



ODU MAGAZINE™

**Ice And Open
Water Fishing
Edition
Nov/Dec 2017**

**Does
The
Name
Matter**



**Santa Gets Schooled
Pros Reveal Favorite Baits
5 Tips For Ice Fishing With Kids**

**TOMBOY TO
OUTDOOR ADDICT**

Pick A Section
**Ice Fishing
Open Water Fishing
Hunting**



EDITOR'S LETTER

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to all the ODU Magazine followers and fans. This year has been fantastic and we are so grateful to have grown so much. Growth has come in many ways and we are so excited to know that what we are doing by reporting the appropriate fishing and hunting news, sharing articles and related videos is working to attract fellow outdoorsmen and

women. At the beginning of 2017 our Facebook page only had 500 followers and we truly didn't promote it, and it has grown to over 6300 followers. At the beginning of the year our email list was at 14,000, now we exceed 17,300.

Several new contributors have joined ODU Magazine to share their experiences in the outdoors with you, to include Margie Anderson, Joella Bates, Bernard Williams and Bernie Keefe. Several more on their way as well in the coming months. I thank each of you for your outdoor insight.

The holidays for me as a dad, husband, outdoorsmen and now a soccer coach seem to get more and more clearer to me as each year passes. I am thankful to all my old friends I have gotten reacquainted with and equally to all my new ones. It is our friendships that help make us who we are in part and I am blessed to be surrounded by many outdoorsmen who believe in what I believe in.

As an outdoors communication professional it is my obligation to make



sure what we do at ODU is both welcoming to fellow outdoorsmen and does not push away others who have similar interests. If you love fishing, hunting, camping and hiking separately or collectively we want ODU to be a place you feel welcome, free of pressures we all clearly feel on other sites we choose to visit and from the TV news.

Have a safe and happy holiday season and look out for our next magazine between Christmas and New Years Eve.

This edition of ODU Magazine again splits time with open water fishing and ice fishing. 28 separate articles are inside from bass to trout. The last two article are from two new contributors Margie Anderson and Joella Bates who are truly dedicated outdoors women who love the what they do.

....WS

Thank you to all who have contributed to make this and past editions a success!

And please, enjoy the outdoors.

*Larry Thornhill and William Schwarz
Co-Founders of ODU Magazine*

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Thank You All!

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It's Time To Think About Ice-Fishing

By Bob Jensen

There were snow-flurries in the air this past week, and air temperatures have been in the lower to mid 30's. There's been too much wind for ice to form, but there's no doubt that another ice-fishing season is getting closer. And with another La Nina weather pattern in the works, we could be on the ice earlier and later than usual. If we want to take full advantage of our ice-fishing opportunities, we need to prepare now. Following are some things you can do to be ready to go fishing when the ice is safe.

You need to get your ice-fishing stuff ready to go fishing. Make sure the batteries in your depth-finder are charged and ready to go. Do that right now: If you don't you'll forget and, when it's time to go fishing, you could end up with a depth-finder that won't work, and that's a bad thing. If you have yet to discover that a sonar unit will help you catch more fish through the ice, this is the year that you need to make that discovery. Vexilar is the pioneer in ice-fishing sonar and continues to be the innovator. Modern sonar is easy to use and will, without doubt, enable anyone to catch more fish with a depth-finder than without. Make sure your depth-finder batteries are charged.

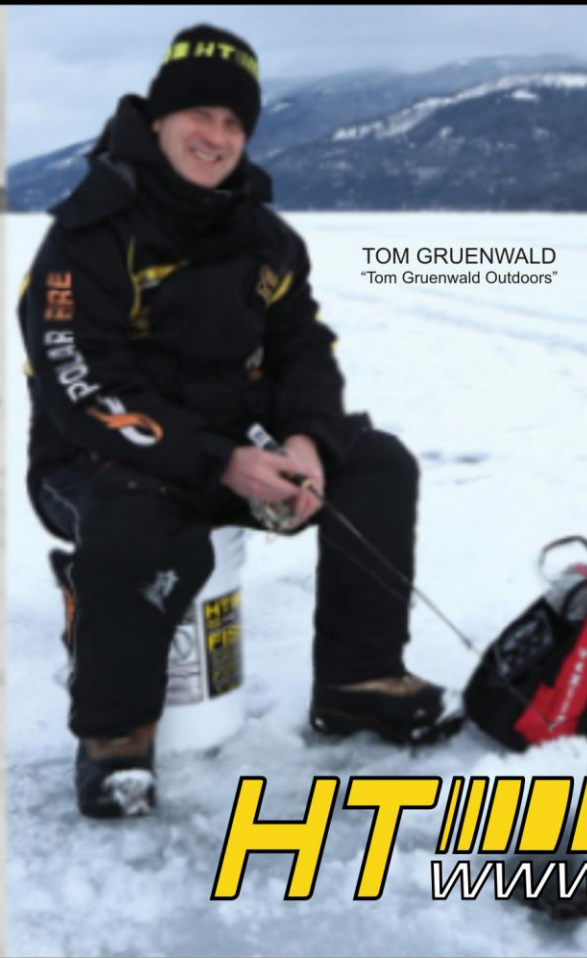
If you have an ice-fishing shelter, check it out. Open it up and let it air out. Check for missing parts. If you don't have a shelter but are thinking of getting one, research the variety of shelters available. There will be a bunch of them set up, so you can sit in the seats to make sure they're comfortable. Otter makes a complete line of 1 or 2 person units as well as hub shelters. Hubs are kind of like tents and provide a lot of moving-around room.

Spool fresh line onto your reel. You don't need to replace all the line on your reel. Just remove maybe twenty or thirty yards of the old line and tie new line to the remaining line. When you're ice-fishing you're only using maybe forty or fifty feet of line in most situations. You want that line to be fresh. A new favorite among many ice-anglers is P-Line Floroice. Floroice is virtually invisible underwater, and that's important. Because of how we ice-fish, the fish can get a very good look at a lure, and line can spook them. Not always, but when the fish are finicky, invisible line will result in more biters. Start the ice-fishing season off with fresh line!

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Fish become conditioned to lures and presentations. When they're not eating what you're showing them, you need to show them something different. There's a new spoon out from Northland called the Glo-Shot Spoon. It's got a unique wobble and a unique glow. It just became available in stores, so it will be very new to fish in many areas. If you fish pressured fish, the Glo-Shot could be what it takes to get them to bite.

And, then when it's time to actually go fishing, make sure the ice is safe. We're all looking forward to getting out there, and that first ice bite can be really good, but that water under the ice is really cold: You don't want to go through. Remember that ice thickness can vary, especially early in the season. The ice close to shore might be plenty thick, but as you walk out farther, it can get thinner. Pop plenty of holes as you go out to make sure you're still on safe ice. If you stay on safe ice, and if your gear is ready, you'll enjoy your first ice-fishing trip of the season.

To see new and old episodes of Fishing the Midwest television, current and archived fishing articles, or fishing tip videos, www.fishingthemidwest.com.



TOTAL RECON PRE-SEASON SCOUTING FOR FIRST-ICE SUCCESS



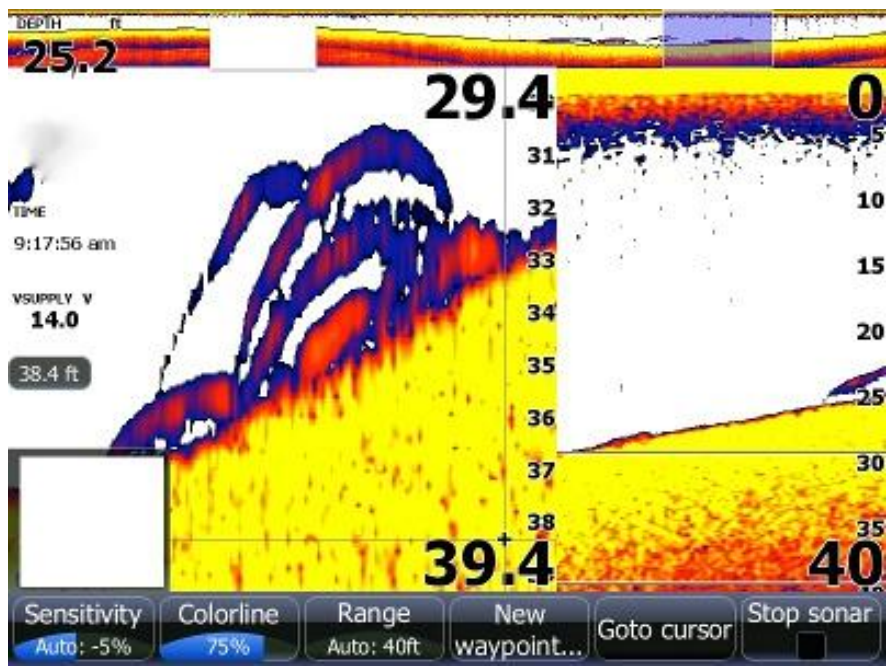
By Bernie Keefe

With ice fishing season right around the corner, hardwater warriors across the Ice Belt are gearing up for the season ahead.

Organizing gear and stocking up on tackle are critical concerns, but veteran guide Bernie Keefe reminds us that pre-season scouting is another great way to pave the way to first-ice success.

"It's a lot easier to find fish-holding cover and structure now than after freeze-up," he says. "With a little effort, you can put together milk runs of high-percentage hotspots that will produce red-hot fishing at first ice."

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Colorado, Keefe guides year-round for a variety of prized salmonids including lake trout, kokanee salmon, rainbows, browns, cutthroats and cuttbows. Yet his pre-season scouting system has merit for a variety of other species, from bluegills to walleyes.

Much of his reconnaissance takes place afloat, as Keefe cruises slowly over potential areas in his trusty Crestliner, using sonar and GPS to find prime lies and save their location for future return.



"Weedbeds are hot zones for trout," he says. "Rainbows and browns will be there feeding on minnows, scuds and crayfish. Big lakers and northern pike patrol the weeds to pick off the 'bows and browns."

To keep his lines in front of as many fish as possible, Keefe focuses on inside and outside weed edges, along with points, cups and open pockets created by bottom content changes.

To find such sweet spots, he uses the side-viewing powers of his Lowrance HDS-12 sonar-chartplotter. "Setting StructureScan to sweep objects up to 60 feet to the side of the boat gives me a nice cross-section of the water column, plus plenty of detail to zero in on the kinds of things that concentrate trout in and around vegetation," he explains.

When he spots an area he wants to revisit in the winter, he throws down a waypoint. "With the HDS system, it's as easy as touching the sonar display with my finger to save the location," he says.

To help him make sense of all the points on his plotter, Keefe systematically labels each with a symbol or name that helps him recall why he marked the area in the first place. There's no right or wrong naming system, he says, as long as you're consistent.

Because water levels fluctuate on the mountain lakes he fishes, Keefe also works the depth at full pool into the name. "It's extremely important to have this baseline depth information, so I know if the lake is 30 feet low, the top of a 10-foot hump marked at full pool will be high and dry," he explains. "Unless you're after flying fish, such a spot will be useless until the lake refills."

Properly identified, waypoints can serve as guideposts for years of ice fishing forays. "I never delete them," he says. "Just because a spot isn't hot one year doesn't mean it won't catch fire next season when conditions are different. I've had areas come to life after five or 10 years, so they're definitely worth hanging onto for future reference."

He also uses StructureScan's DownScan Imaging to search beneath the boat for boulders, humps, transitions from hard to soft bottom, and other finds that can spell the difference between a slow day on the ice and something to write home about.

It's worth noting that Keefe recommends using the mapping option of your choice. "You can use the chartplotter's basemap, commercial cartography or create your own custom map with programs like Navico's Insight Genesis," he says.

Visual cues and knowledge of seasonal fish behavior also factor into pre-game strategizing. "With any of the fall spawners, it pays to keep an eye on the spawning grounds," he says. "For example, lake trout spawn in November before ice-up. Once the lakers move out, rainbow trout move in to feed on their eggs, often providing great fishing the first few weeks of the ice season. Some of my biggest bows of the year come off these lake trout beds."

Likewise, kokanee salmon spawning areas often attract super-sized lake trout and pike. "During the late fall, watch for salmon splashing on the surface along shore, and make a mental note of the location or mark it on a paper map or your GPS plotter," he says.

"After the spawn, some of the older, spawned-out salmon often survive into early ice," he continues, explaining that the "swimming dead" draw predators in droves.

Finally, he notes there's nothing as surefire as finding fish on sonar a day or two before freeze-up. "As long as the food and habitat are hospitable, they're not going anywhere," he grins. "In fact, they tend to get comfortable, which makes them more vulnerable to anglers."

If all of this pre-season scouting sounds like work, Keefe assures us it's well worth the effort. "Planning your first-ice attack on open water eliminates the need to run around punching holes looking for fish once it's game time," he says. "And trust me, you'd rather be reeling in fish than scratching your head, wondering where to drill the next hole once the clock starts ticking."



EARLY ICE CRAPPIES

By Brian 'Bro Brosdahl

My travels across the Ice Belt during the Bro Road Show have showed me how different ice fishing can be, depending on the part of the country I am visiting.

The area in Northern Minnesota where I live, there are usually 3 different "first ice" experiences during December. The ice fishing season goes from walking on the ice in early December, to driving snowmobiles and ATV's on the ice by mid December, to finally driving full sized 4-wheel drive vehicles on the ice by Christmas during most winters.

Each time anglers are able to advance their mode of travel, the more opportunities open up on the lakes. Walking on the ice gets old pretty quick. It limits where you can go and what you can bring with you.

Once I can get a snowmobile or ATV on the ice, I can go many more places and bring with more stuff. The full bore ice fishing doesn't begin until there is more than 15 inches of ice on the lakes, so anglers can begin to put out their stationary fish houses and start driving vehicles on the lakes.

Anglers wanting to target crappies in my part of the country usually need to wait until the ice gets a little thicker, before they are able to access the basin areas of the lakes, which is where the vast majority of the crappies are located during the winter.

Crappies like open water, but not true open water. Crappies usually prefer "isolated open water", which means they like deep holes next to structures or deep holes surrounded by shallow water. Crappies tend to avoid larger basin areas that don't have any type of structures nearby.

When I am searching for crappies for ice fishing, I usually find the deep hole first and then search the perimeter of the hole for steep breaks, turns in the breakline or other unique features that might be used by crappies when they are feeding.

I like to mark the shape and features of the deep holes on my



Humminbird Helix 7, which has both GPS and the Chirp feature that helps separate multiple targets in deep water.

Crappies like to sit in one area when they are inactive, but when they get active, crappies usually make a feeding movement which often starts as sunset approaches and can continue into the dark.

Anglers need to find the resting areas for crappies to catch them during the day, but once the crappies are on the move, anglers have to position themselves somewhere on the crappies milk run to catch them consistently.

Crappies feed on many different things, but their “bread and butter” during the winter in my part of the country is zooplankton, which are tiny microscopic critters that the crappies are able to sift out of the water.

Zooplankton feed in the mud bottom where dead plant and animal matter collect on the bottom. Zooplankton rise up off the bottom as it starts to get dark and concentrate in stratified layers just off of the bottom. The zooplankton is usually thick enough to be visible on sonar and looks like green clutter above the bottom.

Crappies swim through the concentrated layers of zooplankton and sift them out of the water with their mouth. Anglers can see when crappies are feeding on zooplankton because it looks like a black ball of



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mush in the crappies' stomachs when they are filleted.

Crappies like to supplement their diet with small minnows and insects, so anglers need to keep their presentations small to appeal to crappies' preference for small prey.

Anglers should keep their lure movements subtle and not overwork their lures when fishing for crappies. I like to use my AquaVu Micro 5 Revolution to watch the crappies bite to see how they are reacting to my presentation.

Instead of the aggressive jigging patterns that walleyes sometimes prefer, a crappie-friendly jigging pattern is usually more of a hyperactive vibration of the lure, without adding too much side to side or up and down movement.

I go light for crappies and use a 30 or 35 inch Frabill Quick-tip Bro Series combo with the 371 Straightline reel spooled with 2 pound test Sunline Fluorocarbon line.

The 371 Straightline reels keep line twist to a minimum and there is no need for backing on the line because of the larger diameter spool that takes up about 22 inches of line per turn of the reel handle. I usually put about 100 feet of line on the 371, which is plenty for most depths of water.

