

**Today's  
Panfish**

**Cold Bass Fishing  
Basin for Walleyes**



**Crappies On The Side**  
**Fall Fishing With Bro**

**Mentally**  
**Prepare For**  
**Your Next Hunt**



# ODU MAGAZINE™

## EDITOR'S LETTER

Thanksgiving has passed and if you know me, like many, the holidays is a time where my hopes for family unity grow stronger and stronger, but fail year by year. I am blessed to have a great wife and three wonderful children who bring my smiles out.

I write this because my definition of family needs to change and it did, last Thanksgiving and I either forgot or I didn't realize it. Family does not mean what it traditional means to many, but it has an even more expanded meaning. At least to me. To us family is our friends as well and I have many. I am thankful for them.

This Thanksgiving was great and our friends from the south and there two wonderful sons came north for fun and food. I am so glad they came!

Our outdoor community is similar and as ODU continues to grow, so does my family. Well to many to mention here, though I am sure you know who you are. So, to you all take good care, be safe, support our countries of the United States and Canada and remember you have family here in Maine.

This edition of ODU Magazine is packed once again, starting with the Ice Zone, followed



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*Cover is of Captain Brian Koshenina*

**Thank You All!**

by open-water fishing articles, as well as hunting. 26 in all plus many great videos. Some Of What Is Covered: Bass under the ice. Bass in open water. Fall walleye review from Brian Brosdahl. Early ice information and lures and locations. And Crappie to whitetails. Keep an eye open for another edition of ODU Magazine at the end of this month!



ODU is nearing 23,000 subscriptions to our FREE digital fishing magazine. We are elated to know more and more anglers and outdoorsmen as tuning into ODU weekly. Here is the link if you would like to share the magazine with a friend here is the link > [REGISTER YOUR EMAIL HERE!](#)

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

*And please, enjoy the outdoors.*

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







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# Ice Fish'n, Bass Fish'n, You Betcha!

By Captain Brian Koshenina

It's that time of year again in Minnesota. The cool, fall air gives way to the frozen wasteland we call winter. That can only mean one thing, Ice Fishing! As most of us seek a limit of Crappie, a trophy sized Pike or a delicious Walleye we often forget about a plentiful and prized summer fish, the Largemouth Bass.

If you are like me, I usually quit targeting Bass in late September, early October. Up here in the north the steady drop in water temperature forces the largemouth into their winter, deeper patterns and their metabolism slows, and it becomes more difficult to get them

to bite. I shift my focus to Musky and Crappie for the remainder of the open water season and I put my Bass tackle away until next spring. I love fishing for Bass, and I cannot wait until safe Ice to fish for them again. Yes, you read that right, Safe ice! Bass have become one of my favorite species to target in winter, Ice fish'n, Bass fish'n, You betcha.

Bass make a formidable foe under the ice. First of all, they do NOT like being caught in cold water and they offer quite a fight. Second, they bite all day. Predators such as Walleye wait for low light conditions to become active feeders, not Bass, which makes them easy to target the whole day. Third, they are easy to find. Green, healthy weeds are the key to finding Bass under the ice. The healthier the weed, the more likely you will have Bass cruising, looking for an easy meal.

You don't need "Special" or "Species Specific" equipment to target Bass. If I'm jigging, I use my medium light Arctic Fusion combo from HT Enterprises spooled with 4-pound test monofilament ice line, a Snyders Lures 'Willow Daddy" spoon (any color) tipped with a Crappie or Fathead minnow. If



I'm Tip-Up fishing, I will use either my HT Enterprise's Polar Tip up or Predator Thermal Tip-Up spooled with 12-pound ice braid and a Snyders Lures "Willow Daddy" spoon tipped with a Fathead or small Sucker minnow. All of these combinations are relatively inexpensive, and you can use them for just about every species that swims under the ice.

If you have an underwater camera, I highly recommend using it, and here are a few reasons why. You can identify areas that will hold Bass. There is nothing more frustrating than drilling a bunch of holes only to find out that there is no structure, the weeds are dead, and the area is void of life. Remember, healthy weeds or structure equals baitfish which equals the predators that eat them. Another reason for using a camera is you can identify the species you desire quicker which gives you more time to fish. I have drilled a hundred holes, used my flasher to find fish, set up my fish house and started fishing only to find out the species I thought I was fishing for and marked so heavily on my flasher was nowhere to be found! I wasted precious ice time when all I had to do is drop my camera down the hole to see if the Bass were down there.

If I'm fishing in my portable house, I will add a slip bobber to one combo, dead stick it, and jig in another hole. I find that Bass often show up in pairs or in small schools when they are cruising for food so why not offer them a little more to get them to bite. Jigging often brings them in and the allure of a slow-moving minnow suspended in the next hole is often enough to trigger a bite. I often have to "Double

hook set" as both combos simultaneously get bites. If I'm setting Tip-Ups I use the same areas where Bass will frequent, and I set them to the "Soft Strike" setting on the spool shaft. Bass like to suck in or inhale their meal unlike pike which will aggressively try and dismantle their meal upon a strike. Setting your Tip-Ups correctly will help land more fish in general, especially Bass.

The next time you are on the ice and the species you are targeting isn't cooperating consider the Largemouth Bass. Cold water Bass make an excellent meal and a worthy catch and release opponent. I guarantee you will enjoy catching them as much as I do.

Sources: HT Enterprise [www.icefish.com](http://www.icefish.com),  
Snyders Lures [www.snyderslures.com](http://www.snyderslures.com)

Captain Brian Koshenina is a professional fishing guide, Maritime Captain, Outdoor writer, speaker, mentor, volunteer, sales rep and Pro Staff member

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7-9	Frank's Great Outdoors	Linwood MI	18	Fleet Farm	De Forest WI
13	Fleet Farm	Blaine MN	19	Fleet Farm	Mankato MN
14	Cabela's	Sun Prairie WI	20	Cabela's	Woodbury MN
15	Cabela's	Richfield WI	21	Cabela's	Owatonna MN
16	Bass Pro	Gurnee IL	22	Cabela's	Rogers MN

## JANUARY SCHEDULE

9	Bass Pro	Auburn Hills MI	18	Operation Tip up	Cecil, MI
10-13	Ultimate Fishing Show	Novi MI			



# Covering the Basin for Icing Walleyes

By Gary Parsons and Keith Kavajecz

Anticipation would be a great word to describe what every ice fisherman is feeling this time of year! Chances are the walleyes still have their fall feed bag on, which means they will be fairly aggressive. This can make for a really fun bite at first and last light, all the way up to at least an hour after dark. In tannic water it can make for a great bite all day long!



Of course, in order to hook into one of these fish, you first have to find them. So, when it comes to location, we like to look for basin areas that are from 15 to 30-feet deep. The best place to target walleyes is close to drop-offs and within a few hundred feet of the base of them. As winter rolls on, they will become harder to catch since they will begin to roam the basin, making it a little more difficult to pinpoint where they are. However, during early ice they will still be found closer to the drop offs.

It is important to note that this isn't the only early season pattern, as shallow weeds and weed edges can produce in some lakes, but the shallow basin areas can usually hold good populations of fish. The best spots to locate them is off points, inside cups and areas between drop-offs that are close together, such as in between two sunken islands that are close together.

Now that you know where to find the fish, it is time to catch them. This means it is Hot Box time. When we say Hot Box, we are referring to the JT Outdoors Hot Box, which is a heated aluminum box keeps holes open up to 20 degrees below zero!

We like to use it with a dead stick (snare rod), although at this time of year some prefer the more conventional tip up flag option. The 36" Snare Rod, also from JT Outdoors, has an integral Nitinol (an alloy blend of nickel and titanium) spring bobber that is virtually indestructible and kink resistant. It also contains a highly visible indicator bead at the end to let you know when you have a strike. The rod itself is a high-grade fiberglass with a super slow action. This provides a parabolic action, which allows the rod to load ultra-subtly.

Once the fish grabs the bait, the spring bobber and rod loads the fish. When the fish begin to feel this tension, they react by trying to swim away, which in turn puts further load on the rod and the fish end up setting the hook themselves.

The length and long bend of the rod give plenty of time for anglers to get to the



hole and land the fish. Not only can no other method or set-up match the sensitivity of this system, but it gives anglers the ability to spread out lines as they would tip-ups yet be able to fight the fish with a rod instead of pulling it up hand over hand.



While you can also jig, it is important to remain mobile. It is imperative to spread lines from the base of the drop-off and into the basin to get bites. We like to give our Hot Boxes about 45 minutes in one location before moving. We move more while jigging, as we rely on our Lowrance Ti2 to mark fish to be sure we're on them.

When it comes to bait; suckers, shiners or larger fatheads work well with the Hot Boxes. Set the depth of the bait anywhere from 6-inches to 3-feet off bottom, depending on the water clarity. If the fish will come up for the bait, you'll get more aggressive bites and catch more fish, so always experiment with your set-ups until the fish tell you what they want. Jig set-ups can be spoons, Moonshine Shiver Minnows and plain

jigs with minnows. We use many of the Clam, Moonshine and Sidewinder spoons (pictured), and most of the time we have a minnow head on the spoon too.

While it may be hard to avoid the itch to get out on the ice, we can't stress enough the importance of waiting until the ice is safe enough to do so! Always take along and wear a float suit such as the IceArmor by Clam Rise and Ascent suits. It is also important to wear ice picks this time of year so if you do break through you have the means to crawl out.

Be sure you are constantly using a spud to check the depth of the ice as you make your way out. If it becomes unsafe turn around and come back another day. If there is enough ice to take a four-wheeler or sled out, be sure to pack a Nebulus Emergency Floatation Device. This product could save your life if you break through the ice on your machine.

While early ice is very productive and a great way to get your Next Bite, it can also be treacherous. So, have fun, but always remember to be careful!





# THE FUTURE OF ICE FISHING



By Eric Haataja

Quote - "Because hook-setting devices set the hook immediately rarely does a fish inhale the bait. A quickhook set almost always hooks the fish in the top of the mouth."

Every year I see new products and new ways to catch fish. In the past few years I've used hook-setting devices such as a Jaw Jackers for many different species of fish. What's great about a hook-setting device is that most of the time it does not allow the fish to swallow the hook. Here is an example on why a hook-setting device should be allowed everywhere in every state legally.

Let's say you set up tip-ups for walleyes. Your flag goes up and maybe one to five minutes — or longer — pass. You set the hook and catch a 14-inch walleye, but the treble hook is in the fish's gullet. Mortality often happens when you attempt to remove hooks from the gullet or gills.

Because hook-setting devices set the hook immediately rarely does a fish inhale the bait. A quick hook set almost always hooks the fish in the top of the mouth. So, in my opinion these type of products will only help protect and preserve our resources.

As anglers, we also need to think hard about large tournaments on small bodies of water. The jamborees that allow fish kills can negatively impact that lake. When I see these events on small lakes that have the biggest pike, walleyes, bass, or other species all on a board for minimal prizes, I feel this is a waste of the natural resources. I think many of our lakes need to be properly managed and hopefully more jamborees consider catch and release. I support many of the jamborees that practice catch and release.

Take a moment and think about what you can do today to help protect and preserve the resources for the next generation.

Eric Haataja is a professional angler, guide and educator who chases big fish in the harbors and bays of Lake Michigan or on a hot bite throughout various inland waters in Wisconsin. [www.wibigfish.com](http://www.wibigfish.com)

A man wearing a green and black fishing jacket, a brown cap, and sunglasses is smiling and holding two large walleyes. The fish are golden-brown with dark spots and are being held vertically, one in each hand.

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## Cold Bass Fishing

By Dan Galusha

When thinking of bass fishing most people do not think of doing it through the ice. Ice fishing is normally thought of for bluegill, crappie, ring perch, walleye, and northern pike. Think of bass fishing and there are visions of flipping/pitching jigs, chunking crankbaits, slow rolling spinnerbaits, and crawling a plastic worm while fishing out of a bass boat. Well, bass can also be caught through the ice.

Most bass that are caught ice fishing are done so by accident while fishing for panfish. Many times, while fishing for crappie I







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have tagged a bass when the crappie slack off. In fact, it always seems like if you are into bass there are very few to no bluegill and crappie caught.

If fishing for bass plan on tagging some larger crappie. The two go hand in hand with the lures that I use for bass. I've caught a lot of bass on the smaller Custom Jigs & Spins Ratfinkee, Demon, Ratso, Gill Pill and Diamond Jig, but there are others that I use when targeting the species.

I will use basically 3 Custom Jigs & Spins lures when fishing strictly for bass. These are the Pro-Glow Slender Spoon (my favorite-picture to the right), RPM (Rotating Power Minnow-pictured below), and Striper Special. I will also tip the Striper Special and Slender Spoon with a Crappie Nibble and/or wax worm. There are other lures that can be used, but these have proven to be my best. You need something with a large enough hook, but not too large as fish don't feed on large offerings at this time of the year.

This season I plan on using a Natural Forage Baits T-Shad with a small B-Fish-N Precision H20 jig head, which is a soft plastic lure mainly for crappie, but through the ice it should work for bass as well.

I'll give all of these lures an application of Kick'N Crappie. For some reason I've found this scent of Kick'N Bass Attractants to work the best through the ice. It has been reported that the saltwater scent of shrimp also works well.

Locations that hold bass are fairly much the same, as you would fish in open water. Depending on the weather, even shallow weeds and brush will sometimes hold a few bass. Points, deep brush piles off of drop-offs, islands, old creek beds, and weed lines are all good holding areas.

I've also noticed that bass tend to hit better towards the end of ice season, but not during the very late times when spider holes are opening, and water is running into them.

Even ice clarity will help produce bass and crappie. When there is very little to no snow cover, I've fished on the edge and middle of white "milky" ice, where it is surrounded by clear ice. I think the fish are holding under these areas because of light and using them for ambush areas. It is better yet if there is a weed bed under this milky area.





The most important piece of equipment in any ice fishing, and especially for bass, is the flasher. My Vexilar FX28 is fantastic for this use. The adjustable angle of the ProDucer, separation and colored bars are a huge plus. When a lot of red is seen, even with the fish on the outer edge of the transducer angle, it is most likely a bass, if you are not fishing in water with walleye and northern. It can also be a large crappie, but 80 percent of the time it is a bass.

As for the technique used on the aforementioned jigs, it is the same for all three. I'll drop the lure to the depth where I see fish on the Vexilar, rip it upward a foot or two, and then let it fall back down. There are also times when the Slender Spoon and Striper Special will be dropped all the way to the bottom and bounced. This will stir up bottom dust, and get the fish looking.

Some strikes will be a hard hit as the lure is jerked upward, especially with the RPM where it rotates like a crankbait, but most on the spoons come as the lure is falling. This is why it is important to keep a close watch on the line and rod tip. There is also a feel to the pick up if the line is kept tighter as the lure falls. The feeling is as if the weight is gone, so set the hook.

As I said before, don't be surprised if a big crappie, or even a large bluegill is caught while pursuing the bass. It is not unheard of for a nice catfish to jump on the offering, but that is another article.

