



ODU MAGAZINE™

February 2018
Open Water & Ice
Fishing Edition

**Nomadic
Lakers**

**The Real
Ned Rig**

**Snag Proof
Insider**

**BEING
A US
CARP
ANGLER**

**OPEN WATER ZONE
ICE ZONE
HUNTING ZONE
THE OUTDOOR
EXCHANGE**





EDITOR'S LETTER

Are you feeling it? Spring fishing is almost here and outside of Fall, my favorite time of year to fish.

This edition of ODU Magazines makes the clear switch to open water fishing with the beginning section (Open Water Zone) covering bass, striper, carp, crappie and redfish fishing. The Ice Zone has articles covering crappie, bluegills, trout and pike fishing. The last section, the Hunting Zone

has our first article on turkey. Another well rounded magazine to share with your fellow anglers.

NEW Sections: For the next twelve months ODU will be hosting two new columns. One on american carp fishing authored by the knowledgeable team at the [American Carp Society](#). The second section (The Snag Proof Insider) will cover being a "Snag-Proofer" and using Snag Proof lures to target bass and other species.

Last Ice: We have another solid month of ice fishing in many parts, so I will start off by saying be careful.

- Do you need some additional tips on how to make your last trips successful, tune into the [Ice Team](#) website and checkout their ice fishing magazines.
- Tip: I find the best time of year to target cusk/burbot/eelpout is right now. Some say this is too late, but this is when I have caught the most. We will be setting our traps this weekend with large dead shiners suspended a 12 -16 inches off the bottom. Maybe we will get enough for a full chowder pot!
- Bass: This time of year bass are full of eggs. Please remember to practice catch-n-release and put them back carefully. This will help this fishery continue to thrive. The average female largemouth bass can carry upwards of 4000 eggs per pound.

Politics (Or Not): Support your Local, State and Federal elected officials and law enforcement as they struggle to address the many challenges arising from the Parkland Florida shooting. It was a tragedy

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Interest in more about ODU Magazine and Outdoors Unlimited Media visit this [LINK](#).

Thank You All!



what happened and giving these officials time to make the right decisions is critical. The biggest thing we can do is pull our children aside and educate them on the facts as we get and verify them and set them up to be better informed as they head to school.



March Edition of ODU Magazine: Who needs to know what really caught the big fish at this years Bassmaster Classic? OR. Who wants to know which lures where showcased on the floor of the Classic EXPO? We will have that covered in the next edition.

....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

**** As you flip through this edition you will find the 2nd month in a row of our Facebook Fans recognition page (link above) and the growing Outdoor Exchange section for the ODU sponsors. Each month we will put out a call for great fishing pictures to our Facebook fans (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ODUMagazine/>) and we will choose a bunch to add to the next magazine.**



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OPEN WATER ZONE

LATE WINTER AND READING THE WEATHER

By Capt. Mike Gerry



As we approach the end of the winter we will see a variety of changes in the weather; many days will be rainy and over cast, others will be bright, sunny and windy. The conditions must be understood by the fishermen to make good choices to find active fish. Reading the weather, the conditions and knowing what to do is paramount to finding fish.

Let's first examine what happens during the bright sunny days of late winter, as we all have seen there are more clear water lakes in the late winter than there is at any time of the year. The lakes are low, and the rain generally does not affect the lake color much at all. Until the water comes up run off seems to have little affect on the water color so dealing with the clear water is important to catching fish. We find that these sunny days move the fish to the ledges and deep water and fish suspend more during this clear sky scenario. Looking in the right place for

active fish is very important, suspending fish find cover like stumps or points where grass comes to an end become great suspending spots. Warming water also becomes key areas especially where the creek makes swings toward the back of the creeks. Looking for these types of areas and suspending fish or bass hugging the bottom around creek bends are key areas. Finesse baits become the tool of choice, so you can slowly present your bait in front of them. Stained water changes where the bass locate tremendously during the sunny days, as the bass start locating in shallower locations and find cover like ditches, rock and brush or stumps to hang in. They also hide more around the cover causing you to fish more reactive baits around and through the shallow cover.

Fast forward to overcast skies and it all changes as the bass become active whether it's clear or stained water. Winter becomes a lot easier as stick baits and swim baits become great ways to catch that big bag we are always looking for. It also opens the door to the crank bait fisherman especially ones with tight wobbles like the SPRO Little John.

Read the sky, read the weather locate where they hang out and you will be a better late winter fisherman.

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YOUR DESERT ISLAND BAIT



You've entertained this question before, while wading your favorite stream in search of trout, or riding the waves in pursuit of walleyes, or simply watching a crackling fire reduce to glowing coals: if you were castaway on a deserted island, and your survival depended on one lure, just one lure, which would you choose?

Most anglers would forego a specialist lure – one that occupies a limited niche in their tackle collection – in favor of a premium generalist lure: one that is intelligently designed to catch anything that swims, possessing an action designed for effectiveness in any soft-water scenario. The profile and finish of this one lure would be ultra-realistic, ensuring that even the wariest predator in the clearest water would readily accept it as alive. Moreover, this one lure would be precision engineered using premium materials and components to withstand the rigors of survival fishing. After all, our very life depends on it.



So what lure should be tucked discretely into your carry-on luggage before your next over-water flight, just in case? That one lure is the Rainbow Smelt Jerkbait from LIVETARGET, which combines ultra-realistic profiles and finishes with a meticulously-engineered action and premium components to create a must-cast bait.

The rainbow smelt is a primary forage fish throughout North America. A long, slender baitfish renowned for congregating into voluminous, shimmering schools, the rainbow smelt a favorite of

dipnet-wielding “smelters” along the shores of the Great Lakes, and is a dietary staple for many freshwater and saltwater apex predators. The Rainbow Smelt Jerkbait from LIVETARGET derives its inspiration from this silver-sided morsel, in both appearance and action.

While engineered to emulate a specific baitfish species, the Rainbow Smelt Jerkbait has quickly become a favorite outside of its living counterpart’s geographic confines. The lure’s irresistible

action, combined with its baitfish-inspired looks, drives largemouth, smallmouth and spotted bass bonkers. Indeed, the smallest RS70 Rainbow Smelt Jerkbait effectively replicates an emerald shiner or a young-of-the-year shad, and bass can’t help themselves. There are certainly times and places for the new generation of softball-sized crankbaits that run deeper than Middle Earth, but when the goal is to simply get bit, playing for volume, the downsized RS70 Rainbow Smelt Jerkbait simply catches more fish.

Steeped in the LIVETARGET Match-The-Hatch® philosophy, the Rainbow Smelt Jerkbait replicates the profile, patterns, and anatomical features of its living counterpart. Produced through a highly intellectualized design process, the shape and finishes of the Rainbow Smelt Jerkbait are designed to convince the wariest gamefish that our artificial offering is indeed, a Live Target. Nowhere else will you find a bait with such highly-detailed, three-dimensional fins, eyes, opercles and scales, with patterns, colors, transitions, and highlights that reflect Nature’s handiwork.

Great looks are just the beginning of the Rainbow Smelt Jerkbait story. Its tight shimmering action on the retrieve recalls the movements of a living rainbow smelt, and is highly effective at dispersing visual

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flash to attract predators over long distances. Pause your retrieve, and the Rainbow Smelt Jerkbait suspends perfectly, creating a moment of intense vulnerability that triggers behemoth bass bites in cold and



warm water. A unique weight transfer system in the larger RS91 and RS115 models propels the Rainbow Smelt Jerkbait great distances on the cast, and produces a deep knocking rattle within an internal sound chamber to attract and trigger fish in stained or turbid waters or in low-light conditions. Ready to break out the planer boards and cover some water? The Rainbow Smelt Jerkbait is also a highly effective trolling bait, fooling trout, salmon and walleyes in the north and sumo stripers in the south. LIVETARGET's ultra-versatile Rainbow Smelt Jerkbait doesn't just belong in your tackle collection, it is the one lure that deserves to be on the end of your line, all of the time.



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The Rainbow Smelt Jerkbait from LIVETARGET is available now, in both shallow and deep-diving models, in three sizes ranging from 2 ¾" to 4 ½" that reach depths of 3-9 ft on the retrieve. Three color patterns, including ultra-realistic silver/black and silver/blue, complemented by a metallic gold/black, ensure that you'll find the perfect LIVETARGET Rainbow Smelt Jerkbait for your local water conditions and predator fish of choice.

Whether castaway on a deserted island, or drifting contentedly just down the shore from the cabin, one lure will make the difference between an empty frying pan and a full belly, and can produce hero shots of trophy fish instead of fishless pictures of the sunset: the exceptional LIVETARGET Rainbow Smelt Jerkbait. Cast one today, and learn how the LIVETARGET philosophy can help you compete, and win, on the water.



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Being a US Carp Angler – With The American Carp Society

By Wayne Boon

Hello and welcome to the first of 12 monthly articles by the American Carp Society designed to introduce and instruct anglers on the new age of Carp Angling... We'll start this month with some history and simple methods for locating and catching carp using gear that you probably already use to catch other species; In the following months we'll be covering all the advanced gear, tackle, baits and tactics that the top carp anglers from around the world employ to catch their trophy catches.

Right from the kick-off here, we'd like to differentiate our quarry, cyprinus carpio from the so called "Asian carp" (Bighead, Silver and Grass or White Amur) the former two are actually the filter feeders that are causing havoc across the mid-West right now and the White Amur feeds on aquatic vegetation. Those three fish are often confused with and thrown into the collective "Carp" terminology by anglers





around the country with the convenient support of their State's Fish & Game department. To be clear, the Bighead, Silver and Grass or White Amur are in no way shape or form even remotely related to the Common Carp (*cyprinus carpio*) or it's history.

Smallmouth, Bigmouth and Black Buffalo also fall far outside of the designation/categorization of "Carp" but we'd love to spend an article on them sometime in the future magazine space permitting...

So, when we mention Carp, we'll be talking about the only true Carp species, *cyprinus carpio*





which incorporates Common carp, Mirror carp and the decorative, colorful Koi carp only.

History of the Carp in the US

Getting back to our main subject, cyprinus carpio: This awesomely intelligent, challenging and world renowned sports fish was intentionally introduced all across the United States starting in the 1870s by the U.S. Fish Commission as a food fish to stave off starvation and fish population crashes.

The Commission was appointed by President Ulysses S. Grant in 1871 to perform extensive studies and reports to gauge the seriousness of the native fish population crashes and to find solutions. The Smithsonian's own Dr. Spenser F. Baird was chosen to head up the Commission and in the following years, published major reports pointing to over harvesting by the ever expanding European immigrant populations of the time along with serious man made changes to the fish's natural habitats.

However, the commission very soon understood that it would have been political suicide to fully publish their findings and recommend that pollution, commercial fishing, wetland drainage and logging etc. be limited as the reports had concluded be part of the solution, so it was decided to look for a suitable replacement fish that would be worthy of cultivation.





At this stage, Dr. Baird was receiving 2000 letters per year requesting carp for breeding programs via his Commission's headquarters; the new Americans, the European immigrant populations were pining for their favorite food fish. This triggered further studies that eventually concluded that "No other species except the carp (*cyprinus carpio*) promises so great a return in limited waters..." Carp (*cyprinus Carpio*) showed that it would reproduce well, grow rapidly, was adaptable to nearly all the environments that could be found across the nation, pose no harm to existing species and processed fine table qualities that many of the immigrant populations were well accustomed to back in their motherlands...

A few hundred carp were brought over from Germany and bred in Baltimore, MD and Washington D.C., these few fish were the genesis of the largest ever governmental fish breeding and distribution programs the world had ever seen! Distributed from coast to coast with much fanfare, carp helped feed a growing population, even finding itself in the best dishes served up by the finest hotels in the biggest cities around the country. At it's peak, over 36 million pounds of carp were commercially harvested per year in the US!

Of course this "savior" fish didn't keep it's elevated status for too long as the Ocean fishing industry picked up it's marketing game. The Oceans were seen as a far cleaner water source for food than the polluted lakes and rivers. Added to this fact was American carp farms had often tried to turn a quick buck and would place carp in anything that held water. These shallow ponds with stagnant muddy water produced inferior and muddy tasting fish, whereas back in the old world, European fish farmers prided themselves in raising their carp in pristine waters that provided a great tasting fish. Thus the decline of *cyprinus carpio* as a safe, clean food source.

Carp soon became the "poor-man's fish" with all the connotations of a trash can diving hobo...

Outside of commercial fishing, carp are rightly recognized worldwide as a very learned, intelligent specie with awesome strength, size and sporting qualities. These attributes haven't been lost on individuals angling for carp in the United States over the years either...whether angled for food or sport, this fish has been a popular quarry for generations of our citizens going back to the turn of the 19th century.

Locating Carp

By way of an introduction to the art of Carp Angling, we will cover here some of the basic topics and concepts needed for an angler to enjoy success at the water. We'll be covering more in depth techniques and strategies for targeting carp in the coming months...

Lets talk about where carp can typically be found and how to catch them in the last half of this month's installment.

Outside of the cold Winter months, carp can be witnessed in lakes jumping early in the morning just as the sun is rising and also late evening just before the sunsets. If you cannot see them you will certainly hear them as they 'crash out' with quite a splash just as the light is fading at the end of the day.



Carp usually patrol the margin areas early morning and late evening in rivers and lakes foraging for food and can be caught near reed beds, lilies and most structure relatively easily at these times of day but they can be caught in all depths of water from a foot to 30 feet or more.



Warm water inlets to lakes and ponds are excellent areas to find carp as the flow of new water brings with it an ongoing supply of food for them.

They are naturally shy fish so other good areas to find carp also are 'shelves' or 'drop offs' where shallower water 'drops off' to a deeper area where the fish will feel safe.

Locating natural food sources for the carp will also help to locate them. They feed primarily on snails, shrimps, beetles, various larvae and some plant seeds/tubers with the larger specimens also eating Crayfish and mollusks like freshwater Clams & mussels, along with both Zebra and Quagga mussels. So natural areas where these can be located are a good start. Clear patches amongst weeds and gravel can signify a carp feeding 'zone'. Areas of high-density weed are also good areas to find carp. Carp are opportunists and won't be far from your local duck feeding location on the local pond.



How To Catch Carp?

Although carp feed at all depths of the water table, they're more likely to be found looking for food on the lake and riverbeds during the day, so this is the best place to start.

Free-lining

The easiest way to catch carp is to go to the local pond with a loaf of bread, a single number 6 or 8 hook and some 10lb line to a pretty stiff rod and you are ready for action! Carp up to 10 lbs are relatively easy to catch very close to the shore and virtually all carp fishing is done from the bank.

There is no need for expensive tackle and boats. You will need some patience so feeding or 'chumming' (where legal) an area prior to fishing always helps. If the locals feed the ducks, that is the best place to start as the carp will be used to feeding on bread on that location.

Alternatively, 3 or 4 kernels of

canned sweetcorn (bought from your local grocery store) threaded directly onto the hook and cast out with or without a small sliding egg sinker/weight will certainly produce a carp if they are there feeding in the area you are fishing.



Float Fishing

Bread can be molded around a hook and 'free lined' into an area with no float (bobber) or weight and the angler can just watch the line; this is a great method for ponds and very small areas of water, however one of the most exciting methods of catching carp is to use a small float (Bobber) as the indicator.