Crappies have paper thin mouths, so it helps to use small lures with slightly larger hooks. If anglers' favorite lures have a small gap in the hook, they can carefully bend the hook out slightly with a needle nose pliers, so the hook gets a better bite on the fish.

I avoid lifting crappies out of the hole by the line. It works much better to grab the crappies by the lower jaw before lifting them out of the hole.

I helped design the perfect lures for crappies with Northland Tackle. For active crappies, I like to use the Forage Dart, Puppet Minnow or Sliver Minnow.

For less active crappies, I use a Gill Getter or a tungsten Mini Fireball jig tipped with a single waxie or eurolarvae. I may also tip the lures with scented impulse plastics like the Skeleton Minnow or Water Flea.

Crappies are visual feeders, so anglers need to keep their baits close to eye level of the fish. One of the biggest mistakes anglers make is having their lures below the level of the crappies, so they have to bring their lure through the school of fish, which often spooks them.

I prefer to position my bait above the crappies and try to get the more aggressive fish to come to me. This also helps get the fish away from the other crappies, so they don't spook as easy when I set the hook and the fish goes flying towards the bottom of the ice.

See you at a store near you this winter on the 2017/18 Bro Road Show.

(Brian 'Bro Brosdahl can be seen across the Ice Belt in a store near you during the Bro Road Show, be sure to check Bro's social media pages for more information about dates and times).



The advertisement features a central image of a fisherman, Brian 'Bro Brosdahl, wearing a racing suit and sunglasses, leaning over the side of a boat to catch a fish. The boat is decorated with various sponsor logos, including 'FLOW-RITE', 'DOUGLAS', and 'SKEET'. In the top left corner, there is a logo for the 'NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL ANGLERS ASSOCIATION' with the acronym 'NPA' and a silhouette of a fisherman. In the top right corner, a large red and white graphic says 'CLICK HERE TO JOIN'. At the bottom, a black banner with white text reads: 'Welcome to the National Professional Anglers Association! If you make an income in the fishing business or want to, we are here to help you succeed. Click to Learn More!'.

KEEP YOUR TIP-UP LINE SPOOLED TIGHTLY AND EVENLY - **HT Enterprises Tip**

This might seem insignificant, but I've been surprised how often anglers have their tip-up line spooled loosely and unevenly on their tip-up something I never allow to happen with my own gear, because this may cause several undesired results.

Even when using liquid-smooth, premium quality tip-ups such as HT™s Polar, Polar Therm or Polar Therm Extreme that consistently deliver high performance cold weather operation, proper line arrangement is a critical factor in a consistently successful tip-up presentation, and this consists of tightly spooled wraps, evenly layered from the innermost band to the outermost one.

When tip-up line is loosely spooled, especially toward the arbor or center of the spool, the outer wraps may cut down into the lower layers, causing tangles. Uneven layers may slip and form loops that can tangle around the line guide, spool handle--even the tube assembly itself.

Needless to say, this may cause lost fish, and on a seemingly less important scale, even the smallest tangles are uncomfortable to try unraveling with wet, cold fingers. Now make that line wet from use--or worse yet, saturated from being submerged in water and given even moderately cold, windy winter conditions, these layers of wrapped line can freeze tightly together. If the line is loose enough and provides a base for water to thicken around the line, the entire spool may freeze solid, rendering your tip-up useless until the line can be thawed back out.

Even if you're patient, peel all the layers of frozen line free, then re-spool and tighten the wraps on location, you're taking a risk. Should you leave any icy line inside the spool, this may re-freeze, and if a hard running fish spins the line down to the frozen spot, this will compromise your chance of success when the fish encounters resistance.



Even if you're able to strip the line all the way down through the frozen layers and carefully slide it through your fingers to shed water and ice, it's inevitable some sticky grains will remain adhered to the line or its surface, at least in places. When this ice-coated line is wrapped back onto the spool and consequently returned to the water, the ice will melt away, in effect reducing the line diameter and creating loops or loosely wrapped layers that may again cause tangling.

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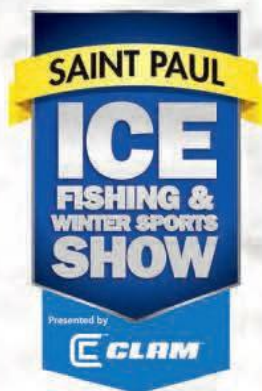
Worst of all, loose, tangled or jammed line wraps not only create resistance biting fish will feel, but this situation may also create a backlash effect, where a lower layer of line may loop or wrap over an outer one, preventing the line from releasing off the spool. Fish that don't hook themselves will likely drop the bait.

Fortunately, the above problems are easily preventable. First, use a premium, water resistant braided tip-up line, such as HT's Polar Ice. Tie the line to the arbor, and in the comfort of a warm room, tightly and evenly wrap the fresh, dry line, layer upon layer, until the spool is filled to the desired level, then add your leader, rig, and secure the unit for transit.

Following these guidelines, you can fish your tip-ups confidently, knowing your line will be delivered to biting fish in a continually fluid, smooth motion, minimizing the chance of biting fish feeling anything unnatural, thereby maximizing your chances for success.

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5 TIPS FOR ICE FISHING WITH KIDS



By Scott Seibert

“Younger anglers require more hands-on supervision, while older ones may only need you to show them the steps one time. Always, however, make sure they know that they can ask for assistance at any time.”

Introducing youngsters to any outdoor activity, including the sport of ice fishing, doesn't require a degree in rocket science — just an enthusiastic mentor and some willing students.

Take my latest adventure, for example. I took a half dozen eager pre-teens on a day-trip for yellow perch and crappies. By its end we had a good catch of fish for the table — and, I'm pretty sure, at least a couple hooked-for-life ice anglers.

Wrapping Up Your Tip-Ups At The End Of The Day - HT Enterprises



Most serious tip-up anglers would agree: One of the most challenging parts of tip-up outings is packing them up at the end of the day. Handling wet line and bait, especially with bare hands, is simply not pleasant, especially under in extremely cold temperatures or windy conditions.

To make the job faster and more comfortable, consider the following:

Wear water resistant, HT neoprene style gloves or waterproof gloves such as HT's Eskimo gloves that allow dexterity, but keep your hands dry.

Consider keeping a hand warmer inside your gloves during the pick-up process.

The Polar family of tip-ups also offers several features that speed up the process while allowing you to minimize or avoid handling wet line:

When fishing shallow water, you can use the handle at the base of the spool to loosely wind up your line—tip-ups can then be re-handled once you're back inside where it's warm to wrap the line under the desired amount of tension.

You can also grasp the vinyl tip at the top of the tip-up mechanism and simply spin the spool to loosely wind up your line—again, this can then be re-handled once you're back inside where it's warm to wrap the line under the desired amount of tension.

Under extreme conditions, note the unique "H" shape of the Polar Tip-Up frame allows you to simply wrap the line around the frame itself for a quick pick-up. Again, the tip-up can then be re-handled once you're back inside to properly wrap the line on the spool.

To secure your hook and leader, simply stretch a rubber band around the end of the frame opposite the reel. Loop a wrap or two of line around the handle on the spool, stretch your leader across the length of the frame and slip the hook over the rubber band. Presto! A secure, no tangle method to secure your rig.

Once you're back indoors, spread your tip-ups on an old blanket or towel to allow any ice or moisture to dry off the units and line; then re-wrap your line under the desired amount of tension. Also use this time to check your backing for knots or damage, replacing nicked or bent leaders, re-tying knots, adding attractors such as flicker blades and beads, sharpening or changing hooks, tightening loose fasteners, etc.

This process not only helps care for your tip-ups so they will be ready to go again next time you are, but will extend the life of your units as well.

Check out the new HT web store - <http://icefish.com/>

Though it's really simple enough, there are a few things you can do that will help you ensure a successful day, and an experience that will have your young anglers looking forward to the next trip.

1. Plan to Succeed

Quick success breeds interest and excitement in novice anglers. So, do your best to put your youngsters on fish right away. At this stage, size and quality of fish take a back seat to steady action. Rather than planning a trip for walleyes that may only bite in the morning or evening, head to a lake where you know panfish are plentiful and cooperative. It might mean taking time to search out bait shop or online fishing reports, but the effort you put in before the trip will pay for itself many times over.

Likewise, keep an eye on the weather forecast as you plan the trip. While bitter cold and wind may not deter you from taking to the ice, don't subject young anglers to harsh conditions right off the bat. Instead, aim for a day when the weather will be mild — above freezing, if possible. You'll not only eliminate the discomfort factor, the novices

won't have to contend with frozen line guides, ice-encrusted line or any of the little distractions that can frustrate even veteran fishers.

When the big day arrives, make sure your young ones are outfitted properly with layered clothing, boots that don't leak, warm hats and gloves, outerwear that repels water, and if the ice is slick with little or no snow cover, perhaps even ice cleats. Getting wet and cold will cut a kid's trip short in a very big hurry, and leave a negative impression that will be difficult to overcome later on.

2. Keep It Interesting

Once you're on the ice, the goal is to help young anglers learn and embrace new fishing skills while they catch fish. And the key is to hold their attention. I started my group out sight fishing for perch in shallow water. They were able to watch how the fish reacted to their jigging presentations, and how perch attack bait. They even learned that they could pull an offering away from a small perch in hopes that a larger fish would move in. The kids were fascinated, plus it was a fantastic learning experience for them.

Later, when we targeted fish in deeper water, the kids were able to relate the signals on a flasher screen to the fish behavior they'd witnessed with their own eyes.

How you approach introducing other skills, such as properly baiting a hook, reading a GPS chart, operating a hand-auger, or erecting a shelter depends on a youngster's age, stature, desire to learn and their existing proficiency level. Younger anglers require more hands-on supervision, while older ones may only need you to show them the steps one time. Always, however, make sure they know that they can ask for assistance at any time.

3. Provide a Diversion

No matter how hot the fishing is, there's a good chance that your companions might need a break. The



ULTIMATE
TIP UP
PATENT PENDING

- Walleye
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(see page 26 for specs and complete details)

diversion could be something as simple as chucking a football around for a while between angling sessions, or perhaps a brief shoreline exploratory excursion.

Food is always a welcome distraction on the ice. You could pack snacks and a camp stove to make instant hot chocolate. Or, go all out and cook hotdogs for a full-fledged mid-lake picnic. Expect that kids might want to step back from the fishing experience for a few minutes at some point — and be ready for it.

4. Answer When Nature Calls

Even just a few hours on the ice can result in the need for a restroom break. Keep in mind that younger kids sometimes let things escalate to a Defcon 1-type situation before they speak up. An easy way to head off any such emergency, especially when you have a group of kids in tow, is to establish a designated loo in the form of a small portable shack — complete with a 5-gallon bucket, bag liner, tote-able toilet seat and a roll of TP. If this sort of set-up doesn't fit your style, that's OK. Just be sure to have a plan of some type to answer nature's call; you're almost sure to need it.

5. Know When to Go

Finally, when you take a kid, or a few of them, fishing, always keep in mind that it's their trip. Take your cues from your companions, and if it looks like they've had enough, don't fight it. End the day on a high note, and they're sure to be up for a return trip in the future.

Certainly, there are a lot of things to anticipate and prepare for when you take young anglers under your wing. If you swing-and-miss a few times, don't worry about it. Your enthusiasm for ice fishing and the outdoors in general is bound to be contagious, whatever the outcome.

Scott Seibert is a professional fishing guide and a leader in outdoor promotions. He is one of the original Ice Team Pros and spends a lot of time mentoring the youth of our sport.

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UNDERSTANDING SONAR SPECIFICATIONS

By Vexilar



A depth finder / fish finder has three main parts; the transmitter, the receiver, and the display. Power output is only one of the factors in the operation of the unit. It measures how much “punch” a sonar transmitter has. Other factors, such as receiver sensitivity, sonar resolution, and display resolution have just as big of an effect on the performance of the unit. Many times these other factors are not specified so it makes it a little tough on you when your comparing different units on the store shelf.

Receiver sensitivity is the units ability to listen for the transmit bursts return to the transducer. The Vexilar FL series flashers, such as the FL-12 shown, listens for this return and coverts it into the pattern you see on the display. The strongest returns are shown as a red color. The

weakest returns are displayed as green. Orange covers the area in-between.

Our finders have always been designed with moderate output power and very high receiver sensitivity. This gives us a good clean signal throughout the units depth ranges. Other manufacturers may use a different design which uses higher output power and lower receiver sensitivity. The end result is that both units have about the same performance at the same depth range.

Sonar resolution, or target separation, is the units ability to separate one target from another. For example, separating a fish from the bottom or one fish from another one close by. This is a function of

the transmitters pulse width, or how long the transmit burst lasts. The shorter the burst the closer the sonar can separate two targets. The FL-12 series can separate targets within 3 inches or so on the 20' depth range. The deeper the range the longer the transmit burst, and thus, the separation increases.

Display resolution defines how small of a line the units display can draw. This specification is the one that probably affects the user the most. The better the display resolution the more detail the display will have. For example, the FL-20 can draw 525 individual lines around the display. When the range is selected to the 20 foot scale each line represents less than 1/2 inch. As the range increases the display resolution decreases.

Don't buy a unit based on its power output specification alone. Compare all specifications and look for the features that will affect you in the real world. Also, go more by what other people say about their units and how they like them and not by what the salesmen tell you. Most of our units are sold on the lake, not in the store. **Company link -** www.vexilar.com



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FROM NOW UNTIL ICE UP

By Joel Nelson

Ice anglers are a nervous bunch it seems from about the time of the whitetail rut, all throughout November. Even if ice doesn't come in their neck of the woods until December, it seems we find more ways to worry about getting ready for it than we do once it's actually here. While I can't do anything about ice-formation, I can certainly give you a peek at my pre-ice checklist. Get the prep-work done, then rest easy until we get some single digits and calm winds.

Auger

Traditionally, gas-powered engines have made this the first item on my checklist. Should you need a carburetor adjust or other fix, you might be a few weeks out. Better to work on this one sooner than later, while service center lines are short and turnaround times are quick. To prep any auger, you first need winter-blend fuels sold in the ice-belt usually anytime in November. Pre-mix your fuel, or purchase some of the handy pre-mixed gas in a can. Check your spark plug, auger flighting, and blade sharpness, then turn over the engine. If you're choking and adjusting throttle like mad just to get it to fire, think how much harder that's going to be on a frozen sheet of ice. Of course, if you're part of the electric auger crowd, simply test your batteries, blades, and general condition to make sure you're ready to drill first ice.

Shelter

This comes next on my list as I want to make sure I have time to assess any items that may be broken,

torn, or otherwise not functional. Then I still have ample time to replace items or add new ones like a light bar, cargo nets, hooks, etc. Were you sick of the bottom of your portable shelter sled holding snow and water last year? Consider drilling small holes at the back end of the sled in the bottom of the runner wells. That way, as your gear warms and dries, simply prop up the front part of your shelter to allow water to drain out.

Electronics

A quick look at your battery and its condition, as well as general operation of the unit itself completes the trifecta of your big-ticket item pre-ice checklist. Look for a shifting screen, poorly lit marks, loose knobs, frayed cables, or loose connections. All of these issues can be carry-overs from the year prior and will make the new year on ice that much more difficult. Again, customer service waits are very short right now, but will be long when everyone breaks out their flasher for the first time of the new season. Stay ahead of the curve and be ready to fish when others aren't.

Outerwear and Boots

This could be one of the most overlooked areas to prep for all ice anglers. Especially early ice, you're often fishing outside of a shelter or at least roaming the open ice to check for safety. Consider a floating bib and jacket

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combination that's designed for the ice, and line its pockets with everything you'll need. Headlamps, bait-pucks, hand-towels, measuring tapes, superline scissors, GPS, and forceps all fit inside the pockets of my on-ice outerwear. Boots are a subject unto themselves, but make sure yours don't leak, and consider equipping them with ice cleats for slick first ice.



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Ice Fishing Pros Reveal Favorite Baits, Previously Off the Radar

Only on the tournament ice fishing scene can a singular cooperative lure brand lay claim such a decisive statement: The most successful ice lures of all time.

From the beginning, it was clear FISKAS Wolfram jigs were different—the first tiny, heavy tungsten ice lures available in North America. Little Atom microplastics similarly showed anglers for the first time what was possible when soft, malleable materials were hand-poured in miniature molds and impregnated with special scents.

So it was, with limited quantities of the jig-plastics pairings in hand, Phil and Jeff Morse started winning early ‘Trap Attack’ events with regularity. The Morses paired FISKAS Wolfram Jigs with Little Atom Nuggies to win the first North American Ice Fishing Circuit (NAIFC) Championship in 2004.