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





# Today's Panfish, Where To First-Ice



By Chip Leer

Early winter offers savvy ice anglers some of the hardwater season's best panfish fishing, for a variety of reasons. First, hungry panfish prowl predictable places that are often overlooked by other anglers. Plus, the fish are active for longer periods of time, more willing to chase baits, and eagerly swim farther to get a meal than at virtually any other time during the winter.

Since the panfish are on the bite, finding the fish is more than half the battle to sliding them onto the ice. A variety of structure and cover may attract fish, but healthy green weedbeds can be panfish magnets, especially for broad-shouldered bluegills and other sunfish.







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Productive depths range from as shallow as three feet down to the deep weed edge, which may lie in 10 to 15 feet of water. Keep in mind that all areas of the bed are not created equal when it comes to attracting fish. Use sonar and an underwater camera to find sweet spots such as points, open pockets, holes and travel corridors within the bed.

Active panfish hit a variety of presentations. Northland Fishing Tackle's 3/32-ounce

Forage Minnow Spoon (pictured below) is a great choice right now, loaded up with a piece of plastic, waxworms or eurolarvae. Horizontal jigs like the Bro Bug and pint-sized heavyweights like the tungsten Mitee Mouse are top picks, too. To cover your bases, pack a manageable variety of your favorite panfish lures and toppings and see what the fish prefer.

The downside of the first-ice blitz is the fish can be more vulnerable to the effects of cold fronts and other adverse environmental conditions—so time your trips to coincide with stable or otherwise favorable weather.

First ice is also a time for extreme caution.

Wearing a life vest, keeping ice picks handy,

and checking the ice every few feet with a spud bar or chisel can help prevent tragedy while you're enjoying all the great panfish action early winter has to offer

Based in Walker, Minnesota, noted fishing authority and outdoor communicator Chip Leer operates Fishing the WildSide. For more information, [www.fishingthewildside.net](http://www.fishingthewildside.net). Call (218) 547-4714 or email [Chip@fishingthewildside.net](mailto:Chip@fishingthewildside.net).



# PLAN YOUR SEASON

By Shelly Holland



If I don't plan out my winter trips now, before the season starts, I fear that winter will slip away and that ice will be melting before I know it. So, I intend to plan as many ice fishing trips as I can

before the ice even sets up.

I don't know about you, but I'm always comparing my ice fishing season to the last one and especially the best one. But even before the hard water season begins the plan is that it will be the most epic one, I've ever had.

Planning my trips now is like rolling out the carpet for my big winter adventures. Not to mention securing a hotel or cabin can be impossible last minute, so there's no time like the present to set up a winter game plan.

## Early Ice Gameplan

This is a great time to plan a group outing to share that special first ice time of the year. You get to fish with your friends and family while staying safe in numbers. It's always prudent to carry a spud bar and throwable flotation devices but ever more so on thinner ice. There are all kinds of resorts in northern Minnesota that would love to rent a cabin right on the lake and sharing the cost of a cabin can be cheaper than renting a hotel. So as the ice starts setting up, you start setting up your plan for that unforgettable first ice of the year extravaganza.

## Mid-Winter Gameplan

Have a mid-winter plan. Make this winter memorable with an ice fishing trip that's sure to deliver. Sometimes that means getting out of Dodge, going to a lake that consistently produces fish and putting your gear to the test for which it was made. Make those plans to those places where everyone talks about — the ones that seem too good to be true where people catch their limit in a few hours. Places like The North West Angle, Lake Winnipeg or perhaps Tobin Lake in Saskatchewan. Memories like these are priceless and last forever.

You know it will be cold so plan this trip with the hardcore fellow ice anglers. You know, the ones who don't just have a shelter and a buddy heater, they have multiples of everything. Things can fail under extremely cold conditions so be prepared. Don't make it unforgettable for the wrong reasons. It's all in the palm of your hands, my friends. Just google these places or others you may have always wanted to go and begin your journey.



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### Late-Season Gameplan

The end of the ice fishing season: I told ya it's over before ya know it! The fishing is great this time of year so there's all the more reason to plan an adventure. The weather is warming up, ice holes are getting bigger and the fish have their feed bags on. Soon the fish will be spawning, and it could be the last time out on the ice for the season.

So, whether you choose a trophy fishing destination or stick around home to fish local lakes the odds are in our favor this time of year. So, make a plan. This is a great time to bring along novice anglers, younger anglers, or perhaps Grandpa and Grandma.

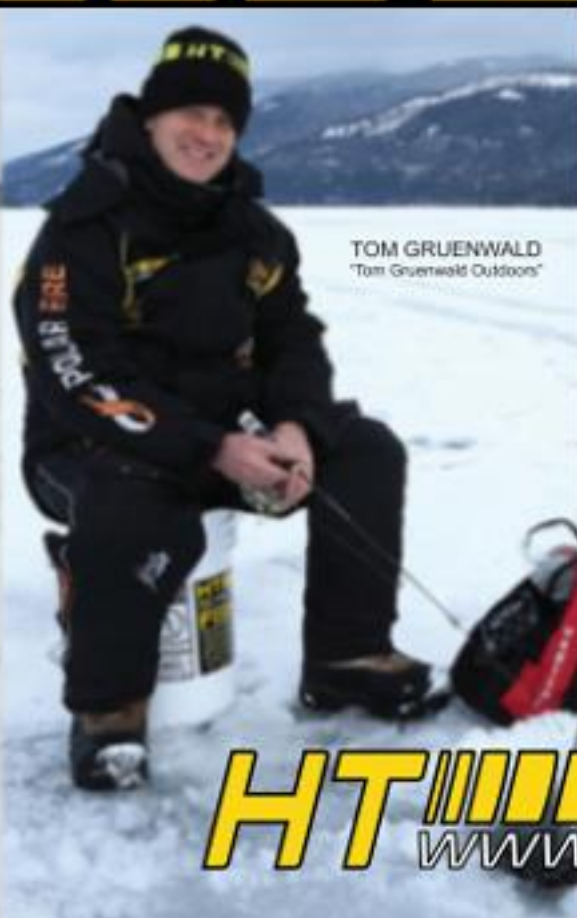
Shelly Holland of Minnesota is a professional angler and promoter who has been teaching others how to ice fish for years. A regular seminar speaker, she excels at relaying her fishing knowledge onto others. [www.sksguides.com](http://www.sksguides.com)

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# Tackling Tough Times

By Tom Gruenwald

Over the past several winters, I've spent some time deliberately fishing highly pressured waters and acutely "educated" fish, often during arduous conditions, attempting to get a bead on tactics that would consistently perform.

Here are a few things I learned.

## **LINE**

Carefully choosing what connects our above water world to the presentation below was unquestionably the most critical factor.

Thin, sensitive, low-stretch lines that hang straight are necessary to maximize contact with the lure and ensure the most diminutive, nit-picky pokes from light-biting fish are transmitted in noticeable fashion--and even when using the finest compositions, requires the recognition of a keenly trained eye.

Although many ice anglers turn to low-visibility lines to reduce spooking under tough conditions--especially in clear water--high-visibility colors actually perform better for detecting subtle takes. I resolved this issue by combining premium, high-visibility backing with a relatively long, low visibility leader connected via a small, lightweight swivel.

## **LURE SELECTION**

The next challenge was determining the best receptors on each end of that line.



For the terminal portion of the presentation, this essentially meant using unique designs the fish hadn't likely seen before. Downsizing and changing color played roles too, but lure style consistently trumped other variables. The presentation also needed to be heavy enough to control yet offer a desirable blend of fish attracting qualities with minimal movement.



I had particularly good results with two lures meeting these criteria: HT's Marmoska Dancer, a very controllable, non-twist, low-profile bullet shaped tungsten design with a minute dancing action; and Snyder Lures' size 10 Big Shaker Spoon, a versatile little bait featuring two nested, hammered blades of contrasting colors combined with a pair of tiny flippers attached via split rings at top and bottom.

Both relatively small-profile baits were heavy enough to drop down efficiently, and with just a hint of movement, provided an outstanding balance of subtle, fish-attracting motion, flash and vibration.

**MAKING SCENTS**

A trace of natural scent was also important. When fish are "skeptical," everything must appeal to all of the fish's senses—especially when dealing with older, larger,

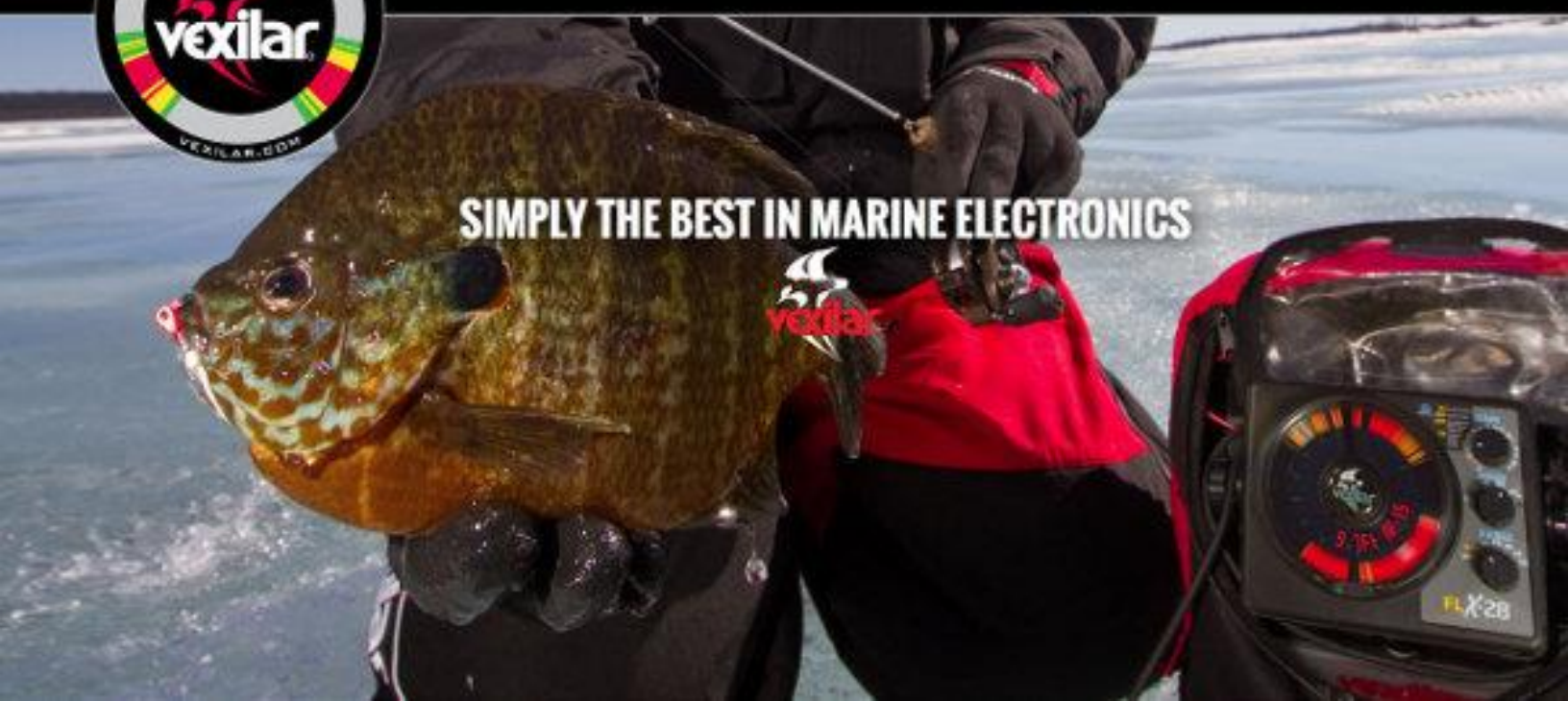


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more educated fish. Thus, adding a wiggly maggot, tiny, lively minnow, minnow head or thin strip of cut bait was often helpful—but sometimes still too much for light biters. Squirts of fish scent applied on thin plastic tails seemed a practical solution, problem was, most scents dissipated rather quickly, making frequent re-application

necessary.

I solved this by using small, thin-tailed soft baits like Berkley Powerbait Ice designs, often trimmed to super-fine, micro sizes. These scaled down, naturally textured plastics sweetened with natural, fish-attracting scents and flavors not only feel, but apparently smell and taste real, causing fish to hang on longer, allowing improved hook setting reaction times.

Similar products, such as Berkley Gulp or HT Ice Scentz, also feature intense fish-attracting compounds, but since they're made from water-based resins, allow more effective scent dispersal and appeared to attain slightly better results with slow-moving ice presentations.

### **ULTIMATE BITE DETECTOR?**

On the other end of the connection, intimate contact with the strike-transmitting line was critical. A fast action rod or spring bobber was certainly helpful, but closer examination revealed it wasn't these things that truly identified light bites—it was the line itself!

I discovered the best way to detect light strikes was by working my presentation with a constant, regular rhythm, looking straight down at my line and focusing on a spot below the waterline where it was unaffected by wind, then watching closely for any interruptions in my



established cadences. Using the line to note any deviance provided the ultimate light-bite detector.

All considered, this makes perfect sense, after all, line comprises the direct connection to your lure. Should your line slip sideways, float up unexpectedly, hang straight when it should be slack, curl when it should straighten or straighten when it should curl, drop that rod tip, reel down and set the hook.

If you can't see your line well enough to watch for unusual movements indicating a strike, try using your fingers as a direct connection bite detector. By holding the line gently between your thumb and index finger while gently jiggling the bait, you'll sense things not revealed by even the lightest spring.

This technique has even led to the development of a unique ice rod advancement by long-time ice tackle innovator HT Enterprises. Called simply "total touch," this system transfers lure movements directly from the line to your fingertips, compliments of a custom engineered handle that conveniently

positions your thumb and forefinger precisely where the line extends under the blank at the fore grip.

Perfect!

### ***WORKING THE BOTTOM***

Another decisive key to the system was working the bottom, using it as a triggering point.

S-L-O-W-L-Y working the lure down seemed to be an effective way of getting even the most lethargic fish to follow;



once the lure settled, rocking the presentation in place, barely shaking the bait or nearly allowing it to essentially sit idle while inducing only the slightest breaths of movement were typically triggers causing fish to turn downward and take the bait directly off bottom.

Such bites were nearly impossible to consistently detect using standard methods, but again, by ever-so-gently lifting my presentation delicately with the line gingerly pinched within my fingertips, I learned to sense a difference when a fish picked up the bait—and this translated into more hook-ups. The technique isn't something easily explained, it's a sort of sixth sense developed exclusively through practice and concentration. You must wait until you first feel weight, but since light-biting winter fish can reject offerings surprisingly swiftly, also be quick to react.

This response requires carefully determined timing, gained and refined only through experience—but once mastered, becomes remarkably effective!



**SUMMARY**

Every situation is different, so these tips certainly aren't meant to be all-encompassing, but rather, provide a foundation of solid principles. Recognize and incorporate them into your finesse techniques, and you'll find yourself becoming increasingly productive when tackling tough times.