Mold the bread to the hook with just the point showing and set the depth of the float so that the bait sits on the bottom of the lake bed or pond. Make sure that the clutch of the reel is set loose so that the fish can take line when hooked.

Once you have found a spot, whether near some reeds, lilies, under a tree or just a few feet out from the shore where the water gets a little deeper, cast your line and if legal in your state, immediately introduce few free offerings to get the fish feeding. Either a handful of sweet corn or a few pieces of bread (rolled up so that it will sink) will work and give it a few minutes for the fish to find the bait. Keep very close attention to the float as a take can be so fierce that it will literally have the rod being pulled from your hands. As soon as the float disappears lift into the fish...



Tackle to Use

Any fishing tackle can be used to catch carp although a longer rod is better suited to float fishing from the shore because they allow more leverage when playing a fish and will assist when casting from the shoreline.

8-10 feet is a good-sized rod for a young angler, 12 feet for an adult; 8-10lb line strength is recommended and a number 6-10 single hook. Traditionally a fixed spool reel with a 'bail-arm' is used for float fishing though bait caster style reels can of course be used. If you are float fishing then a 'European' style 'waggler' float is recommended over a traditional bobber. Wagglers are much

thinner in the shape of their body and much easier to cast with accuracy. They also have better indication on bites for the carp fisherman. They can now be found in most fishing tackle stores.

Alternatively, if you already have a 6 or 7ft medium action spinning rod (3/8 - 1oz lures) or similar sitting in the garage at home, just rig it up with a sliding egg sinker weight with a bead to stop the sinker from hitting the knot (see photo below); using the line, hook and bait advice above, Carp can readily be caught from most waters here in the USA.

Baits to Use

As above, Sweet corn and bread are two of the best baits to use for carp but nightcrawlers (earthworms) are excellent as well as dough baits made from mixing breakfast cereals with syrups. For bigger fish and longer fishing sessions hard boiled baits or 'boilies' as they are known are excellent to use on a hair rig (we'll describe boilies and show the mechanics of the hair rig in next month's installment).

Catch & Release

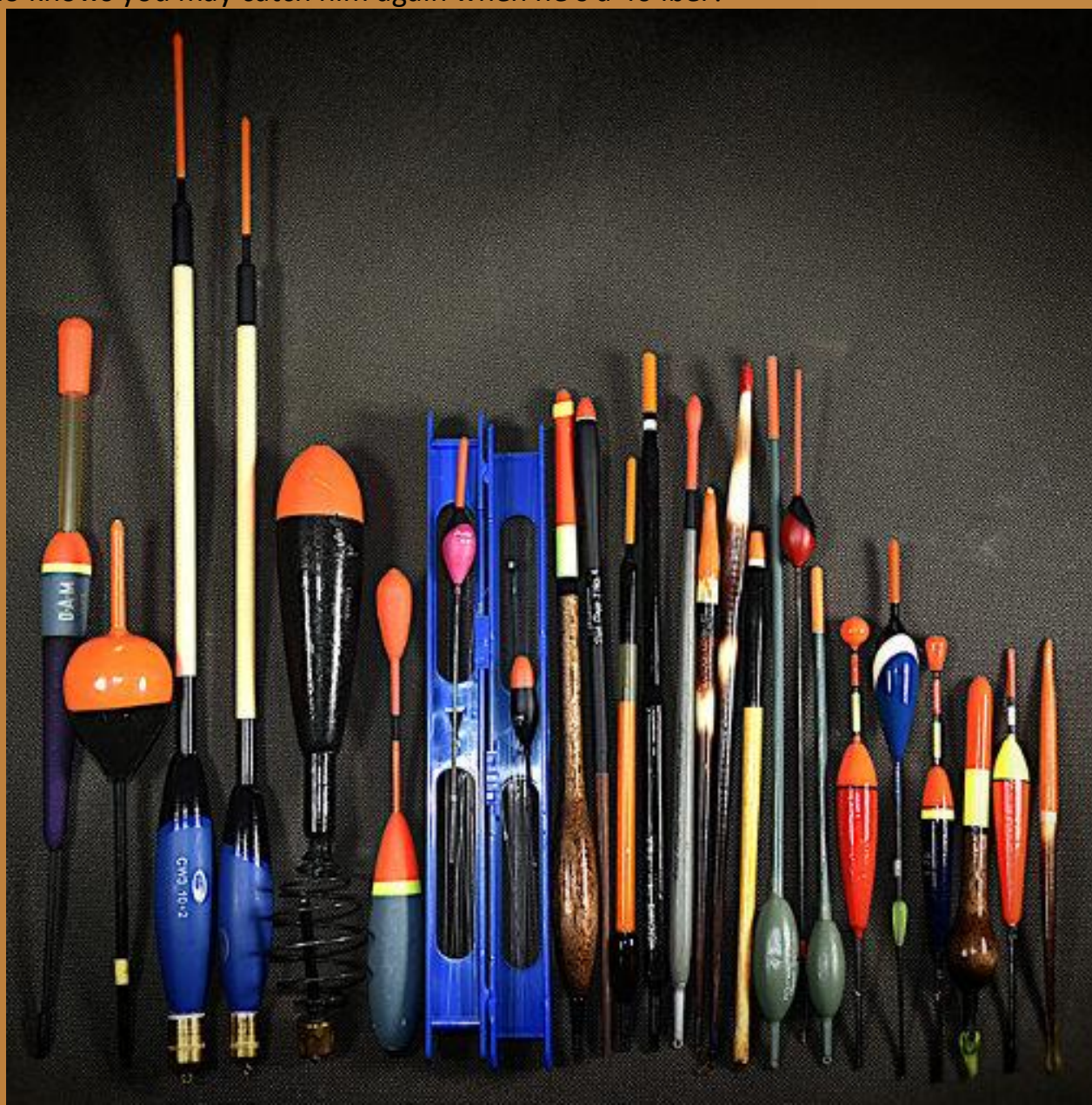
To preserve the fish for others to enjoy, especially those larger than 10 - 15 lbs, it is important to release the fish unharmed. Who knows you may catch him again when he's a 40 lber!

Catch the carp, have fun and take some pictures to post on the Internet/Social Media platforms to show your friends but always put the care of the fish first.

About Our Organization

The American Carp Society was formed in 2002, with the goal of promoting and educating the public on the sport of specimen Carp Fishing in the USA.

The Common Carp (cyprinus carpio) is one of the hardest fighting freshwater fish in the world and



is now being pursued by anglers of all persuasions, from fly fisherman to dedicated Specialist Carp anglers as a sport fish. The American Carp Society is a membership based organization and is responsible for promoting the sport and ensuring careful stewardship of both the specimen fish and its environment for the future generation of American Carp Anglers.

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The Hobie logo is displayed in a stylized, cursive font within a blue diamond-shaped frame. The background of the advertisement features a large image of a man fishing from a blue Hobie kayak on the water, with a smaller inset image at the bottom showing a man in a red kayak and a couple in green kayaks.

Hobie

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TARGETING WINTER BASS WITH JAY YELAS-PART TWO

By Shane Beilue

In part one of Jay Yelas' strategy for catching winter bass, he explained how to target winter bass on grassy lowland reservoirs often found in the southeastern U.S. In this sequel, Jay explains two other scenarios for how he finds bass in the deep and rocky conditions associated with highland reservoirs across the country.

Highland reservoirs are associated with steep rocky banks and clear water. Prime examples are Table Rock and Bull Shoals.

Cracking the code on highland waters is a whole other can of worms than lowland lakes, as highland lakes are characteristically devoid of vegetation due to the rocky nature of the lake bottom. For Yelas, this calls for a ½-¾ ounce football jig paired with a Yamamoto Hula Grub. His color selection is quite basic, as he adds, "Green pumpkin (Yamamoto color 297) is always hard to beat in this clear water, but I will go to black/blue if the water is a little darker. I also use 8-15# fluorocarbon and a 7'3" Kistler rod in Heavy action with an extra fast tip."

Regarding location, Yelas looks to pattern the bass on familiar structure. He explains, "What you really want to search for are outside channel bends with bluff banks. The bass really hold on that vertical structure during the winter and this can be in the main lake or the creek channels. Bass don't seem to relate to the flats as much on these highland impoundments in winter, rather those bluff ends are the

key. What can make a bluff even more attractive is when you can find transitional rock and/or ledges that stair step off the bluffs.”

Yelas reminds winter anglers of the need to slow down. Way down. As he details, “The method is to fish so slow you can virtually count the rocks on the bottom with that jig head. You really can’t fish it too slow because these highland lakes are clear and deep, which means colder water than on a lowland lake.”

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Yelas focuses his search grid from around mid-creek of a major tributary out to the main lake with the appropriate channel bluffs in 25-40’ of water. With the deeper depths of the highland lakes, Yelas suggests a reeling hookset. As he explains, “Since you’re fishing deeper water, you can’t try and cross their eyes like when you’re flipping boat docks. You just have too much line in the water to get a good hook penetration. If you’ll reel quickly as you feel the fish load on the rod tip, you can sweep the rod and have much better odds of getting the bass to the boat.” For this reason, Yelas utilizes a Lew’s high speed reel in a 7:1 retrieve.

As a second option for catching bass from highland reservoirs, Yelas relies on the ubiquitous Senko – particularly on lakes with large spotted bass populations. “Spots are known for suspending off the bottom at these deeper depths during the winter”, he explains. “They can be particularly difficult to get a bait through them, so I’ve found a wacky rigged Senko on 6# fluoro will get those fish to bite when nothing else will. This works even out in that 30’ range, which can make it slow going as you wait for that Senko to get through the suspended fish, but it will definitely catch them when they’re up off the bottom.” Yelas prefers the 5” Senko and often rigs it without any nail weight.



The Outdoor Exchange
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Whether fishing highland or lowland reservoirs this winter, integrate Yelas’ strategy to stay on the bass and keep the winter chill at bay.

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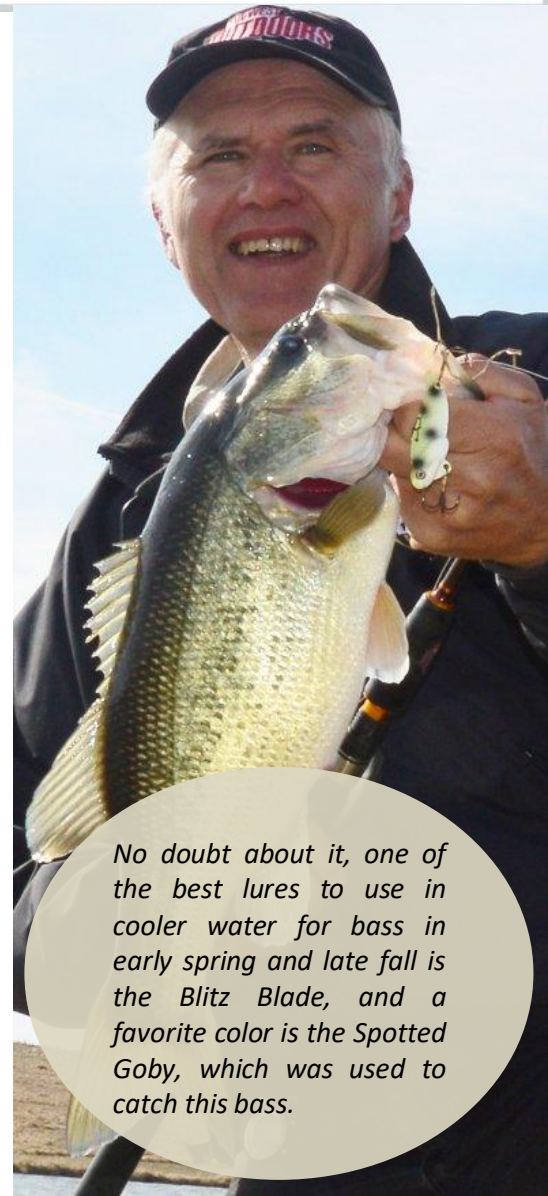
PRE-SPRING AND EARLY SPRING FISHING

By Dan Galusha

March is a strange month for fishing. The first part is what can be called “pre-spring” and by the end the first day of spring has arrived, turning it to early spring. It also can have ice, or recent “ice out” at the beginning, and cold open water by the end.

Many anglers along the rivers are thinking of great walleye fishing, but there are those who want to get out and try their hand at bluegill, crappie and bass. The panfish are the best bet, especially crappie, but bass can hit if the right spots, techniques and lures are used.

As always, the best areas are going to be those that warm quickest, which is normally the north and northwest portions of a lake – anywhere that the sun and wind hit. However, nothing warms to that magic 60-degree temp until later. Smaller waters are always the best targets, and those having weeds, wood and riprap areas are always a plus. Also, sandy-bottomed areas are another good



No doubt about it, one of the best lures to use in cooler water for bass in early spring and late fall is the Blitz Blade, and a favorite color is the Spotted Goby, which was used to catch this bass.

location, and if there are some of the sand pit/barrow pit areas to which permission can be gained, these can be a gold mine.

Because of the types of waters being fished a lot of shoreline and small boat fishing will be done. There is an abundance of small watercraft these days, which has been a boom in the kayak world. I use an old Sportsman 2-man bass boat, which is no longer manufactured, and there are a few others similar to this unit, along with a few having a superior, but heavier, design.

Shoreline anglers will want to go as light as possible, but with some of Plano's innovations a lot more can be taken. I'll use different soft side models, a 4870 being the prime one, and set them up with 3650 and the thinner 3601 Stowaways. This cuts down on space, yet gives me a variety of lures with more boxes. I also take some of my assortments of ice jigs, floats and panfish tackle that are stored in a Frabill tackle bag. If I'm going strictly for crappie and bluegill then I'll just grab the Frabill bag. The Plano



The black/blue Blitz Spyder Jig teamed with a matching Natural Forage Baits Mad Craw and dose of Kick'N Bass Attractant, is one of the best lures to use in many conditions, but especially when it takes a slow bottom swimming lure in early spring.



A 4" Natural Forage Baits Lil' Killer rigged on a B-Fish-N H2O jig head and used with a finger jigging technique convinced this nice crappie to hit.

bag also provides more room for a lot of other items including, digital scale, towel, camera, and other miscellaneous items, depending on how it is arranged.