Recognizing the efficacy of the two elite though obscure ice brands during early hardwater competition, Jamie and Carmin Olson began selling FISKAS and Little Atom baits out of their van in 2001. Demand was so great before and after these local ice derbies that anglers gladly endured long lines to buy the good stuff from Olson’s then-travelling lure show, in parking lots or right out on the frozen lake.

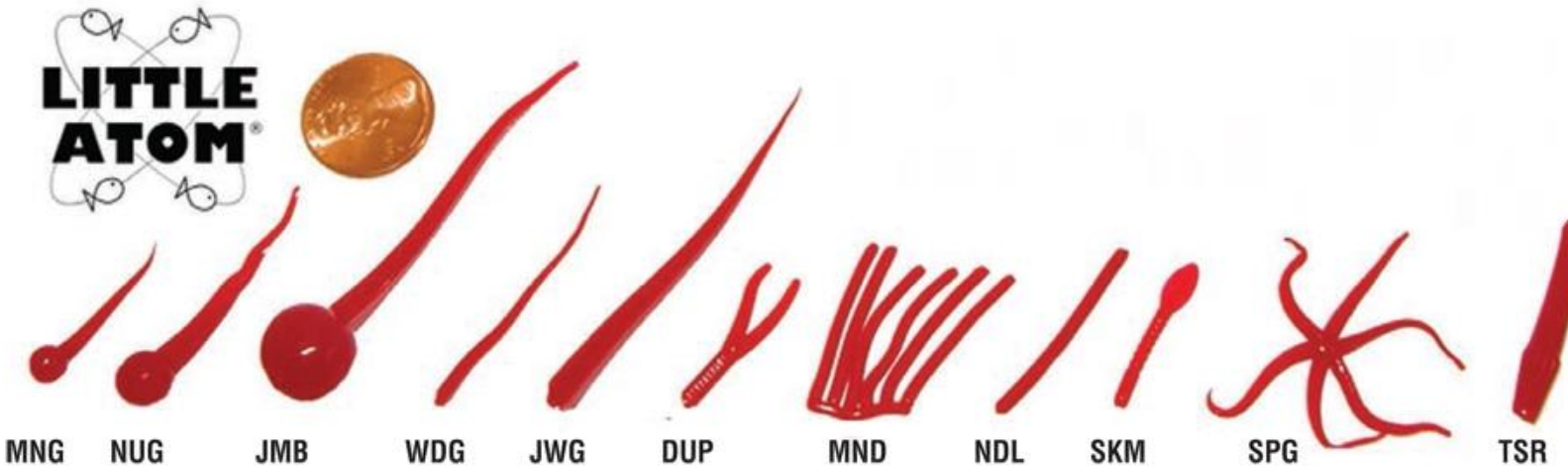
In the years since, FISKAS Wolfram Jigs and Little Atom microplastics have combined to win at least six NAIFC Championships—more than any other lure— including titles in 2004, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2013 and 2015. Following years in which local ace anglers kept the lures’ success largely under wraps, several FISKAS-Little Atom ice pros have finally agreed to talk.

Chicago based Tony Boshold, a two-time NAIFC Champ and World Ice Fishing gold medalist name-drops a few choice nuggets: “All these years later, word on the street is still legit: Give me a 5-mm glow FISKAS Wolfram Jig with a pearl-glow Little Atom Jumbo Wedgee and I’ll whale on big crappies all day, anywhere. Or for big palm-stretcher bluegills, slide a red-glow Wedgee on the same exact jig.

“Another super secret agent combo is a Little Atom Shmoe Spoon with a Little Atom Wedgee or Skimpie, threaded onto the hook in an L-shape. Fishes horizontally and vertically—I call it vertizontal—at the same time. It’s crazy deadly for mammoth panfish.”

Ice fishing pioneer Phil Morse fished his first Little Atom Plastics in 1998. “I was travelling to a lot of the early Trap Attack tournaments throughout the Upper Midwest and started hearing whispers about these amazing tiny plastics. Found out the baits the anglers were hiding in their boxes were Little Atom Wedgees—the basis for all microplastics since. It was and remains the greatest micro soft plastic bait ever created.”

Morse calls out his sacred jig-plastic pairings: “No doubt, It’s a 3- or 4-mm FISKAS Epoxy Jig in E71 Glow



School Bus Yellow or E61 Glow. Add a Little Atom Nuggie and you've got a fish-catching, money-winning combo on any body of water. One other real gem is a size 10 or 12 Little Atom Purist fished on a loop knot. Color doesn't matter, so long as it's brown," Morse laughs. "Yeah, brown!"

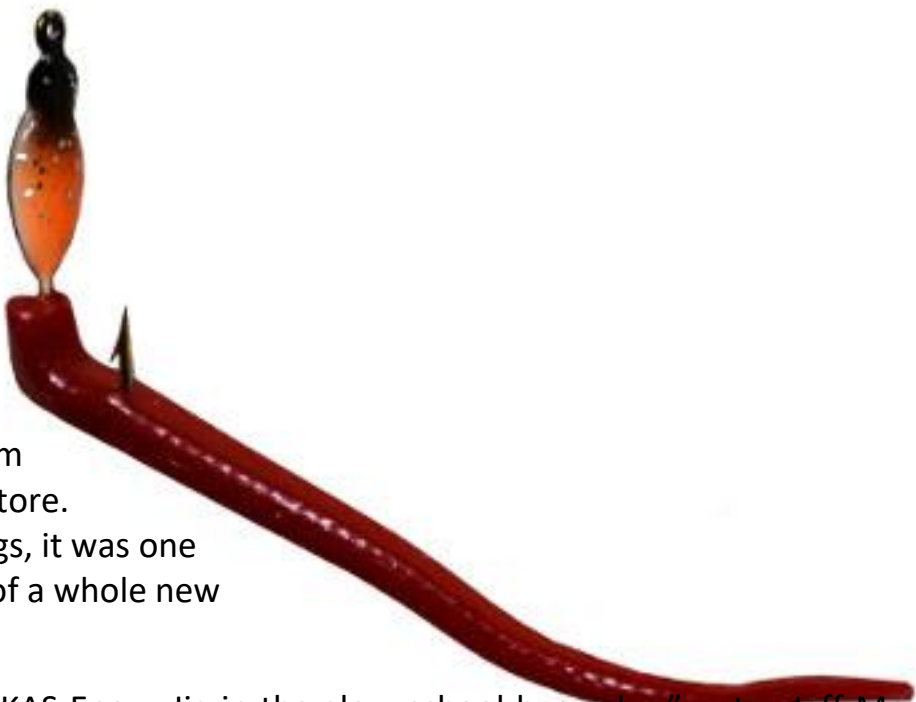
Morse's son Jeff, an ex-Cabela's staffer, recalls the day he showed FISKAS Wolfram Jigs to tackle buyers at the fishing superstore. "When Jamie Olson opened his case of jigs, it was one of those wow moments—the beginning of a whole new generation of tungsten ice lures.

"Like my dad, I'm a big fan of a 3-mm FISKAS Epoxy Jig in the glow-school bus color," notes Jeff Morse. "Tell you a secret, though. In tough bites, a FISKAS Metallic Wolfram Antz in the AN98 gold pattern is an absolute fish-catcher. Tip either jig with a Little Atom Nuggie or Duppie and you'll out-fish your buddies nine times out of ten. Also, don't be afraid to downsize to 2.5-mm jigs with 1-pound test ASSO New Micron 3, a super strong, fluorocarbon coated line."

Another family of exceptional ice anglers, Captain Matt Strong and his wife Laura discovered FISKAS-Little Atom products seven years ago, now crafting their own brand of "Ice Strong" titanium spring bobbers. A Lake Michigan charter captain and Upper Peninsula ice fishing guide, Strong divulges his two favorite panfish pairings. "For big bluegills, a FISKAS Wolfram Handpainted jig in blue-face glow (HP51) is money, plain and simple. The same FISKAS jig in pink-face glow (HP50) with a glow-red Little Atom Nuggie has crushed so many big crappies that the combo is tied to at least one rod all the time."

"When you've got the best, purest tungsten, the finest, most durable paint finishes and the highest-grade stickyharp hooks all in one ice jig," notes Boshold, "it's pretty obvious why the all best anglers continue to trust FISKAS.

"Add up all the championships and wins, and you see why FISKAS and Little Atom microplastics are the money-winningest ice lures of all other tournament Wolfram Jigs without question time. Even though a lot of imitators are out there now, the final word on who's got the best stuff has never changed—most of the best tournament anglers gladly fish these baits, regardless of who sponsors them."





I haven't given up hope for a couple more open water fishing trips in the next week or two, but I know that I need to start getting ready to go ice-fishing. Following are some things you can do to prepare for the ice-season, and also some things you should consider for your ice-fishing in the next few months.

First, and the way most important thing, is to make sure the ice is safe. If there is already another person out there, that doesn't mean it's safe. If there are a bunch of people out there and some four-wheelers, you're probably ok. If someone drove their pickup on the ice, go for it. However, if you're not sure, you should probably not go out, especially if you have someone with you that you're responsible for. If you decide to go out, wear a life-jacket and drill test holes as you go to measure ice depth.

Some folks take a rope with them in case their partner goes through. If it's that questionable, don't go. From personal experience, it's no fun

Get Ready For Ice Fishing Season

By Bob Jensen

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breaking through the ice.

Make sure the blades on your auger are sharp. Sharp blades go through the ice faster and make less noise, and noise should be avoided as much as possible on early ice that probably doesn't have much snow on it. Noise spooks the fish.

Make sure your depth-finder has a fully charged battery. It's very frustrating to get on the ice and find your sonar won't work. A sonar that doesn't work means you won't catch as many fish. Just as in open water, sonar will be the difference between a few fish and no fish, and a few fish and a bunch of fish. Vexilar has been the leader in sonar for ice-fishing for a long time and continues to create sonar that meets the needs of any ice-angler.

Start the season with fresh line. When ice-fishing, we often use line that's lighter than we use in open water. When the panfish get finicky, many experienced ice-anglers go to two and three pound test line, some even go down to one pound test line. That's pretty thin stuff, and there is no margin for error. If you're using light line and it's not in the best of shape, you're probably going to have problems. Fresh,

good, high quality line is always a good idea, and is especially so when ice-fishing.

Make this the year you try some tungsten jigs. It might be hard for some to believe that the material your jig is made from matters, but sometimes it does. Tungsten is much more dense than lead, so a sixteenth ounce tungsten jig is much smaller physically than a sixteenth ounce lead jig, and much of the time fish prefer a smaller jig, especially when they're not sure they want to bite. Tungsten fishes heavy, so you can use a heavier jig that looks smaller, and that will put fish in the boat. Mooska and Banana Bug jigs are two tungsten jigs that really caught on last ice-season.

Last thing: Plastic is becoming the go-to thing to tip jigs with. When the action is good, you'll catch more fish with plastic instead of live bait because plastic is more durable: You're not re-baiting after every fish or two. Match the plastic to the aggressiveness of the fish. When they're biters, go with plastic that has more action and bulk, something like an Impulse Slug Bug. When the fish are finicky, less action and less size will be better: Try an Impulse Blood Worm.

The weatherman in my radio just said to expect cold weather in the next few days. I doubt it will be cold enough to make ice, but if it does, I'll be ready. If you consider what we just talked about, you will be too.

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



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UPSIZE PANFISH THIS WINTER

By Jason Mitchell

Many ice anglers covet big panfish. What constitutes a big bluegill, sunfish or crappie can vary across regions and can depend on the angler, water and year. Some lakes only seem capable of producing bluegills that max out at eight inches. Other lakes rarely ever produce a crappie over twelve inches. There is no secret ingredient for success that will change what swims in a lake. Rule number one is to fish water that has big panfish. If you want to catch big panfish, you have to fish water that is capable of producing big panfish. Factors that seem to have the most limiting factor on panfish size is angler harvest and predator prey imbalances.



Population structure has an enormous effect on overall strategy for ice angling. For example, winter kills often produce big panfish about four or five years later. What typically happens is the lake dies off, anglers forget about the lake and the few fish that survive compete with fewer fish. If you are dealing with one size class of fish or fish that have grossly large body condition resulting from few fish and too much forage, the strategies are completely different.

Dare say however that what most ice anglers deal with on most lakes is something completely different where the fishery has a very robust panfish population but... only a very small percentage of fish are the largest or top end size. Many fisheries might consist of numbers of five to seven-inch bluegill for example with perhaps five percent of the fish measuring over nine inches. This type of fishing is obviously a numbers game where the more fish you catch, the more likely you are to encounter the largest fish in the system but ice anglers can also improve the odds dramatically by specifically targeting the largest fish.

Higher than the Clouds

Ice anglers often spend a tremendous amount of time locating schools of panfish assuming that the more fish are below you, the greater the odds of bigger fish being present. This assumption is often correct in that in a pack of a hundred fish, there are often a few outliers that are bigger. This mob of fish however can consume you. The hardest thing in the world can be leaving biting fish. A strategy that has worked so well over the years for targeting the biggest panfish in the school is to fish high above the pack and force the fish to rise in the water column. If you drop right down to the pack, you are going to have to catch an enormous amount of fish before you find the fish you want if you are targeting the larger fish. What I so often find is that the largest fish in the school are typically dominant



and most confident to leave the security of the pack. If there is one fish in that school that will rise five feet higher than the rest, it is often the largest fish in the pack. Fish high above the fish and force the larger fish to rise from the pack. Four inch bluegills will quickly dart up and dart back down because they don't seem to like being alone and silhouetted. Bigger fish will rise higher and stay above the pack for longer periods of time. When fishing basins and channels where panfish typically suspend over deeper water, larger profiles often shine because fish can see the presentation from much further away and separating fish by how far they will rise is one of the best strategies there is for sorting out the largest fish from the rest of the school. Realize as well that when you start fishing high above a school of fish, you will get fewer bites and catch fewer fish but you will often catch the largest fish.

Because of the effectiveness of this high sorting strategy, we often upsize the profile or size of our baits by using soft plastics. Larger profiles like the Maki Plastic's Jamei and Draggi can be seen from further away which means that you can lift fish higher in the water column from greater distances. This distance often separates the big fish from the small fish.

The second factor is to keep moving and hitting fresh fish. If you sit over the same hole for any extended period of time, you can quickly wear out your welcome. When you see the fish size drop off in a hole, move. Now if you sit over a hole long enough, fresh fish can recharge a hole so patience can sometimes work but what I find is that drilling more holes and fishing new water is usually best because you can always rest your old holes for a half hour or so and simply let that hole load up with more big fish. I find that I can sit over a hole and pick away at fish where the rate of catching nice fish might be a

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handful an hour... or I can bounce around to several holes and go back to the hole described above and still catch the same number of nice fish, just in a much shorter window of time.

Knowing when to give fish a rest and look for new fish is often what separates great ice anglers from the rest.

First Pressure

Day in and day out, people who find fish catch the biggest fish. In the dynamics of a school of fish, the biggest fish are often the dominant fish in that particular school. The biggest fish often eat first and eat the most. The little fish often don't get to eat until the big fish are done. Guess who gets caught first? Community holes are often very difficult to catch the largest fish unless you get to that spot first. You see it every winter, the first people on the ice during the early ice period catch some nice fish and then the size of the fish drops off through the winter on community spots. If you want to catch the largest panfish beyond first ice, find fish that are not using the community spots. Might mean finding an unassuming lake that doesn't have a reputation or is difficult to access. Might mean looking for a secondary basin or figuring out the small details like an inside turn or soft bottom point that anglers overlooked. Don't overthink fishing however, success is often simply leaving the pack and drilling holes over fresh ice. Simply moving fifty yards away from the crowd can often produce a nicer class of fish. As a rule of thumb, some of the first fish you pull off a location will often be some of the nicest fish.

Anglers who have a knack for catching bigger panfish through the ice typically have a lone wolf mentality. They put in the work looking for fish and cycle through fish on fresh spots. This winter, get confident in blazing your own trail and adapt your presentation to upsize your presentation and fish well above the pack. This combination of location and presentation will increase the size of the panfish you catch dramatically on fisheries where there is a substantial amount of fish with only a smaller percentage of fish being on the upper end of size.