Tom Gruenwald has contributed to the modern "ice fishing revolution" over the years by authoring hundreds of magazine articles and four books on the subject, all while spending countless hours promoting the sport through his seminars, appearances and award-winning television program, "TGO, Tom Gruenwald Outdoors."

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# LOCATING WALLEYES DURING EARLY ICE

By Kyle Lynn

As the last of the leaves are blown away and the first real mid 20's temps last longer than a few hours during the early morning our minds start to wonder from sitting in our deer stands to sitting on a bucket staring down an ice hole. The need to scratch the itch sets in as we pull out the old trusted sonar and rod bag and begin to rig rods and charge batteries. We start

dreaming of hot coffee and hooksets while cooking some hot dogs over the old sunflower heater our grandpa's used and now passed down to us. First ice is just around the corner.



If you are like me then it is really hard to not get excited about searching for walleyes on our favorite reef or break. Drilling holes and dropping your sonar down and looking for those red arcs hovering just on the bottom of the lake lurking in the shallows for a meal that will momentarily satisfy its hunger. But the question that stands with even the most

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experienced of anglers is “Where do I start?”

First, let’s think back to the fall patterns. When the fall feed bags were on and the water temps were dropping the fish were stacked up in the shallows. 7 to 12 feet of water we were pulling cranks and drifting bobbers. Start where you left off. More times than not the fish haven’t moved out of their fall haunts. They are still staged on break lines, rock piles, and shallow reefs feeding on the minnows and smaller fish that haven’t left. Until the temps really drop and the ice thickens to the point of driving on the majority of these fish will remain shallow and hungry!

Start with selecting a piece of structure or section of break and begin punching holes every 20 feet or so. This goes much faster with a friend to help drill holes. Next take your sonar and check the holes and look for bait fish clouds and/or the infamous red arcs we so desperately love seeing. You may bring a rod with that has a search bait on the end and drop it down and rip it a few times to see in there is anything lurking nearby. Once you locate the fish it is only a matter of process of elimination to find out what they want. I typically start with a search bait like a Rippin Rap from Rapala or a Psycho Shad from Clam Pro Tackle. Next, I will move to a loud spoon tipped with a minnow head. I have found that noise is key to trigger aggressive fish into biting during early ice. My favorites are a Northland Tackle Buck Shot in Perch pattern and a Clam Pro Tackle Rattle Blade Spoon in pink with gold glitter back. You may get some lookers that do not commit to the bite but when the active and aggressive fish





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home in on your spoon or search bait they will pound it hard enough to set the hooks for you.

Movement

is also a key to success. You must be able to leave a spot with neutral fish or no fish at all and go find the active and aggressive fish. It is really easy to pick a spot and stay there all day, but you are more likely to set more hooks if you're on the move. Pack light stay mobile and stay warm.

Oh, and one more thing, have fun! Enjoying the chase is just as important to success as catching the fish. If you're not having fun, you won't stay to find the next heavy hitter. Good luck out there and remember to have fun.

**Kyle Lynn Fishing  
Minnesota**

<https://www.facebook.com/Kyle.Lynn.Fishing.Minnesota>





# Lake of the Woods

**By Jerry Carlson**

It had been a couple of years since I made my last trek to ice fish on Lake of the Woods. Because of this fact, I was quite thrilled to be invited to join its tourism director, Joe Henry, and a group of Ice Team anglers on a mid-March excursion to Arnesen's Rocky Point Resort in Roosevelt, Minn.

Although it was my first trip to Arnesen's, I was quite familiar with this resort. It has been a mainstay in the Lake of the Woods region for years and is a top-rated destination for both summer and winter angling. Their reputation for putting guests on fish is legendary.

We were all up early on the first morning of fishing. Working with the Ice Team crew meant there were plenty of details to take care of before we embarked onto the ice. It was barely light when we pulled off of the shore.

Since the date was late and the ice was just starting to deteriorate, all of our fishing was going to be done out of portable shelters. Although I had never fished out of a hub shelter before, they proved to be easy to put up, very roomy and a warm environment out of the wind.

As is usually the case when on a fishing trip of this nature, it took a while to sort out the best technique. There seemed to be plenty of fish showing up on our Vexilars, but refining the





presentation took a little time. Eventually, we got dialed in on what seemed to be the best presentation.

My best action came on a Clam Red/Gold Leech Flutter Spoon tipped with a minnow head or tail. I also caught plenty of fish on a dead stick and minnow. I found that by hooking my minnow through the belly I got more bites. When hooked this way, the minnow is constantly struggling to turn over and right itself, which seems to trigger strikes.

In typical Lake of the Woods fashion, we found ourselves catching a real variety of fish. The walleyes were cooperative but so were the sauger, perch and tullibee. Some of the tullibee were quite large and very scrappy fighters.

It wouldn't be a Lake of the Woods trip without a few eelpout in the mix. A couple of the ones I caught were huge and tested my four-pound-test line to the max. Anglers have learned that these fish are actually very good to eat. Mine went back down the hole, however.

A large bluegill fish is shown in profile, facing left, with a lure in its mouth. The fish has a greenish-blue head and a yellowish-orange body. The background is a dark, rippling water surface.

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# Finesse Adjustments for Panfish

By Jason Mitchell

There are a variety of factors that influence the presentation and our overall mindset for catching sunfish and crappie through the ice. Over the past fifteen years, there was a strong overall trend to power fish through locations and find fish. Whether we were attempting to break down





expansive basins or push through weed locations, drilling holes and fishing fast was a winning formula. Finding fish or more specifically... being the first angler to land on the fish was a simple ingredient to success. Those basic guidelines continue to work but there seems to be more situations and conditions that dictate an adaptation of tactics.

I often joked that I don't use one-pound monofilament unless I have to. I don't use a size fourteen hook unless I have to. Typically, when you are in search mode and are the first to land on fish, you are typically dealing with more aggressive fish where you can get away with three-pound test and much larger jigs. Bigger is better if you can get away with it. Because of angling pressure

however, and other factors like zebra mussels, there are situations where we simply have to scale down and use finesse. So, I joked that I don't use one-pound monofilament unless I have to... on today's ice fishing scene on many bodies of water, I have to. As ice anglers continue to get better at finding and catching fish and as many bodies of water continue to clear up from invasives like quagga and zebra mussels, there is a strong case for an increase in using finesse.

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## Line Debate

Perhaps no other adjustment creates such startling results as simply dropping down to one- or two-pound monofilament. Granted you have to drop way down in line diameter just to retain the sensitivity of smaller jigs but there is more at play. Lighter line also swings and moves in the water easier when fish attempt to inhale the jig. What also becomes obvious is that bluegill and sunfish in particular simply see the line. On heavily pressured water where there is excellent water visibility, anglers who drop down to one- and two-pound test continue to catch fish while anglers using four-pound test simply don't. What is really startling to me is situations where we could sight fish in these situations. I have watched bluegills stall at three to four feet away from a jig when using heavier three- or four-pound mono.

Fishing with one- or two-pound test takes some adjustments. Setting the hook is different. Fighting fish and landing fish is more tedious. You can't windmill larger fish and lift them from the hole to your hand using the line.

## The System

On the toughest bites, spooler reels like the Clam Ice Spooler Elite (pictured right) can do a much better job of managing your line. There is misinformation that spinning reels cause twist and that there is no twist when using a

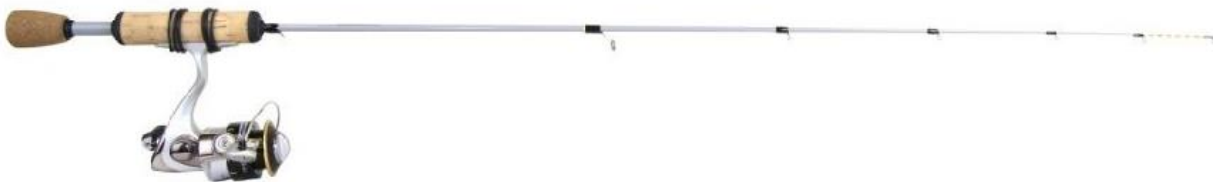




spooler reel. The reality is that there is no or little twist on either a spinning reel or spooler reel when the line is fresh and new. You can better manage your line and simply get more mileage out of your line however with a spooler reel, but twists develop into your line when using any reel because when you pound the jig, you are creating twists. If you can imagine fishing hard for a week... you might get three to four days out of your line with a spinning reel before you have to change the line or take care of it where you might get six days out of a spooler reel before you start to notice the twisting. On tough bites, you simply have to monitor your line and change your line frequently so that you don't have any twists in the line that turn your jig fast when you pause. You can stretch the line with your fingers and drag the line through the snow to work out some of the twists to get through a day but changing line often is the key to catching fish when the bite gets tough. I still find myself using a classic spinning reel often particularly when I am fishing outside but I must change line on a spinning reel much more often. Bar none, the best ice mono on the market right now is the Frost Ice Line because of the thinner diameter and knot strength. This line is also marked every three feet with a high vis orange interval which makes bite detection much easier when having to watch the line.

The rod simply must load up and handle the lighter line. I am a big fan of shorter rods on really tough bites simply, so I can block out more wind disturbance and keep everything closer to my eyes. My favorite finesse rods are the twenty and twenty-four-inch Meat Stick Rods in our Jason Mitchell Elite Series (pictured next page) line up. The tip is sanded down so that you can watch the tip like a spring bobber. What I find on tough bites however is that rod tips and spring bobbers have the most influence on softening the stroke on the presentation but





be prepared to watch the line. Watch the cadence on the line as you quiver the rod and if the cadence changes, set the hook.

## Tiny Challenges

When we scale way down in jig size, we create some challenges. Obviously, it takes more time to get down to fish but on tough bites, the fish want the jig worked slowly through the water column from a much higher ceiling. You simply can't get away with dropping right down to the level of the fish. In really clear water on heavily fished fisheries, you often have to fish down into the zone from four or five feet, sometimes higher. Perhaps the biggest challenge is that smaller hooks simply require a more babied approach during the fight and you will usually need forceps to remove each hook. There are times when we simply have to drop way down in size but the first adjustment, I try to make that usually makes a difference is switch from a horizontal jig to a vertical jig. Vertical jigs like the Clam Pro Tackle Half Ant have the classic tear drop shape but are made out of tungsten. Vertical jigs often shine when the conditions get tough. I personally believe that tear drop style jigs move less water and have a much smaller profile from a fish's perspective when they are looking up at the jig. From a bluegill's point of view, a size ten vertical jig looks as small as a size fourteen horizontal jig. This is a huge advantage because you get the added weight and larger hook on the vertical jig with less bulk and less profile.

Another factor to experiment with is your knot. There are situations where a loop knot will cause the jig to flash and swing more as you pound it. A palmer knot allows you to change the angle of the jig and adjust how the hook rides below the jig. There will be days where one knot will out produce the other.

As a rule of thumb, I would rather use soft plastics over live bait because of the durability and a list of other factors. There are some tough bites however

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where you simply struggle to catch fish with soft plastics and have to use bait like wax worms or maggots. In fact, on the toughest bites, you often have to use fresh bait in order to get bit.

### **Sight Fish Tuition**

I have said this many times, but the knowledge you gain from sight fishing

makes you a much better ice angler. Obviously, you need the right variables to sight fish. You need fish in shallow enough water with good enough visibility where you can simply watch the fish. Even if the fish are small, spend some time watching fish below the hole. Use an underwater camera if you have to. Spend time watching how sunfish and crappies approach the lure. Watch to see what fish like and don't like. This education is not only enjoyable but will serve you well when you can't watch the fish. When you have to create the mental picture in your mind from reading the red lines on your Vexilar, the lessons you learn from watching fish will serve you well. Looking back at almost all of the very best bluegill anglers I have ever met on the ice, almost all of them became scary good from time spent sight fishing.

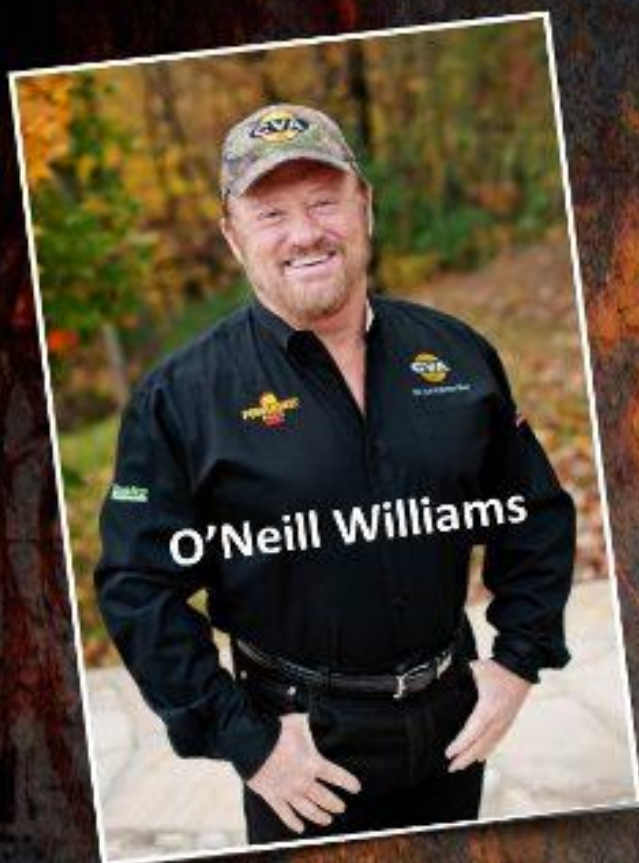
### **The Big Picture**

The reality is that no matter where you fish, finding fresh fish is often the key to being successful. Fishing new ice and being the hunter who finds the fish is paramount. When you are in search mode, you can sometimes fish with a different style and error on heavier line, heavier presentations and fish much faster. On many metro fisheries or on water that sees a high amount of pressure however, your windows of success are much narrower where the conditions dictate a much higher reliance on finesse. Combine the fishing pressure with ultra-clear water and you simply have to make that adjustment even during the search and find phase of the day. The reality for many ice anglers today is that you have to make that adjustment to consistently catch fish.

