to decoy effectiveness isn't their individual appearance; it's their overall look.

### **The Look (above image)**

We all want our decoys to look like real birds. Marty Dietz, a Minnesotan with a bad case of goose fever, says the best way to accomplish this is to record and study images of live birds. "When scouting, take pictures of birds in the field you're hunting," he advises. "This allows you to see the numbers, locations and positions of individual birds." By basing his decoy spreads on his photos, Dietz knows he's exactly



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

mimicking the real thing.

Early season groups of geese usually contain numerous small family groups that often land and feed on their own. Decoy spreads should match, with small clumps of a half-dozen phonies spaced throughout a field.

This is the time of year when feeding is heaviest, as geese are hitting numerous food sources and packing on the pounds while the weather allows. For this reason, veteran goose hunter Dee Draper of Utah does all he can to match such feeding scenarios. He advises mimicking live birds in the area, and key observations help do so. “A tighter spread indicates a lot of food, while an open and scattered spread indicates less.” When representing heavily feeding birds, Draper recommends using a high proportion of feeding, head-down decoys.

The overall look of an individual decoy is largely determined by its design, manufacturing process and finish. These variables are, perhaps, most important in the early season.

“With a lot of sun in the early season, and the light dew around dawn, a painted decoy will shine as the sun comes up,” Draper claims. This immediately educates honkers. For that reason, Draper and all other experts interviewed, rely on Avian-X fully flocked AXF Honker decoys.

Michigan’s Joe Robison, a waterfowl biologist-turned-hunter, agrees. “On sunny days, fully flocked



decoys absorb sunlight and appear more natural than painted versions. Avian-X decoys finish birds right in your lap... far better than any others I've tried."

While the ultimate goal is to set your blocks on The X – that spot on the spot where birds always seem to want to land – that's not always possible. When he can't be right on the mark, Draper presents two other decoy rigs to fool birds.



### **The Traffic Rig (above image)**

The right decoy spread in the right location can cause passing geese to change their plans. Draper and his hunting companions often employ a traffic rig to bring in geese traveling between their roost and primary feeding grounds. Again, utilizing fully flocked decoys, Draper attempts to create a scenario mimicking a group of birds on a hot feed. To do so, he uses a larger number of tightly-spaced decoys. The spread employs mostly feeding poses along with a single, head-up sentry. "An effective traffic rig portrays a lot of food," says Draper.

### **The Loafing Rig**

Big western river systems often congregate birds between feeding stops. Draper scores big in such locations by creating a resting-type atmosphere on a sand bar or island. Draper advises that, especially early in the season, geese like to drink and rest in areas just out of the water, and are often on low alert while doing so. Mimicking such mid-morning loafing activity often brings geese in on the first pass.



## Early Ducks

Geese aren't the only game in town during the early season. To consistently score on teal, realistic decoy set-ups are just as crucial. While teal come and go quickly, they do so across the entire continent, and often see multiple decoy spreads in a single day. For these reasons, teal become educated extremely quickly, adding to their already jittery behavior.



Adam Campbell of Louisville, Kentucky gets his fair share of blue-wings in the late summer period, but does so by going against the grain, and matching the birds. "I use Avian-X Early Season Teal decoys," he states. These blocks have an overall drab appearance to perfectly match September conditions. "I tend to stay away from full plumage drakes, as we get mainly blue-winged teal, and the males are not in plumage."

Campbell's teal spread is meager in comparison to those of the honker hunters. "I only use six to 12 decoys and a single spinning wing decoy," he says. Teal are generally suckers for motion, and the spinner helps draw them in from long distances. In jurisdictions where spinners are illegal, a jerk string can often be magic to teal that otherwise buzz around without committing.

Decoy placement is important, especially as it relates to shooting angles for each hunter in the blind. To maximize your take on teal, have as many barrels on them as possible once they get in close.