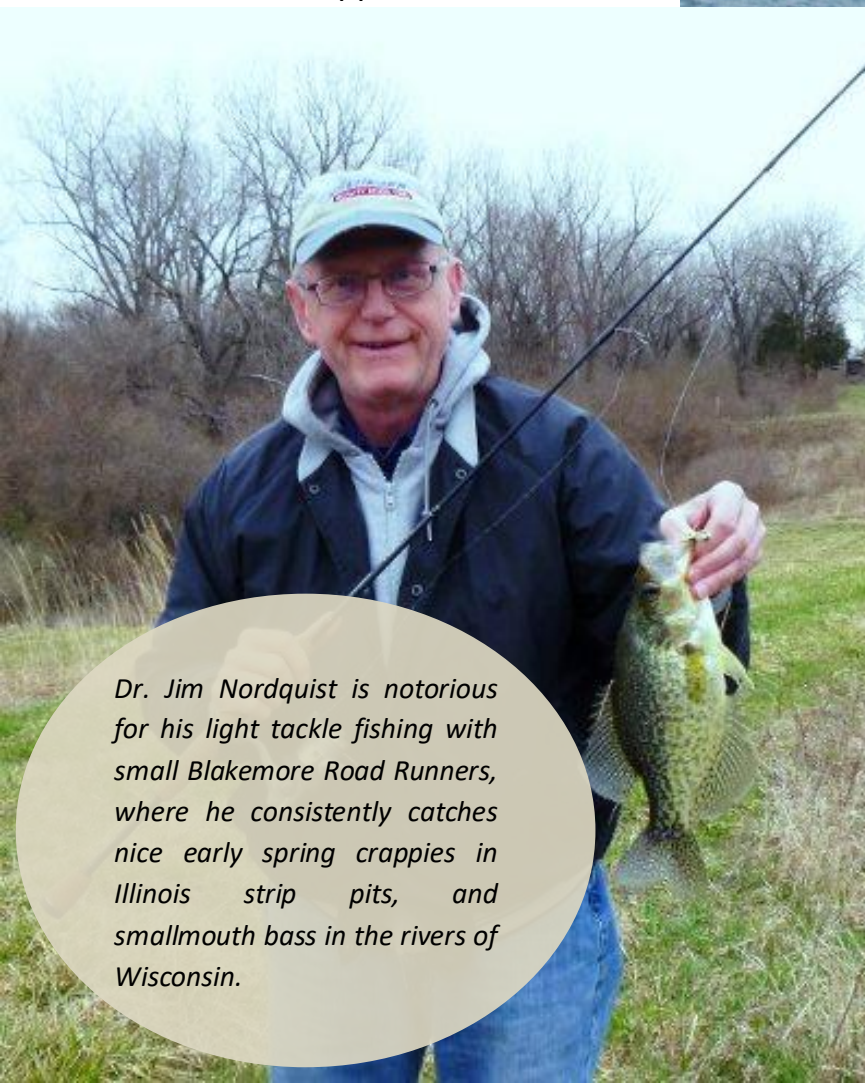
My system for fishing this time of year is extremely simple. It is broken down as follows:

CRAPPIE AND BLUEGILL

Terminal Tackle: Assortment of Custom Jigs & Spins ice jigs; Blitz Crappie Jig; Mr. Crappie 1/32 and 1/16-ounce Slab Daddy Jig; Panfish/Trout Road Runners; 1/32-ounce and smaller plain shank jig heads for 1.5" Gulp Minnows; 1/16-1/8 ounce B-Fish-N H2O Jig Heads and Blakemore Road Runner for 2" Power Minnow; assortment of panfish size Tru Turn Hooks; small split shot; Mr. Crappie weighted and rattling floats; Crappie Nibbles in white and chartreuse; Gulp Waxies; Kick'n Crappie and live wax



One of my favorite lures combinations for fishing under a float for crappie is the Slab Daddy jig with a Crappie Nibble or wax worm.



Dr. Jim Nordquist is notorious for his light tackle fishing with small Blakemore Road Runners, where he consistently catches nice early spring crappies in Illinois strip pits, and smallmouth bass in the rivers of Wisconsin.

worms.

At the beginning I like finding the wintering areas and casting over the top, working the baits under a float, especially drifting with wind. At this time it is ice jigs; crappie jigs (both with Crappie Nibbles or wax worms); jig head and 1.5" Gulp Minnows; hook/split shot/wax worm; and Panfish Road Runners.

When no wind is available to drift the jig and bait, I will slowly move it over the area, placing a bobbing action with the rod tip, or using a short pull and pause, which lifts the bait, and lets it fall back.

As the time goes later, and the water may be

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warming a tad more, I will start using the jig head/2" Power Minnow rig and Panfish Road Runner. Both of these lures will then be used with my finger jigging technique. I will continue using the other items under a float, but with the Slab Daddy, Blitz Crappie Jig and Panfish Road Runner being the main choice, and if a ice jig is used it will be the little larger size of a Custom Jigs & Spins Ratso. This is also the time to start testing out the non-wintering areas a bit more, especially along the riprap and edge of any shallower weeds.

With all of this there is always the Kick'n Crappie applied, even to the Power and Gulp Baits. It doesn't take much; so don't use a whole bottle on one application. You can dip the smaller baits in the bottle if it would be easier, as this definitely gives them a good coating. I reapply it about every tenth cast, or after every missed strike, hang-up and fish caught.

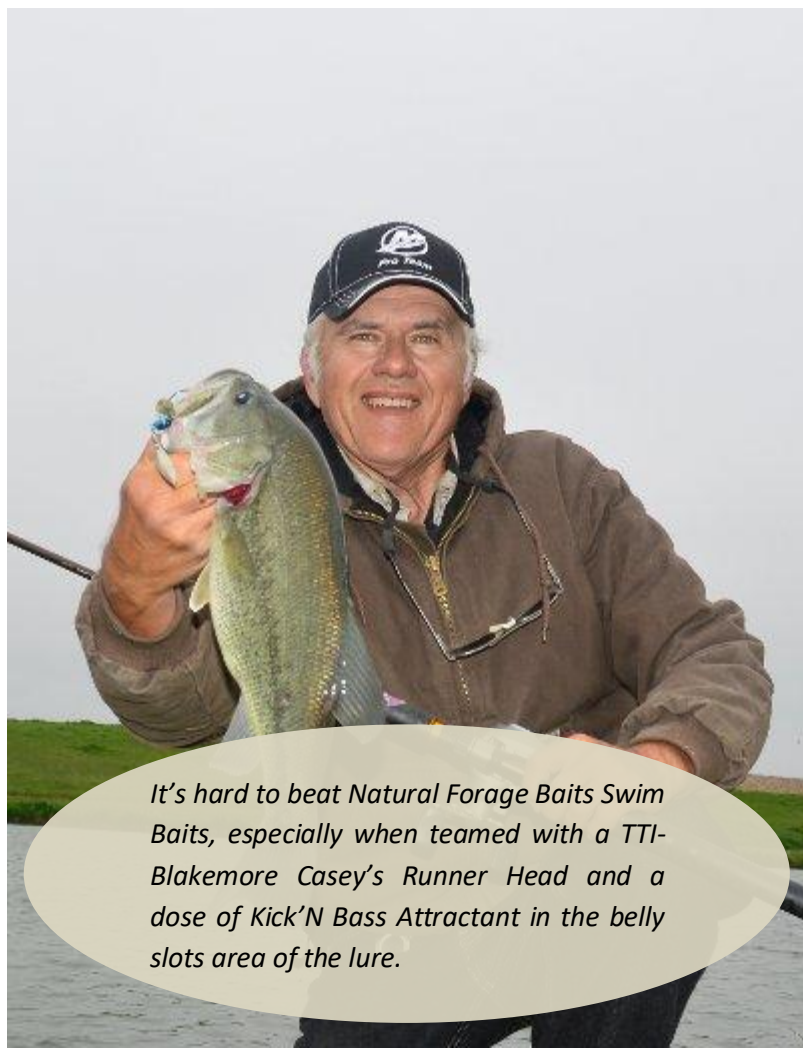
BASS

Terminal Tackle: Assortment of Blitz Blades; 1/8-ounce Blitz Finesse Jig with twin-tail trailer of choice or Berkley Pit Boss Jr.; 1/8-ounce Mad Bug Dragon Hopper with Natural Forage Baits Mad Craw; 1/16 and 1/8-ounce B-Fish-N H2O lead heads for 2" Power Minnow; 1/8 to ¼ ounce B-Fish-N H2O heads and Casey's Runner heads for Natural Forage Baits Swim Bait and Lil' Killer; Rat-L-Trap; 1/8-ounce Road Runner heads for use with an angler's choice of bodies; and Kick'n Bass Attractant in whatever scent (anise shad, java, garlic, and crawfish) works at the time.

Starting at the beginning of the time it is normally a hit and miss situation. I will mainly use the Blitz Blade and Rat-L-Trap as a quick search, but with a slow steady, stop-and-go or pumping retrieve. For some reason these two lures have produced well in colder water. To mix with the Blade and Trap, I'll use the NFB Swim Bait on the two previously mentioned heads with a slow steady swim at various depths, and a lift-and-drop retrieve. Otherwise I would do a slow finger jigging retrieve on a Lil' Killer so that it would thump harder, but slower; or a lift-and-drop and slow constant retrieve with a Road Runner head using a curl tail or Lil' Killer as the body. However, if I were to fish a strip pit, I would go with the Finesse Jig with something like a Mann's Auger Frog, which is no longer manufactured, or a Pit Boss Jr. Another choice would be the Dragon Hopper with a NFB Mad Craw.

Later I would use everything discussed above, but with a faster retrieve on items other than the Finesse Jig and Dragon Hopper, especially on a sunny day in the areas with warmer water, and along riprap and weed edges.

Windy days would have two main lures used – Blitz Blade and Rat-L-Trap, and mainly fished along the shores into which the wind is blowing. The wind does two things – stirs up food and helps warm the water on a sunny day.



It's hard to beat Natural Forage Baits Swim Baits, especially when teamed with a TTI-Blakemore Casey's Runner Head and a dose of Kick'N Bass Attractant in the belly slots area of the lure.

Again, we will mention applying the Kick'n Bass in the same way as the Kick'n Crappie. The difference would be that I normally only apply it to the jigs and soft plastics, and not the Blades and Rat-L-Traps. I want it on something that holds the scent longer, which has a longer time to spread the product in the strike zone. This is a reason that you want to make several casts to the same area, especially if there is confidence that it may be holding fish.

Once early spring hits, and the open water fishing bug bites, give this basic selection of baits and techniques a try, while adding your own special touch.

If you have any question on this subject, drop me a line through the Dan's Fish 'N' Tales® website at www.dansfishntales.com, or Facebook page at www.facebook.com/dansfishntales. There is also a video showing some of the techniques that I use for early spring and late fall fishing with the Blitz Blade that is on my You Tube channel at www.youtube.com/dansfishntales.




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CATCHING CONDITIONED FISH

By Bob Jensen

It's that time of year when the fish are starting to get a little conditioned to our ice-fishing presentations. In fact, it's that time of year pretty much any time of the year. Fish truly do become conditioned to an angler's choice of lures. Conditioned means they quit hitting, or at least are less likely to eat a particular bait than they used to be. Some examples follow, and also a couple of ideas on how to deal with conditioned fish.

I remember way, way back in the day when my dad took me fishing with him to Wisconsin over the Memorial Day weekend. It was an annual event for several years.

Walleyes were always the target, and we usually used jigs. Then one year we discovered these minnow shaped baits that looked like something a walleye would eat. They had a black back and a silver belly. Trolling was prohibited on the lakes we fished, so we drifted when the wind was strong enough. We pulled these

baits on 3-way rigs and caught walleyes like we had never caught them before. This went on for several years before we noticed the catching decreasing. We couldn't figure out what had happened. Out of desperation to catch fish, we went to a tackle store to find a different bait to use. That's where we discovered the same bait in a different color: Orange back/gold belly. We got some, rigged them the same, went back to the lake and started catching walleyes all over again. We figured the fish must have got tired of the same bait and wanted something different. That was my first exposure to conditioned fish, but it made an impact.

A few years later, I got on a very hot smallmouth bass bite on a local river. They were heavily schooled on a deeper water structure, and they were eating marabou jigs and minnows. Orange jigs were what I liked at the time, and that's usually what I started with. But after catching a few bass, action slowed. I knew they were still down there, but I couldn't get them to eat my orange jig. Again, desperation, or at least a very strong desire to catch more bass, kicked in. I tried a different color jig and almost immediately started catching fish again. When they slowed on that color, I tried another, and caught a



Mike Frisch caught this big largemouth while fishing in the rushes with a swim-jig tipped with plastic.

few more. Eventually they quit eating or they moved and I couldn't catch any more regardless of what I used, but I saw enough to know that those bass became conditioned to a particular color, and since then I've seen it with crappies and walleyes.

How about largemouth bass? A spinnerbait used to be one of my favored presentations when fishing rushes. I've caught lots of bass on spinnerbaits. Then we started using swim-jigs in the rushes, and we started catching bass better on them than on spinnerbaits. Those bass had seen lots of spinnerbaits, but not so many swim-jigs. I still won't go bass fishing in the rushes without a spinnerbait tied onto a rod, but for now, the swim-jig will probably get more water-time.

This time of year it's particularly noticeable that fish get conditioned through the ice. A particular bait gets hot and that's what everyone uses. The fish that are susceptible to that presentation eventually become less likely to take it. Change to something different and they'll probably be more willing to accept it.

Just remember that using what used to work isn't always the answer. When the fish quit hitting what you're using, use something else and you'll increase your odds for better fishing action.

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How one globe-trotting angler taps winter smallmouth bass in the Gopher State

The Perfect Drift': Sub-Zero Bass by Kayak

By Jim Edlund

The vast majority of northern bass anglers hang up their open-water gear for the winter. With most lakes under inches (if not feet) of ice by January, most fishing involves an eight-inch hole in the ice.

“You have to look hard in the northern states, but there are places to fish bass during the winter in open water,” says Minnesota-based kayak angler Paul Hansen.

Funny thing about Hansen, he has plenty of access to open-water fish during the worst of Minnesota’s winters. As a commercial airline pilot, he’s often free to explore waters during layovers in southern climes – something he’s been doing in one form or another for almost two decades. In fact, he reluctantly admits fishing was the impetus to learn how to fly.

“After working long hours in fishing retail, I knew there had to be a better way. If I could make it

through pilot's training and build up hours and experience, I could eventually create a business to fly adventure anglers into really cool destinations, which selfishly appealed to me," says Hansen.

Turns out Hansen took to flying as naturally as he did to fly casting, and in the year 2000, he and legendary fly angler/travel partner Trapper Rudd started an exploratory kayak fishing program.

"We put kayaks on an airplane and brought them to Mexico. We had fished all the popular destinations and set out to find untouched snook, tarpon, and bonefish by kayak. We found some epic fisheries that wouldn't have been accessible without kayaks. This led to years of great adventures, like the stuff I read about in magazines as a kid," says Hansen.

These days, Hansen flies fewer angling expeditions into remote locations, having opted for the stability of a commercial airline job. "My kids are involved in a lot of school activities and sports, so naturally, I want to be there for them. I don't necessarily turn down opportunities, but let's just say my priorities have changed."

Still, as a competitive kayak angler who frequently competes in both the Kayak Bass Series (KBS) and Kayak Bass Fishing circuit (KBF) tournaments, there are times when Hansen gets antsy during long Minnesota winters. Having qualified for the KBS Nationals on Lake Guntersville, Alabama, this past September, Hansen says he feels the need to stay at the top of his game despite Minnesota's harsh winter weather.



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"There are warm-water effluent areas throughout the frozen north that offer an open-water alternative to ice fishing. And some of the smallmouth bass fishing is pretty phenomenal," says Hansen.

Just minutes from his Twin Cities, Minnesota home, the warm-water discharge from power plants on the St. Croix River and Mississippi River offer some legendary winter smallmouth bass fishing opportunities.