**The author Jason Mitchell produces the popular outdoor program, Jason Mitchell Outdoors which airs on Fox Sports North on Sundays at 9:00 am. Mitchell is credited with pioneering and innovating many presentations and strategies in modern ice fishing. More information can be found online at [www.jasonmitchelloutdoors.com](http://www.jasonmitchelloutdoors.com).**

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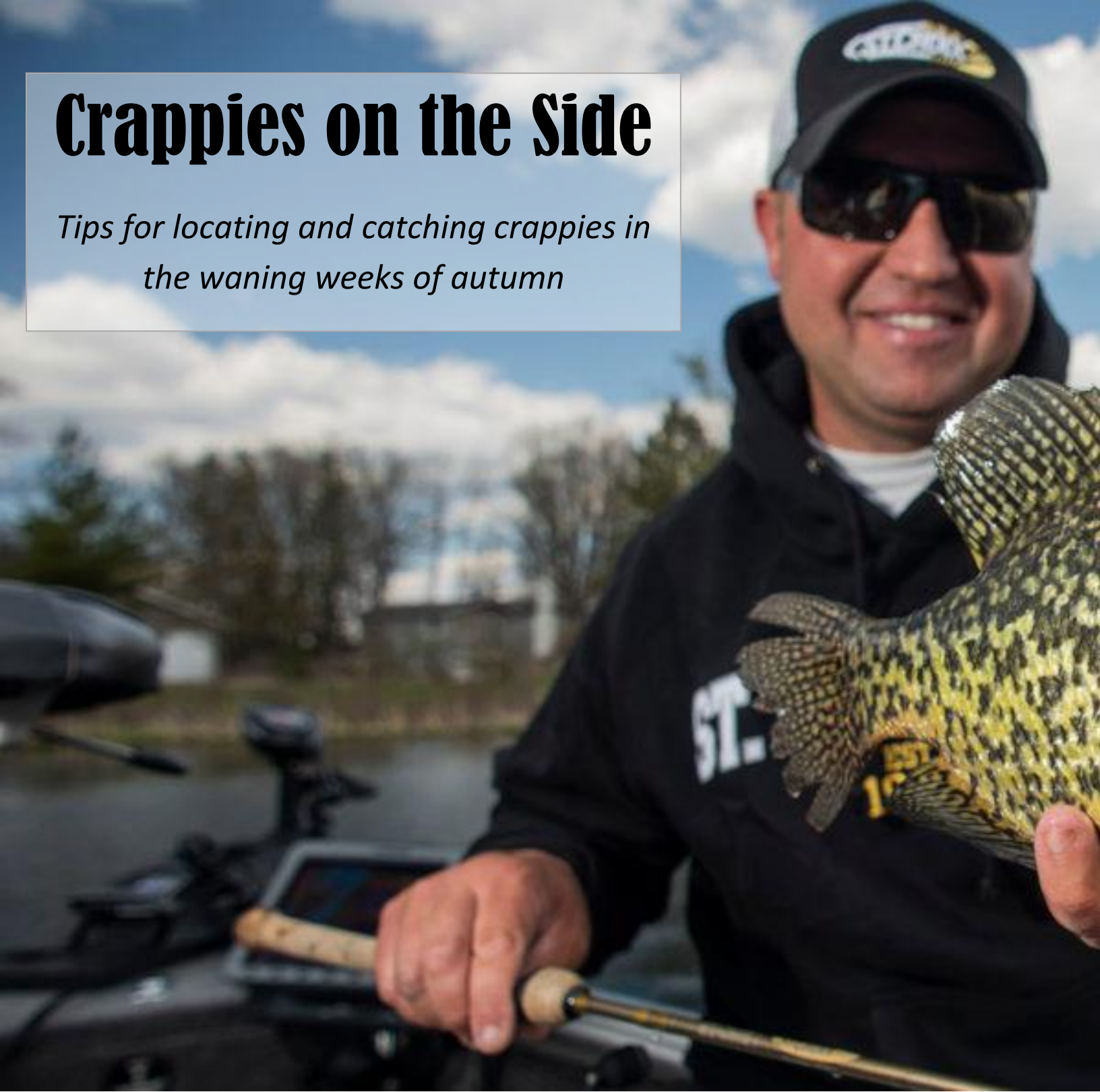
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# Crappies on the Side

*Tips for locating and catching crappies in the waning weeks of autumn*



**By David A. Brown**

Fall is feeding time for predators of every flavor, and crappies are in full-on gorging mode; keenly aware of winter's lurking. Knowing this, Seaguar and Raymarine pro Troy Peterson knows that finding the food means finding crappies. The fish are mostly suspended this time of year, but dialing in the likely bait-holding areas helps him narrow the search.

"We have a pretty big river system with the Wolf River (Wisconsin) and all the minnows, shiners and other baitfish are up in the rivers, scattered amid the timber, in some of the deep holes and





behind dock posts,” Peterson said. “So, we’re basically driving up and down the river, looking for giant schools of baitfish. They’re typically in the wood, whether it be brush or dock posts and the crappie are typically right behind them.”

Beyond the river scenario, Peterson says he employs a similar strategy for crappie on lakes where crappie will be pursuing pods of baitfish that are making a seasonal movement out of the weed beds. Expanding in size, these baitfish will be holding over deeper flats.

“It’s more of an afternoon bite,” Peterson says. “We’re just using the DownVision to look for



weed edges, brushpiles and cribs (artificial habitat features comprising a rectangular log frame dressed with brush and other accents). Crappies like to sit over wooded structure, making it easier to drive across lakes and reservoirs and make a grid to find out which cribs the fish are sitting on.

As Peterson explains, local fishing clubs build these cribs to provide habitat in otherwise barren areas of the lakes. Typically weighted with cinder blocks, these fish attractors are dropped beyond the zone of natural cover. On many northern waters, a permit is required to introduce habitat, like cribs and brushpiles. Opposingly, on southern lakes and reservoirs, ardent anglers sink their own structure, refreshing productive brushpiles, as they erode over time. (There's an Arkansas guide who has over 2,000 brushpiles marked on a single reservoir!)

## TECH TACTICS

With Raymarine Axiom Pro 12 and 9 units on his dash and a 9 on the bow, Peterson lauds the crisp clarity of traditional 2D sonar and DownVision images. From a simple time-management perspective, this amazingly sharp detail allows him to immediately recognize what he's seeing and respond accordingly.

"Raymarine's signals are so clear that when you get fish suspending over deep water, you can almost count the minnows in the bait school versus a giant blob or who knows what," Peterson says.

Also, Raymarine's interaction with Navionics Auto Chart Live takes scouting to a new level. Particularly critical on previously unmapped waters, the ability to record and store what he graphs proves invaluable for open water pursuits, as well as ice fishing.

"This allows me to grid out a lake and create my own maps," Peterson says. "I can find the deepest holes or the basin, I can find the sharp breaks, I can use SideVision to find and mark the cribs."



Marking weed edges, wood piles and rock structures before first ice provides key perspective that guides his decisions while he's standing on the lake. Again, it's time management, born of understanding.

"When we're ice fishing, we don't have the ability to scan, we have to just go and drill holes and you have to be right on top of spots," Peterson said. "That's the beauty of using the Auto Charts Live feature."

**For optimal imaging, Peterson offers these tips:**

"I've found that on certain types of water, you need to play with the settings a little more," he says. "If you have murky water or really clear water, settings are a big deal. I'll play with the contrast a lot to try and identify the types of species that are mixed in with the bait."

"We have walleye, pike and bass mixed in with these bait pods. Once you get good at it, you can determine the actual species of fish by the soundings you're getting. Darkening up the contrast and increasing the gain a little bit will give you better definition."



**TARGET ACQUIRED**

Once Peterson locates the crappie-friendly structure, he takes a simple, yet undeniably effective approach to tempting the fish. Inspired by old-school cane poling, Peterson equips uses a telescoping 14- to 16-foot pole rigged with 8- to 10 Seaguar AbrazX fluorocarbon to deploy a minnow on a No. 2 long shank Tru-Turn hook with a 1/4-ounce weight, all under a slip bobber.

"On the river system, crappies tuck behind brushpiles and vertical structure like dock posts and stumps, staying out of the current and just sucking in anything that gets eddied back into where they're hiding."

"There's nothing more effective than cane poling and dropping your bait directly on top of them without worrying about casting to them or feeding the line back. You want to get your bait as close to that vertical structure because eddies suck whatever they're eating to the back side of

that structure.”

As Peterson explains, the 1/4-ounce weight serves as an escort for his bait. Precision placement is the key ingredient, so he wants to know exactly where each bait goes.

“I want it to drop perfectly straight down; I don’t want any whip or resistance in that line,” Peterson says. “I want to be able to suck that bait as tight to the structure as I can, especially when I’m fishing really thick brushpiles. If I see a pocket on the screen, it’s really important to drop down in there quickly and get the fish out.”

Now, if Peterson’s fishing more around docks in the river system, he switches to a tube or a craw tube presentation. Skipping or flipping works and he’ll match his jig head size to water flow.

“When the current is strong, you want to get your bait down there, so we may use a 1/16- or a 1/8-ounce head,” Peterson said. “But in average current, a 1/32- to 1/16 is what I use.”

Successful southern reservoir crappie masters will mark a brushpile, throw a marker, quickly back off, and make long casts with light jigs. 1/16th ounce is a standard, shifting up with winds and down with a still surface.

One particularly effective combination is a Z-Man Finesse ShroomZ jighead with a Z-Man ElaZtech Finesse ShadZ or Trick ShotZ. The inherent buoyancy of ElaZtech slows the fall, while the material’s durability stands up to fish after fish.

If you prefer hardbaits, LIVETARGET’s lipless Golden Shiner Rattlebait is a proven crappie slayer. Cast over the brushpile, let the bait sink a couple seconds, and retrieve straight back to the boat. (A new, smaller Golden Shiner Rattlebait will be available soon, too.)

Crappies don’t leave the lakes, rivers and reservoirs in late fall. In fact, if you locate fish, there’ll likely be throngs of them. Look for wood structures on the edges of current and brushpiles positioned on points and breaks, and feed them live minnows, finesse jigs and miniature rattlebaits. You’ll be glad you did...





# Power Trolling the Fin Spin Jig Heads

By Bernard Williams, Outdoor Writer



Being a competitive crappie fisherman takes lots of work and studying to stay on the cutting edge of this sport. You can't discount any technique that catches fish, whether you like it or not. To outsmart the fish, you must employ different methods.

Power Trolling is a technique that many of us need to learn and utilize. It's not new to the crappie fishing game, it's been around for quite some time. One of the most feared crappie fishing teams in the area Mr. A.E. Smith & fishing partner Flo Smith, from Brookhaven, MS introduced it back in the early 70's using cane poles and a 5 oz. weight. And by the way, it was a known fact their competition hated to see them coming because they knew they were bringing the "big guns".

"We would rig our poles with two hooks and a heavyweight in between and push them with our trolling motors. Boy, would we catch fish. This was back when the limit on most lakes was 50 per person. We've caught our share of limits during the day." According to Mr. Smith, "We weighed 20 fish per team. Flo and I could hang with the best of em and have been fortunate enough to have won our share of tournaments over the years. It was not unusual to catch doubles on several poles at one time. I know this technique works because Flo and I helped bring it to town."

Fast-forward to today, Mr. A.E.'s son, Les Smith of Como, MS has taken what he learned from his dad, mom and perfected it even more. He's one of the designers of the new B'n'M Pow-R-Troller. This is a heavy-action trolling pole designed to hold weights up to 3 oz. or heavier with plenty of backbone and a sensitive tip to see the lightest strike. His favorite is the 16ft pole.

"Jack Wells entrusted Kent Driscoll, John Harrison and I to come up with the ultimate power trolling rod. We spent an entire fishing season working with prototypes, over and over, back and forth until we got a pole that's light enough to handle, yet strong enough to hold the weight and "air mail" a 3-pound crappie on the other end. To protect the handle we put an aluminum collar or V-Grove on the end and also to allow an easy fit into the rod holder for the same rod placement every time. Thanks to Jack for listening and allowing our input to design such a great pole."

Les is adamant about his setup. He feels it very important to fishermen trying to learn the Power Trolling technique. According to Les, "Power trolling is my favorite technique once the spring spawn is over. I fish the rest of the year with the same setup, the only thing I do in the colder months is slow down to around .7 and tip my fin spins with a minnow versus a curly tail."

"I have used several different line setups but this summer I tried a new setup and fell in love with the results, a similar line setup to long-lining. I put my weight (1oz, 2oz, 3oz) up front (top of my leader), move down (2 ft) and put my first overhand knot or 3-way swivel, then a (3 ft) leader and lure at the bottom. With the heavier weight in the middle, we seem to get what we call "drive buy" strikes, a quick hit and turn it loose."



Smith says, "I began to wonder if they were feeling the resistance of the heavyweight and simply turning it loose before we could get a hook set. Which led to trying this new setup with moving the weight to the top to experiment with the resistance factor. I was pleasantly surprised with the results"



and for several trips fishing this setup alongside my original setup. It has quickly become my favorite setup for power trolling. Depending on several factors: the time of year, depth of water and speed I start out in the spring with 2oz weights while the water temp is still favorable and the fish are still in the fairly shallow water. Once the fish go deeper in there summer pattern I transition to 3oz weights to get down to where the fish are staging and to keep my lines more vertical while running up to 1.4 mph."

Smith continues, "Fall fishing I transition back to either 2oz or 1oz weights when the fish move shallower and slow down to around .7. Smith says, "My lure of choice is the Crappie Magnet Fin Spin Jig Heads. The fin spin bade will spin as slow as .3 miles and hr whether you are power trolling or long lining. The concave head shape makes it dart and creates a unique look and movement. It doesn't matter what body I add, it has unbelievable realistic action. They have double cross barbs that hold any jig body, be it solid body or tube jigs. My favorite combination is the Fin Spin curly tails with a Slab Curly trailer (no minnows) this is a deadly combination." If you haven't tried this combination you are missing out on some good crappie fishing!"

I've used this lures on several

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occasions long-lining. Here's what I've found to stand out with the Fin Spin Jig Heads.

- The distinct shape of the shad Dart shape creates a different movement and the cup on the front forces water to the blade causing it to spin at slower speeds.
- The willow shape blade creates a smaller flash and less vibration that crappie can't resist.
- Double Cross barbs hold any soft plastic bait on better as you cast or troll this lure.
- Larger gap hooks make this perfect for catching the huge Grenada Slabs.
- Huge color selection to choose with glow colors coming.



The Fin Spin, Crappie Magnet, and the Fin Commander are designed and sold by Leland Lures. Owner Jeff Smith sells them thru Wal-Mart and other stores, as well as his website [www.troutmagnet.com](http://www.troutmagnet.com). I hear he's got a new model Wrapped Fin Spin that's deadly on crappie. Don't tell Les I told you, keep it quiet.

The Pow-R-Troll is sold at all your B'n'M outlets. Online stores like Grizzly Jig ([www.grizzlyjig.com/p-515-pow-r-troller.aspx](http://www.grizzlyjig.com/p-515-pow-r-troller.aspx)) has excellent prices on single pole purchases and they offer a 4-pole discount. The Pow-R-Troller is offered in 14', 16' and 18' lengths.

Like all crappie fishing techniques, it's up to you to choose what works best for you. If you want to cover lots of water, be able to turn around quickly on open water schools, then Power Trolling is a technique you need to add to your repertoire. I did, and I've never regretted it. I can push soft plastics and live bait. I can fish open water and stump fields with few hang-ups.

Go ahead and sneak out there one day and try this combination. Don't tell any of your buddies until you feel confident enough to use it daily. Mr. A.E, Les and I all say it puts fish in the boat and you'll enjoy the action.