Dee Draper has it down to a science. "I prefer to shoot finishing birds crossing, not facing," says Draper, who does so by utilizing clumps of decoys, spaced with numerous landing holes in between. He hunts from a crosswind set-up, so landing birds approach from left to right, or right to left, rather than directly towards Draper's hiding area. This focuses the birds on the decoys, rather than on the hunters. Do it right, and as the birds settle into the landing zones, each member of the hunting party is presented with an easy shot directly in front, maximizing the barrel-to-bird ratio.

Novice waterfowl hunters imagine skies filled with stupid birds during the early season. Veterans, however, know the truth: Oftentimes, the jig is up by day two.

To prolong opening-day success levels for weeks to come, take a lesson from the birds. Focus on what's most important to them. And remember, all eyes are on the decoys.





# Goose Call Design and Selection

*Your choices matter... especially when it comes to today's modern, short-reed designs*

By Jay Anglin

Like most hunting gear, goose calls have evolved drastically over the past few decades. Early calls made decent honks, but had very little tonal range. Flute-style goose calls became popular later, and many elite goose hunters used them to take a substantial number of birds. Some still do. Then, short-reed calls arrived.



## The new standard

Everything changed when competition callers started to win contests blowing short-reed goose calls. And while you can still buy long-barreled flutes and standard-reed goose calls, nothing offers the realism, range and versatility of the modern short reed. Today, the vast majority of top-performing goose calls are essentially variations on the same short-reed theme.

While short-reed calls can be difficult to master, once the caller is capable of using them confidently to produce clucks, honks, moans and murmurs, an entire new world of goose manipulation opens up.

In reality, figuring out how to operate the short-reed call is not as difficult as it seems. Firsthand personal instruction from a proficient caller goes a long way, but readily available video instruction is a

viable option for do-it-yourselfers. A host of videos and other online resources abound, and high-quality instructional CD's or DVD's are also available from a variety of call manufacturers. Zink Calls, for example, includes instructional DVD's with their higher end calls, but also offers a Power Pak Combo that includes a short-reed polycarbonate goose call (your choice of model) and a 30-minute DVD filled with calling instruction and tips from elite caller, designer and call maker, Fred Zink, for under \$45 bucks.



## Material considerations

In addition to call style, variables such as material and size also come into play when selecting the appropriate goose call for a given hunting scenario. Of course, cost is an important consideration for most hunters, too. A goose call's materials affect tonal range, volume, overall versatility and price. Various wood, acrylic, and polycarbonate models are available, along with hybrid calls that most often combine wood barrels with poly or acrylic inserts.

Hunters who spend a lot of time working geese over water may want to lean towards wood or hybrid calls, as these materials tend to sound slightly mellower and have less pop or crack than acrylic and poly



calls. Water deflects and amplifies sound, so blowing birds off with excessive volume can be a concern when louder acrylics are used, especially by novice callers.

When field hunting, however, grain stubble and other vegetation tends to attenuate sound, making louder calls more desirable. The punchier vocalizations produced by acrylic calls are better suited in such cases, as they are more capable of cutting through the wall of sound interference. This is especially the case when running traffic, which means attempting to gain the attention of birds on the horizon that are not necessarily coming to a decoy spread set on an X where the birds have been feeding.

Not surprisingly, hybrid calls with wood barrels and synthetic inserts tend to fall somewhere between wood and acrylic with respect to sound and represent versatile and cost-effective options for hunters. Polycarbonate calls also offer reliable performance for hunters, producing tones and volumes somewhere between wood and acrylic at highly affordable prices.

There is a short reed goose call available for every budget. Some of the less expensive polycarbonate calls sound pretty darn good and deliver admirable performance without dropping a bunch of coin on a top end acrylic call. If you are new to short reeds, consider buying poly first. Once you find the call style and design that fits your preferences you can make the additional investment on durable acrylic calls that not only offer superior craftsmanship, but truer sound as well.





## Size matters

Call size is also an important factor. Smaller, shorter calls generally produce higher-pitched, louder vocalizations and tend to be more difficult to operate, while larger, longer calls are typically easier to blow and produce deeper, more guttural goose sounds. Many hunters prefer medium-sized models for blind duty because they produce a nice range of sounds with varying pitch and volume, and are only moderately difficult to master.