"I ran drift boat fly fishing trips on the Mississippi River for over 20 years, so I know the water like the back of my hand. But I always felt like the drift boat had to go away at some point—and I reached that

point. It was far more convenient for me to drive over, drop in the my kayak, and hit the areas that I really liked. Some spots I can fish from the kayak, other areas I get out and walk and wade.”

One particular stretch of river—the Mississippi River between St. Cloud to Elk River, Minnesota—is high on Hansen’s list for winter smallmouth. “Although I had fished this stretch for years out of my drift boat, when I started fishing it from the kayak it was like brand-new water to me. Areas I would normally bypass with the drift boat were now fishable. I could get right up onto a sand bar, into the run-outs of an island or small creek, between boulders, or right next to an island and stake out—or get out and walk and wade. It really opened up an entirely new world to me. The kayak allowed me to re-learn my water.”

Depending on the conditions, Hansen employs the use of two specific fishing kayaks, both designed and manufactured in the USA by Maine’s Old Town Canoes & Kayaks, a company with over 100 years in the watercraft business.

“I like the 12-foot Old Town Predator MX because it’s nice and short with a stable 34-inch beam. At 82 pounds, I can grab it and go—and drag it through just about anything to my access points, including deep snow. Now, if I have access to a good landing, then the Predator PDL is my choice, because I then have more boat control on the river via the PDL Drive, which allows me forward and reverse with my feet and one-handed rudder control. With the MX, I’m drifting—and trying to fish on a float—and



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control the boat at the same time, which can be challenging on some waters. With the Predator PDL, I can back-pedal, I can slow my drift, and I can really fine tune boat control while fishing hands free.”

Despite the frigid air temperature, Hansen says he actually prefers kayak fishing smallmouth bass during the winter. “The fish tend to pod up and the kayak allows you excellent access to them. Winter is the best time to do this, more so than when they’re scattered the rest of the year.”

But Hansen admits that sometimes finding smallmouth pods can be a challenge. And even when you find them, it all comes down to just the right presentation.

Winter Smallmouth Location

The first thing Hansen looks for are areas that retain heat. As cold-blooded creatures, smallmouth bass will only expend as much energy as the water temperature allows. The biological imperative is to conserve energy; when water temperatures are low, bass will move less. As water temperatures climb, bass activity increases.

“Smallies will congregate in sandy areas, which retain heat. They may pull off and feed, but their metabolism has slowed down and they’re going to spend a lot more time just hanging out, less time actively chasing. So, I’m looking for sand, a log, or a tree that has fallen into the river, all which retain heat. Same with bottom substrate. Anything that’s dark will pick up heat from the sun and attract smallmouth bass—dark rocks and boulders, even mud at times. Same thing for cover that sticks up out of the water.”

Current also plays a big part in locating winter smallmouth bass. Winter smallmouth bass are typically found adjacent to current areas, only moving into fast water to feed when absolutely necessary. More often the case, winter smallmouths relate to slack-water areas just off current seams and eddies. Anywhere that current naturally pushes food is a sure bet. Such areas are visible to the naked eye.



There are areas along the river bottom, too, where current is slower. “You can often find groups of fish in troughs—and sometimes a really small area, stacked up like cordwood. Troughs or channels offer reduced current, warmer water temperature, and provide cover. The areas behind boulders provide something similar. Again, smallmouth avoid exerting too much energy in the winter, reserving it for feeding.”

Presentations

Left to his druthers, Hansen typically reaches for a fly rod, but has found better odds with unique, hybrid techniques that merge his experience with fly and conventional angling.

“Fly fishing works great for many situations—including winter smallmouth—but you don’t have the success rate because any time you build up slack or drag, you’re creating an unnatural presentation. This fish are going to blow it off and eat something that looks more natural. Thing is, there’s probably more food in the river at any given time during the winter than any other time of year. Very few things are physically hatching and flying away. The bottom is often littered with nymphs, leeches, and baitfish are of a size that pack a lot of calories.”

Conventional spinning tactics like a jig and minnow also introduce drag. Go too heavy in jig weight to reduce drag and you’ve got the hassle of snagging in the crevices of river rock.

“A centerpin outfit gives me the perfect drift. Due to the rod length and the entire system, the drift is longer, slower, and more precise. It allows a very natural presentation. You want split-shot placement that’s appropriate for the current and allows the minnow to float along so it slowly rolls in front of the fish and they can’t resist,” says Hansen.

To that end, Hansen uses a St. Croix Avid 13’ ML power, moderate action centerpin rod with a Raven centerpin reel loaded with 10-pound PowerPro



braid. He attaches an 8 lb. Seaguar fluorocarbon leader to the main line, places small split-shots evenly below a steelhead float, and uses a small circle hook to prevent gut-hooking.

In terms of bait, Hansen's had the best success with small-to-medium sized suckers or creek chubs. "For winter bass fishing, live bait simply produces more fish. Circle hooks make it low impact, with the hook penetrating the corner of the mouth for an easy release."

Artificial Ways

There are times when Hansen goes artificial-only—like during the classic January thaw when temperatures can rise well above the 32-degree mark.

"Bass activity will definitely spike when the mercury jumps. That's when tube jigs fished on a slow bottom crawl will keep up with live bait. It might take a few casts to get the right weight tube jig figured out so you're not snagging or drifting, but once you do, they're easy to fish. Wacky worms like Z-Man Zinkerz work in winter, too. Same for Fluke-style baits. Even hardbaits like the LiveTarget Emerald Shiner Baitball jerkbait, twitched with super-long pauses. Just remember to work any baits slower than you would other times of the year."

For situations like this, Hansen leaves the centerpin rig in the rod holder, and throws baits on a versatile 7'1" medium-power, fast-action St. Croix Legend Bass Tournament spinning rod and Daiwa spinning reel spooled with 8- to 10-pound Seaguar InvisX fluorocarbon.



Winter Bass Safety

Any time you're fishing in winter—whether on the ice or open water—safety should be your first priority. Navigating rivers in winter can be dangerous. Ice floes are not uncommon, even in areas with warm-water effluent. Should an impact with an ice floe knock you out of your kayak, a PFD and spare clothes can save you from drowning and hypothermia.

“Because it's one dump and game over, I always wear a PFD, and keep a dry bag filled with another pair of long underwear, socks, a top, another jacket, hat, gloves, etc. in my Old Town Predator's bow hatch. I wear Gore-Tex waders, wading boots, a base layer, and fleece pants underneath. The big thing is staying warm and comfortable without too much clothing. You don't want excessive sweating; neither do you want so much bulk that entering the kayak becomes difficult. I also keep my cell phone in a dry bag, and waterproof matches to start a fire on shore if need be to warm up and change clothing. I've yet for something like this to happen. Honestly, part of that is my choice in kayak. You wouldn't want to fish rivers in winter with a Wal-Mart special. Old Town Predators are incredibly stable kayaks designed to resist tipping and allow anglers to even stand up and fish.”

End Note

Stuck with cabin fever or mid-season ice fishing burnout? In need of an open-water bass adventure? Hansen encourages anglers to investigate local rivers. Find warm-water discharge from a power plant, water treatment facility, or other industry, and you're in business. Employ a kayak to get beyond the bank, learn to execute a perfect drift, experiment with live and artificial baits, and you might just be amazed by the hot bass bites possible in the dead of winter.

All photos courtesy of Old Town Canoes & Kayaks/Jason Arnold

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*A Midwesterner's
perspective on
the King of the
Marsh*

Bull Redfish: Extreme Fish Living in Extreme Places

By Dr. Jason Halfen

Anglers grow by stepping out of their comfort zone, venturing to destinations that feature extraordinary, albeit unfamiliar, fishing opportunities. As a child of the upper Midwest, I cut my fishing teeth on walleyes and crappies, accented by the occasional brook trout or musky. However, as my fishing enthusiasm evolved into a career, I quickly realized that my own background represented an extraordinarily small piece of the global fishing puzzle. It was time to step out of my own comfort zone and explore more of what the fishing world has to offer.

My favorite adventure so far – the Louisiana gulf coast, where the Mississippi River meets the Gulf of Mexico.

This is an account of my first trip to the Mississippi River Delta in pursuit of bull redfish: The King of the

Marsh. As I landed in New Orleans, I wondered if my lifetime of Midwestern fishing experiences had prepared me for my first casts into these fish-infested marshes.



For this first trip to the Bayou, I placed my trust in the hands of professionals: experienced guides seasoned by years spent in the marshes in pursuit of fish and game. My Captain for this redfish hunt was Terry Lambert from Cajun Fishing Adventures, a guide who embodied every characteristic I associate with the best anglers – a true instructor who taught me, pushed me, reveled in our joint accomplishments and more than once, made me laugh so hard that I had to put the rod down and simply enjoy the moment. For a beginner in the marsh, an experienced Captain is priceless.

We're not in Kansas anymore!

As Captain Terry backed his boat into the churning waters of the Mississippi River near Buras Louisiana, I quickly realized that the Mississippi of the south is not the same animal that I frequently fish in the north. The swirling currents and minimal water clarity found near the Delta stand in stark contrast to the well defined current seams that attract gamefish back home in Wisconsin, where a "chocolate milk" river would send us hunting for clean water before we ever cast a line. Down in the marshes, this is just another day at the office, a workplace where bull redfish are on the agenda.



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TEARING UP THE DETROIT RIVER

We idled to our first location, a saddle between two marsh islands that was swarming with nervous baitfish, diving pelicans, breaching porpoises and an occasional whirlpool caused by a feeding bull red. Feeling the impact of the current, Captain Terry dropped tandem shallow water anchors to lock us in place against the incoming tide; class was now in session.

Our rigs would be deceptively simple: popping corks to create a surface commotion and support a suspended soft plastic offering beneath. We primarily tossed LIVETARGET Rigged Shrimp, incredibly realistic imitations of one of the preferred forage items for marsh bulls. We selected attention-grabbing colors like Hot Pink to help our finned targets find our offerings in the turbid waters, a process further facilitated by the subtle internal rattle in our LIVETARGET shrimp imitations.

Soft plastic minnows, like the Z-Man MinnowZ, were also responsible for a considerable number of redfish catches. Constructed from proprietary materials, ElaZtech baits resist cuts, nicks and tears, and boasts one of the highest fish-per-bait ratios among all soft plastic baits on the market.

We used Seaguar Pink Label 100% fluorocarbon leaders, selected not because of fluorocarbon's near-invisibility under water, but because of its remarkable abrasion resistance – a necessity in this demanding environment. These leaders were linked to our Seaguar Smackdown braided main line using a double Uni knot, a compact union that passes smoothly through the rod guides on the cast and is more than tough enough for chasing bull reds in the Louisiana marshes.

Bull reds from start to finish!

The redfish hunters' most important fish-finding tools are their eyes. In the boat



with Captain Terry, traveling to our destination or idling around a likely area, everyone's eyes were trained on the water's surface, searching for the telltale sign of bait in distress. Once positioned near a pod of bait being dissected by a saltwater apex predator, anglers cast their popping corks and tethered soft plastics into the killing zone. Often, a couple of quick "chugs" of the cork were all that was necessary to elicit a strike and that first powerful run characteristic of a hooked bull redfish. After a strong, sweeping hookset, the fight was on.

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This is the realm of stout spinning gear, with rods typically 7 feet in length or longer to deliver relatively light baits on long casts, and to provide effective hooksets into bony mouths. The Legend Tournament Inshore series from St. Croix Rods are engineered to withstand the rigors of a wide range of inshore species, from speckled trout and snook to redfish and amberjack. The 7-foot, medium-heavy power, fast action LTIS70MHF spinning rod is an outstanding choice when pursuing bull reds. Pair this rod with a reel featuring a smooth drag system to counter the redfish's characteristic line-peeling runs, and you will be well-equipped for many years of trips to the marsh.

Once a tired bull red and the equally-winded angler converge, the fish is brought topside for a quick photo-op and subsequent release. Bringing a headstrong, 20-30 lb redfish aboard is a task reserved only for the most robust of nets. In Captain Terry's boat, Conservation Series landing nets from Frabill are the net of choice. Not only do these nets have the strength and longevity needed to handle season-after-season of bull redfish, but their knotless mesh netting eliminates damage to the fish caused by knots.





Trophy bull redfish are too precious of a resource to damage during the landing and release process.

A perspective on the bull reds' future

After subduing an uncountable number of bull reds under the watchful gaze of Captain Terry, I decided that my forearms, shoulders and back had been sufficiently abused by the King of the Marsh for this day. As we navigated through the tangle of canals and bayous that separate the redfish grounds from the launch, Captain Terry lamented the loss of marsh habitat that occurs on a daily basis, caused in part by the capture of freshwater sediments in reservoirs far upstream, sediments that are desperately needed to replace marshland that is being washed out to sea. This is an unsustainable trend, with implications far beyond the redfish, or any of the millions of finned or feathered creatures that call the marshes home.

Get informed about this critical habitat issue, through an organization like Vanishing Paradise, and do something to help, so that the marshes' unique fishing opportunities will be here, and be better, for the generations that follow us.



THE SNAG PROOF INSIDER



Fishing Tips From The Pros

SNAG PROOF'S TWELVE MONTHS OF FROG FISHING TIPS

By Connie Fuller

In this column we're going to talk about a particularly fun type of fishing. Snag Proof fishing! Using Snag Proof lures allows the angler to get "in where the big fish hide and feed and where ordinary lures can't go!" That quote is from the founder of Snag Proof lures, Harry Ehlers, from back in the early 1960s. It still holds true today. Team Snag Proof will be talking about all sorts of things associated with fishing Snag Proof lures.

The Snag Proof team has members from all over the country, so you'll get information for fishing in MN, CT, CA, FL, TN, SC, AL...just about every region! These guys are passionate about fishing and passionate about Snag Proof. You'll be surprised at what you might learn.

In this introductory column, my aim is to talk about the company, and the wide variety of "critters" made by Snag Proof. In the coming months you'll hear from different members of the Snag Proof Pro Staff talking about their favorite lures, tips and techniques with our lures as well as recommended

equipment to ensure success. If there's a topic you'd like to see covered, we'd love to hear from you! Message Snag Proof on Facebook, you'll get a prompt response.

Snag Proof began in the late 1950s when Harry Ehlers (my Dad) had an idea for a different kind of fishing lure. Working as an ad exec at Totes Rubber Boots, he saw the

Snag Proof

TRADE MARK



7-pound, 11-ounce bass taken from Ohio pond — fishing on top of moss. (24 other bass were taken same day with Snagproof Frog — fished on top of the moss!)

dip-mold process and applied it to his love of fishing. He began experimenting at the kitchen stove, ruining a few pots and pans and developed the first hollow-body frog. Encouraged by fellow outdoorsmen, he ran some ads in a few outdoor magazines and soon was able to quit his day-job and Snag Proof was born! The business moved from the kitchen to the basement, then a little “hole-in-the-wall” space and then to a 7500 square-foot building. The business grew as more and more fishermen realized just how effective these lures were.



Harry could catch fish anywhere and did a lot of “field research” while (Mom) Vivian took care of the day-to-day business side of things.