# OPEN WATER FISHING 2018

By Bob Jensen

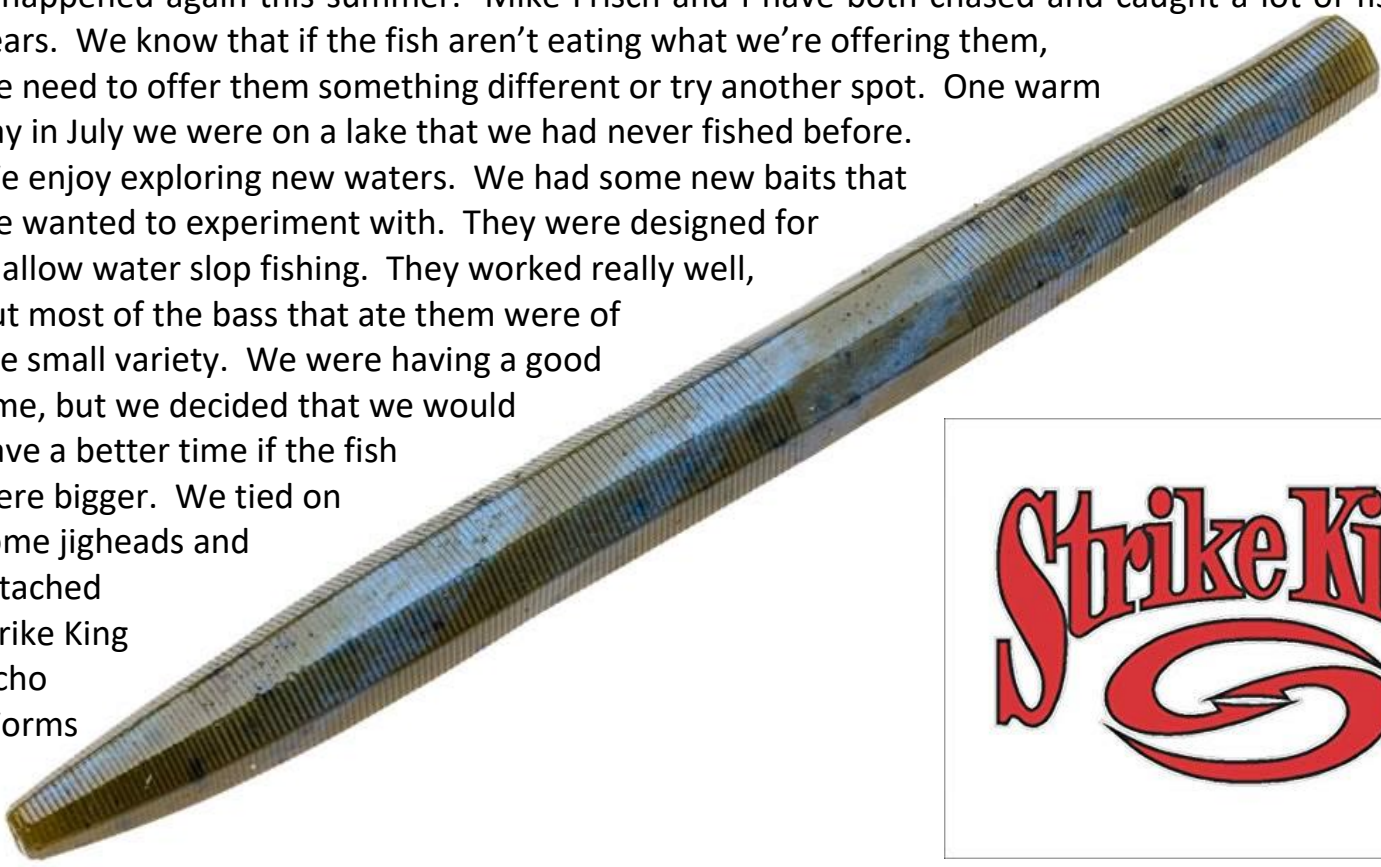
We were fishing largemouth bass on a lake in Minnesota this late October. It was a beautiful day and the thought never entered my mind that this could be the last trip of the year. Since then the weather has cooled noticeably, and there has been ice on the ponds here in north Iowa for several days. I now realize that that bass expedition probably was my last open water fishing trip of 2018. I always like to reflect on the fishing season that has just been completed. Following are some of those reflections.

A common theme of my reflections almost every year is that I re-learn a lot of the things that I already know.



*Chad Peterson returns a walleye to its home in a Minnesota lake this past June.*

It happened again this summer. Mike Frisch and I have both chased and caught a lot of fish over the years. We know that if the fish aren't eating what we're offering them, we need to offer them something different or try another spot. One warm day in July we were on a lake that we had never fished before. We enjoy exploring new waters. We had some new baits that we wanted to experiment with. They were designed for shallow water slop fishing. They worked really well, but most of the bass that ate them were of the small variety. We were having a good time, but we decided that we would have a better time if the fish were bigger. We tied on some jigheads and attached Strike King Ocho Worms to



them and went to a nearby weedline. There we caught lots of fish, and they were much larger. Reminder: It doesn't matter how we want to catch the fish, if we want to be successful, we need to offer them what they want and where they want it. That is a helpful reminder for the upcoming ice-fishing season.

Over the past several decades my boat partners and I have used in-line planer boards to catch salmon, trout, walleyes big-time, even northern pike and crappies. This year Tanner Arndt and I used in-line boards to catch dozens of perch in a short period of time on Big Stone Lake on the Minnesota-South Dakota border. We had four boards out with Lucky Shad crankbaits behind them. This spread of lines enabled us to efficiently show the perch a variety of lure colors. On this day, color didn't matter, but some days it does. There were times that we had four perch on at once: Lots of fun! Off Shore Tackle makes the easiest-to-use, best running boards that I and many others have ever used.

Fishing for the most part across the Midwest is outstanding, and in many places, it continues to improve. The better-than-it-used-to-be fishing is for several reasons. Certainly, our equipment is much better. Modern sonar draws such a good picture of the underwater world, and from several different perspectives.

Rods are much more sensitive and affordable, lines





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

are more reliable, less visible, and more manageable. I ran a Suzuki 90 horsepower 4 stroke motor this year and was so impressed by the quiet and efficient performance that it provided.

But in addition to the equipment, voluntary and mandated angler actions are helping our fisheries immensely. In some places it's the law that we release certain fish, but much of the time it's voluntary catch and release that has enhanced fish populations in both quality and quantity. Not everywhere and for everything, but in lots of places, fishing is as good and even better than I can remember.

And, with all that said, it's been another memorable open water fishing season: Now, bring on the ice.

To see new and older episodes of Fishing the Midwest television, fishing articles and fishing videos, go to [www.fishingthemidwest.com](http://www.fishingthemidwest.com).





# Big Fish Anyone

By Captain Mike Gerry

Warm days are not necessarily your best winter time fishing; I understand the winter can be harsh on the body but if you want the best big fish days on the water you probably need to be



tougher than the average fisherman. The problem is if you're after a trophy size bass, the nasty cold, rainy, snowy day in the mid of winter is generally when you're going to find that trophy bass. I have found most of my biggest fish have come on the worst winter day of the year. In fact, the lake record caught in 1991 of 14 lbs. 8 ozs. was a cold rainy half snow winter day on Guntersville.

The down side is, it's hard to stay focused and continually work the proper depths and structure to find that trophy fish. The elements fight against you, your hands are cold, it's hard to feel a bite and most of the time the bites are few making the day long and boring. I find that knowledge in this case is your best friend, know what to expect, dress for the tough elements, bring some of those \$.50 hand warmers and put one in each pocket to keep feeling in your hands.

Don't waste time, fish where the big fish should be in this type of weather, in my opinion this is extended off the long deeper points. I find that in a bad cold winter day the bigger fish extend themselves off under water points from the first break extending down to 20 feet or more of water. The reason being is there is generally still grass near the shallow top and stumps with shell beds off the deeper points. This is all ideal locations for that big trophy bass and with some patience and hard fishing you just might find it.

Lastly fish small baits, work them slowly and make very precise casts. Use your Lowrance structure scan to find the structure where the big fish have the best chance to hide. Work those pieces of structure very thoroughly; make several casts so you cover every angle. You won't feel big bites you'll just feel a twitch or heavy rod tip, make a good hook set because it could be the fish you have been waiting for!

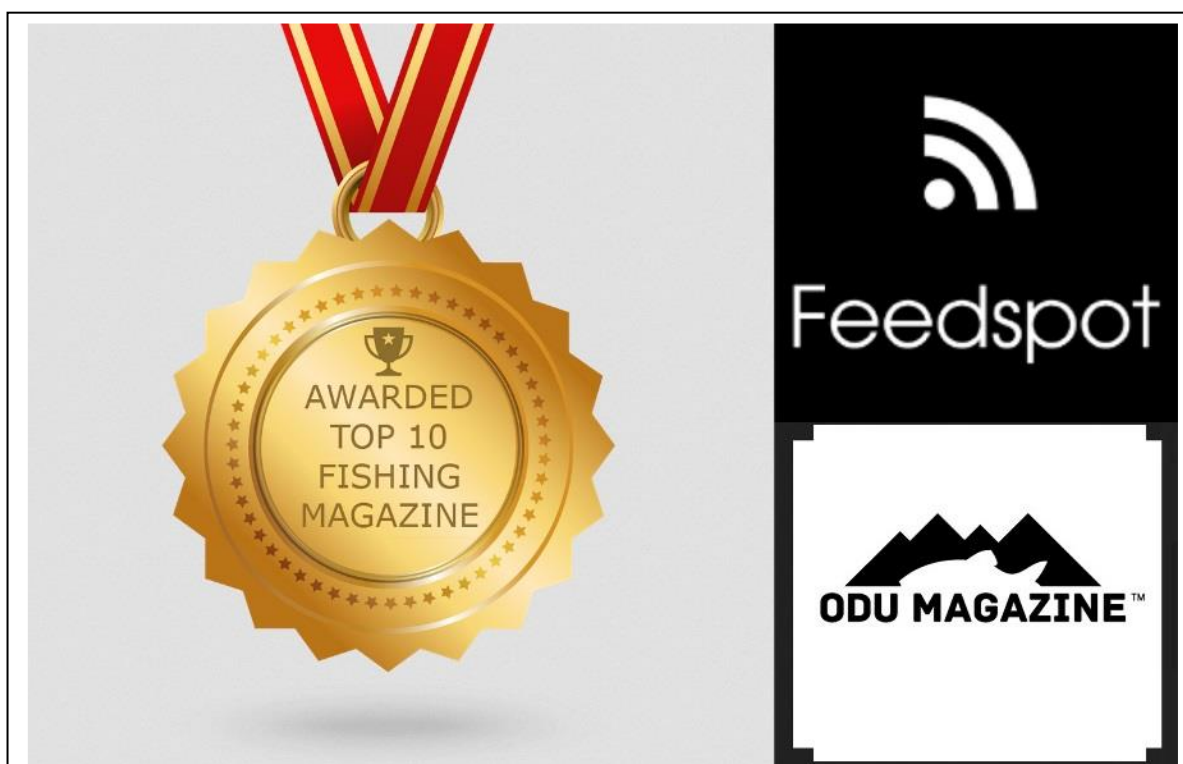
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Feedspot (<https://blog.feedspot.com>), one of the webs largest news aggregators and sourcing sites, released their ranking of over 1000 digital fishing magazines and ezines on the web. ODU Magazine was ranked sixth!

The magazines/ezines were ranked on these criteria:

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***Alternative  
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Game***

# Where No Ned Has Gone Before

By Ted Pilgrim

The legendary Ned Kehde isn't likely to utter the phrase that's made him famous; the term for the rig that's forever transformed the bass fishing landscape. Actually, the chances of Kehde going third-person like some Prima donna wide receiver are roughly the same as his odds of playing in the NFL. That's just Ned being Ned: the fact the humble Hall of Fame angler would rather credit those



other fathers of finesse—Chuck Woods, Guido Hibdon, Harold Ensley, etc.—than acknowledge his own momentous role in bass fishing’s backstory.

Such modesty can be misinterpreted, but in Kehde’s case simply underscores the exceptional skill with which he practices the method known more broadly as ‘Midwest Finesse.’ Friend and former NASCAR driver Terry Bevins says, “Ned’s one of the best finesse anglers in the country. Put him in the back of the boat with one of his finesse jigs, and he’s likely to whoop your butt.”

To hear Kehde tell it, the bass-catching power of his “little jig” is so great there’s simply no reason to change it. “In years past, we’ve experimented with just about every new rigging refinement you can think of,” notes Kehde. “In the shallow impoundments we fish, none have been so fruitful as an exposed-hook, mushroom-style jig dressed with half a ZinkerZ or other finesse worm. Day after day, season after season, it inveigles dozens and dozens and dozens of bass.”

### **The Ned-Miki**

Interestingly, the same simple motivation to catch more bass has inspired anglers across America to create unique and individualized versions of the Ned Rig framework—both in retrieve and the way they fasten a finesse bait to a hook.

Longtime Ned Rig fan Joey Nania, professional angler and Alabama based fishing guide, has devised a couple key mods to the presentation. Recently, he’s guided clients to loads of spotted, largemouth and striped bass, wielding a concoction he calls the Ned-Miki Rig. “As bass fans know, the Damiki Rig has been a money presentation for enticing shad-focused bass suspended in 15 to 30 feet,” says Nania. “But you need a really well-balanced, 90-degree jighead and a compact shad-shaped bait to pull it off. Having fished the Z-Man NedlockZ HD jighead





for a lot of my regular Ned Rig fishing, I realized this head would really shine for ‘video-game’ fishing—working individual bass on sonar, vertically, playing cat-and-mouse. It’s versatile enough that you can cast the bait to suspended fish, too, just letting it glide and pendulum as you work it back to the boat.”

A 1/10- or 1/6-ounce NedlockZ HD, says Nania, melds perfectly with a Z-Man StreakZ 3.75, a bait he calls “one of the best small shad imitations ever. And because it’s made from ElaZtech, the bait’s super buoyant. When you pause and let the Ned-Miki soak, the bait maintains a natural horizontal posture. Similar fluke-style baits aren’t buoyant, making them ride tail-down, rather than hovering horizontal like a live shad.”

Northern anglers fish a similar method, keying on suspended or rock-hugging smallmouth bass. The Ned-Miki has even evolved into a superlative substitute for a dropshot rig, which isn’t quite so precise for big sluggish smallmouths hunkered down between boulders.

“Watch the bait drop on the sonar screen until it’s about 1 foot above the fish’s head,” Nania explains. “Hold the bait still. When a bass begins to rise and chase, lift the bait to take it away. Sometimes, a bass will chase the Ned-Miki up 15 or 20 feet, absolutely crushing it on an intercept course. Other times, you have to entice them a little, using the bait’s super-soft, high-action tail to close the deal. Almost like a dropshot, but even more dead-on.”

### **All-Terrain Ned**

Going where no Ned Rig has gone before, Nania is ecstatic when he mentions another new finesse device. “What can I say about the Finesse BulletZ, man? This jighead is off-the-charts cool. Rig one with a Finesse TRD, MinnowZ or TRD CrawZ and fish simply can’t tear it off. I’ve had the same bait on the same jighead for the past week, and dozens of bass later, it’s still going strong.”