## Be prepared

Ideally, a well-stocked call lanyard will hold at least a couple different goose calls that are suited to different situations. The chaos of waterfowl hunting is hard on equipment, so it's advisable to carry a back-up call just in case you lose an insert while moving decoys or split a reed while calling aggressively. Reeds are available from the manufacturers. Some even include a couple of extra reeds with their top-of-the-line calls. Just be sure to take a careful look at how the guts – including the tone board, reed and wedge – are oriented within the insert so you'll be able to take them apart and put them back together correctly. Better yet, consider snapping a few close-up photos on your smartphone.

Most calls come properly tuned from the manufacturer. Sooner or later, however, they'll require re-tuning in order to restore optimum sound and performance. Tuning takes a lot of practice, and it's common for even experienced hunters to give up on the process. Thankfully, quality goose call makers are more than happy to overhaul and tune calls as needed. Just get in touch with customer service and make arrangements to ship your prized instrument in for a little TLC.

Effective calling is critical for consistent goose hunting results, and nothing beats the modern short-reed goose call to get the job done. Learning to use one may seem intimidating to the uninitiated, but it's well worth the effort, as they produce incredibly realistic goose sounds. Consider your level of proficiency as well as budget, and then select a call or two that best fit your needs. Superior design, nearly endless instructional resources and a bit of practice will find even the most tone-deaf hunters clucking their way to a limit of honkers in no time.





# WATERFOWL VISION: BEATING THE ODDS

## *To fool fowl, it's all about the eyes*

By Joe Balog

Whether one pursues whitetails or waterfowl, rabbits or reindeer, understanding your quarry is one of the keys to successful hunting.

Certain species exhibit incredibly advanced natural traits that demand full consideration and preparation. Whitetails, for example, have about 60 times as many scent receptors as humans. Their noses simply cannot be ignored. And when it comes to hunting waterfowl, it's all about the eyes.

Birds, as a whole, possess some of the most advanced vision in the animal kingdom, and waterfowl are no exception. Research of avian eyesight reveals characteristics hard to comprehend by human standards. In fact, once we consider the effectiveness of their eyes, it's hard to believe hunters kill any ducks or geese at all.

In order to begin to understand how waterfowl see, it is helpful to recognize the fundamental differences between their eyes and our own. Most game birds possess monocular vision, rather than the binocular vision that we have. Because a bird's eyes are located on the sides of its head, in most cases it is physically impossible for both eyes to focus on the same object at the same time. Waterfowl are an exception. Most waterfowl species do enjoy a very narrow field of binocular vision, right in front of their bills.

Monocular vision eliminates the intricate 3-D views that we see as humans. Overall depth perception is dramatically compromised. Ducks and geese compensate for this, however, by turning their heads back and forth, occasionally viewing the same object with each eye at different times. Hunters can observe this behavior when landing Canada geese attempt to gain perspective on the distance to the ground. Ducks can also often be seen bobbing their heads in flight while looking at decoys or other birds on the water.

While monocular vision limits a bird's 3-D viewing ability, it greatly expands their overall field of view. A



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A mallard duck can see 360 degrees around its head, as compared to a human's 260-degree range. This is an adaptation for predator detection. Waterfowl have evolved to survive, in part, by being able to view their entire surroundings.

Monocular vision makes waterfowl hunting extremely challenging. Just hiding from the birds seems impossible. But their optical advantages don't end there.

The advanced eye structures of ducks and geese further increase their ability to pick out potential danger, including hunters on the ground. Our eye structures have built-in obstructions, which ducks and geese lack. Whereas human eyes contain blood vessels throughout the retina, these vessels are





contained in a single, small organ known as a pecten within the eyes of ducks and geese. This feature gives them unimpeded vision far surpassing that of human beings.