Snag Proof grew a loyal fan-base of fishermen who appreciated the effectiveness, durability and customer service we provided. We held the first specialty tournament in the industry, the Snag Proof Open on the California Delta. At the time, it was the 2nd largest tournament ever held in the state-305 boats!



The Ehlers family produced Snag Proof for 53 years and finally sold to another family business in California. It was ultimately sold to another company in 2016 and we are proud to say the lures are still produced in the USA!

Snag Proof produces a wide variety of hollow-body, weedless lures including the Deadly Worm, Soft Craw, Minnow, Moss Mouse, Boss Rat, Weed Demon, and Wiggle Wog! Of course, we are known for our frogs and we have the widest variety of frogs on the market. From the Original Frog to the Tournament Frog to Bobby’s Perfect Frog and the Wobbletron we have a frog to fit your style and fill your live-well!

Take a look at the lures offered at www.snagproof.com!

Keep an eye on this column, you’re sure to find a tip, technique or new lure to help you have a successful day on the water!

Good fishing to you! Connie

PATIENCE WHEN FISHING

By Bob Jensen

Through the years, I've been to a lot of places where people gather. It might be a sportshow or a boat show or a home show or a restaurant or just hanging out with friends: Wherever. The conversation often goes to fishing, and, often, a non-fisherman in the group says that he doesn't go fishing because he doesn't have the patience. When I hear that, I think to myself of all the successful anglers that I've had the opportunity to fish with over the years. And then I remember: Patience was not an attribute they possessed. The most successful anglers are not patient: In fact, they're usually quite impatient. Here's why patience is not necessarily a quality that lends to fishing success.

For most people, our time spent fishing is limited. We just can't be out there every day. Whether it be open water or ice-fishing, our time on the water or ice is limited. And, since we're fishing, we want to catch some fish, and more is better than a few.

For those reasons, it usually doesn't work well to be patient. We need to get after it. To get after it, we need to spend time fishing the areas where the fish are, and then we need to show them a bait that they are willing to eat.

In the ice season, it's pretty easy to figure out if there are fish below your hole in the ice if you're using a sonar. There is no question that a depthfinder will help you catch more fish. A friend of mine wasn't a believer until I loaned him my Vexilar.

After just one weekend on the ice with it, he vowed to never go ice-fishing again without one. This is a guy who would drill a hole and sit on it for hours. He was patient. He didn't catch a lot of fish. When using the depthfinder for the first time, he learned that if no fish come in and at least look at your bait in a few minutes, it's time to move. He is now less patient, and he now catches a lot more fish.

Same is true in open water. Whether you're fishing from a dock or a boat, you've got to keep moving until you find the fish. If you've got confidence in an area it's okay to give it a little more time, but don't fish memories. Just because you caught fish on a particular spot last trip or last year doesn't mean that



John Peterson is a guy who catches a lot of fish. He keeps moving and switching baits until he finds what the fish are liking on that particular day.

they'll be there now.

The same thing is true with lure selection. Many anglers have their favorite lure, and if you want to start with that favorite, and it's appropriate for the area being fished, by all means tie it on. But if you believe that there are fish in the area and your favorite lure is not their favorite thing to eat at that time, give them another offering. I have so many memories of fish liking a particular bait one day and refusing it the next day. They'll even change preferences on an hourly basis sometimes.

ODU MAGAZINE VIDEO BLOCK
(www.odumagazine.com)

People go fishing for a variety of reasons, and that's the appeal of fishing. If you enjoy throwing a bobber off the dock and watching it while you watch the other things going on, that's wonderful. But if you want to catch more fish, patience, for the most part, is not the answer. Keep moving, keep trying different presentations, keep doing whatever it takes to get a fish to inhale your lure and you'll catch more fish.

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

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Flawless Fish Mounting Tips

Catching a trophy fish is one of the most exciting moments in any anglers life. If you decide to keep and mount this trophy vs have a replica mount made, here are some tips to make sure your trophy is in the best shape before sending to the taxidermist.

Keep it Separate: In the river hanging fish together on the same stringer is common practice. However, if you catch a trophy, keep it separate from the rest so the fish do not beat each other up, damaging their fins. Do your best to retain the fish as you caught it, don't damage the scales, and avoid cutting the gills to bleed this walleye. In a live well make sure there is plenty of water to keep it alive and cool while fishing.

Ice Cold: The winter and spring water is cool enough to keep the color in your fish. Heat will cause some of the fish discoloration. After fishing, get the fish on the top of the ice. Place the side of the fish you want displayed up in the cooler. Keep it on the top of the ice and out of the water. Water flushes the color from the fish.

The Sooner the Better: Ideally get the fish into the taxidermy right away, the sooner the better to retain the colors.

Freezer Time: If you can't get it in right away, wrap the fish in a white wet cloth then wrap it in plastic.

Face Up: Always face the walleye face up in the freezer. Make sure nothing is set on top; this causes discoloration in the fish.

Freezer Burn: It can stay in the freezer for 3-6 months. Not much longer. It's important to ensure the fish doesn't get freezer burn.

The advice provided will help you ensure you have the best fish mount possible. Mounting a fish is a way to celebrate and remember the adventure. Reflecting back on the time you spent on the water, the fish you caught and people you spent time with. Each time I look at a mount it reminds me of those memories.

The Real Ned Rig, Please Step Forward



Legendary angler Ned Kehde

chronicles namesake lure & how to fish it

Days on the water with Ned Kehde aren't measured by pounds of bass in the livewell or by "5 good bites." Rather, outings with the Hall of Fame fishing writer mostly distill down to clicks on a little handheld counting device; following many of Kehde's daily, 4-hour forays, the clicker rolls to some number of bass and other fish greater than 100.

Dig a little deeper and you discover it's not unheard of for a single, durable ElaZtech softbait — Kehde's favorite — to have topped the century mark. According to Kehde, the all-time record was set by one particular 4-inch Z-Man Finesse WormZ, with which he caught 232 fish.

More recently, while testing a TRD HogZ — a relatively new 3-inch finesse bait — Kehde caught 55 bass in 69 minutes — all in frigid 41-degree water. "I mailed the HogZ back to Daniel Nussbaum of Z-Man," noted Kehde, "after this one bait produced 112 fish. It was still in really good shape."

The larger truth is Kehde remains chiefly responsible for developing an amazing fishing system his friend



and fellow Hall of Fame writer Steve Quinn originally termed the Ned Rig. Though the ultra-finesse presentation runs counter to much of bass fishing's mainstream, which often prefers beefy rods, stout line and jumbo jig-hooks, the unassuming Ned Rig has almost certainly captured more interest and acclaim by North American bassers than any other presentation in recent memory.

Even so, if you ask the humble Kehde — who isn't interested in fame or being paid to promote any particular lure or brand — to talk about the origins of the phenomenal lure, he's likely to defer to names like Chuck Woods and the legendary Guido Hibdon. "Probably less than one in ten anglers knows that Woods designed the Puddle Jumper, as well as the Beetle and Beetle Spin — three classic finesse lures — nor that he also created the first Texas-rigged jigworm."

Ned Rig Renaissance

In the 1950s, says Kehde, Woods was already fishing a version of the Ned Rig — a soft plastic 'Beetle' on a jighead with a spinning rod. "I believe Chuck Woods has probably caught more Kansas largemouth bass than any man in history."

The next big development in the Ned Rig narrative occurred a half century later, the day Kevin VanDam showed Kehde an early ElaZtech bait while fishing together in 2006. VanDam put in Kehde's hands a pack Strike King Zeros, an ultra-durable stickbait manufactured by the parent company of what would eventually become Z-Man Fishing. That same year, Kehde fished with Japanese bass legend Shinichi Fukae on Beaver Lake. "Fukae was using the same method we had adopted, retrieving a jigworm a few inches off bottom, reeling and shaking as it went along. It gave further credence to our Midwest style of finesse bassin'."

Not long afterward, Kehde became a major fan of Z-Man's unique ElaZtech baits. To this day, his



favorite remains a green pumpkin ZinkerZ stickworm, cut in half to 2-1/2-inches, or a single 2-3/4-inch Finesse TRD. Kehde impales both on a 1/16-ounce Gopher Mushroom Head jig or a 1/15-ounce Z-Man Finesse ShroomZ. Interestingly, Kehde cherishes red jigheads, a tip gleaned from finesse expert Fukae.

To give his ElaZtech baits valuable buoyancy, Kehde soaks them in hot water and stretches them. “Or you can let the bass do it for you,” he adds. “The more bass you catch on each bait, the better it gets — the more the fish seem to bite it.

“Removing some of the salt makes the bait more buoyant, giving it a nice subtle glide. The buoyancy is key to our no-feel style of fishing. We can’t exactly explain it, but the more you feel the lure, the fewer bass you’ll catch and vice-versa. With light jigs and small hooks, big hooksets aren’t necessary. A lot of the success in fishing the lure comes down to instinct and intuition. And the fact the bait’s so good, it often does the heavy lifting for you.”



Six Secret Ned Rig Retrieves

So skilled and potent have Kehde and his loyal Midwest Finesse Network of anglers become at fishing Ned Rigs that the anglers have developed six unique retrieves — all effective, depending on the situation:

The Swim-Glide-Shake: “After the lure touches down, immediately begin shaking the rod, continuing to constantly shake as it sinks toward bottom. Throughout the retrieve, keep the lure swimming slowly

from six inches to one foot above bottom. The glide comes in as we stop turning the reel handle and allow the lure to pendulum toward the bottom.”

The Hop-and-Bounce: “Drop the rod to the five-o’clock position after the cast and hold it there. Shake the rod as the lure falls to the bottom. After it touches down, hop it up by rotating the reel handle twice, and then pause. As the lure falls back, we shake the rod. Repeat this cadence throughout the retrieve.”

The Drag-and-Deadstick: “This is normally performed by the angler in the back of the boat; it shines in water up to 12 feet deep. Cast toward the shoreline and shake the rod as the lure sinks. Rod held at 3- or 4-o’clock, the angler drags the lure slowly across bottom as the boat moves along the shoreline. As the boat moves, peel some line off the spool, creating slack and allowing the lure to lie dead-still for five seconds. You can occasionally shake the rod after the deadstick routine.”

The Straight Swim: Primarily executed with a single-tailed grub on a 1/16- or 1/32-ounce jig, this long-cast tactic works with the wind at your back, when bass are foraging on wind-blown shorelines. Depending on wind, hold your rod at 2- to 5-o’clock and simply turn the reel handle at a slow to moderate speed. You can enhance it with shakes and pauses, too.

The Drag-and-Shake: “After we’ve reached bottom, we turn the reel handle just fast enough to get the lure to slowly travel along the bottom. As it does, we twitch our wrist, shaking the rod, line and lure.”

Strolling: “When bass are on massive, featureless flats — especially in winter on flatland reservoirs — we use the trolling motor to move our jigs along bottom, a great ploy for locating schools of fish. The angler on the trolling motor casts to the starboard side at about a 45-degree angle toward the back of the boat. A second angler does the same on the left side, while the person in the back merely casts straight back. When the baits of the two anglers in the front of the boat reach directly behind the boat, they retrieve and re-deploy their original casts.”

Kehde concludes: “It’s the only way I fish anymore. Simple. Affordable. And so dad-gum good at catching boatloads of bass and other species, it’s almost ridiculous.”





The Low-Priced Comfort

By Bernard Williams

So you finally got that bass boat, you and your partner are ready to go crappie fishing. One problem, one of you has to sit at the back of the boat. Let me tell you a way both fishermen can sit comfortably on the front deck without defacing your new boat. It's called the Side Kick Double Seat by Millennium Marine (www.millenniummarine.com). It's not a brand new concept or invention, double seat holders have been around for quite some time. The Millennium engineers simply made lots of improvements to an existing product. In other words, they put their spin on it and made a good thing great. Here are a few improvements:

- 3 independent feet added to each of the seat pedestals for improved stability in rough water. This also eliminated the skid, rocking, and movement of the seats.
- Up to 17" horizontal adjustment – locking screws that hold the adjustment in place
- Height adjustment pins for changing seat position for added comfort.
- Fits any $\frac{3}{4}$ " pin/screw type receptacle – will accept the 1.77" Ranger pin as the center post.
- Designed for the Crappie or Catfish Fishermen
- Hand nuts and pins – no wrenches needed for adjustments.
- The Pivoting Center is perfect for adding an Umbrella on those hot days.
- All Materials are made of Anodized Aluminum

I recommend any boater that wants to employ either spider-rigging or long-lining techniques to try the Side Kick Double Seat. It's well worth the investment and it gives you flexibility. I installed seat bases at the front and back of my boat. The only problem is the seats are too close for comfort when I'm fishing with an extra-large person like myself. I purchased the bent poles and they gave me about 8 inches of separation between each seat and about 4 inches to the back. That's just not enough space to sit

comfortably for 8 to 10 hours of fishing.

I was introduced to the SideKick by Gene Johnson, an Independent Consultant to Millennium. Gene said, "It's the safest double seat on the market. I've had issues with some of the others dumping fishermen in the lake. This seat hold stays where you put it. You're got numerous adjustments that allow you to get it in your sweet spot."

Crappie tournament fisherman and Mr. Crappie Pro-Staffer David McWilliams said, "I switched to the SideKick because the other double seat holder would tend to walk up and back after a while. The SideKick stays put. I have to be careful when fishing with my 7-year-old son, I can put a small seat on the pivoting center post and he can sit there all day between me and my adult partner. He loves every minute. I added the Shade Tree Fishing Umbrella Holder (U-571-00) and we can fish all day in the summer"

Oh well, I was saving the Umbrella Holder for a different article, but since David mentioned it, I might as well add it to my recommendations. The Umbrella Holder can also serve as a net holder. As with all Millennium products adjustments and locking are the keywords. The holder fits all standard seat posts. It has telescoping adjustments allowing you to move the umbrella out or up close to your seat. It attaches directly to the SideKick Double Seat Holder and it can swivel up to 360 degrees for maximum protection.

Try it for yourself. If you're not satisfied you can easily sell it to some of your buddies. When I say these are two hot and innovative fishing products don't just take my word, give them a try, you'll be glad you listened.



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HARD ROCKY BOTTOMS

By Capt. Mike Gerry

As we get into the best of the winter fishing the one thing that becomes very evident is the need to find hard cover, rocky bottom structure and vertical structure. One typical area that comes to mind and is common in all lakes is bridges. Bridge fishing is a common community hole but there is a reason it's called a community hole; it holds bass and lots of

them. So yes, it gets pressure but this time of year it's a confidence place for the weekend angler.

One important thing to remember is the pure fact of during winter fishing the bass generally feed sporadically in short 15 to 30-minute time frames so you cannot get discouraged and move on quickly you need to give the bass time to get into their daily routine. Many times, that routine is not what you expect but picking up and moving on before the bass get a chance to find their feeding time can cost you fish. Be patient; use the depth of the pilons for the vertical bites, find the bait for the reaction bite and change baits some in-order-to give them a variety of presentation to react too. Winter can be a time of year that many adjustments need to be made to the bait your presenting, sometimes its color, sometimes its size as in profile and many times it's just how your working the bait. Don't get stuck in your past ways if the bite isn't there; try something different whether it be in how you reel it, drop it, size or even color these can all influence winter fish.