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Ask Josh Nelson

Where to Find Bluegills - Early Ice Weedbed Questions

Colby K. asks:

Joel, I love watching you fish in lakes up by the Bemidji area. I have a flasher, underwater camera and lakemaster, and like to target lakes people don't fish. What is the best way to utilize weeds to find bluegills? And if you find alive weeds do you like them near drop offs? Or what can I look for topographically for gills in December? Any help is great thank you!

Well Colby, those are some big topics, but I'll do my best to give you my take on early season weeds and gills. I think



you're wise to focus on these locations right out of the gate, as I've had some poor fishing in traditional spots and community winter panfish holes during the first few weeks of the season.

As far as topo map locations, I think most of the spots I favor are pretty easy to find. They typically involve some sort of inside turn pushing up from deep water into the shallows, especially where the shallows lead into another neckdown, lake, or other expansive flat and shallow water environment. I'm a firm believer that these locations act as funnels, channeling fish movements through a pinch-down area and helping you to simply get more looks from more fish. Other spots would include major points, or mid-lake humps that have weeds as well.

For better or worse however, the quality and species of the weeds can trump location, with good standing cabbage and/or coontail in the afore-mentioned locations being a premium. Good weedbeds will hold a few fish in almost any location, just like good structural depth elements will. Combining the two is what you're after.

This job is made easier with a great underwater camera like the Recon, as a portable hand-held panfish



camera is simply made for such scenarios. Often, especially mid-day, panfish will hunker down tight to the weeds, so finding small pockets, hard edges, and their overall location within the weeds is of the utmost importance. They do this in lakes with formidable predator populations, and you'll likely catch a few bass and pike in the process. That said, a few feet too far away, and you'd think there's not a fish in the lake. Small moves can pay huge dividends here, and don't be afraid to drill plenty of holes.

Of course, all lakes aren't created equal when it comes to panfish in the weeds. Some lakes simply don't have the quality weedgrowth of the proper species at depth, and others have such large amounts of predators, that finding them in weeds is a difficult process. In these situations, or with the lack of weedy success, don't be afraid to push directly out from those areas into the 15-25 foot depths to see if they're suspended near bottom. I would consider these more typical midwinter locations, but don't be afraid to try them if you're not getting bit.



THE OPEN WATER FISHING ZONE



By Chip Leer



PROJECT PERCH

A close-up photograph of a yellow perch's head is on the left side of the page. The fish is holding a white, fuzzy lure in its mouth. The lure has a red band near the hook. The background is a blurred blue-grey.

Timely Tactics For Finding Jumbos Fast

Fall is prime time to tap one of the year's best yellow perch bites, as gluttonous jumbos gather in predictable places. If you're a fan of fast action, fish fries and sweet-tasting fillets, you don't want to miss it.

Here's the deal: From the Great Lakes to large natural lakes and small inland honeyholes, falling water temperatures trigger perch to abandon a variety of summer ranges in favor of shallow, food-laden flats, where they feast on protein-rich forage such as small crayfish before winter locks the lakes in its icy grip. The shallow flats bite gets better as the water cools from the summer peak all the way to the fall turnover. After that, perch still roam the flats, but the big schools tend to break up.

Flats lying in 4 to 10 feet of water are generally a good starting point. Since schools of portly perch roam these areas like buffalo herds grazing the prairie, the trick to finding them is covering water. Keep in mind perch tend to school by size, so don't settle on a spot until you find the fish you want.

In search mode, I like throwing tiny crankbaits like LIVETARGET's HFC (Hunt For Center) Crawfish

(<https://www.livetargetlures.com/freshwater/hfc-crawfish>). The 3/8-ounce, 2-inch floating bait dives 6 to 8 feet, which is perfect for fishing fall flats. It wiggles and wobbles in an off-center manner just like a real crayfish swims. Plus, it comes in a variety of colors, so you can mimic crayfish colorations in the waters you're fishing.

The HFC Crawfish excels fished on 6-pound monofilament and a 6½-foot, medium-action spinning rod like 13 Fishing's Muse Gold MG (<http://www.13fishing.com/muse-gold/>) S66M.

Make a long cast, swim the lure down, then retrieve it just off bottom. Pause when you nick vegetation, allowing the bait to rise a few





inches before continuing the retrieve. This crank-nick-float routine is extremely effective at pushing fat fall perch over the edge.

After locating perch, follow up with a 1/16- to 1/8-ounce hair or marabou leadhead jig, tipped with a chunk of nightcrawler or half a fathead minnow (head or tail, doesn't matter).

Experiment with jig action. Sometimes a subtle drag is best. Other times, perch prefer a pop-and-pause locomotion. Dialing in

the right cadence takes a few minutes, but is key to milking the most perch possible from a spot before moving on in search of the next school of autumn jumbos.

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 look to www.fishingthewildside.net or email Chip@fishingthewildside.net.

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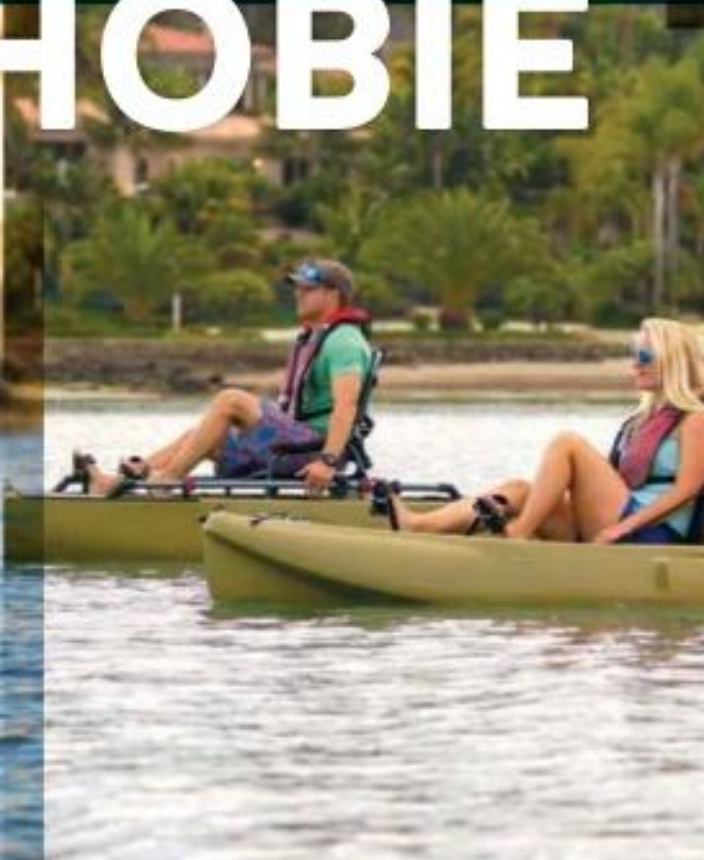


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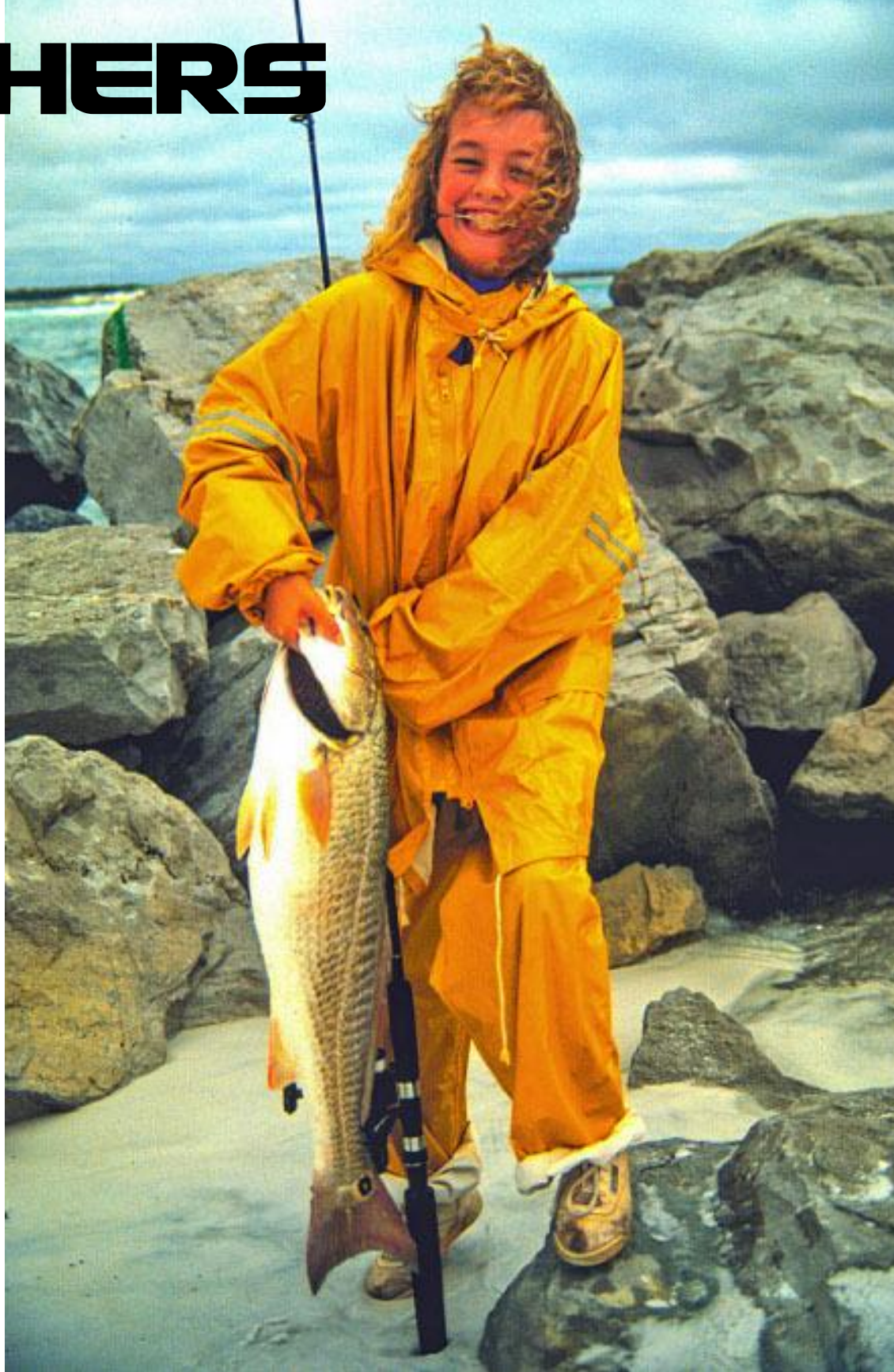
By Bill Vanderford

As I proudly watched the happiness spread over her beautiful face while battling a trophy bass recently, I couldn't help but drift back in my mind to the first times that I had taken my daughter PJ with me on fishing trips. It was nearly 40 years ago when my fishing guide business was booming, her mother was teaching school and PJ was my daily responsibility.

Regardless of the weather, from the time she was one year old, I would bundle her up in a tiny snowsuit, wrap a blanket around her and place her beside me in my bass boat as we sped across the lake to meet my clients. Thankfully none of the anglers that came with me on those trips ever had a bad thing to say about the quiet little girl who would amuse herself with discarded plastic worms in the bottom of the boat.

We had our ups and downs during the maturing process, but those simple beginnings have kept PJ and me very close over the years. Once in a while, when she has time, we renew the magic of a simpler time that seems to get better with age.

Despite the many hours spent with me in a bass boat, PJ caught her first fish in a small pond near our house. As a professional fisherman, it was especially touching to see my youngest daughter bait





her own hook and catch her first bream at the age of three. From those simple beginnings at the pond, I watched her develop into an accomplished angler in both fresh and saltwater. Until the week that he died, PJ and I would often share our fishing outings with my father when the bass or crappie were feeding good.

By the age of 12, PJ discovered sports and boys and the fishing seemed to go to the back burner...except for times when she needed some space or had a problem...as I had done with my father 40 years before. The joy and solitude of being together on the water with a fishing pole seemed to always dissolve any hurt or diminish any pressing problem...despite the huge age gap and differences of opinion, fishing was and still is a common





denominator that has a healing effect.

Though she was a great athlete in college, PJ also had a yearn to see the world, so she became a flight attendant for World Airways after her college days. World flew our brave military men and women and their families to every remote corner of the globe, and gave PJ the opportunity to see most of the world in the following 10 years. As her father, I am very proud of her deeply caring compassion while serving those wonderful defenders of our freedom as they travelled into unknown dangers.

Today, my little girl has two beautiful daughters of her own to whom she has passed along her love of fishing. Also, on special occasions, I am invited along with the girls to again feel the deep bonds that PJ and I had developed through fishing in her formative years. In those moments, PJ is again the excited little girl that I remembered, and for dad and daughter all is right again with life and the world!

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 jfish51@aol.com or at his web site: www.georgiafishing.com.





the
NEXTBITE
MEXIBITE

Santa Gets Schooled

By The Team at The Next Bite

In the calm before the storm, it is pretty typical for our good buddy Santa to give us a call to go fishing one last time before production ramps up in the North Pole for the Christmas season. This year we decided to go to a cabin on one of our favorite lakes.

We arrived with our rigs early Friday evening and lit a campfire outside. Just as we were settling in to our chairs we saw Santa approaching on his sleigh. As he approached, we noticed something seemed a little bit off. "It looks like someone is with him," said Keith.

Sure enough, there was someone else in the sleigh. It was Mrs. Claus! The guys had never met Santa's better half, so they were pretty excited.

The sleigh landed and Santa introduced her to Gary and Keith. The group spent the next couple hours chatting by the fire before turning in for the night.

The next morning was one of those classic walleye days. The temperature was just right, the sky was slightly overcast, and there was a good walleye chop going. As Santa looked out over the lake he commented, “Wow, looks like a back-breaker out there. Kind of like my honey-do list!”

Gary and Keith gulped, not knowing what kind of reaction Mrs. Claus would have.

She simply paused and gave him “the look” before saying, “Really? How about a challenge? Let’s split up today. It will be Gary and I competing against you and Keith. Meet back here at 5 o’clock, and the team with the most fish wins. Losers have to clean them so, you might want to just add that to your list now.”

She then smirked and looked at Gary. “We got this!” Gary said, “You bet we do!” They then hopped in the Nitro Z21 and took off.

Santa got into the other boat and Keith fired up the Mercury. They hadn’t even cleared the dock, but Santa was already white-knuckled from clenching the seat in anticipation of a rough ride. It didn’t take long for him to loosen his grip and enjoy the trip across the lake.



When they finally stopped he said, “Wow, that wasn’t bad at all!” Keith pointed down below his seat. “That’s because you are riding on a WavePro Air Suspension Boat Seat Pedestal (pictured). The air spring chamber allows for 0-200psi of air spring preload to accommodate rider weights up to 380lbs!”

“I wish I would have known that before I made the back-breaker comment to Mrs. Claus,” chuckled Santa.

Keith didn’t waste any time trying to put fish in the boat. He handed Santa a rod with a Moonshine Shiver Minnow (pictured) tied to the end. Santa took a close look at the bait. “What is this?”

Keith replied, “That’s a money bait! These little lures



ODU MAGAZINE VIDEO BLOCK (www.odumagazine.com)

have done well for me over the past couple of years in tournaments. You should use them for stocking stuffers.”

“This is a cool color for a bait,” said Santa. “What’s it called?”

“That’s the Cranberry Shad. It’s one of the holographic patterns. You might want to cast it out big guy. You aren’t going to catch any fish with it out of the water,” Keith replied.

Santa took the hint and made a cast going right over Keith’s line, creating the first tangle of the day. While they were working on getting their lines separated, Gary and Mrs. Claus were setting up for their first trolling pass.

“We’re going to be running one of my go-to baits to start out,” said Gary. “This is a Berkley Flicker Minnow. I won a tournament a couple years ago on them and they have been producing ever since. And check this out.” Gary opened up the rod locker and pulled out a 9 ½ foot Bass Pro Shops Walleye Angler Trolling Rod. “This is a new rod coming out that is made of lighter high-tech materials. Not only can it collapse down small enough to fit in the rod locker, but I bet it would fit just right in Santa’s sleigh to hand out on Christmas Eve.”

As he put out the line, Mrs. Claus had a puzzled look on her face. “What is that yellow thing and what does it do?”

“That’s an Off Shore Tackle Planer Board. It pulls the line away from the boat when we are trolling,” said

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Gary. "These boards are perfectly ballasted, which makes them great for running in waves like this." A minute later Mrs. Claus saw the board slide back and grabbed the rod to reel in the first eater of the day.