The eyes of many birds, including ducks and geese, also contain cone cells that are sensitive to ultraviolet light, which is invisible to the human eye. The reasons for this are debatable, as are the practical implications to hunting.

Most scientific sources agree that much of this UV-sensitivity is present to assist birds in discerning between the varying plumage colors of their peers, and may be important in choosing mates. In addition, it's been found that some food sources, including select berries and seeds, emit ultraviolet



light, which may help some birds locate key food sources. Whether or not ducks and geese use this ability to find certain grains or wetland seeds is unknown.

What is known, however, is that most ducks and geese see much better, both in colors and in terms of focus, than humans. In addition, it is believed that many birds see both slow and fast moving objects much better than we do – an ability waterfowl may use to guide their migrations by following the subtle flickering of far-off stars.

While all this biology is fascinating, it supports what most waterfowl hunters already know: Hunters must stay fully concealed if they expect to have a chance at fooling waterfowl into coming their way.

Because ducks and geese can distinguish between colors incredibly well, hunters must not only consider how good their camouflage looks, but how well it blends with the surrounding terrain. When viewed by a duck or goose, the darker camo typically used for timber hunts, for example, stands out like a sore thumb in light cornstalks or a dried out cattail marsh.

Also consider the contrast presented by a lack of concealment. After a generous review of scientific literature, a once-debated factor is now clear: Ducks and geese can easily pick out the human face, so always cover it with a facemask or paint.



The importance of blind concealment can't be understated. For years, I've watched as unsuccessful hunters fail to consider what their hiding spot looked like from above, rather than simply at ground level. While it can be difficult to get effective overhead concealment, hunters should take every opportunity to ensure they do so. An easy method is to secure area foliage – like dead reeds or flooded corn stalks – onto stout dowel rods with zip-ties. Place a couple of these stakes around each hunter and the dog stand to provide tufts of overhead cover.

When choosing a manufactured blind, consider the look from above as much as anything.





Ameristep's layout blinds incorporate total concealment via Realtree camouflage with built-in grass straps for attaching supplemental vegetation. They also include fold-open doors or a flip-up lid for hiding the hunter's face. The slanted design of Avian-X's popular A-Frame Blind effectively hides most of the blind's interior from above, and the narrow opening at the top can easily be concealed with natural materials. Like the Ameristep layout models, the large and portable Avian-X A-Frame includes built-in grass straps and pockets for easy and complete concealment using natural vegetation.

Once hunters are well hidden, the next duck-defying visual consideration is the look of our decoys. When hunters set out a decoy spread, they are inviting extreme scrutiny by some of the sharpest eyes in the animal kingdom – eyes that are on high alert for the slightest imperfection. Extreme realism is a must.

Avian-X decoys are regarded by many as the most realistic available. The company's Topflight Duck Decoys have fooled ducks for years, thanks to the intricate relief of their carving and their highly-detailed paint schemes. In addition to their standard Topflight Mallards, Avian-X offers Backwater and Sleeper/Preener Mallard Packs that take mallard decoy spreads to the next level by adding the natural and relaxed feeding, sleeping and preening poses that put incoming ducks at ease. They even offer an Early-Season Mallard Pack that effectively duplicates the look of mallard drakes in the eclipse plumage that's so commonly seen throughout much of the early hunting season.

Unique weather situations also affect decoy appearance and, therefore, must be considered. Decoys featuring traditional paint and hard plastic bodies often produce unnatural glare under many conditions – particularly on frosty mornings and sunny afternoons. Softer molding compounds will help, but fully-flocked blocks, like the entire Avian-X AXF Canada goose line, will immediately eliminate this problem.

Under rare occasions, ducks and geese seem to ignore what their eyes are telling them, and bomb into the spread without concern. Those days, however, are few and far between. More often, those beady little eyes do us in. These advanced organs function well beyond the scope of most hunters' knowledge.

So if you'd like to finish more ducks and geese, start paying those eyes the respect they deserve. Cover up completely, and utilize the most realistic decoys you can find. All eyes are upon you.