Some baits that I am impressed with during the cold winter months around this bridge structure starts with an Alabama rig; although this can be a tough physical challenge it catches fish. An A-rig just entices bass as it presents that school of bait look to feeding bass. I also like jigging spoons in the cold of winter and around bridges it's a killer bait; the flash and side to side movement of jigging a big flashy spoon over the top of their heads is just irresistible. Lastly let a Carolina rig pull horizontally along the bottom for those bottom hugging bass that are looking for a lethargic easy meal.

Bridges a-long with cold water are a natural rocky bottom habitat that you can benefit from!

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SWIM YOUR WAY TO MIDWINTER ICE FISHING SUCCESS



FISHING THE
WILDSIDE

By Chip Leer

Whether you're chasing walleyes, perch, crappies, or pike, a properly presented swimming jig can help you catch more fish as the hardwater season progresses into the midwinter doldrums.

Thanks to their ability to swim horizontally, such lures—also called swim jigs or swimbaits—allow you to reach out and trigger more fish than strictly vertical presentations. This makes them perfect for extending the action of peak feeding periods around sunrise and sunset, as well as searching for scattered groups of aggressive fish during the day.

Swim jig options include classic choices like the Northland Fishing Tackle Puppet Minnow and Rapala Jigging Rap, but one of my all-around favorites is Northland's Forage Minnow Dart.

This unique jig is one of the only, if not THE only one, designed for use with plastic or live-bait. The jig features a top-mounted line tie, single tail hook and centrally located belly treble. Because of the jig's balance, it swims horizontally when jigged and rocks subtly before coming to rest, which is a great trigger.

What's unique to the Forage Minnow Dart is that you can make it swim however you like by changing



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how you tip it. Most often I tip with a minnow either vertically, however if I need more glide I adjust the minnow to lay on its side. Then if I need more profile, different color or extra glide I will use a flat-sided, scented plastic such as an Impulse Water-Flea. Remember, the more surface area of the plastic the further the bait will glide. This is why I love this swim bait, I can adjust action & glide to match the fish's mood.

To fish a swim jig, start with a couple of 12- to 18-inch jig strokes to get the bait swimming outside the hole and attract the attention of nearby fish. Let the jig settle between strokes.

Some fish charge in and hit right away, but others need more coaxing. To turn these lookers into biters, play a game



Northland Forage Minnow Dart with IMPULSE Stone Fly

of cat-and-mouse with smaller jig lifts, nods and bobs, or encourage the fish to chase by slowly raising the lure away from it.

Keep in mind a Forage Minnow Dart acts differently depending on the tipping. When fishing a big plastic, I let the jig free-fall on a slack line. With a minnow, it performs better on a semi-taut leash.

While some anglers consider midwinter the time for finesse, I always keep a swim jig tied on at least one rod—and you should, too. These free-swimming, versatile lures catch fish all winter long, even during the dreaded doldrums of February.



Crappie caught on Northland Forage Minnow Dart with minnow



Rigging For Mid Winter Pike

By Dan Johnson

February is a great time to hook up with big, green and angry northern pike. The offering? A big sucker.

February offers a variety of options on ice. Many choices hinge on deep water, such as chasing walleyes, perch or tullibees roaming the abyss. But one of my all-time favorite patterns centers on targeting hungry northern pike lurking in food-rich,

shallow water weedbeds.

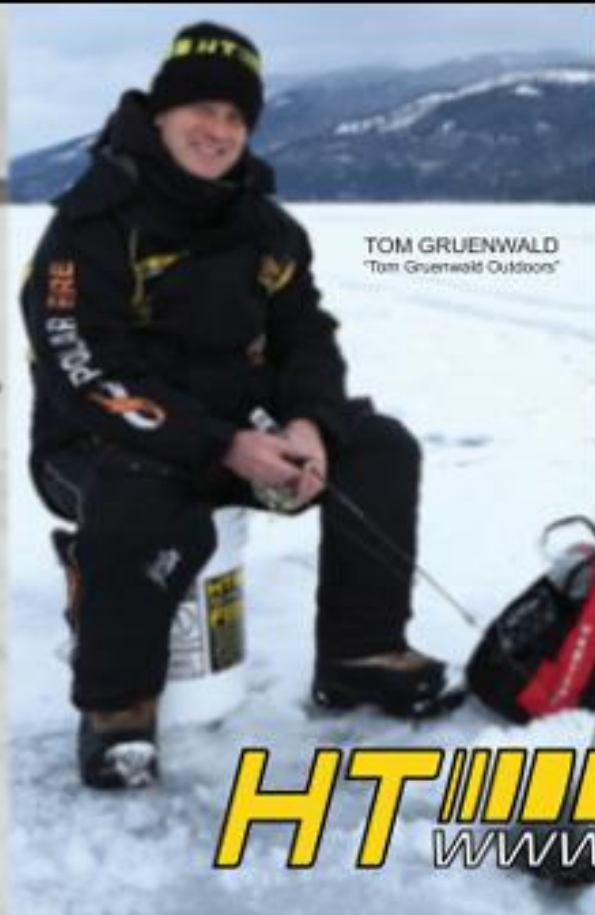
Case in point: A large natural lake a short cast from my central-Minnesota home offers great opportunities for “green party” pike action—and similar scenarios exist across the Ice Belt. The lake spans two sprawling basins, and hosts a variety of structural sweet spots where northerns and other predators can harass baitfish including yellow perch, suckers and countless species of minnows.

Some of the lake’s most consistent pike action, however, can be found in a large, shallow, weedy bay at the south end of one of the basins. Anglers tapping this bite typically enjoy numbers of pike from eater to trophy size proportions that are unusual in an easy-to-access fishery an hour’s drive from the Twin Cities metropolis.

What makes this spot—and others like it elsewhere—so hot are lush beds of healthy green weeds, which offer ample oxygen and attract a wide variety of fish. Most of the time, the best fishing occurs on or near the transition from thick weeds to deeper, open water coming in from the main lake. But open pockets, slight inflows and other fish-attracting features are always worth checking.

When fishing the salad, many anglers favor tip-ups armed with live bait. This is a great strategy, too. But I like to add an animated jigging presentation to the mix to attract nearby pike.

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RIGGED AND READY

By Mike Hungle

“The night before a fishing trip, spend a few minutes in the garage getting gear organized. During that time, decide on what lure you are going to start with the next day and get that lure rigged onto your fishing line.”

You’ve been waiting all week to get out on the ice. Finally the big day arrives and once at the lake you and your buddy start drilling and cleaning out holes. Before you can get a lure attached to your line, baited and down hole, your buddy is calling you to help him land a fish. As you run over there to help, you wonder how on earth he got started fishing so fast.

The trick to getting a hook into the water right away is being rigged and ready to go. Let me explain.

The night before a fishing trip, spend a few minutes in the garage getting gear organized. During that time, decide on what lure you are going to start with the next day and get that lure rigged onto your fishing line. Many of the Dave Genz and Jason Mitchell rods all come with built-in hook holders, so simply attach the hook to the holder, snug the line up tight and you’ll be good to go the next morning. If your rod doesn’t have a hook holder, simply attach it to one of the rod guides.

While rigging up that rod, rig up all of your spare rods. Personally, when I decide on a particular lure to start my day, I rig up a second combo exactly the same way. Then, I rig up a few more rods with different sizes and styles of lures. By doing so, it allows me to get back into the water fast if a fish steals my starting lure. It also allows me the luxury of making a quick lure change without having to physically remove a lure, find a different lure and hook up the new one.

Once my rods are all rigged up, each rod then gets slipped into a rod sleeve to help prevent them from



getting tangled while on the way to the lake. Once they are rigged and encased, I like to set the whole works into a 5-gallon pail for easy access and transportation.

Clam makes two types of rod sleeves for ice fishing rods. The first style is the Rod Slicks that are a mesh material and available in black, pink or blue. By choosing different colored covers, you can designate certain colors for various types of lures.

This allows you to spend more time fishing and less time looking for a particular rod, reel and lure combo. For example pink for jigs, blue for jigging spoons and black for lipless crankbaits. Another option that Clam makes is the Clear Rod Tubes. These tubes are see-through and allow you to see your rod and lure, while at the same time preventing all the lines from tangling and twisting.

Depending on when I get home and when I am planning to go again, I will either re-rig that same evening or in the day or two leading up to my next adventure. Rigging rods in the comfort of my own garage is much easier than rigging rods in the middle of the lake with cold hands and the anticipation of trying to get rigged up quickly so I can start fishing. Being rigged and ready keeps me prepared, so I'm ready to get going as soon as the holes are drilled and cleaned.

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The Skinny On Bulls

By Jason Mitchell



Some of the shallowest panfish we catch each winter happen in March during late ice on many fisheries. Fun sight fishing patterns often emerge. Fish can sometimes be found in a few feet of water under the ice. Shallow weed patterns often come alive at late ice. Many anglers assume that aquatic vegetation has to be green and vibrant in order to hold fish. While still green weeds do hold fish, dead stands of weeds will also hold fish if the weeds provide cover and there is good oxygen. When the ice begins to rot along the shorelines and water begins to seep into the lake along the shorelines, shallow water can be extremely productive.

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(www.odumagazine.com)

One of my absolute favorite locations for looking for shallow water bluegills at late ice is really shallow pencil reeds. Pencil reed beds are common on many lakes and often hold big fish. In many cases... depending on the thickness of the ice, we might only be fishing in two to three feet of water under the ice.



We are more than ice anglers.

We hear a lot about "limit your catch, don't catch your limit" when it comes to open-water fishing. How you shouldn't dump your bait. Why you should let the big ones live to fight another day. But when the snow falls and the lakes freeze over, we don't forget those valuable lessons. We still handle fish with care. We still leave the ice cleaner than we found it. We still make conscious decisions at home to help improve habitat downstream. Because we are more than ice fishing fanatics.

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These pencil reed locations can really vary in size and profile. Some dish bowl lakes might simply see pencil reeds lining the rim of the lake where there is the right sand bottom composition. Other locations might be prominent reefs and bars that might be several acres. My favorite type of location features pencil reeds that are growing out into five or six feet of water with a little bit of a roll to the contour where there is a sharper break running along the outside edge of the reeds.

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There are many strategies to fishing these reed beds but there is one overriding challenge. You have to drill several holes to really figure out the nuances of the location but drilling a lot of holes over these shallow locations seems to push the fish off.

Can't prove this but it seems like electric augers and smaller bits seem less intrusive. Six and four inch augers shine for cutting enough holes to really figure out these locations. On the flip side, these smaller

REDESIGNED.

AND READY TO MINGLE WITH THE FISHES.

The Meat Stick rods and combos are balanced to load perfectly with heavier search lures yet enables anglers to watch for the lightest pickups. They feature a sanded glass blank that features a feather light tip for bite detection, and an extremely heavy backbone that loads up for the fight!

The Mackinaw "MACK" rods were designed extensively for the sole purpose of taming big fish. The graphite blank on the bait-cast rods feature spiraled guides for better shock absorption and sensitivity. The handle is designed extra long past the reel seat for better balance and leverage to reduce fatigue. This rod is extremely effective for chasing giant Pike, Lake Trout, Walleye and Salmon.

Jason Mitchell
elite series

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holes are terrible for sight fishing. If you are planning on strictly sight fishing, use an eight or ten inch auger to give you a bigger window and let everything settle down after you drill your holes. Another tip is to not drive vehicles over the location or drag anything on the ice. When initially figuring out a location, we typically drill a lot of holes for simply learning the spot.

You can walk from hole to hole and fish but what we so often find is that we catch a lot more fish by recognizing the sweet spots and waiting out fish. The sweet spots are often open lanes and cuts, troughs and dips in the bottom that funnel fish movements. Once you recognize and locate these spots, you can sit and let everything settle down. Seen it happen often where you drill your holes and it takes five to ten minutes for fish to come back underneath you. You can definitely fish too aggressive and move too much in this type of situation because the reality is that fish might be scooting ten to twenty feet away from each step you take. Have also seen situations where fish wouldn't swim underneath a shelter or sled. As a rule of thumb, you can get away with much more noise and presence if you are alone and on the spot first. As angling pressure increases over multiple days however, it seems like fish become more sensitive to everything. The more you fish a location and learn the spot on the spots however the less holes you have to drill and the less intrusive you can be.

Big bull bluegills in pencil reeds can be a handful. These fish can wrap you up and break you off. Because this can often be combat fishing, I often opt for heavier line like the Frost Four Pound Mono. This isn't finesse fishing. Because four pound test can lack sensitivity, I often use tungsten jigs even in this often shallow water just because the added weight of tungsten improves the performance of heavier lines.

These patterns are notorious for producing big bluegills and this is fun fishing. Much like trying to pull a heavy bass from out underneath a dock or laydown, there is an element of drama when fighting big fish in heavy cover. Focus on the troughs, holes and bowls or any sharp outside edge that is in tight proximity to high dense stands of rushes and you will typically find big bluegills at late ice.

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NOMADIC LAKERS - THE SOLUTION

By Rob Jackson

Once the ice tightens up lake trout can and will go anywhere. Have you ever asked yourself why? You hear stories of fish being caught in 10 feet of water by perch fishermen or off of a tip-up while others are pike fishing.

Lake trout are there for one reason and one reason only: to eat. As a fall spawner they are putting on the feedbag big time to recoup from the spawn. They are nomadic devils under the ice in search of baitfish.

These lakers are not your grandpa's pond trout. They are voracious feeders and can produce the most aggressive bite you'll experience on ice. Once hooked, they give you some of the most fun you can have on ice. Big, deep head shakes; barrel rolls; and once they get over 10 pounds there's some drag-peeling runs. Fun.

How do you attempt to track down fish that are always on the move? The simple answer is move with them, but that is no easy task. We are on ice, not on open water where a few quick turns of the boat can show you to where they've moved. I prefer to set up in an area I know they will be moving to and let them come to me. I set up on what I call a wall.

A wall? I try to find the steepest break into the main basin to deep water. In some areas I've found, I can go from 10 feet of water to 70 feet in five steps. Perfect. Why there? The lakers will corral bait up against the wall giving them a backstop against which to attack. Those lakers are there to beat up on that bait and eat. It makes sense to target the hungry ones.

Once set up on the wall, you should be marking baitfish, which will come and go. If you have none for more than 20 minutes you should consider a small move, not a mile away but somewhere nearby. You need bait under you. Sometimes your flasher will read 70 feet with a band 30 feet thick of solid red mark. The bait will pile up together for safety, but not my bait. I want my bait to stand alone, away from the pack. Safety in numbers, yes, but I don't want my bait to be safe. I want it to look vulnerable and



different than the rest. There is nothing sweeter than watching that laker come flying out of that baitball up to get after your lure. It's addicting.

When that fish comes flying up at your bait the best move is to start reeling away from it. Trust me you can not reel fast enough to get it away from a heat-seeking laker. Once you've enticed the strike, ram that hook home. Don't be shy with your hookset. It needs to penetrate that bony mouth. Two hooksets are often in my game plan.

Bait selection can vary depending on the forage of your lake. Try to match the hatch. White tube jigs and 3- and 4-inch swimbaits are staples. Some fish in the late season reacted very well to Clam Rattlin' Blade Spoons tipped with a half minnow. The perfect combo would be the Ice Team Professional Series 36 inch Heavy Action rod teamed up with your favorite reel spooled up with 10- or 12-pound braided line to a flurocarbon leader for stealthiness.