From a distance Keith and Santa saw the high-five in the other boat and knew they were already one fish down. With his game face on, Keith made a cast to a hump in the opposite direction of where Santa was casting. "Got one," Keith yelled. "It's a nice fish! Grab the net!"

By the time Santa got to the front of the boat, the fish was beginning to surface and Santa missed it. Keith brought the fish back up and this time Santa got it.

Back in the other boat, Gary decided it was time to switch things up. "We're going to put on another one of my favorite baits," he said as he pulled out a different lure. "This is a Berkley Flicker Shad. Let's run it about 15 feet down. Let me show how to know how much line to let out to get the lure where you want it."

He pulled out his phone and brought up the Precision Trolling App. "It's really easy. Just select the lure you are using and dial up how deep you want it to run. The app will tell you how much line you need to





let out!”

While she was setting the line, Gary kept the boat on course with a FOB around his neck that runs his PowrTran Python Kicker Steering System (pictured above) from anywhere in the boat. There is no need for two throttles to keep the boat at the right speed either, as the system works in conjunction with the iTroll (pictured), which can fine-tune trolling speeds to a 1/10th of a mile!

Back in Keith’s boat, Santa had started pacing around. Keith thought that he might be getting nervous. Even though they had caught a few more fish, they knew that their completion had also boated a few more. Finally Santa spoke. “Your Lowrance looks different. It seems easier to see than your old one.”



“You’re right! It’s the new Lowrance HDS Carbon. It has great LED back lighting and an anti-reflective coating giving it wider viewing angles. It also has a high-performance processor to give faster redraws.”

“I just may have to put one of those under the tree for myself,” Santa joked.

With the sun starting to go down it was time to head to the cabin to see who would be cleaning fish. Back on shore, each team was eager to show off their catch, only to find that they were tied! Gary and Mrs. Claus had the heaviest fish, but Santa and Keith had the longest fish. This meant there was only one way to declare a winner. There would have to be a sudden death fish-off from the dock.

Santa and Mrs. Claus would go head to head. Santa reached into his tackle box and put on something that looked like a cross between a Hula Popper and a Jitterbug. “Made it myself in the workshop,” he proudly proclaimed.

“Oh boy,” said Mrs. Claus. “I feel like I need something unique to compete with that.” Gary smiled and said, “Here try this!” Mrs. Claus shrieked with excitement. “Where did you get this? This lure looks amazing!”

"For the past several years a lot of guys have been custom painting their lures to get exactly what they want in a pattern. Well now Renegade Outdoor Innovations is taking custom lures to a whole new level! Not only can you create your own pattern, but you can also take a picture of a perch or another bait fish and have that pattern put on a lure. The coolest part is not only can a custom pattern be put on a crank bait, but it can be put on an artificial tail as well. Go to www.renegadeoutdoorinnovations.com and check it out!"

Santa and Mrs. Claus headed down to the dock to begin the fish-off. We would tell you how the story ends, but we're pretty sure you can figure out who got The Next Bite!

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Keys for Locating Winter Bass

By Captain Mike Gerry

Although fall fishing is still upon us; the weather will change the patterns from fall fishing to winter fishing quickly it will just take a few cold nights. As this change occurs your pattern of shallow water fishing will go away and finding bass will become a little tougher; your baits may change drastically and the keys or the natural elements will have to lead you to the fish.

The good news is there are many natural elements that will lead you to the fish; being observant enough to use these natural elements will probably determine your daily catch. Most fisherman are by products of going to spots where they have caught fish in the past, if the bass were here last winter they may or may not be present in that same spot a year later. So redundant fishing locations can be a complete bust for many reasons, the most prominent reason being fishing

pressure; bass are being pushed out of their typical locations more than ever because they are being caught so many times. When your spots don't pan out the natural elements that occur every day on our lakes must be your key to finding the fish.

The first element I look for is under water points, set your Lowrance unit to reflect the deeper points with a color high-light; you will be amazed at how many points you're missing when you do this. If the bass are moving to 15 ft. depths this will allow you to highlight through your Navionics chip loaded on your Lowrance HDS and will highlight the 15 ft. depths or any depth you choose. Observe the shore line as it tells a story of what is underneath; steep drops off the banks generally occur when there is a hilly fall off the bank; this will indicate sharp drops at the banks edge. Look for the seagulls hovering over water and diving for bait fish; birds feeding over an open flat is an indication of bass also feeding from underneath and will be a great natural element that will lead you to the fish. There are many natural elements I have just listed a view; but if you're observant you will quickly learn how nature helps you find the fish!

DOLPHIN DAZZLE

By David A. Brown

Capt. Ron Mitchell grew up around prime dolphin waters, but with most of his on-the-water time consumed by kingfish tournaments, the Raymarine pro from St. Lucie, Florida cherishes the time he gets to spend chasing mahi-mahi. Eager to make the most of each outing, Mitchell employs a two-part plan: find 'em and wreck 'em.

More on that in a moment. For now, consider the dolphin appeal. For starters, this dazzling speedster offers some of the sea's finest table fare. Throughout the dolphin's range of Nova Scotia to Brazil those who love this game know it's about more than a dandy dinner.



Built for speed — up to 50 mph — dolphin can tuck their pectoral and pelvic fins into depressions for minimal water drag and catch just about anything they want to eat. Male dolphin (bulls) are distinguished by tall, blunt foreheads, as compared to the rounded heads of females (cows).

And when it comes to natural beauty, few can rival the dolphin's dynamics. Mostly a golden yellow fish, dolphin display brilliant blue borders along their dorsal fins, with iridescent blue/green accents and



smaller blue spots extending along their backs and flanks.

The dolphin's broadsides are dressed with skin cells called chromatophores, which expand and contract to alter the coloration with a dolphin's changing moods — feeding aggression, mating, irritation over a hook in the mouth — stuff like that. A boated fish quickly fades to a dull greenish yellow, but once you see that electric blue vibrance of a swimming fish, you'll be hard pressed to find its rival.

With one of the highest metabolisms and fastest growth rates in the sea, dolphin can reach nearly three feet in length in their first year. Fueling such growth requires dolphin to eat frequently and heartily. You'd think that conserving energy might be one of their strategies, but these fish live a fast-paced nomadic lifestyle and any thoughts of "conservative" go out the window when a hooked fish unleashes its repertoire of jaw dropping aerial acrobatics.

WHAT THEY LIKE

Partial to warm waters, dolphin may be found off the North Carolina Coast during winter, but always in the Gulfstream's balmy flow. Florida's East Coast and all throughout the Gulf of Mexico offer consistent options in which finding dolphin means looking these major fish attractors.

Weed Lines: Patches of golden sargasso weed floating loosely, often gather into tight banners of gilded

grass amid which a buffet of crabs, juvenile sea turtles and baitfish hide.

Flotsam: By way of storms and flood tides, the sea claims a rag tag assortment of natural debris from logs and palm fronds to manmade items like coolers, lounge chairs and plywood. It's a random collection, no doubt, but a common feature links their dolphin relevance — shade; not so much for these pelagic predators, but for the baitfish they seek. Anything floating offers shelter to seagoing forage and savvy dolphin know the value of checking anything overhead for snacks below.

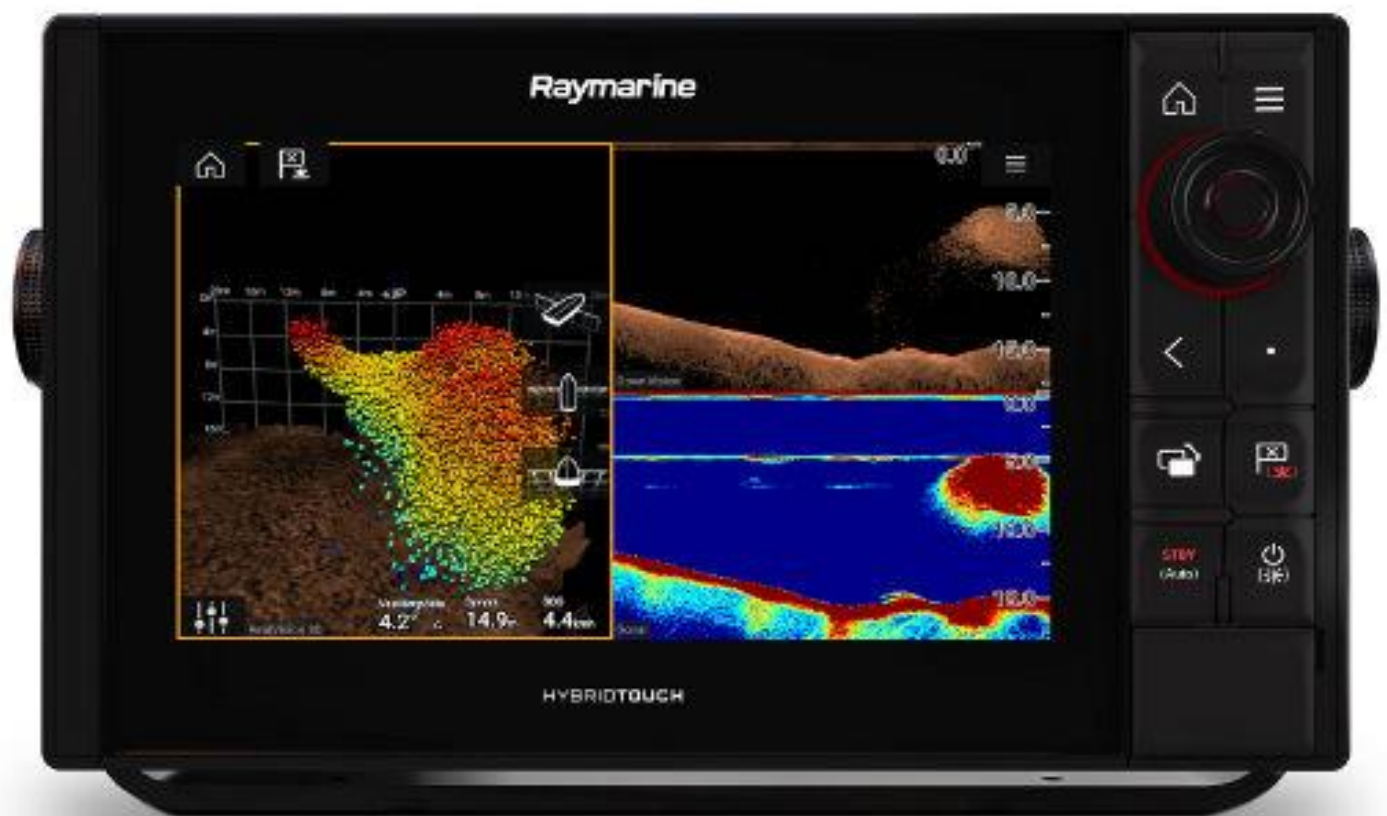
Rip Lines: Converging water masses, form a frothy boundary at their meeting; typically with a temperature change of a couple degrees or more. Baitfish often hold on the clear, warmer side, so never overlook such dividing lines.

FIND THE FISH

Complementing these surface-level interests, don't forget to look up. That's right, sea birds — mostly the broad winged frigates — will trail dolphin and other predators for miles in hopes of picking off a free meal. One big dolphin, or a pack of smaller fish, may be working a school of bait and the frigate will follow him and wait for the chance to dive down and grab the dolphin's table scraps. And therein lies a tried-and-true dolphin fishing strategy.

"Dolphin fishing is more about find the birds, and find the fish, so we'll use our super high-definition





‘bird mode’ on our Raymarine radar to locate a couple birds and then find something that might be holding some dolphin,” Mitchell said of the setting, which automatically optimizes the radar receiver for detecting sea birds above fish. “There have been many times when we’ve found one frigate bird a mile from us and we’ll run out there and find it’s following a 20-pound dolphin.”

Along with strategic bird watching, Raymarine’s new Axiom units with their RealVision 3D technology will hasten the inspection of flotsam and weed lines. What was once only a top-down observation is now a thorough analysis of what lies beneath.

And, as Mitchell notes, don’t miss the opportunities that may be circling below. While small to midsize dolphin are quick to explore the upper reaches of the water column, larger, more experienced fish often patrol 15-20 feet below the fracas until they’re convinced the opportunity merits the risk of ascension.

Many times, anglers tussling with smaller dolphin near the surface will spot faint lines of brilliant blue patrolling deeper in the water column. Complement this observation with frequent glimpses at the sonar to stay ahead of the opportunities for maximum readiness.

TEMP THEIR TUMMIES

As Mitchell points out, one of the most notable traits of dolphin behavior is their intense feeding competition. It’s more uncommon to see a hooked fish rise solo than to see a half dozen or more fish



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swimming alongside their struggling schoolmate — often literally trying to headbutt a bait out of the captive's mouth.

Entertaining for sure, but this behavior also works to the angler's advantage, as attracting one dolphin typically means attracting many. Common is the practice of keeping a hooked dolphin in the water for a few minutes to rally a robust gathering; but even short of such strategy, it's not difficult to keep a bunch of fired-up dolphin in the neighborhood — especially if you pepper the area with chunks of cut sardine, ballyhoo, bonito or whatever's handy.

Now, getting to this point obviously requires that initial connection and pulling a spread of baits past those weed lines, flotsam or rip lines beats the heck out of random trolling. A broad spectrum of artificial lures from noisy poppers to bubble making jet heads and even diving plugs will raise fish, but day-to-day, it's hard to beat a dead ballyhoo.

A slender baitfish with the odd design of a long, narrow bottom beak paired with a stubby upper jaw, this meaty forage species abounds throughout much of the dolphin's southern range. Brining dead 'hoos toughens their form and extends their trolling life, while dressing at least some in your spread with Mylar or colorful nylon skirts adds a little extra visibility that might catch someone's eye from afar.

"I'll troll naked ballyhoo too, but to protect the baits and to keep them weedless, I'll use a Blue Water Candy trolling skirt on some of my bait," Mitchell said. "I like the Jag in either pink or clear with blue



accents.

“When the dolphin are feeding, I don’t know that color makes much difference, but if I put out five different colors and one gets bit more than the others, I’m switching to that color.”

Mitchell said he’ll further expand his presentation by staggering the placement (line length and depth) of ballyhoo in his spread. Running ballyhoo below the surface: downriggers or the more common option of wiring a trolling weight below the bait’s chin.

Weighted or unweighted, ballyhoo last considerably longer when you snap off that lower beak and wire their jaws shut. And, while rigging ‘hoos with internal hooks has its merit, for simplicity, dolphin anglers tuck their hook under a rubber band wrapped around the bait’s head (similar to bridling livies).

Once he scores a dolphin bite, Mitchell sets up on what’s usually a cluster of opportunity. From his experience, the best way to capitalize on the moment is to sling out a netful of live pilchards to concentrate whatever dolphin may be buzzing the area. He’ll follow by deploying three to four nose-hooked

live baits on circle hooks and if the dolphin hold deep, a split shot helps sink the offering.

A simple game plan with home run potential, Mitchell’s tactics have been known to yield multiple hook-ups; and, while the flurry may seem like a whirlwind of confusion, just break it down to one fish at a time. When the fish jump — and they always do — try to rank them by size and work on the biggest one first.

Steadily guide your fish to the gaff with a smooth cadence of raising the rod tip to move the fish and winding down to gather the line you gained. Once you sling your catch over the gunnel, drop the dolphin into cooler to preserve its freshness — a move for which you’ll thank yourself at dinnertime.