Made to snake Ned Rig style ElaZtech baits through the thickest cover, the Finesse BulletZ sports a subtle bullet-shaped head and a slender keel weight molded precisely onto a custom, heavy-duty size 1 VMC EWG hook. “People look at this jig and wonder how the heck you rig a bait without tearing it. It’s funny because it’s actually a non-issue with ElaZtech, which is pretty much tear-proof. And once the bait’s in place, it’s there until you take it off.

“Goes without saying that the bait’s weedless,” says Nania. “But I’m also just discovering how well the little jig skips under docks,” he adds. “Regardless of the cover— rocks, brush, grass, manmade structures, etc.—this is one incredible jig-bait combo for finessing big bass in places you couldn’t



previously throw a Ned Rig.

"I like to rig a 1/10-ouncer with a TRD MinnowZ—Smelt and Hot Snakes are two of my favorite patterns—and skip it under docks. Rigging the same bait on a 1/6-ounce Finesse BulletZ jig also shines for casting into deeper schools of bass."

Nania notes how the jig's keel weight makes the bait glide and slide horizontally, rather than nose-down. "It's like some radical, improved version of the slider head, except this jig perfectly matches 2- to 4-inch finesse-style baits. And you can pull it right through the thickest brush piles with no problem at all."



From southern impoundments to northern lakes and rivers, the Finesse BulletZ jig may be at its best when rigged with Z-Man's authentic mini-crayfish bait, the 2.5-inch TRD CrawZ. "The TRD CrawZ is a subtle, unassuming little critter," says professional angler Luke Clausen. "But rigged with the Finesse BulletZ jig, the bait rides in this freakishly lifelike, claws-up posture. Put it in the water and its buoyant little claws flap and wave, virtually taunting bass to bite—and they do," Clausen laughs.

## Ned-Neko?

Blurring boundaries between Ned-style and other finesse presentations, creative anglers have concocted what we'll call the Ned-Neko Rig. Coupling a Finesse TRD, Hula StickZ or other buoyant finesse bait with a Neko hook and Neko weight yields astonishing action, and an intriguing underwater posture.

Hooking configurations depend on cover and bass activity level. The simplest is to Texas-rig your chosen finesse bait onto a #1 to 2/0 Neko style hook. Finish the Neko-Ned Rig by inserting a 1/32- to 1/8-ounce Neko weight into the bait's tail-end, resulting in a compelling pogo-stick-action along bottom. Also effective is a drag-and-deadstick retrieve, particularly in small, high-percentage zones.



Or, you can get extra wacky (pun intended), and hook the worm right through the middle, leaving the Neko weight in the tail. The toughness of ElaZtech even eliminates the need for an O-ring; just a 1/0 Gamakatsu Finesse Wide Gap hook, your favorite TRD and another alluring look bass can't say no to. Ned inspired. Ned approved.



# Things Change For Whatever Reason . . .

By Mike Frisch

Those of us who love the outdoors rely on patterns – things that typically happen at particular times – that help us predict what fish and game will do in an effort to maximize our chances for fishing and hunting success.

While patterns are reliable at times, sometimes the fish do what they want to do regardless of what the “pattern” says they should do. A case in point comes to mind from this past season and involved walleyes and an episode of Fishing the Midwest TV that a fishing partner and I were trying to film.

We located three schools of walleyes relating to main lake structure that were eager to hit our live bait rigs the day before the scheduled shoot. The next day with cameras on board, under very similar weather conditions, we were only able to get a few of the live bait, structure fish to bite.

Mid-day and with several fish still needed, we made a switch to a basin area and began trolling Lucky Shad crankbaits (pictured next page) on lead-core line in deeper water. This open water trolling pattern had produced only a few small fish the day before. On this day, however, three of our first four fish were over 20” and we wrapped up the shoot that afternoon.

Why did the structure fish shut down and the trolling fish “grow up”? I’m not sure, but the lesson from that day was the importance of keeping an open mind and being willing to change fishing locations and methods when what you are currently doing isn’t working.

While sometimes change doesn’t improve fishing results, sometimes it does and this particular day it did!

Clear, clear waters





Last year at this time, I believe I wrote about the prevalence of clearing waters being encountered in many lakes, largely due to zebra mussels.

This trend certainly continues as more and more waters are found to be “infested” and the water continues to get clearer and clearer, meaning we as anglers must adapt.

The biggest change that I am

seeing relating to zebra mussels and clear water involves the depths various fish species are now being found at.

In the past, I’ve written about how much of my walleye fishing now occurs in deeper waters and that continues to be true. This year, I also saw that trend continue with much of my bass fishing as well.

Deep weedlines – a common holding spot for largemouth bass – now grow out to 20-plus feet of water in several lakes I fish, and that has resulted in at least some largemouth living in those deeper weeds. Smallmouth bass that I used to find on tops of rocky humps in 8- to 12- feet are now more often found deeper too, often on the deeper edges of these humps, or on humps located in deeper water altogether.

While these deeper fish are often still often cooperative biters, keeping this “deeper trend” in mind certainly is beneficial when searching for fish.

If searching for and catching more fish in the future is one of your goals, the lessons provided by the fish this past year and shared above may help you do just that!

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

Mike Frisch is host of the popular Fishing the Midwest TV series. Visit [www.fishingthemidwest.com](http://www.fishingthemidwest.com) or follow Fishing the Midwest on Facebook for more “fishy” stuff. As always, remember to include a youngster in your next outdoors adventure!

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# The Millennium Rod Transport Rack

## *“Rod Transport at a Low Cost”*

By Bernard Williams

I ran into an old friend, Gene “EZ Pole Holder” Johnson the other day. I asked him what was his latest invention? “I’ve got something you would love, it’s a Rod Transport System that carries 8 poles with ease and convenience. It allows you to identify and separate your rods and protect your tips from breaking. It’s perfect for two or more group fishing trips. It’s easy to remove and it comes with the Spyder Lok adjustment teeth for a sure lock.” Gene says, “On top of that the system comes with a 1-year warranty”.



Gene is one of the engineers/inventors of the famous SpyderLoc Rod Holders and the Sidekick Fishing Seat. Every time I visit his shop, he’s got something new on the workbench. This man is a genius when it comes to making and inventing new things to make crappie fishing more convenient. There’s no telling the things this man has brought to market. I only know of a few, but there are many.

I put this rod transport system on my boat to make it easier to get my poles in the water. Tournament fishermen must utilize their fishing time to the second. Every second your poles are out of the water, you’re not catching fish. This system allows you to get your poles in the water quickly, no more tangled tips, broken tips, and rods laying all over your boat deck.

It makes moving from spot to spot much easier. My partner and I can roll up and move in minutes when we get to a spot, we can get our poles out a lot quicker.

Gene recommends the dual set for poles 16’ and under, for poles 18’ and over he recommends the 3rd stand. The transport system sells for under \$180 and free shipping. He’ll sell the 3rd stand for \$90. That’s not bad considering the benefits this system provides.

The R300 Transport Rack can be purchased online at Gene’s website, [www.ezpoleholder.com](http://www.ezpoleholder.com). This system is designed for years of use, the All Aluminum Construction will not rust or fade. It doesn’t deface your new boat and it can be easily removed.

Gene actually has a double set on his boat allowing him to transport 16 rods on one side. These rods can be folded down once the poles are removed. I fish out of the side of my boat. I remove my rods and fold the rod stand inside the boat and they’re completely out of the way. It works great. I don’t think there is a better solution on the market. I know of no other way to protect your rod investment on the lake or on the highway.





# Fall Fishing With Bro

*(A Look Back At Early Fall)*

By Brian Brosdahl



Fall starts getting real in October. Some days can be nice in the afternoon, but you can usually plan on it being a little chilly, especially in the mornings.

Most deep lakes in the Ice Belt have their thermocline disappear in September and the lakes usually go through turnover in early October.

Large shallow lakes or shallow bays of large lakes do not set up a thermocline during the summer because the entire water column gets turned-over every time there is a heavy wind.

Deep lakes set up a thermocline during the summer. The thermocline is simply the narrow band of water that separates the warm upper level of the lakes from the cold lower level of the lakes that often runs out of suitable oxygen later in the summer.

If walleyes live in a shallow lake, many of the fish tend to move shallow as soon as the water cools down and becomes more comfortable for the fish.

At the same time, fish living in deep lakes have been located above the thermocline during the heat of summer, so they seem to be anxious to go into deeper water as soon as the water cools and the thermocline disappears.

This means there are walleyes and other fish heading in opposite directions during the fall, depending on what type of lake or what part of the lake the fish are located.

The cold-water period is by far the longest period of the year for lakes in the Ice Belt. It is the only part of the year that extends to both open water and hard water, lasting about six months in many parts of the North Country.

Water is the densest at 39 point something degrees and water is least dense when it freezes at 32 degrees. It's a good thing too. If water was most dense at 32 degrees, the lakes would freeze solid all the way to the bottom during the winter and almost everything in the lakes would die.

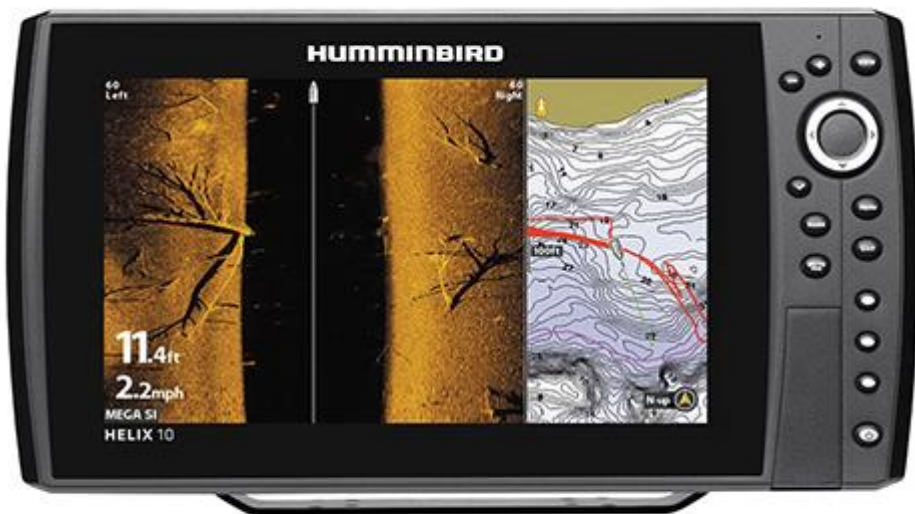
When the very top inch or two of the water column gets colder than 39 degrees, it begins to float on top of the 39 degree water and eventually freezes and turns to ice.

October fishing is great for me because my guiding season is winding down and I have more time to do some scouting before the ice fishing season arrives.

An ideal day for me during October would be grouse hunting in the morning and fishing in the afternoon. I really enjoy cruising around the lakes with my Humminbird Helix 12 (picture below) with Mega Side-Imaging looking for interesting spots to check out and mark on my GPS to fish during the winter.



The cold-water period is all about finding the “spot on the spot”. Fish don’t move around nearly as much during the cold-water period like the do during the heat of summer. When it gets cold, most fish want to be located in an area that supplies all of their needs in a more confined location.



The things I look for depend on what species I am trying to pattern and what type of lake I am fishing (deep or shallow).



Different fish like different things and different lakes offer fish different types of habitat, so lots of it depends on what is available to the fish in their home lake.

Walleyes like rocks and gravel bottom, steep breaks into deep water and large complex food shelves capable of holding enough forage for them to live comfortably most of the winter.

I usually work backwards when looking for walleyes during the cold-water period. I look for the deep basin areas and then look for anything that touches the deep water, whether it is shoreline or mid lake structure.

If I am fishing in a shallow lake, I look for shoreline rocks or weeds with a sharp break and “deeper” water nearby. I also look for baitfish on mid lake structures or along subtle changes in the bottom

I can get a lot of information from my Humminbird Helix 12 just from what I see on the sonar screen. Sometimes, I still want to see exactly what things look like with my eyes, so I know what species are in the school of fish and also the average size of the fish in the school.

I have my AquaVu HD10 (pictured above) on a Ram mount on my Ranger Boat right next to where I sit, so I can quickly check out things I see on sonar. I always bring it with me in the boat and I also bring it with me when I am ice fishing.

Crappies are an important species for me during the winter because I guide for them along with walleyes and perch.



Crappies spend much of the fall and winter in the basin of lakes. Crappies like “isolated open water”, which can be deep holes between structures, deep water beside



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structures, or along inside turns or points in the basin. Depressions or rises in the basin are also good and any edges between different bottom types in the basin. Some of the stuff crappies like is hard to describe, but I usually know it when I see it.

When I find a school of crappies, they are often suspended several feet or more off the bottom. I like to use a 5-foot ultralight St. Croix Panfish Series Rod

(pictured prior page), so I can fish close to the boat, where I can see both my lure and the crappies on sonar, much like I do when ice fishing.

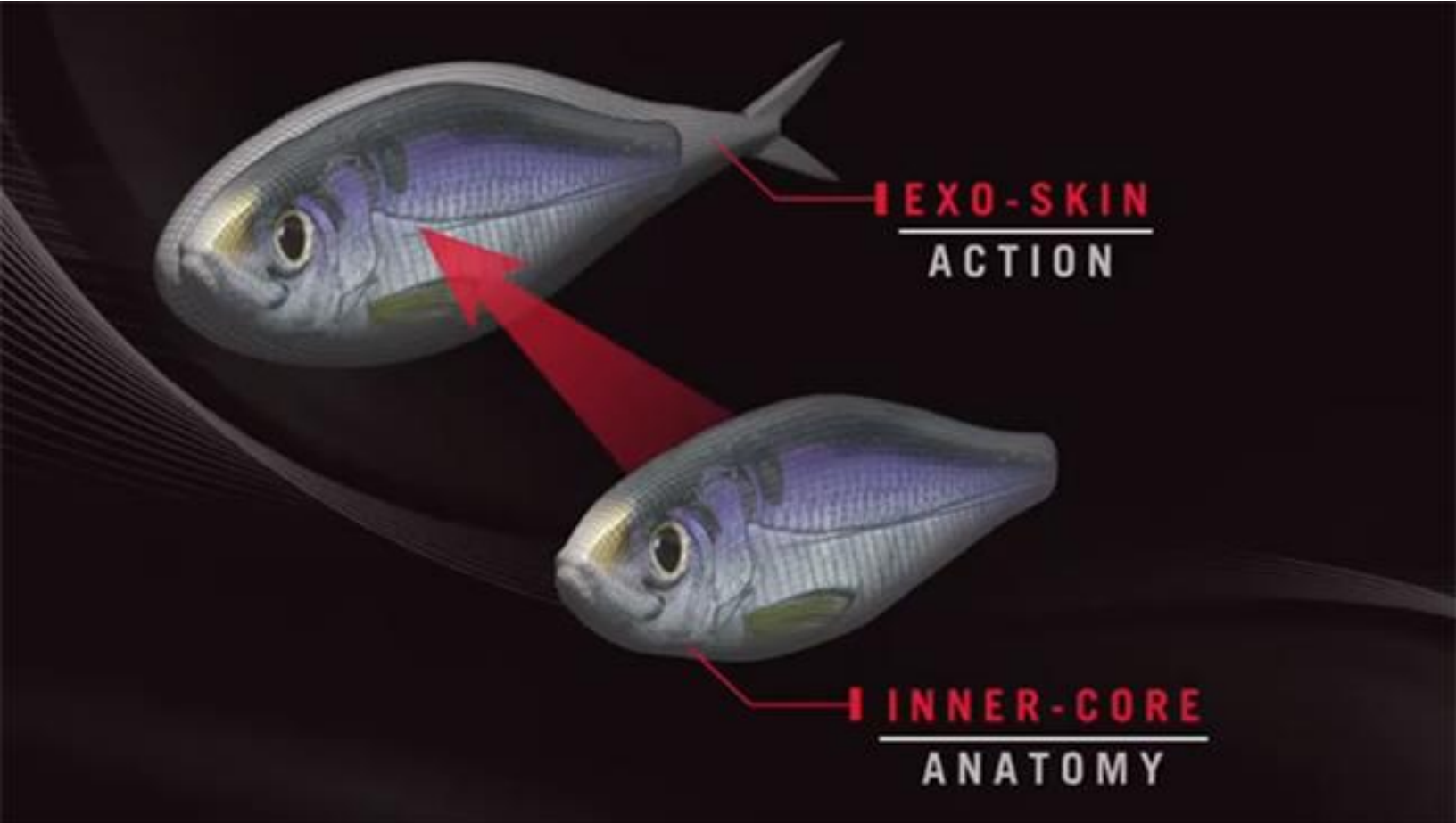
I spool my reel with 3-pound test Sunline Fluorocarbon and use the Northland PM1 Puppet Minnow with no bait or the 1/32 oz. Buckshot Rattle spoon (pictured below) with a minnow head or wax worm. I also like to use a Dart Minnow with small fathead minnow on the back hook or a small Feather Jig and a minnow with a split shot about 2 feet above the jig to help get it to the bottom faster.