Find a wall, get that bait away from the pack and hold on!

Rob Jackson lives in Eastern Ontario and is a prolific multispecies angling expert and guide.



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SUCCESS ON ICE WHEN YOU CAN'T BE MOBILE

By Joel Nelson

Much ink and article space has been given to the idea that mobility leads to more fish. Yet even with lazer-fast augers, lightweight lithium-powered sonar, and warmer, form-fitting outwear the likes we've never seen before, we so often end up riding out a bite while sitting down, rather than kneeling or standing. Though we may know the more productive play is to troll the open ice, weather among other things can make this difficult. With that in mind, I've been told that 80% of our ice fishing brethren chooses shelter of some kind. Increasingly, that's in the form of a wheelhouse, where mobility is possible yet often impractical. Still, even those in portable shelters avoid moving when at times it would likely be beneficial. The challenge then becomes catching fish in whatever space you choose, knowing you won't be venturing far from a home base. Here's a few methods I've used to put more fish on the floor when I'm hunkered down.

Location, Location, Location

It's wise to consider "finding" before fishing. This couldn't be more true than for a wheelhouse weekend where you know you'll be stationary for days on end. At the very least, you want to locate yourself along some structural element that should attract fish even if not present at the moment. Preferably, it's a location that you've scouted, or at least drilled and dropped sonar on before committing to. Though you're

likely anxious to drop down and fish, consider that just a few minutes scouting may determine the success of the entire fishing trip.

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Portable Strategies

With the advent of hub houses, the fact of the matter is that we're often using these portable shelters more like permanent ones. Still we know that these can be rather easily moved, so my approach is to put out a modest spread of baits, knowing full well that there's the opportunity to easily move. Most often, I'll run one set-line – call it a bobber rod or deadstick – and do my best to run a jigging rod immediately nearby. The setline usually is a plain hook or lightly dressed jig with active live-bait threaded on. The jigging rod is a dinner bell. Hard baits of all varieties work well here, especially loud baits with rattles that push vibrations throughout the water column to as many fish's lateral lines as possible.

The general idea is to draw fish into your spread so that you can show them your offerings, such that even if they don't close on the really aggressive baits, they're directly adjacent to a free-swimming minnow or more neutral enticement. Keep in mind however that with a portable, you still have the option of moving throughout the day. This means that bobber rods or deadsticks are more likely to come into play than tip-ups or rattle reels. I find that keeping everything attached to a rod and reel allows for easier transport.

Permanent and Wheelhouse Approaches

I recoil from the thought that fishing out of a stationary shelter is limiting or otherwise lazy. It certainly can be, but that would be like saying open water trolling is simply dragging crankbaits around until the dumb ones eat. In the boat of a good troller, you might as well be in a science room with a lab-coat. Variables abound, from depth, color, size, shape, bait-length, boat speed, line-distance, line-type, snap selection, location, etc., the opportunities for discovery are endless. So too is it for an active wheelhouse or permanent. Consider the house your personal lab, and a chance to really spread your wings and flex some muscles.



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(see page 26 for specs and complete details)

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Tip-ups here come into play in a very big way, as you're camping out for awhile or maybe the rest of the winter. You can cover a sizeable distance in any direction, while offering various species at different depths, wholly different looks. Rattle reels inside of the house become a big part of your strategy also in order to take advantage of the total number of lines you're legally afforded given the number of people in your shelter. On both looks I'm continually experimenting between different forms of live-bait and size, along with hook type (horizontal vs. vertical), line, weight, bobber vs. no-bobber, etc. Like when trolling, let the fish tell you what the magic of the moment is and be ready to adapt immediately.

Of course, ringing the dinner bell is just as important now, similar to the way that a fancy dinner spread is only possible if there are guests at the table. Especially for long wheelhouses or permanent structures, consider people alternating holes, and fishing opposite ends to draw in fish from even greater distance surrounding. I've personally seen on underwater camera the same fish identified by unique markings, a split fin, etc., directly seek-out an aggressive offering from either end of a 21-foot shelter. That same fish won't always commit to the fish-bell, but quite often you look down at the nearby bobber to see it buried beneath the ice.

Stationary doesn't have to mean sedentary, so keep working out there. Of course, you can take a break and let the fact that just having lines down and fishing is better than sitting on the couch. Especially during prime-times and low-light periods however, lockdown and be ready to tend a variable spread of differing bait options and delivery methods to make the most of your time on the water.

JOEL NELSON OUTDOORS



Shooting Through Ice

By Steve Mattson

For years now, savvy ice fishermen have been using their Vexilar's to check the depth of the water without drilling any holes in the ice. Simply put, shooting through the ice to read the depth saves time, energy and also prevents spooking fish by avoiding drilling unnecessary holes. Lets take a further look into the reasons and how we do this.

Although it is obvious we need to eventually drill a hole to fish, drilling lots of holes can spook the fish particularly in shallow water situations. But how do we know where to drill the holes until we can get a depth reading anyway? The answer lies in the principal of how a depth finder works. You can actually use your depth finder on top of the ice to show you a picture of what is below you. How? Believe it or not, sound waves actually travel better through most hard material then they do the air or water.



By simply placing the Vexilar Ice-Ducer (transducer) or LPS-1 on top of smooth ice, you can view what is happening as if you had the transducer directly in the water. However, a little bit of water is needed on the ice to seal the transducer to the face of the ice. If the transducer is not tight to the ice then the unit will not read correctly. Squirt enough water onto the ice so that the transducer face will entirely touch wetted ice. Dont worry about ruining the transducer. Shooting through the ice will not damage the transducer so go ahead and try it a few times. Just wet the ice and try a reading, if you cant find bottom, squirt more water and try again. If that doesnt work make sure you change the depth setting on the unit to make sure the unit will be able to

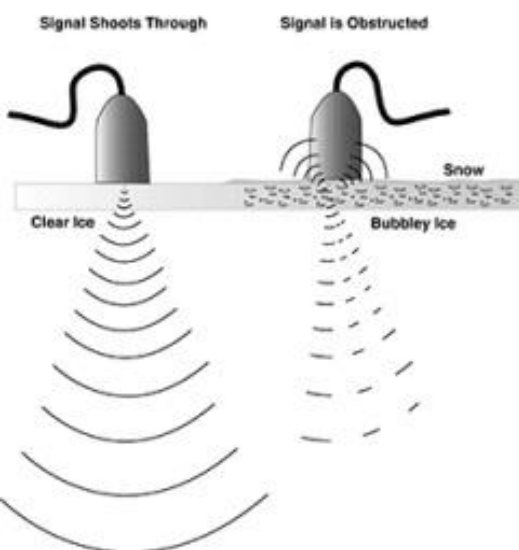
capture the depth. If that still doesn't work, then try a different spot.

Factors that will influence the effectiveness of shooting through the ice include: air bubbles in the ice, cracks, debris and basically anything between the transducer and the water that has a different density than the ice itself.

Anything in the ice, whether it is air or debris will either absorb or deflect the sound waves and disrupt the reading. When in doubt simply move over a little and try again.

Because shooting through the ice requires you to read through two different materials of differing density (water and ice), you may need to increase the gain (sensitivity) on your Vexilar in order to read the depth and what is in the water column. Simply turn the dial up until you mark bottom. LPS- s do this automatically.

The ideal condition for shooting through the ice is totally clear ice. However, you will be surprised at how effective this is at reading bottom in many different ice conditions. During the early ice stage, you can normally take a reading just about anywhere on the ice. By the time winter is in full swing, you'll have to clean off the snow to get down to bare ice. Late ice is difficult to shoot through at all, due to the deterioration as the sun eats away at it. A quick tip is to take advantage of previously drilled holes of other ice fishermen. Even when the holes have a lot of new ice, it is usually clear ice and will give you a great reading.



Seeing fish is easy too. When you get the gain set correctly, seeing fish underneath you can be just as easy as if the transducer were directly in the water. Simply look for the classical green or red marks between the ice and bottom.

Time and efficiency are important for effective ice fishing. Using your equipment to the fullest will allow you to be more effective and help you to catch more fish. Be sure to carry a bottle of water with you next time you venture onto the ice and use your Vexilar to paint the picture underneath you before you even have to start the ice auger.

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FISH FLASHERS AND DROPPERS FOR WINTER SUCCESS

By Chip Leer





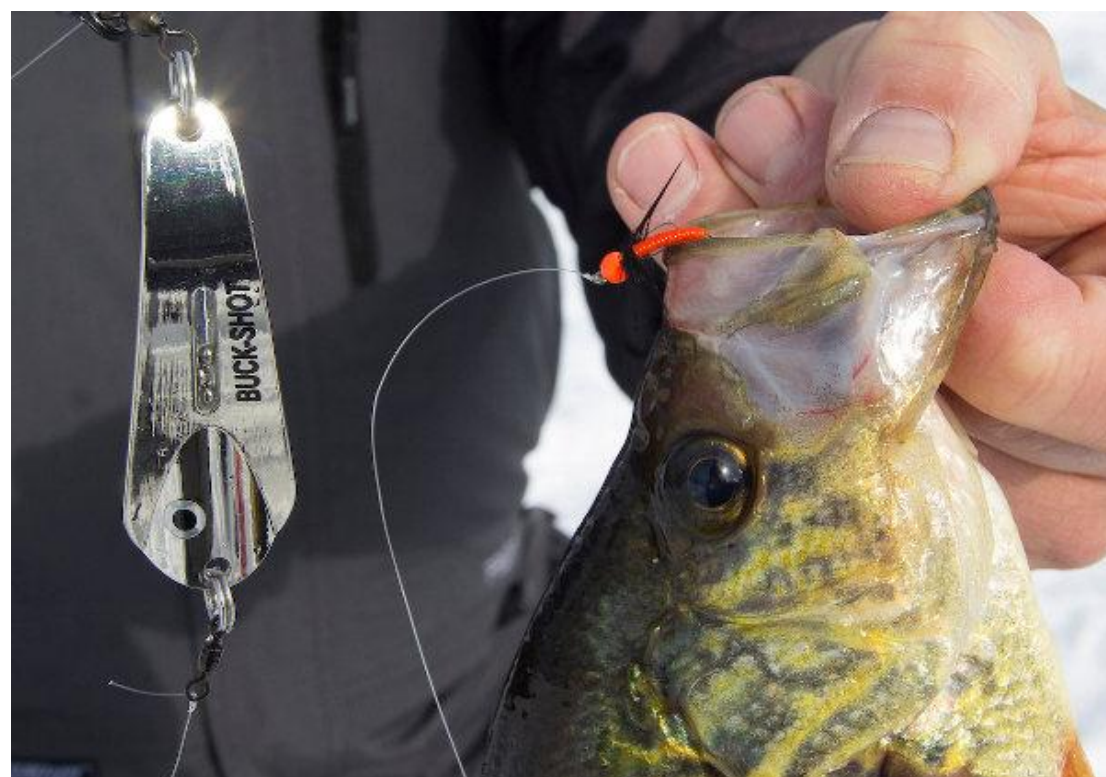
One of the secrets to late-season ice fishing success is being able to attract fish from greater distances than we did earlier in the winter.

While you can often use a large, flashy lure to call fish into striking distance, these attractor baits are sometimes bigger than what the fish want to eat. To turn these lookers into biters, you need to add something smaller to the presentation.

Dropper rigs consisting of a small spoon positioned just above a tiny jig or fly are a common solution. To maximize the attraction, however, I like to add even more eye-appeal to the mix with a larger spoon like or even a salmon-style flasher.

Flashers have a long history on the open-water scene, primarily for trolling up trout and salmon. But they're also deadly under the ice. I've had great luck for tullibees and crappies with a long, wide salmon flasher with a highly reflective metallic finish.

To fish a flasher, you'll need an ice rod (http://store.13fishing.com/c/ice_rods_wicked) heavy enough to handle the additional weight. Upsizing from light to medium power usually does the trick. Spool up with the mainline of your choice, then attach the flasher to it with a swivel, to allow the flasher to freely rotate 360 degrees, producing the most flash possible.



Below the flasher, tie on a 12- to 24-inch leader of 3- to 4-pound BIONIC Fluorosilk (<https://shop.northlandtackle.com/line/bionic-fluorosilk/>). Complete the setup with a Northland's Helium Fly, Larva Fly or Bro Bug tipped with IMPULSE (<https://shop.northlandtackle.com/soft-plastics/>) plastic and/or live bait.

When fishing a flasher rig, avoid the temptation to jig aggressively. You want the flasher to rotate, not flip, flop and flutter. If you're not

marking anything on sonar, lift and drop the rig a few times, but otherwise keep jiggging to a minimum.

For its part, the fly or light jig on the business end of the line will float around and sway like a pendulum below the flasher. Such subtle motions encourage fish that move in for a closer look to take the bait, and are another reason flasher rigs are so deadly for late-winter fishing.

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

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CRAPPIES ANYWHERE

By Jason Mitchell

If there is one certainty with late ice crappies, there is no sure-fire location or formula for success that works across the board. What always amazes me on our travels as we travel across the Great Plains and upper Midwest is just how much fisheries can vary. The strategy and location on a small reservoir in North Dakota will be completely different than a deep natural lake in northern Minnesota. While crappies might indeed be genetically identical across the board, that is about where the similarities end. Each ecosystem has a unique set of rules. Lac Qu Parle fishes much differently than Bowstring. Pipestem Reservoir is drastically different than Merritt Reservoir. There are general rules of thumb and similarities but what separates good ice anglers from the great is being able to figure out



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the small nuances that make each of these fisheries tick.

In our travels, we are able to make some observations and perhaps the most consistent observation is that late ice consistently offers some of the best ice fishing of the winter for crappie on most fisheries. Locations, prime spots and staging areas however can really vary. Shallow sand hill lakes in Nebraska might find crappie staging in three feet of water along pencil reeds during the late ice time frame. A large lake in northern Minnesota might find schools of fish suspending off the deep weed line over twenty feet of water. If there are a few general rules of thumb to follow, it often seems like crappies in natural lakes are much more weed orientated where as we find reservoir crappie relating much more to the old river or creek channel edges, flooded brush or submerged trees or rocks.

On many natural lakes throughout northern Minnesota and Wisconsin, crappies typically suspend out over soft bottom basin bowls or use weeds. As late ice approaches, structure that offers vegetation that is located between where crappies wintered and where they will eventually spawn is usually the dead ringer. Simply connect the dots as to where the fish were and where they will end up.... Usually a shallow protected bay or marsh. The bigger that area is, the more fish it can hold. Sharp breaking weed lines adjacent to these spawning areas are typically good but as the ice rots, fish will push up shallower and ride right below the ice.

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the sand hills of Nebraska however fishes much differently where late ice patterns often occur next to shore somewhere around the rim of the lake and the key is finding the right dip or lip next to shore in conjunction with the right vegetation.