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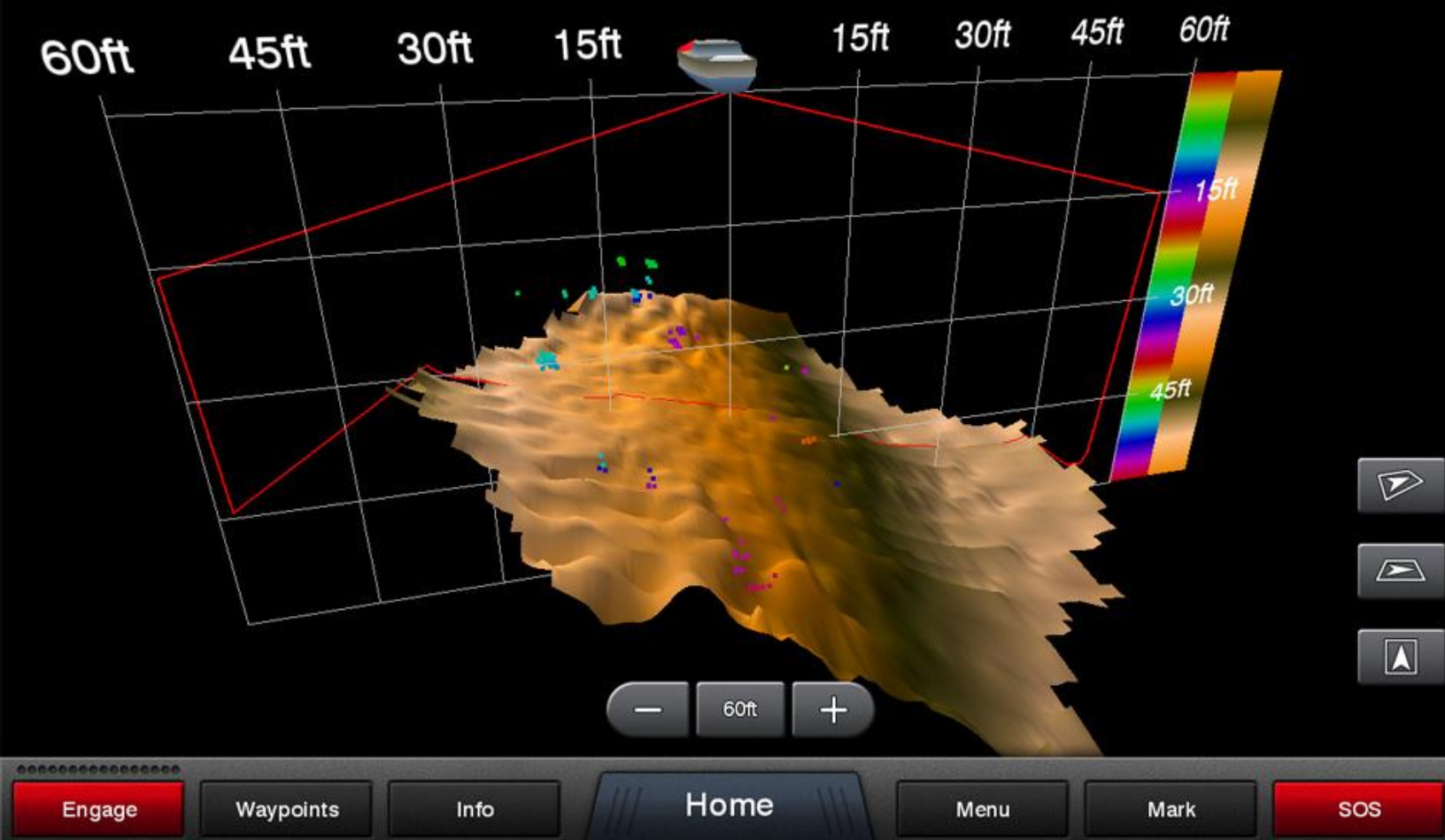
360 Sonar – How New Technology Has Changed the Game

By Bernard Williams, Outdoor Writer, Magnolia Crappie Club

Turning on the 360 sonar and watching it light up reminds me somewhat of a video game. 360 sonar is the latest and greatest in sport fishing sonar. What we're seeing in 360 sonar was once only available to military and top-end commercial applications. For anyone unfamiliar with this technology, it creates a picture of what's ahead and around your boat.

A few years ago we were raving about side-scan and down-scan and what it could do. Never before could we see the lake floor in such clarity. All that has changed and a number of companies are offering units that are "All-Seeing". Lowrance offers the SpotlightScan, Sinrad has Forward Scan, and Garmin has the Panoptix.

My experience is with the transom mounted "Down-Looking" transducer. I chose this unit because is

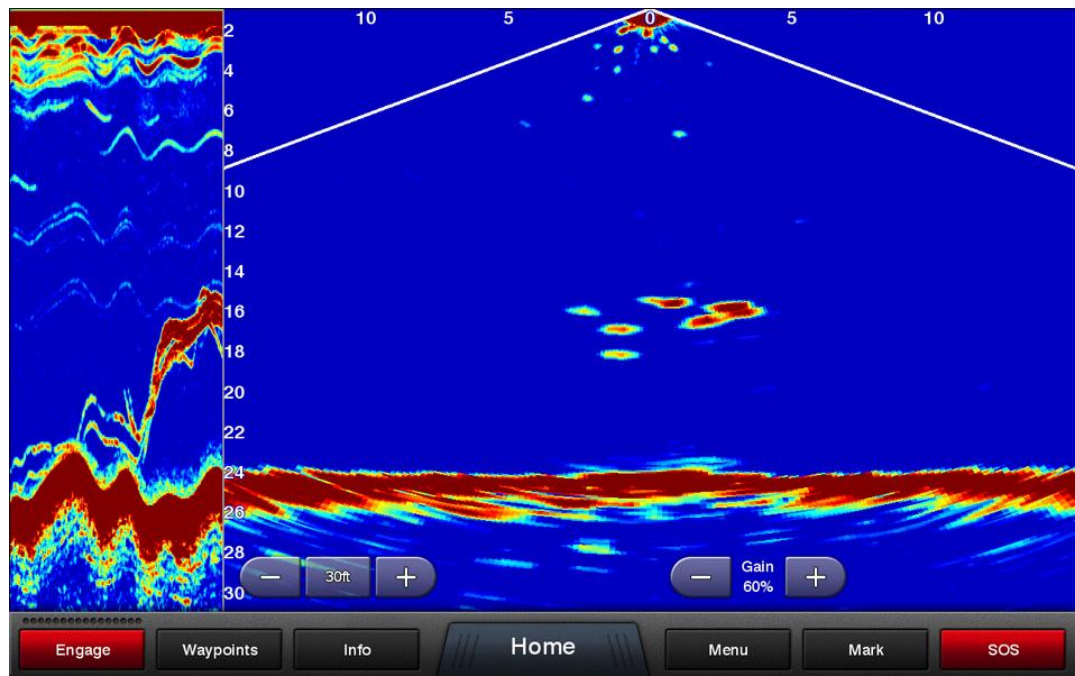


mainly fish from the back of my boat, although sometimes I wish I had the forward-looking transducer mounted to my trolling motor.

Each of the unit uses ceramic elements for transmitting and receiving. Garmin uses nearly 100 of these elements, far more than the 8 to 15 elements used in the other transducers. The more elements used the clearer and more precise the picture becomes.

The Garmin Panoptix - The Garmin unit offers 3 different views for the Forward and 3 different views Down Transducers.

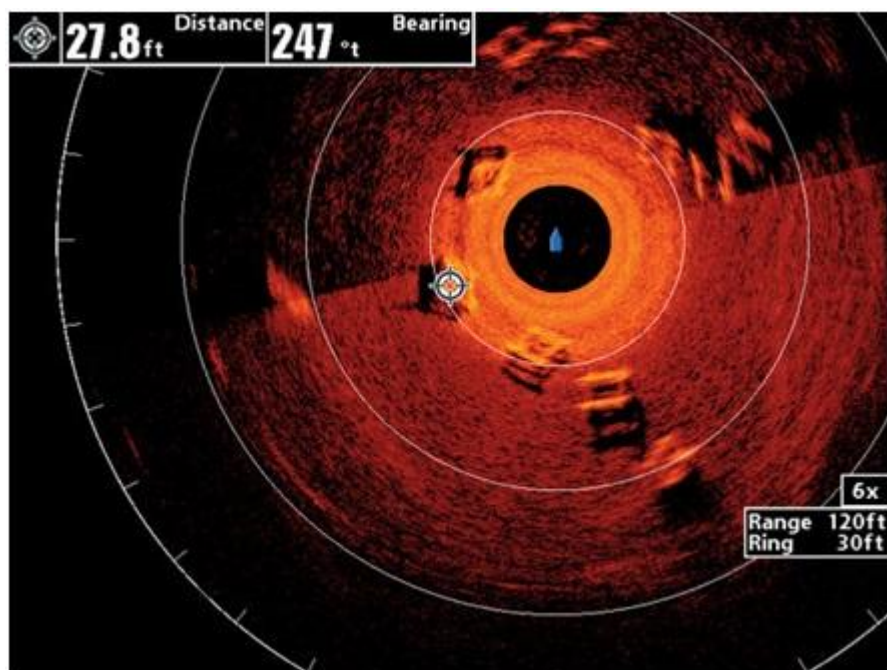
- LiveVü Forward - Provides a more live-video look that shows fish swimming and moving toward or away from the boat. See your lure. See fish react to your lure. See and feel the strike.
- RealVü 3D Forward - Scans the area in front of your boat, creating a forward-looking 3D view of the bottom, structure, and fish. You can control how quickly the forward area is scanned to provide greater or less



detail, making it very easy to identify where the fish really are.

- **FrontVü** - To help give you time to avoid collisions with submerged obstacles, FrontVü provides a look forward that shows underwater obstructions within a 300-foot range as you approach them in real time.
- **LiveVü Down** - Provides real-time moving sonar images below the boat. With LiveVü Down, see small baitfish and large target fish swimming around and pinpoint their distance left or right, and their depth.
- **RealVü 3D Historical** - Gives you a wealth of sonar data. It scrolls through the data as the boat moves to show the history of entire water columns – from the bottom to the surface and all of the fish in between. Bottom contours and fish pop in vivid color in three dimensions.
- **RealVü 3D Down** - Digitally scans the area below the boat from front to back and side to side. A full 3D view of the area under the boat is constructed, showing bottom contour changes, fish, and structure, even while stationary.

My absolute favorite is the RealVü 3D Historical. It shows me what I've passed over thus giving me the option of turning around on the fish. I can see bottom contours, stumps, logs and humps that I couldn't distinguish with side or down view. Plus I can stretch out the range and see nearly 40 feet on each side in 25 feet of water or deeper.



Humminbird 360 Imaging – Introduced in 2012, it was the bomb in the fishing world. It could be mounted to a cable-steer trolling motor or a Deployment System that's lowered below the hull. The beam's view can be limited to 10-degree increments, allowing you to zoom-in on a particular spot.



This unit truly allows you to fish like Professional Bass Fishermen Gerald Swindle says, "Fish in front of the fish, Fish where they're going instead of where they were". You can stay on top of schooling-fish and baitfish balls without spooking either one.

Lowrance Spotlight and Forward Scan –


This unit is Navico's version of 360 Imaging, available in Lowrance and Simrad MFD's. It's Angler-Controlled Directional Sonar. It's mainly used for targeting fish in front of the boat. This imaging

system is ideal for shallow water. It will look up to 8 times the depth forward, thus in 12 feet water, you can see up to 120 feet ahead.


Things to Remember - With any new technology, there's got to be drawbacks. I can only speak for myself. The main drawback I find with Forward Looking Sonar is that the transducer must be mounted to a cable steer trolling motor. Electric steer trolling motors cannot be used. Since 80% of crappie fishermen use electric steer motors they'll have to either use the Humminbird Deployment System on the Humminbird or the Minn Kota Ultrex. I'm told that do make after-market mounts for electric-steer trolling motors that allow the Humminbird 360 to attach but the doctor is still out on the Lowrance and Garmin.



Conclusion - Whether you make the switch to 360 imaging or not, it's up to you, all I can tell you is 360 imaging is around to stay and it has changed the fishing game. It's like all technology, the older it gets, the less expensive it becomes. Give it a while and it'll be like side and down imaging, affordable. It will save you from fishing "Dead Water", I can guarantee you it will show you the fish, making them bite is another story and another article.




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2018 NPAA ANNUAL CONFERENCE SPEAKERS TO INCLUDE KEVIN VANDAM AND AL LINDNER



The National Professional Anglers Association (NPAA) will be holding their annual conference on January 5-7th at Chula Vista Resort and Waterpark in Wisconsin Dells. This one of a kind annual event is geared for all anglers who have interest learning more about the professional/business side of sportfishing and is open to any angler (member or non-member) who has the desire to take “The Journey to Professional”. Featured on the list of conference speakers for 2018 are two of the most recognized names in our sport, Kevin VanDam and Al Lindner. More information on the conference including an agenda with the complete list of speakers/events and a registration form can be found on the NPAA website at www.npaa.net. The conference registration deadline is December 15th, but space is limited to the first 400 registrants. Don't miss out on this must attend event, register today!





MAKIN' BAIT

By Jim Salazar

Artificials are fun to throw and it's rewarding to figure out what the fish want to eat, but for a real thrill there is nothing like having a big fish pickup your live bait and run with it, then getting to set the hook with some gusto. That's the real kicker for me.



Here in Southern California we're lucky enough to have live bait haulers and receivers in most of our harbors or bays. These bait suppliers usually have live sardines or anchovies and often times live mackerel as well as squid.

If you're beach launching or fishing an area away from the harbors and the bait receivers you'll have to catch your own live bait. As Morgan Promnitz described in a recent Hobie article, the Sabiki or

Lucky Joe rig is the most common saltwater rig used to catch our local live baits so I'll cover a few other methods used across the country that some you may find familiar and some others just plain strange.

Making bait isn't just for saltwater. A big live crawdad or minnow will sometimes be just the ticket to get that big fat bass to explode out of the weeds. There are a lot of different tools out on the market for makin' bait in both fresh and salt water and a local Southern California company that I work with, called Promar/AHI, has a very wide selection of these traps and nets available. Here are a few methods that are on the market that you may not have been aware of, but be sure to check your local Fish and Game regulations to make sure that they are legal to use in your area.

Cast nets are a very productive tool for gathering live bait. With just a little practice, a 6-foot or 8-foot net can be cast from the sitting position in a Hobie kayak. Using various sizes of mesh and weights a variety of finfish can be caught with a cast net. In places like Florida, a guide like Alex at LocalLines can throw a cast net from a Hobie to gather bait like backwater mullet, whitebait, and pogies. In California we are only allowed to use cast nets in salt water in the northern half of the state, so please check your local regulations on their use and sizes allowed.

Of all the tools used to gather bait the squid jig is one of the most unconventional looking devices used. A jig to catch market size squid is usually about 6 inches long and shaped like a glow in the dark torpedo sinker. This jig has an eye on top to tie your line to and a series of about 20, one-half inch long, needle like pins attached in a circular fashion near the bottom of the jig and these needles are bent upwards. The squid impale themselves on the bottom of the jig while attacking everything in the area in a spawning frenzy. Sometimes when it's that easy to catch some "candy bait" and the fishing/catching doesn't work



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out, your bait can turn into a delicious calamari dinner.

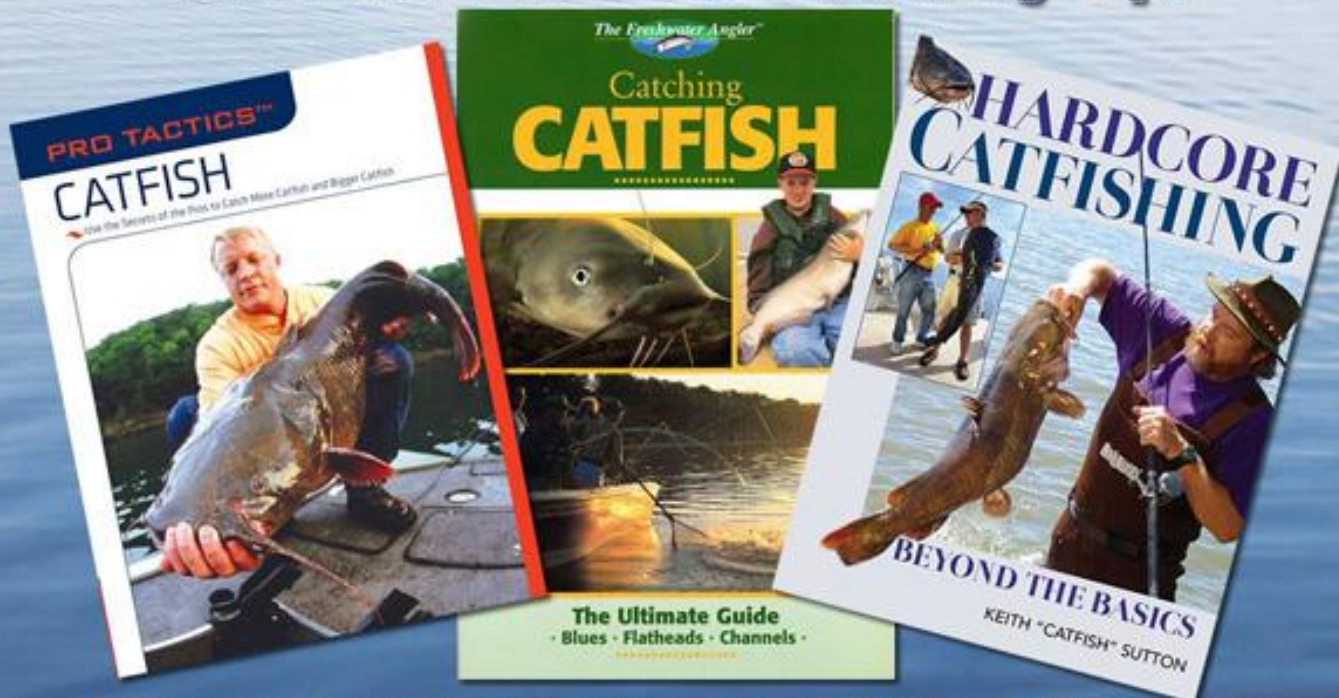
Another unconventional tool to catch bait is an umbrella net. This device is a 36-inch square piece of netting with four metal rods that pop out and keep the square shape and it has hemmed edges sewn in to insure that your catch stays in the net. The metal rods have an eye at the center of the device to attach a rope to so that you can pull your catch up. The umbrella net is really simple to use. The net is assembled and dropped into the water, then some bread or chum is sprinkled over the submerged net while waiting for the baitfish to gather above it. Once enough bait has gathered over the net it is quickly raised to the surface, trapping the bait fish inside the edges and safely inside the netting.