Remember, crappies will get the "Bends" in water deeper than the mid-20s, so you may have to keep what you catch, regardless of size.

I look forward to seeing many of you on the Bro Road Show this late fall. See my facebook page or website for more details.







# SOFT PLASTICS ENTER THE TWENTY- FIRST CENTURY

By Jason Halfen

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

The "Nature of Competition" in soft plastics design drives LIVETARGET to develop industry-first process: Injected Core Technology (ICT)

Niagara-on-the-Lake (November 8, 2018) – Let there be no doubt, soft plastic lures are effective fish tempters. Available in profiles ranging from simple to gaudy and colors that vary from muted to other-worldly, soft plastics are well-established staples in the arsenals of bass, walleye, and panfish anglers in fresh water, as well as those chasing a wide range of finned predators in the salt. Yet, the majority of soft lures that we thread on hooks and dress on jigs have changed little since the advent of grubs and worms in the 1950s. Warm polymer stews, steeped with colored dyes and glitter, are



injected or poured into metal molds; when the whole operation cools, soft lures emerge.

While the sizes and shapes of soft plastic lures are limited only by the bounds of anglers' imaginations, they all suffer from precisely the same shortcomings: stated simply, most soft baits don't look anything like the natural forage that predator fish eat, and few behave like a vulnerable prey item that is about to play its part in Nature's food web.

But that's changing, thanks to Injected Core Technology (ICT) from LIVETARGET, the leader in lure design and forage replication.

Injected Core Technology welcomes soft plastic baits into the twenty-first century, uniting artistry with engineering to deliver unprecedented levels of soft plastic form and function. Lures manufactured with Injected Core Technology are effectively a bait-within-a-bait, featuring a vibrant, biomimetic, forage-profile interior that is fully encapsulated and intimately linked to a clear, soft polymer exo-skin. Matching anatomical features are aligned on both the interior core and its protective shell, producing unique three-dimensional, flash-generating textures that are both robust and ultra-realistic.

By carefully controlling the density of both the interior core and the outer shell during the molding process, Injected Core Technology lures are instilled with perfectly-balanced, strike triggering actions – right out of the package.

Nose hook a lure and fish ICT baits unweighted and witness a soft plastic with a remarkably slow descent, its body on a horizontal plane as it falls, perfectly mimicking the behavior of an injured baitfish descending to its demise. Injected Core Technology lures don't tumble or spiral, they simply drift tantalizingly downward with a gentle shimmy along their length until they come to rest on the bottom – or are consumed by a predator.

But that simple unweighted rig is just the beginning. Soft lures manufactured using Injected Core Technology are extraordinarily versatile and can be rigged and presented in every way imaginable. From traditional Texas and Carolina rigs, to drop shots and Neko rigs and everything in-between. For example, while ICT was tested, schooling, shad-based bass slurped up Skip Shads when other classic baits put up

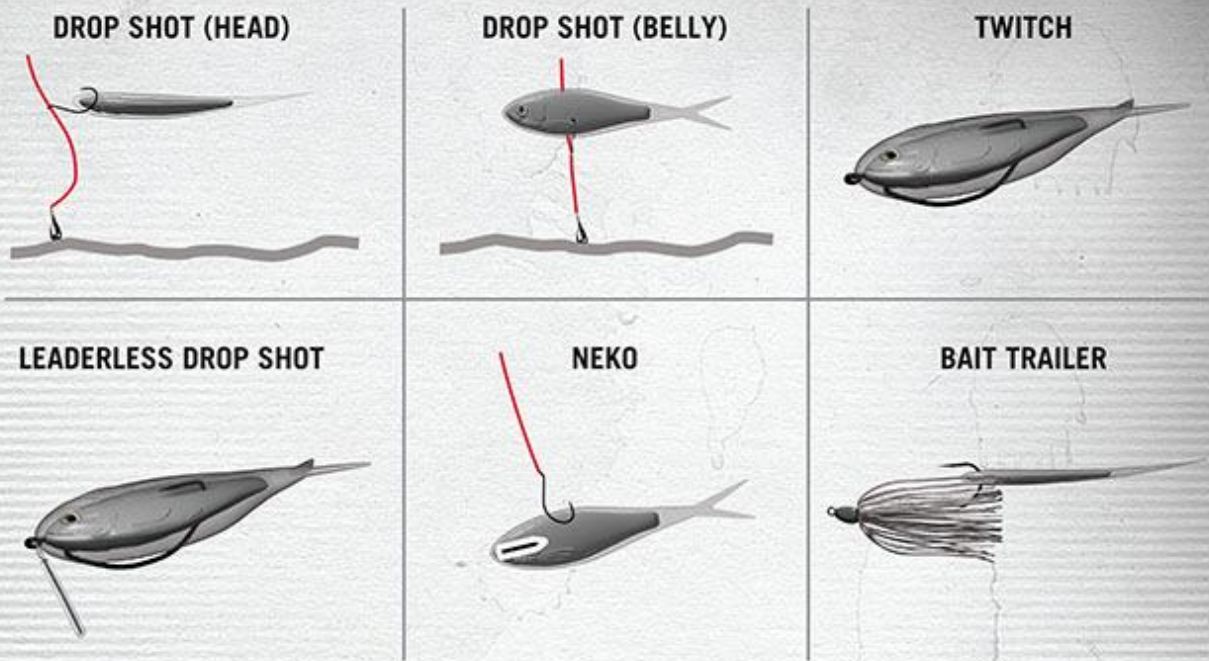




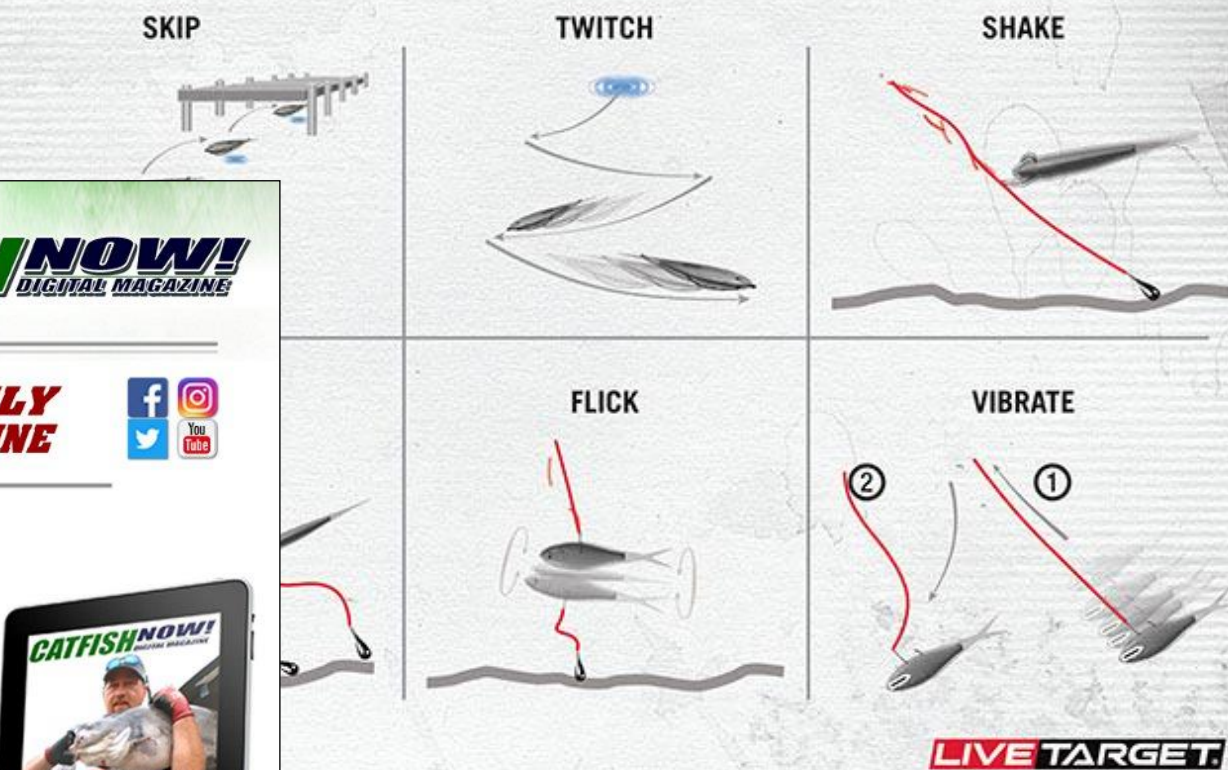
zeros. In another case, shallow, inshore ranging trout and redfish pounced on weightless, freefalling ICT baits...and in aquarium clear water!

Unveiled at ICAST 2018 and soon appearing in tackle shops across North America, Injected Core Technology lures from LIVETARGET will be first available in two bio-inspired profiles: the

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slender Twitch Minnow and the full-bodied Skip Shad. Each of these two lure families stands ready to tempt and trigger your favorite predator fish, whether it feasts on a diet of shiners, smelt, sardines, or shad.

Let the era of realistic soft plastics begin...thanks to LIVETARGET's Injection Core Technology.

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# Wanted: Squirrel Tails

By Jason Houser

The age-old tradition of hunters being out in force bagging their limits of squirrels continues still today. However, the number of squirrel hunters has dwindled tremendously over the years as hunters set their sights on bigger game.

In my opinion that is a shame. Squirrel hunting is a great way to prepare for bigger animals, they provide excellent table fare, and you can make money selling their tails. That might have caught your attention.

If you don't want to make some extra cash, you can always trade squirrel tails off for fishing lures. Mepps lures out of Antigo, WI purchases squirrel and deer tails to make their hand-tied, dressed hooks that most anglers are familiar with. Hunters have the option of selling their squirrel tails or trading them in for double the cash value to receive fishing lures.

Now, you are not going to get rich selling squirrel tails. They buy fox, black, grey and red squirrel tails and will pay up to 26 cents each for tails. And they need a lot of them. Since the mid-1960s they have recycled almost 8 million tails. Josh Schwartz, Communications Director for Mepps and Mister Twister says the company would like to purchase 250,000 tails annually to keep up with the demand.

That is a lot of tails considering they can make up to 8 dressed hooks per tail. That just goes to show you how many lures are being shipped out of the Wisconsin based plant every year. Another interesting note is that Mepps has almost 8,000 lure combinations to choose from. There is no reason for an angler not to find what he needs.

Hunters have the option to sell their tails frozen or dried. If you decide to ship the tails to the factory, a check will be sent, or they will call you to see what lures you would like. Dried tails can be sent year-round, but they recommend shipping frozen tails only during the months of January, February and March.



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Another option is to take your tails to the factory to sell or trade them. If you live close enough or are passing through the area, I would recommend this if for no other reason than to see a little behind the scenes of what happens with your squirrel tails

When you walk in to the selling department you will find one lady in the small room sitting at a table full of

colorful tails, hooks, string and scissors. Her job is not just to buy the tails, but she also washes and dries each tail that comes through the door. Also, if the tails need to be dyed for a specific lure she does that too. And, she is also the one sitting at the table hand tying each hook that will later become the business end of the popular lures. Truly a one woman show. However, there are a few people that work from home tying lures too.

I must add that do not go out to kill squirrels just to sell their tails. Mepps only want tails from squirrels that were harvested with the intention of human consumption. Selling the tails is just an added bonus.

Mepps prefers tails from squirrels taken after October 1st. Also, do not remove the bone from the tail. Deboned and spit tails are not of any value. It is illegal to sell squirrel tails in the states of California and Idaho, and it is illegal to sell Western Grey Squirrels in the state of Oregon.

*So, instead of throwing squirrel and deer tails away this year, turn them into something you can use like cash or fishing lures. For more info on selling to Mepps visit, [www.mepps.com/squirrel-tail](http://www.mepps.com/squirrel-tail).*







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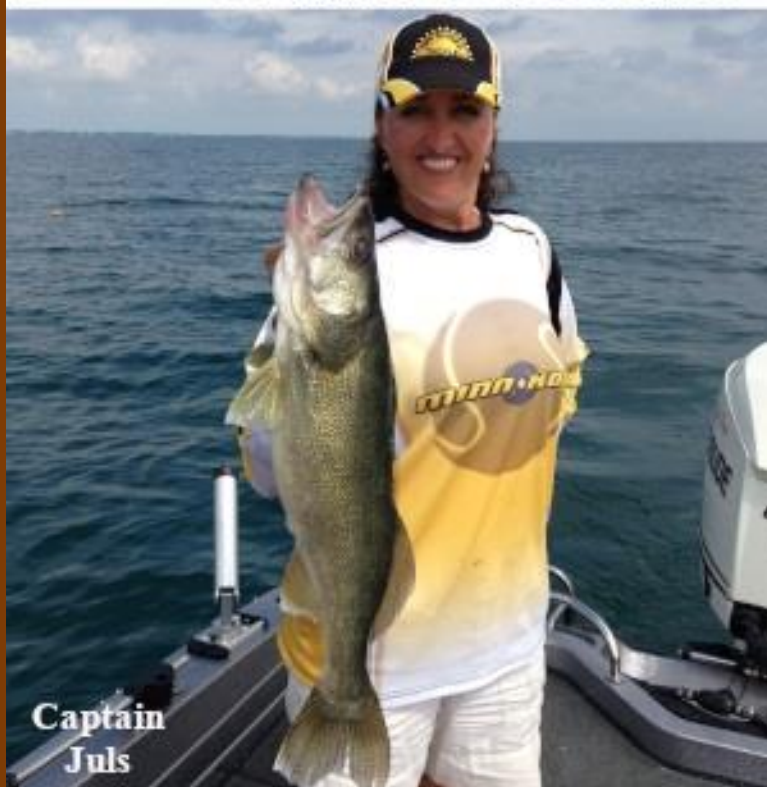
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# HUNTING ZONE







# A Flatlander in the North Country

By Dana Benner

I am a firm believer that in order to fully appreciate the outdoors we owe it to ourselves to understand how those who came before us lived with the world around them. In this quest for a greater understanding I made arrangements to visit The Poore Farm Museum in Stewartstown, New Hampshire.