We have fished several great reservoirs for crappie. The upper end of Lake Oahe on the Missouri River System might be one of the best places around right now for catching crappie through the ice over fourteen inches. From large reservoirs like Oahe to midsize reservoirs like Merritt Reservoir in Nebraska or Jamestown Reservoir in North Dakota, what we so often find is that weeds are often lacking. The fluctuations in water levels and sometimes turbidity keep aquatic vegetation from developing and as a result, crappies react and relate to completely different times of structure. Most of the winter, fish seem to relate to the old river and creek channels whether they suspend in the channel or relate to that sharp breaking structure on the sides of the channel. Flooded timber and brush piles are top locations as well. What also makes these reservoir fish different is that they often seem to spawn on chunk rock or rip rap. Shallow rock piles in the back ends of creek arms often load up with fish in spring. We often find fish staging in tributary arms at late ice and as the season gets later, we often find fish pushing up out of the structure of the old channels and up onto shallow flats. If there is brush, trees or rocks, these locations get even better. On smaller reservoirs where there are no incoming tributary arms, what we often find is fish pushing up into the top half of the reservoir and the sweet spots are often inside cuts where the landscape forms a crevice or valley that funnels some of the runoff into one area along the shore. This runoff seems to



eat the ice and stain the water and crappies go nuts.

No matter where crappie live, all fish seem to react to incoming snowmelt at late ice. Fresh water creeping in along the shorelines might add more oxygen, maybe it stains the water. The best bites often seem to correlate when the water starts to color up. Old holes will

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often thaw out and water will often run into the hole where there is foam floating on the surface of the hole. Foam is a good sign. The more holes in an area and the bigger the holes, the better. When you see foam, fish are often cruising a foot under the ice, look for fish really high.

Because you can often anticipate really good crappie bites at late ice, you can catch fish on a lot of different presentations. Jigs with soft plastics are a standby and something I use a lot. Still like to often use tungsten even in shallow water as I love how abrupt the jig falls when I quiver the jig. The soft plastics often seem to move more water with tungsten and the extra weight seems to add a more intense action to the plastics. Tungsten and large profile soft plastic options like the Maki Jamei call fish in.

If there is a presentation category however that I am falling in love with more and more for crappie, it would have to be small spoons. Particularly on reservoirs when dealing with more turbid water, spoons seem to have more flash. Spoons also shine for finding fish over large water. Spoons can run the gamut from ultra-finesse like the CPT Guppy Spoon (pictures in black and white) to loud and proud like the CPT Rattlin' Blade Spoon. On some water, some of the spoons we have success with more resemble walleye tackle compared to the finesse often reserved for panfish. Especially when anticipating big fish or dealing with turbid water and or current. Even on classic natural lake environments, when fish push up right under the ice or start using shallow weeds, there is a different intensity of aggressiveness that is often triggered by spoons.

Finally, and most importantly, late ice or last ice... whatever you want to call it is exactly that... last ice. Often some of the better fishing happens as the ice deteriorates. When water starts to run into the lake and holes open up, you are fishing on borrowed time. Safety is priority number one. If the ice flexes or sags as you walk across it, get off the ice. When the ice comes up in chunks when you drill a hole, get off the ice. Always carry a rope, life jacket and ice picks. Keep your cell phone in a sealed waterproof bag. Don't take chances.



**HUNTING
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Keeping It Pretty

By Dan Galusha

Everyone knows the importance of cleaning and oiling the inside of the barrel and functioning areas of your firearm. Unfortunately some ignore the outside areas, or do it incorrectly. This definitely holds true on the Henry Golden and Silver series of rifles.



First off, something that can be done to all firearms is to give all the metal areas a good treatment of a protecting product. There are a few on the market, but I use Gun Protect. This

A Henry Evil Roy with its soft storage cover to be used over the receiver portion.bass in the rivers of Wisconsin.

Micro fiber clothes are recommended for polishing the Henry Golden Boy's brass areas, and NOT brass polish.



comes in spray or cloth wipes. It also has modules that can be put inside gun safes and cases that will be an ongoing protection for a full year.

To apply Gun Protect I wipe all metal surfaces by spraying a small amount of the product on the wipe, which can be used alone when wanting a quick wipe down at the range. I then wipe all the metal areas, except for the golden or silver area, which will be discussed shortly. If the firearm is all black/blued, go ahead and hit everything. I also open the lever and give the inside of the action one spray, and when cleaning the bore use it has a “follow up” to, or in the place of, the final swab of oil.

Next are the wooden areas of the gun. According to Dan Clayton Luce of Henry Repeating Rifles, the best product to use is linseed oil. Don't use furniture polish. I take a small amount and rub all of the wooden area, which not only protects, but also gives the wood a great shine. Remember you don't need a lot, so a small bottle can last a long time.

Since the Golden Boy rifles have brass I assumed that brass polish would be the way to go. Dan said that this is not the fact for the regular 22-caliber Golden Boy. You should use a micro fiber cloth, like the ones that Henry sells on their online store. This also is used on any of the silver series, including the Evil Roy. I use a Royce brand cloth, purchased online, which is used by optometrists, that has been excellent.

It is a different story on the Big Boy version

Products used to help keep the outside of a firearm looking its best – Gun Protect Storage Module; Linseed Oil; Gun Protect Spray; and Gun Protect Treated Towel.



of the Golden Boy rifle. With this firearm it is recommended to use a brass polish like is sold at the Henry online store. I don't have another suggestion on this, so I would recommend staying with Henry's recommendation, unless you definitely know of an equally good product.

Earlier Gun Protect modules were mentioned for using in gun safes or lockable cabinets. It is advisable to have such a unit to store guns and ammo.

Another layer of protection is using the soft protective cover that originally came with the Golden Boy, Golden Boy Silver and Evil Roy. Whenever storing these rifles the cover should be placed on them. It will help prevent inadvertent scratches that can come from a multitude of sources, including taking the rifle in and out of the cabinet.

Guns like the Golden Boy and Evil Roy are not only some of the best and enjoyable for shooting, but also are great showpieces. Always remember to completely and properly clean your firearms, with quality products, inside and out, and you will be "keeping it pretty" and in top working order for many years to come.

If you have any questions on this, stop by the Shoot 'N' Plink™ page on the Dan's Fish 'N' Tales® website at www.dansfishntales.com/shootnplink and drop me a line, or go to the Facebook page at www.facebook.com/shootnp link, send me a message. While there make sure to click on the "Like" button. A video regarding this subject is on my YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/dansfishntales, which also has links on my website.

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Until next time, shoot safe and have a great day of plinking.



The Blue Bull

Crouched beneath a canopy of mesquite trees, my guide Tony and I have crept, crawled, and even ran behind an animal I would swear was a ghost if it weren't for the large piles of dung it leaves giving clues to its whereabouts. Elusive and wild, it doesn't show up at feeders, eat corn, or stay in one place for long. Nonetheless we press on, staying one step behind the nilgai antelope - The blue bull of south Texas.

Native to India, these huge bovid weighing up to 700 pounds were first introduced into Texas back in the 1930s by the King Ranch. Decades later they've flourished in the warm climate and vast ranchlands of the southern portion of the state. A few miles outside the historic city of Rio Hondo, within the greater 100,000 acre Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge, the Pair-O-Dice Ranch is inundated with free roaming herds that cross through the property while traveling to and from the refuge.

Bulls in the area will repeatedly defecate in the same pile as a form of territory behavior that's also believed to be a defense mechanism towards tigers - their main predator in India. Covering ground is considered the best offense to locating one, yet by late afternoon we'd walked several miles that resulted in only a brief encounter with a female cow before we decided to call it a day.

The following morning we began trailing what Tony thought may be a solitary bull along the property's border with the refuge. "He crossed here this morning" he said, while examining a fresh set of hoof-prints in the road. Again we crept along a worn trail for most of the morning following its tracks in hopes of an encounter, but the sudden crash of hooves galloping through the brush ahead left no doubt we'd been spotted. With that, we decided to rest and called Ranch Owner Lance Swanberg to pick us up for lunch. "Leave your gun loaded with the safety on until we get to the lodge," he advised, as I knocked mud off my boots and climbed into his pickup.

Along the way we stopped at a few senderos in hopes of spotting a nilgai. Fat chance. Only whitetail



does were out this late as we drove past each one in anticipation of what may appear. My hopes of a nilgai bull were beginning to fade as I carefully scanned the last one with my binocular. Again more whitetail. Lance shifted the truck in reverse and we began backing up when suddenly Tony shouted: Bull! Dustin get out! Get out! In a flash, he and I were both out of the truck and running along the sendero's edge. "There!" he pointed, to a wall of mesquite trees about seventy yards off where a large shape was moving. "Get ready," he hissed, while pulling me in front of him. Finally I laid eyes on what we'd been after for two days, a massive nilgai bull walking broadside towards the mesquite. Without hesitation I shouldered my rifle and peered into the scope. Its huge body filled the glass with slate colored bristles as I ran the crosshairs up its shoulder remembering Lance's advice from earlier that day: "You want to shoot for their shoulder



to try and break a leg or they can run forever,” he’d advised. With that, I clicked the safety off and squeezed the trigger just as it entered the brush. The recoil of the .300 short mag momentarily blurred my view, leaving me to question whether any limbs had obstructed my shot. He’s down! He’s down man! Tony said, giving me an instant sigh of relief that the shot was good. Walking closer, I came to the realization that I’d just shot my first nilgai, and not only was it a bull, it was a mature trophy. I was in awe of its sheer size, yet perplexed how it dropped so easily. “Lucky devil, you spined him,” said a voice over my shoulder. It was Lance. “I saw your shot from the truck, and you broke its back. That’s why it dropped. Congratulations Dustin!” It was an awesome moment. I wish I could say I intentionally shot for the spine, but it was pure luck that I hit it that high. Nevertheless there would be no long tracking or recovery services needed. The bull was massive weighing just over 700 pounds and after skinned, caped and quartered, my pickup truck was loaded down with several hundred pounds of meat along with a beautiful trophy that was headed for the taxidermist. Leaving the Pair-O-Dice that afternoon covered in mud, exhausted, and in desperate need of a shower, I was blissfully satisfied that after two tough days of real free-range hunting, I’d finally gotten what I came all the way to the Lonestar for - the blue bull of south Texas.

Dustin Catrett

**For more information on booking a nilgai hunt
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TURKEY HUNTERS: SHAKE AND WAKE

Fire up gobblers with the new Flextone Thunder Shaker Gobble

The hardworking call geniuses at Flextone are known for pumping out innovative game calls that get the job done when others fail, and at a range of hunter-friendly prices. Known for ultra-realistic tones produced by flexible materials that closely approximate the soft tissues of the real animals they're designed to imitate, more and more Flextone calls are finding their way into the pockets and onto the lanyards of hunters every season.

With the increasing availability of gobbler decoys on the market today, many hunters have started to use the illusion of turkey dominance to bag their trophy toms. But visible cues are only a part of this rouse. Since dominant toms often listen to their domain from the safety of heavy cover and dark shadows, pushing his fight button can require additional stimuli beyond an intruder jake or gobbler decoy. This is when a vocalization or two – one that demands attention – can seal the deal.

In these cases, using a compelling gobble call is a great way to push him over the edge. But many gobbler calls can take years to master, and even seasoned hunters aren't immune from the racing heart, trembling hands and quivering lips that often manifest when a big stud gobbler struts in. The last thing a hunter needs to deal with when gobbler fever sets in is the temporary inability to make a call work properly. Fortunately, Flextone has given hunters the simple advantage they need to spur that big boy into action when he's locked up out of range.

The new Flextone Thunder Shaker Gobble is an easy-to-master bellows style call featuring durable construction for years of carefree use. Just give it a shake and this simple-yet-effective call produces incredibly accurate, natural gobbles.

Following hen yelps and cutts with a gobble – just like real turkeys do – is a great way to create additional realism and intrigue in your calling repertoire. The Thunder Shaker Gobble allows a single hunter to use a mouth call to create hen sounds, and then unleash an incredibly realistic gobble at just the right time. When the boss hears one of his ladies being courted by an intruder, he'll often come running right in to settle the matter.

Flextone Thunder Shaker Gobble

- Model #FLXTK136 / UPC #8-15097-00136-2
- Very easy to use
- Shake for incredibly realistic, natural gobbles
- Durable construction for long-term performance

Turkey hunting is difficult. Stubborn toms and complex calls don't make it any easier. For times when Ol' Tom needs to hear evidence of what he's seeing, Flextone's new Thunder Shaker Gobble is the ideal shake and wake tool to fire that gobbler up and bring him strutting into your decoy set.

Wrapping a tag around a long-spurred leg has never been this easy.



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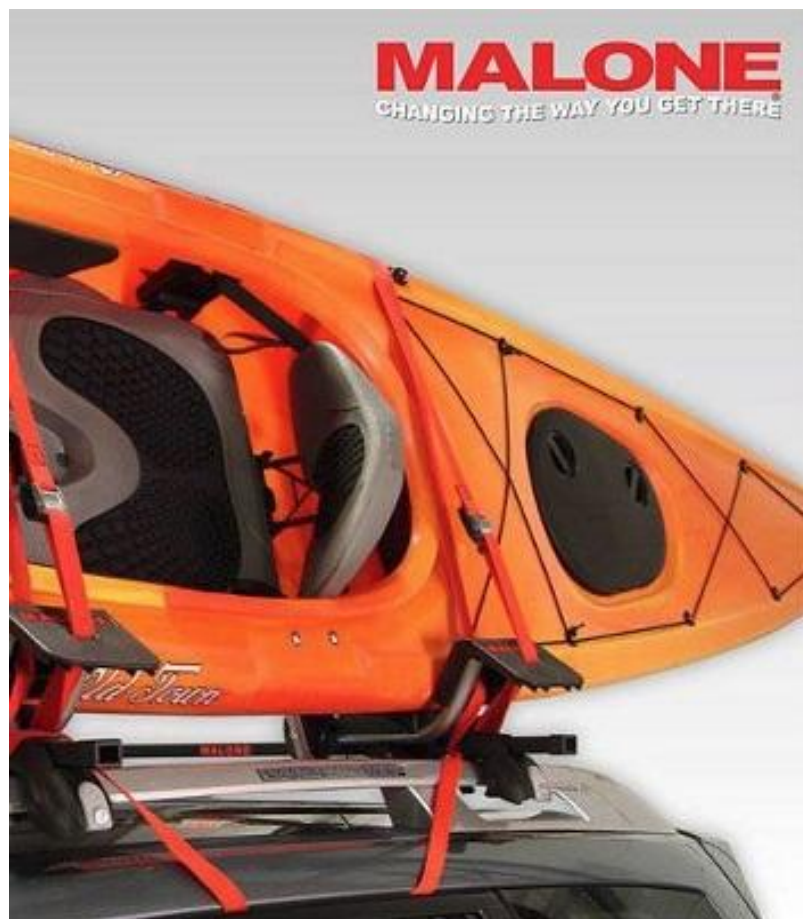
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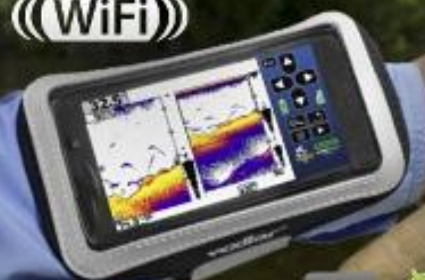
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