If your state fish and game wardens allow the use of fish traps in your local area, there are a variety of styles and sizes available to catch everything from minnows and crawfish to small bait fish and crustaceans. Most of these traps are collapsible for easy transport and setup. Some of these traps have a bait pocket built-in, but nothing works to attract baitfish like a can of cheap cat food with some holes poked in it. I prefer the cheapest salmon or seafood feast type of catfood because of their oiliness. Some of these traps have an additional layer of netting at the entrance that keeps the fish or critters from exiting the trap. I find this type of trap to be the most efficient at keeping the bait from escaping, especially with an overnight soak time.

Once you've caught that bait you'll need to keep it alive and ready to go. Some baits, like shrimp or minnows are hardier than others and simply require a bucket with some water and a battery operated aerator to stay alive. Anchovies, squid and sardines on the other hand will require a re-

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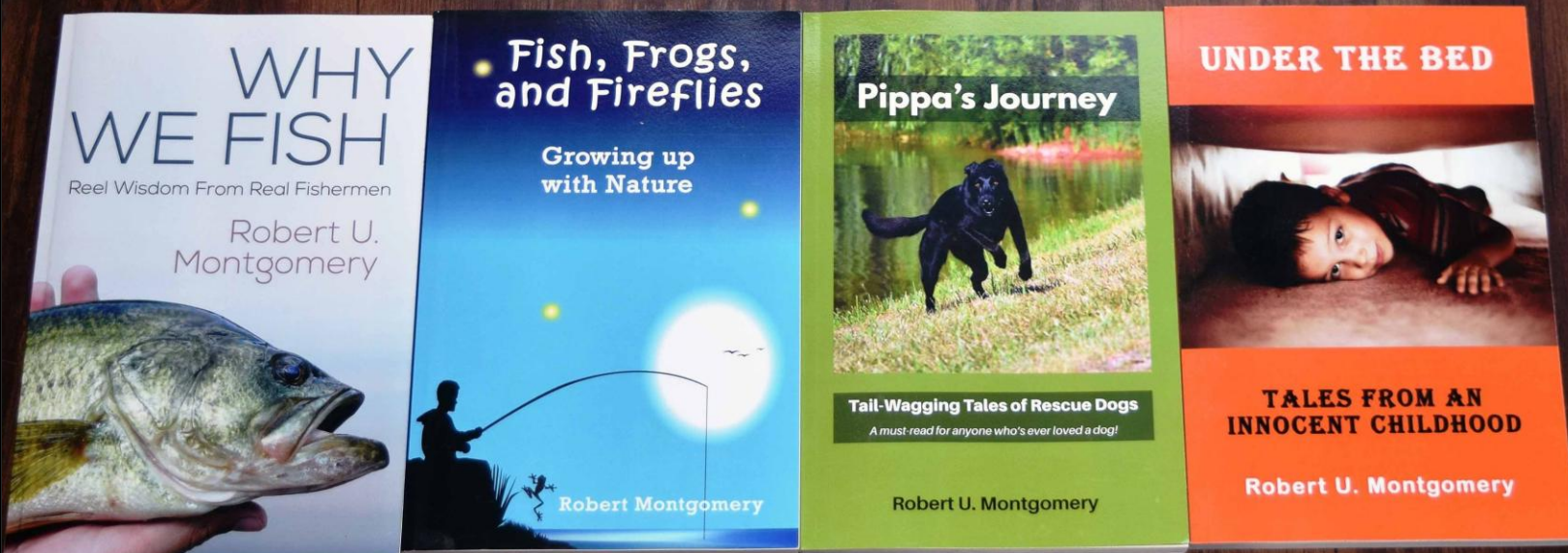
circulation or through-hull pump and a live-well with lots of room for them to swim while the water circulates and oxidizes in order for these species to stay fresh and alive.

Both Hobie live-wells work

excellently to keep my local saltwater baits alive and ready to catch that big yellowtail or halibut. The new XL tank has two water levels that you can work with, and both the XL and the regular bait tank are run with 12-volt pumps on a 6-volt battery to keep the pressure of the water from beating up the bait. Happy, healthy bait is what you want to catch that next trophy fish.

Remember, when you are out fishing, be alert with your head on a swivel to see those signs of surface action, keep an eye on your fish-finder for bait-balls and "make bait" when you can.

Check back weekly for new videos and stories by the [Hobie Fishing Top Guns](#).





When I write an article I always tell the reader what I am using for gear. I talk about the rods, reels, lures and line that I am using on particular trip. I'm not sponsored by anyone, so I am not trying to sell you anything and I am not under any obligation to favor one brand over another. I just like to give you, the reader, all of the info.

I remember the days where you mentioned Rapala then you were writing about the carved wooden lure out of Finland that worked like no other. Boy, are those days gone. Today Rapala lures are made out of plastic and are manufactured in China. How about Storm? How many of you remember the old Thundersticks? I do, and still have a bunch of them. These lures were so good that they gave Rapala some

DOES THE NAME ON YOUR FISHING GEAR REALLY MATTER?

By Dana Benner

competition. That's when Rapala decided to buy them out. Now Storm lures are really Chinese made Rapalas with a different name. How about fishing line? At one time Stren and Berkeley were the two

big names. Then Berkeley bought out Stren. Same line, two different names. The list could go on and on.

The bottom line is that a great deal of the gear you purchase is made by a handful of manufacturers. The outdoors industry is a multi-million dollar business and the more of the market one manufacturer corners, the greater the profit for them. Whether you buy a Storm or Rapala lure, the same people are making the money. In some cases the very thing that made those particular products really good is gone. In many cases you are just buying the name.

I am very picky when I purchase gear. I look for American made (not Chinese made by an American owned company). I do my research because I want quality, not just a name. Do I have to “go to the Dark side” at times? Sure I do. Sometimes there is no alternative, but that doesn’t mean I’ll cave in to corporate America if I don’t have to.

So whether you are using a Rebel or a Bomber (same parent company); a Storm or a Rapala (same parent company); Berkeley or Stren (same parent company) it really doesn’t matter. I will still tell you what I am using for gear, but keep in mind that whatever you use it only works because you make it work. It has nothing to do with the name on the package.





For some anglers, the open water fishing season is history. If you're one of those anglers, there are some things you should do while open water fishing is still a fresh memory. If you don't do those things now, if you're like me, you'll probably forget to do them, and that could create problems and expenses when the next open water fishing season returns.

Following are some tasks you should do this weekend if you're done fishing for the year.

STORING YOUR FISHING STUFF

By Bob Jensen

probably get by with just parking it in the garage and not doing much to it for a year, maybe two, but eventually, improper storage will create headaches and expenses.

The best place to start is with your boat. You can



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Have the motor winterized. Some handy anglers can do this themselves: I'm not handy. However, the motor that I run, an Evinrude E-TEC, can be winterized by anyone. It's a simple two minute deal. What I really like about this is, if I find out the walleyes are going on the river, I can go fishing and, when I'm done for the day, I can quickly and efficiently winterize the boat again. If you have to take the boat to a mechanic for winterizing, you're probably not going to take advantage of those unexpected fishing opportunities.

Remove the boat's drain plug. Also, make sure there's no water in the lower unit of the motor. If there is, and if it freezes, you could have big problems come spring.

Check for line in the prop of your outboard and electric motor. Also check for dings in the prop and have them fixed.

Some folks take the batteries out of their boats and store them someplace where it's not cold, but if you want to leave them in the boat, make sure the battery is charged and then disconnect the wires. Check the charge of the battery a couple of times during the winter.

Lots of anglers like to take the depth-finders out of their boats.

Remove anything that could attract rodents. You don't want a family of mice to make their home in the boat over the winter.

Open all storage lids and remove lifejackets to let them air out. If you've got inflatable lifejackets, check the canister to make sure it's still good.

Do a walk around the trailer. If you've got a bad tire, replace it.

Make sure all the trailer lights are working. Now is the time to fix any that aren't.

When it comes to reels, back off on the drag. Reel experts say it's harmful to the reel to store it with the drag tightened down for extended periods of time.

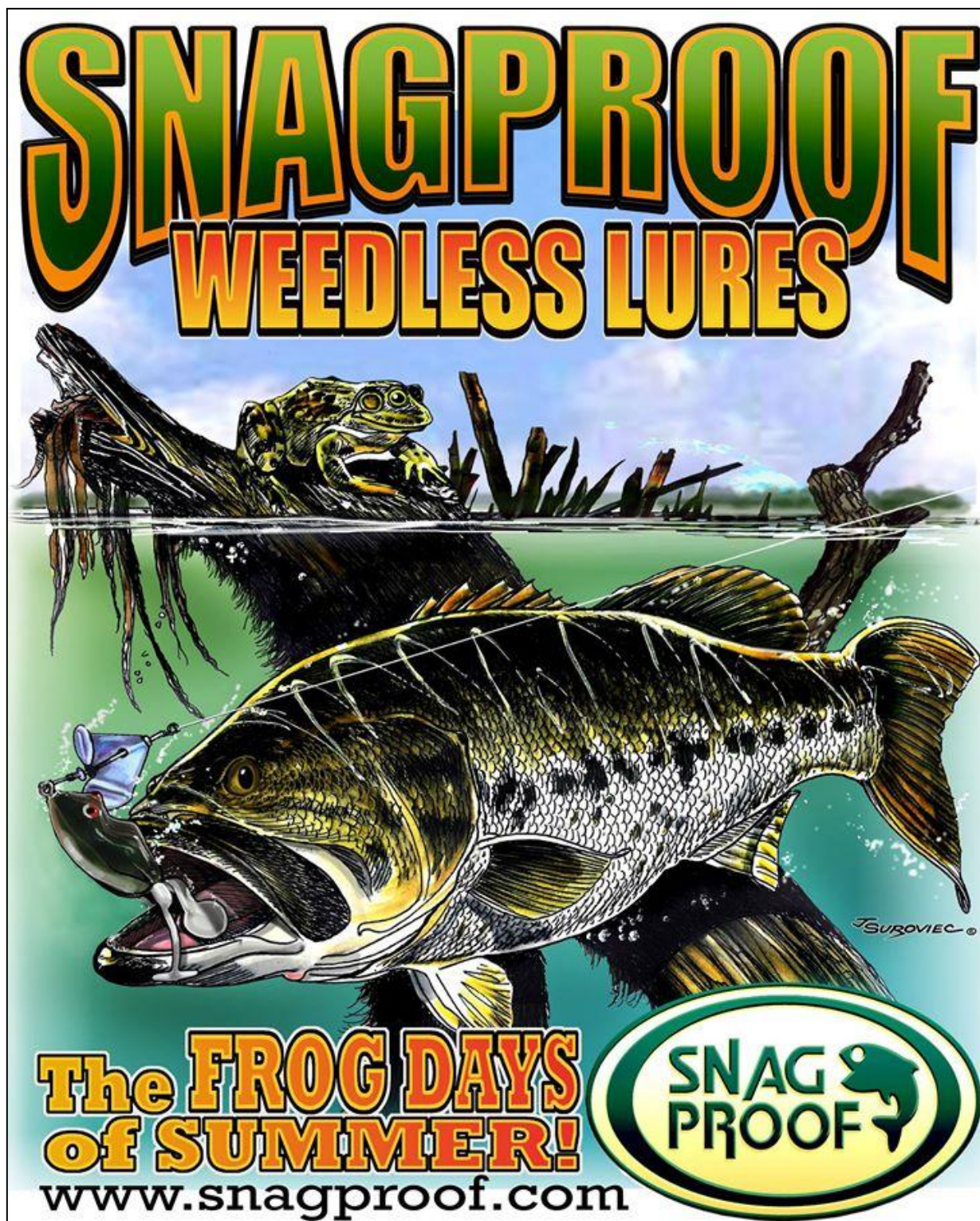
Also, don't store rods with a bend in them. If some rods are stored with a bend long enough, it will weaken it.

If your line needs to be replaced, strip off fifty yards. This will force you to put new line on before you go fishing again. I like to take the line off now, but I replace it in the spring.

Open your tackle box and let it dry out. You don't want to store your baits in a wet tray.

If you take care of these tasks now, you'll be ready to go when the water warms up and the fish start biting in the spring.

To see new and old episodes of Fishing the Midwest television, new and old fishing articles, and fishing video tips, visit www.fishingthemidwest.com.



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CATCH THE PRE-ICE BITE!

By Chip Leer

Don't pack away your open-water tackle just yet. Winter's impending arrival means it's time to take advantage of a unique and highly productive fishing pattern I like to call the "pre-ice bite."

**THERE IS
STILL
TIME**

Make no mistake, the lengthy feeding periods, extended strike windows and aggressive behavior of mid-fall are history once water temperatures dip into the lower 40-degree range. So the pre-ice bite doesn't produce daylong action on active presentations like casting (<http://www.13fishing.com/creed-x/>) and trolling.

Instead, you have concentrated bursts of fish activity during prime times such as the last hour or so before and after sunset—with fish congregated in very predictable places. In most cases, you'll find them in the same areas you will at first ice.

In the case of walleyes, look for classic structure like hard-bottom humps or transition zones at the ends of points going into the basin of the lake. Panfish may school over deep holes or soft-bottom basins, depending what the lake has to offer.

When you locate the fish, hover over them and subtly work vertical presentations like

- rattlebaits (<https://www.livetargetlures.com/freshwater/golden-shiner-rattlebait/>),
- jigging spoons (<https://shop.northlandtackle.com/spoons-and-swimming-lures/>),
- minnows (<https://shop.northlandtackle.com/spoons-and-swimming-lures/puppet-minnow/>)
- plus swimming and ball-head jigs (<https://shop.northlandtackle.com/jigs/>) tipped with a minnow, plastic or combination thereof.

Gentle jig strokes interspersed with pauses that give the fish

a chance to take the bait are generally your best cadence.

While the pre-ice bite is different that

the patterns we enjoyed earlier in the fall, it offers anglers a great chance to get out and enjoy a few more short but productive open-water trips before winter locks down the lakes for the season.

Based in Walker, Minnesota, noted fishing authority and outdoor communicator Chip Leer operates Fishing the WildSide, For more information look to www.fishingthewildside.net or email Chip@fishingthewildside.net.





GOING BELOW THE SURFACE

BY
MATTHEW
VANN

Most anglers agree that the most effective way to consistently put fish in the kayak is to fish sub surface. I love to fish top water and enjoy the explosive strikes as much as anyone, but I catch the majority of my fish below the surface.

When fishing the bays and inshore flats, I like to have a combination of lures that I can present throughout the water column. I target redfish, speckled trout, flounder, jack crevalle and many other species using this “top to bottom” approach. My sub-surface arsenal consists mainly of four types of lures; the suspending jerk bait, suspending twitch bait, crank bait and swim bait jig combo.

My favorite way to search, find and catch fish sub-surface is with suspending jerk baits. Depending on the lure, I fish an erratic-fast-retrieve to a twitch-pause-rise cadence and everything in between. These types of lures allow you to fish from just below the surface all the way to or near the bottom. The length of its bill determines how deep the bait will run. Jerk baits can entice powerful reaction strikes as well as lure in wary fish that may not be actively feeding. Some of my go-to jerk baits are the Rapala

Shadow Rap Shad, standard and deep diver, the LiveTarget Glass Minnow, Yearling and Shiner Jerkbait and the Lucky Craft Pointer Minnow.

Suspending twitch baits offer a more subtle approach. Like jerk baits, these lures can also be fished just below the surface all the way to the bottom. The weight of the lure will determine what depth you can effectively fish it. I use my twitch baits when the water is really clear or under calm conditions. These lures are typically fished with a slower retrieve. The strikes often come on the pause when your line is slack. Having new sharp hooks is imperative. I upgrade all my jerk bait and twitch bait hooks to Owner 2X stinger trebles. In my twitch tackle box you will find the MirrOlure MR17 MirrOdine, Catch 5 and Catch 2000 as well as the Paul Brown Original, Fat Boy and Soft-Dine lures. The Rapala Twitchin' Minnow and Twitchin' Mullet both cast great and work well on all retrieves. They also come stock with inline J hooks, which help when fishing with floating grass.



With both Jerk and Twitch baits, it's all about the cadence. I switch up my twitch and pause combinations as well as the speed of retrieve and length of pauses. When you get a strike, repeat that cadence.

When needing to cover a large amount of water, I tie on a lipless crankbait the appropriate weight to work the water depth I am fishing. Some crank baits come in hard and soft versions. These lures

make plenty of noise and work great on a steady retrieve. A rip-pause retrieve will often result in violent reaction strikes. In deeper water a yo-yo or vertical jigging style can precisely pick apart the entire water column. The LiveTarget Pinfish and Sebile Flatt Shad both come in three different sizes and great colors and are staples in my tackle box.

And finally, I always have a soft plastic paddle tail swimbait jig combo. This versatile bait allows me to cover the entire water column with many different presentations. I carry jigs from 1/16 ounce all the way up to 2 ounces and swim baits 2 to 14 inches long. I jig, swim, hop, drag and dead stick these lures depending on the situation. For my smaller swim baits, I use the Slayer Inc. SST XL and SSB. The Hogy Lures 6.5 and 9 inch Pro Tails are pre-rigged swim baits molded around weighted VMC Barbarian Jig Hooks and are hard to beat when casting to big game inshore species. Hogy also has the HDUV (heavy duty ultra violet) Jiggin' Eels and Paddle Tails in 7- to 9-inch offerings which can be rigged on Barbarian Jigs.

I use these four bait types to effectively cover the water column and consistently put fish in my Hobie kayak on saltwater flats, and in bays and passes. These lures and techniques can be utilized in any body of water, fresh or salt from coast to coast with success. Using the "top to bottom" approach to cover the water column sub surface will help you find where the fish are & hopefully get the strike you are looking for.

Check back weekly for new videos and stories by the [Hobie Fishing Top Guns](#).





FINDING BIG BASS

By Captain Mike Gerry

It's always a puzzle to figure out where the bigger bass go, why are they difficult to find and what keys should you look for to find the bigger fish? These questions have been out there for years and I am not sure there is a clear cut answer but I will give you my insight on those bigger fish.

One of the first things I have figured out is that the bigger fish are generally mostly females as the male bass is generally smaller and because they spend so much of their life protecting the spawn and the female fish their life span is much shorter. This reason alone eliminates the male fish from the growth factor that comes with their aging process.

I also believe that the bigger females do not roam nearly as much as the smaller fish do; sure they move to the traditional seasonal changes but once they get there they have a tendency to stay put. Not much different than the aging process we go through as we get older we seem to want to be set in a home town and stay there. This reasoning I believe is one key to finding bigger fish; if they stay close in their locations it gives you the understanding that you must work an area thoroughly once you find a bigger fish. The bigger bass have staged close to the location you found them in you just have to unlock the secret that gets you into their house. This is not an easy task but slowing down and looking for key elements like oxygen created by say green grass and thick cover, lots of bait fish and easy feeding routes are probably the areas the bigger bass will live in. Big fish didn't get to that age and size because they were reckless they grew and aged because they were careful and found areas to hide in that were safety areas with food and oxygen to survive. Many times it's simple like deeper water with areas of oxygen and plenty of bait fish others it's just not. You just have to be intuitive and find that spot their living in.

I believe bigger fish because their older also have routines, like time of day they feed or relocate because of the sun or predators; you have to determine in your lake their habits and use that to find the bigger fish.

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THE HUNTING ZONE





TOMBOY GIRL BECOMES OUTDOORS ADDICT

By Joella Bates

After becoming the first woman in the world to take Africa's Big 5 with a bow, I humbly look back at my hunting and shooting journey. It all began while I was a very young girl. It started with me fishing as a diaper-clad baby girl with the thrill of landing fish that Daddy hooked then he taught me to hook them for myself. My fascination with furry and feathered beasts came before I even turned two. I often rocked Daddy's dead squirrels, ducks, pheasants and quail like most little girls would do baby dolls. I was destined to become a both a fishing fanatic and a hunter.

Daddy owned Rudy's Dock on Little Richland Harbor, in an embayment of Kentucky Lake in Waverly, TN. Getting to accompany Daddy as he guided clients on fishing trips, was a great way to learn from the



best. Catching crawdads for bait on safety-pin hooks, provided for Sunday afternoon entertainment in the wet-weather creek that meandered through my Granny and Granddaddy Smith's property. I quickly traded sewing-thread line tied to the end of a stick for a glass rod and a Pflueger Supreme reel wound with braided line and a wobbly Jitterbug for bass fishing on Kentucky Lake.

By the time I was six, I expected Dad to take me on all hunts. I tagged along with him and his buddies as a bird-girl or squirrel-girl, carrying harvested small game in Dad's oversized-vest. When I was eight, Dad told our English setter, Jeff O' Honey, to tree a squirrel. Dad finally gave me a chance to shoot the shotgun at game. After 11 failed attempts, Dad said,

"Let me show you how to shoot that gun." I watched as he shouldered the gun and laid his cheek to the comb of the stock. I just knew that he was going to shoot the squirrel, but he loaded the last shell and handed me the shotgun.

"You've got to make this one count or we will go home empty handed," he said.

With my cheek on the stock, I lined the white bead up down the center of the barrel. With the bead on the squirrel, I pulled the trigger. The squirrel plopped hard on the ground. I picked it up and cuddled the warm dead body before placing it in my vest. I felt a sense of jubilation like none that I had ever felt before. I was no longer just a little girl; I was a real hunter.

After four years of hunting without seeing a single deer, I broke the ice, my freshman year in high school, with a nice doe. Within a few weeks, I shot a buck. Through my high school days and first two years of college, I harvested a buck each year.

Life changed a lot when I attended a turkey shoot while I was a freshman at the University of Tennessee at Martin. The UTM Rifle Coach invited



me to try out for the team. Ten days later, I was the top marksman on the UTM Rifle Team and within the next eight months, I was awarded a rifle scholarship.


Having shot rifle competitions with the entire target being the size of a fifty cent piece and the bulls-eye like a period at the end of a sentence, hunting deer with a rifle was not much challenge. Being one who always seeks challenges, I was excited to try archery again. After my ninth grade summer experience with archery, I jumped at the opportunity to replace my stolen guns with a used bow. I could draw the 50 pound bow, but the string came past my ear. Not knowing anything about proper draw-length, I tortured myself with kisses from the bowstring. The string slapping my bow arm left purple and red bruises, but the bigger issue was my desire was horribly wounded.

Two years after Dad joined the angles in heaven, I was reintroduced to archery but this time, I had a purpose. Odell Braswell sold me a compound bow that fit me. After professional instruction, I left with confidence and a target proving I could hit a quarter-sized orange dot at 15 yards.

Deer season couldn't get there quick enough, but my excitement was squelched when I missed my first five shots at two different does. I experienced my worst case of BUCK-FEVER ever, but my commitment to regular practice allowed me to break the missing streak.





Nine 3-D Archery World Championships (four as a Woman Pro; four in Women Traditional Class with a Recurve shooting Barebow) and 80 species later, I feel qualified to train and coach individuals who want to take their archery shooting to a higher level. I look forward to sharing many stories and archery shooting tips in upcoming issues in the online ODUMagazine's Archery Zone section.

Remember to always SHOOT STRAIGHT & DREAM BIG!



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LATE HUNT COUES

By Margie Anderson

By the time the late hunt finally begins in mid-December, Coues deer are mighty spooky. Coues have a well-deserved reputation for being shy and nervous, and being dogged by hunters for two months doesn't help them relax. Nevertheless, the late hunt is the prize that most hunters covet, because that's

right about the time that the Coues' rut begins. Late hunt tags are hard to draw, so if you are lucky enough to have one you want to make the most of it.

Temperatures should be dropping, so the deer will be a little more active during the day. It still doesn't mean you can get away from glassing altogether, though. Scouting and hunting Coues deer is hard work, and one of the ways to increase your odds of success is to get away from the roads and into isolated areas where hunters are few and the deer are more relaxed.

SCOUTING

If you have a late-hunt tag, the best time to have started scouting was during the early hunt, when you can get a good idea of where the hunters are concentrated. Those are areas to avoid. Oh, you'll hear the usual stories about the guy who was driving down the road and had a big buck run in front of his truck, or the one about the guy who shot one that walked through his camp, but most of the time the hunters who get the good deer are the ones who work at. They do their homework and they do a lot of hiking and scouting.

Coues hunting is sometimes called the poor man's sheep hunt because these little deer just love steep country. Search your map for a rugged canyon with no roads within a couple of miles. If there is access to water within half a mile or so, you've found a great place to start scouting. Don't worry if you're seeing just lots of does – that's actually a good thing. Once the rut begins, the bucks will be out looking for the ladies. Find the does, and sooner or later the bucks will show up.



Glassing is a big part of scouting, especially early in the season before they start to roam around a bit during the day. Binoculars and scopes are so crucial to success that you'd be better off keeping your old truck for a couple years if that's what it takes to be able to splurge on really good optics. Until you've actually tried to find a Coues on a hillside where the dirt is the same color he is, you

have no idea how difficult it is.

Take along a pad to sit on and make yourself comfortable. Stopping the truck and glassing an area for ten minutes before moving on just won't cut it. Get there before dawn and stay until after the sun goes down, and pick that habitat apart inch by inch.

Big bucks will bed down and won't move for hours. They may get up and reposition, then go back down for several more hours. Go over the area you're scouting methodically, using a tripod to hold your glasses or scope steady. Often the cover is thick, so when a deer does get up and move around, you won't have much of a window of opportunity.

Coues deer like to eat weeds, grass, mistletoe, and even cactus fruit when it's available. They can be found at elevations from about 4000 all the way to 10,000 feet, but they only have a range of about four miles or so. Once you've scouted them out, odds are they'll be around somewhere close when your hunt finally starts.

“KICKING THEM UP”

Still hunting for Coues is tough. If you've got the patience to move 50 yards every half hour or so you'll be good at it. Too often, walking around in search of Coues deer backfires.

You can set your buddy down at the base of a thickly vegetated slope, then take off to walk through the trees in hopes of kicking up a couple of deer, but Coues deer will surprise you. They can get up and take off without showing themselves to you OR to your buddy, and vanish over the hilltop even if there is practically a cliff on the other side.

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On the other hand, if you are sitting still glassing and another hunter kicks some up off the slope you're watching, chances are you will see them and he won't. Most of the time, walking through the brush just does somebody else a favor. If you want to try that technique, get some walkie-talkies with earbuds and position your buddy far away where he can see the big picture.

STALKING

If you glass a buck that is within range, consider yourself fortunate. With a rifle this isn't too hard to do, but if you're a bowhunter you've got to creep much closer. Some bowhunters prefer stands, blinds, or even rattling. Others will spot and stalk.

If you have a long stalk to make, it really helps to have a buddy with a walkie-talkie who can see the entire area. Make sure you use earbuds so the deer won't hear him when he talks to you. He can give you directions while you make your stalk.

Good camo and lots of patience are required for a successful stalk, but the rush is well worth it. Whether you hunt with a rifle or a bow, a Coues hunt won't be the easiest hunt you've ever been on, but you're sure to have a good time and plenty of stories to tell when you get back, with or without a deer.

No time to scout? It can be difficult to get away for enough days to do a thorough job scouting, and some guys don't even put in for a tag because of time constraints. But you can actually hire it done: search the internet for Coues deer guides and you'll discover that many of them offer scouting services.

Knowledge is power, and a Coues hunter needs all he can get. Duwane Adams and Tony Mandile's book *How to Hunt Coues Deer* will give you a good start. You can get a copy on Amazon for just under \$35.

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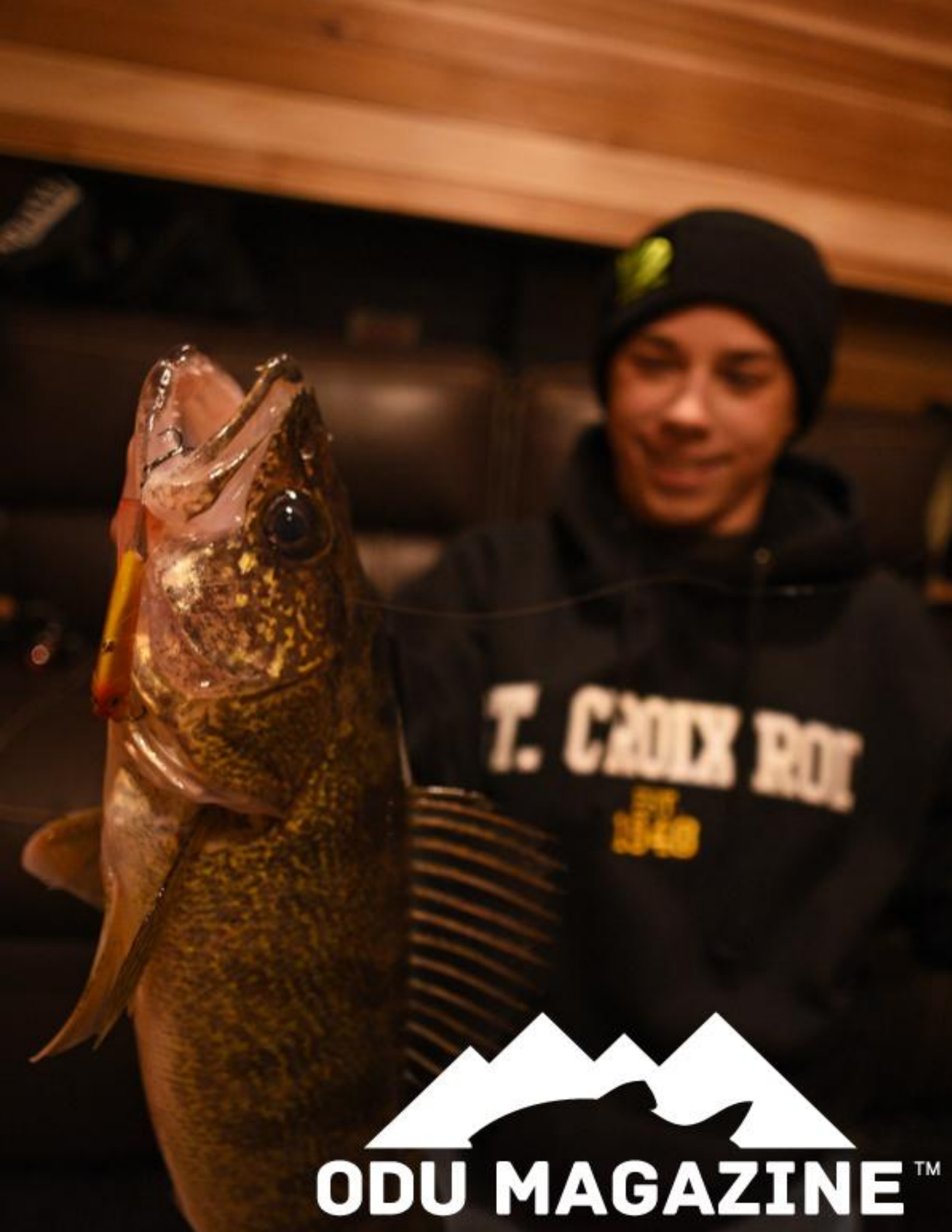
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