This trip came about after numerous emails between me and Richard Johnsen, the museum's Executive Director. Though the museum didn't officially open until the first week of June, arrangements were made for me to visit on Saturday, May 17th. I was to be met there by Richard and two of the museum's directors, Linda Tillotson and John Lanctot.

Pulling into the drive right at 1:30PM I was greeted by John Lanctot who gave me a warm welcome. Richard Johnsen met up with me and from there it was not long before I started getting a history lesson. My tour of the farm was a real eye-opening experience. This area of New



Hampshire was not really settled until the 1800s and this particular farm was established in 1825. Sitting on 100 acres The Poore Farm is an example of how people lived; making do with what they had. Everything they needed was made right here on the property, including the woven rugs that were on the floors and can still be seen in the house. As there was no extra money or stores to shop at, if you couldn't make it you really didn't need it. This particular farm had cattle, horses, sheep and chickens in addition to apple orchards and extensive gardens. Over the many years much of what was cleared fields has been reclaimed by Mother Nature with only a few old apple trees indicating where the orchards once were. Today they are the feeding grounds for deer and bears.

Stepping into the house is like stepping into a time capsule. The first thing you notice is that there never was any indoor plumbing or modern appliances. The good news is that they did have running water, though it was cold water fed by a stream uphill from the farm. This gravity fed system assured that the house had constant running water. Refrigerating was provided by that same cold water. A great deal of credit goes to Linda Tillotson for the amount of work that went into preserving, organizing and cataloging much of the items that are on display in the house.

A trip to the barn revealed an assortment of tools used in everyday life on the farm. From hand-made wooden spigots for collecting maple sap to a variety of horse and oxen powered plows, skidders and wagons are on display for all to marvel at. A visitor can easily spend the better part of a day, or more, researching the history of the North Country at this one location.

All too soon my tour was complete, and it was time for me to head home. The information gathered during my short time in the North Country left me wanting more. The people up here are great and treated me like family, even though I was a flatlander. After my visit I truly have an even deeper respect

for our outdoors and for those who came before me. If you are in the North Country please stop by The Poore Farm Museum in Stewartstown. They are a non-profit organization, staffed by volunteers and operate on shoestring budget. They are a worthy organization and can use your help.



The Poore Farm Museum  
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# The Benefits Of Conservation Hunting And Venison In Namibia

By Jofie Lamprecht

Namibia. Land of wide-open spaces. Land of contrasts. Land of the brave. From the oldest desert in the World to sub-tropical climates and wide rivers. Where the sustainable use of our abundant wildlife is enshrined in the country's constitution. The second least densely populated country on earth.

Namibia has had a constant average of over 5000 conservation hunters per year [1] for the last 9 years. This seems like a high number of hunters, right? Well, with our wildlife numbers increasing year on year and the value of these animals increasing due to hunters' dollars and the increase of wildlife range's – the answer is categorically NO!

Partly due to our colonial history, German hunters are still the most prevalent, with the USA

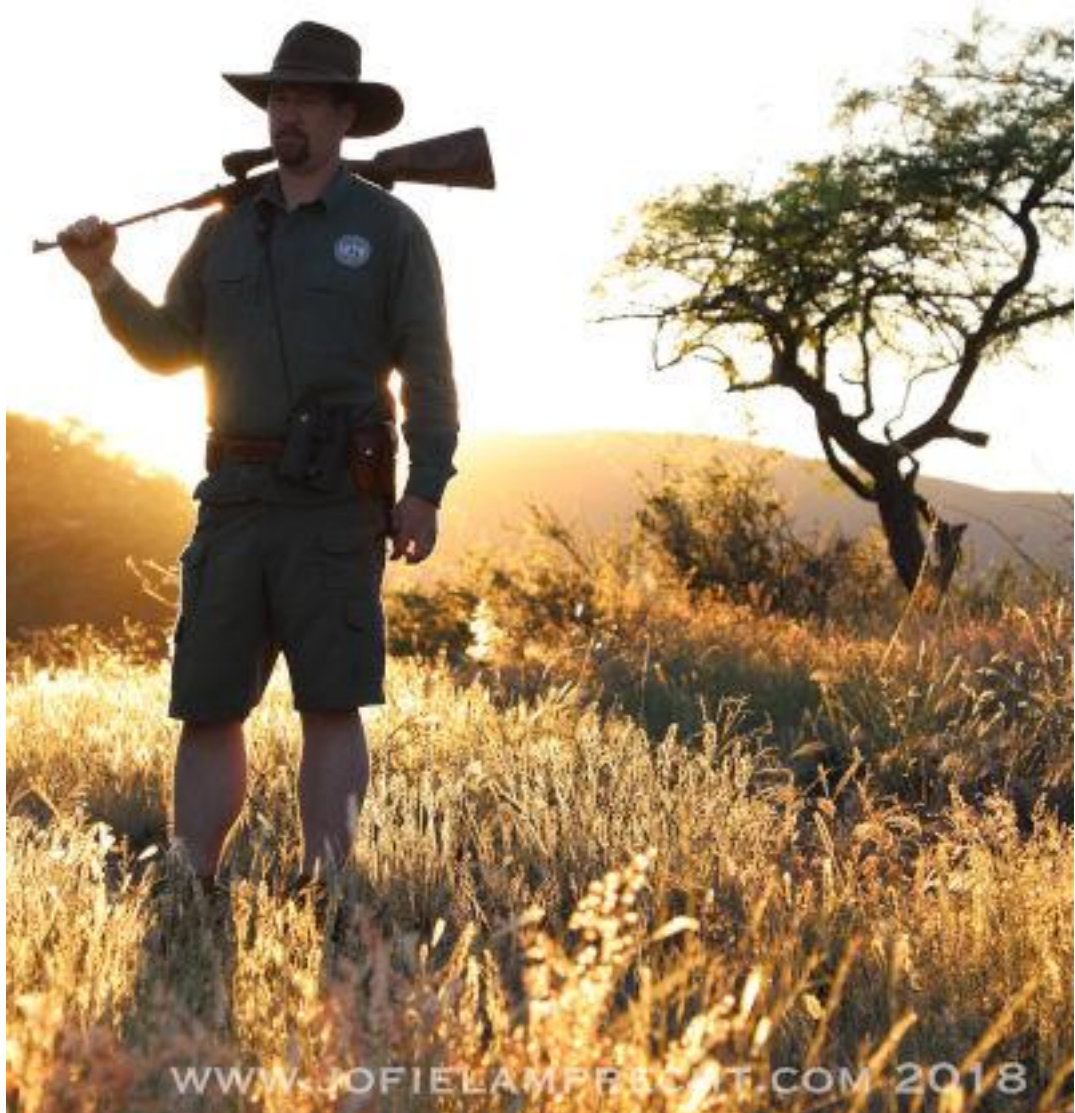


market share increasing every year – these two countries representing 50% of Namibia's total international hunting market share. From there the origin of Namibia's hunter is wide and diverse.

### **Germany and the USA are dominant in the conservation hunting market**

These conservation hunters harvest on average 23,000 animals each year [2] which are then exported to their home countries. Again, you think – this is high right? This is an average of 4.6 animals per conservation hunter! As stated above, Namibia has a firm grasp on wildlife numbers and thanks to the tireless effort of the Namibian Ministry of Environment and Tourism – conservative quotas

are set each year on government land and communal conservancies – as well as well-regulated on privately owned land.



### **Conservation hunters harvest on average 23,000 animals each year or 4.6 animals per hunter**

Namibia's conservation hunting contributes N\$ 450,000,000 [3] (almost half a billion N\$ OR US\$ 32 million) in the primary sector to the Namibian economy a total of 0.24% of the country's GDP [4]. This is an estimated N\$ 1.35 billion (US\$ 96 million) total including the secondary and tertiary sectors or 0.75% of the country's GDP. This includes but is not limited to: airfares, tourism activities, taxidermy, shipping and much more.

### **Hunting contributes N\$ 450,000,000 (US\$ 32 million) to the Namibian economy in the primary sector to GDP**

This sector is definitely a significant contributor to Namibia's "third-world" economy as well as an important source of employment and protein in the form of venison. Using the term "third-world" is really not the case for Namibia as a visitor – it is truly a very poor example of a "third-world" country and is often referred to as the "Switzerland" of Africa. The economic value of conservation hunting in Namibia increases constantly year on year and Namibia has become Africa's most popular conservation hunting destination.

## **Namibia has become Africa's most popular conservation hunting destination in Africa**

If one looks at the diversity of species that are hunted annually, Namibia offers 44 different huntable species.

For some of the animals hunted, the venison is not consumed. This accounts for very few animals. The vast majority of animals, including big game like elephant, rhino, hippo and buffalo are a very important source of protein for local communities.



### **Venison as a product = an important source of protein for local communities**

So how much venison is estimated to be a product of conservation hunting each year?

- From dangerous / big game animals, of which 98% occur in either state or communal lands, 320 tons of meat is harvested each year. The vast majority of this meat – about 80+% goes straight to local communities.
- On private land this figure is even higher. If at an average of 50 kg (120 pounds) per plains game animal, this equates to 1.15 million tons of meat annually.
- That is 28,750 18-wheeler trucks loaded to capacity with meat. That is a lot of venison!

**An estimated 1.47 million tons of venison meat is the product of conservation hunting annually in Namibia**

If one converts the value of this meat to money, its value would be around N\$ 29.4 million (US\$ 2.1 million).

**So how do conservation hunting and tourism sectors compare?**



## Let's go to the numbers:

### *Namibia's tourism:*

- Currently (2016) 1.5 million tourists visit Namibia each year [5]
- Average tourist stay = 9 nights [6]
- Average spend by a tourist per day = N\$ 1,840 [7] (US\$ 132)
- Tourism contributes N\$ 5.2 billion (US\$ 371 million) or 3.5% of the country's GDP in the primary sector and a total of N\$ 15.1 billion (US\$ 1.07 billion) or 10.2% of the country's GDP to the secondary and tertiary sectors.



- Tourism creates 45,000 jobs in Namibia (6.5% of all jobs) per year [8] in the primary sector.
- Interestingly – there are an average of 33.3 tourists for each job created in Namibia in tourism.

**Average spend by a tourist per day = N\$ 1,840 [9] (US\$ 132) and equates to 3.5% of GDP in the primary sector**

**There are 33.3 tourists for each job created in Namibia**

### *Conservation hunting:*

- 5000 hunters per year
- Hunters spend an average of N\$ 90,000 (US\$ 6,429) per trip [10]
- Using the same average stay as a tourist this means hunters are spending an average of N\$ 10,000 per day. This is five times the value per day that hunters are spending, excluding the venison that they contribute to the Namibian economy:
- Conservation hunting contributes N\$ 450,000,000 towards Namibia's GDP in the primary sector, which is 0.24% of the country's GDP [11]
- This is an estimated N\$ 1.35 billion (US\$ 96 million) total including the secondary and tertiary sectors or 0.75% of the country's GDP.
- N\$ 100 million (US\$ 7.14 million) goes directly to communal conservancies [12]



- This accounts for 50% of the revenue earned by communal conservancies annually [13] directly from conservation hunting.
- Hunting creates 15,000 jobs in Namibia (2.1 % of all jobs) per year [14] in the primary sector.
- This is significant. This means 3 jobs are created for every 1 conservation hunter coming to Namibia. A much higher employment rate than tourism.

**Average spend per conservation hunter per day is N\$ 10,000 (US\$ 715) and equates to 0.24% of GDP in the primary sector and accounts for 2.1% of all jobs**

**3 jobs are created for every 1 conservation hunter coming to Namibia**

**So, what does this mean when we compare the figures?**





Tourism is obviously the winner by sheer volume, but what about revenue and ecological impact of these numbers as well as employment?

#### **In brief:**

- It takes 5.4 tourists per day to generate the same revenue as a conservation hunter
- What is the ecological and carbon footprint and tourism vs conservation hunting?
- Camps and lodges need to be 5.4 times bigger to generate the same revenue.
- The foot-print of these lodges take away animal habitat
- Hunting camps are far smaller, hosting far fewer guests to generate the same revenue.
- Habitat degradation – Roads and foot paths take habitat away from wildlife.
- Meat

✓ Conservation hunters produce 294 kg (647 pounds) of meat per hunter on average per

trip – a total of 1.47 million tons of meat

- ✓ To feed 1.5 million tourists, at an average of 180 grams (6.5 ounces) of meat per day per person one needs = 270 tons (600,000 pounds) of meat per day:
- ✓ For 9 days on average this is a total of 2.43 million kg of meat for all tourists.
- ✓ With conservation hunting alone, if we only feed tourist's venison – which a lot of lodges to – there is not enough to go around.
- ✓ Yes, there is commercial meat hunting as well as domestic stock raised for meat consumption – but I think you get the point we are making here.

#### • Water

- ✓ Water is an incredibly scarce resource in Namibia. Most water is pumped out of underground reserves.
- ✓ At 100 liters (26 gallons) per person per day (a very low number) just tourism uses 150 million liters (57 million gallons) of water per day = 60 Olympic size swimming pools of water per day for guests only.
- ✓ Vegetables – a vegetarian in the middle of Namibia's wilderness has a far greater negative ecological effect eating fruit and vegetables transported 1000's of kilometers to get there than eating venison.
- ✓ Shower and toilet waste

#### • Fossil fuels


- ✓ Tourism uses an enormous amount of fossil fuels to get tourists to Namibia, and then onto their destination. Camps and lodges then also need to be supplied as well as the tourists driven around.
- ✓ Electricity needs to be generated. Solar has become a popular option.

- Trash - This needs to be dealt with and is often too expensive to be taken to the nearest town for recycling = it is buried close to the camp or lodge.

- Employment - The huge number of those employed in conservation hunting vs. tourism is significant.

#### Points to consider:

- It takes 5.4 tourists per day to generate the same revenue as one conservation – at what cost to the environment?
- All tourists are not vegetarian, and the meat must come from somewhere?
- Conservation hunting harvests animals in a



**Anti's want to close all hunting? Who will cover the anti-poaching costs, employment, revenue generated and supply meat lost by local communities?**

**CHARITY IS NOT SUSTAINABLE. HUNTING IS.**



sustainable manner, and plays a smaller part in the economy, but produces a product of venison

- Conservation hunting has less impact on the environment all aspects considered
- The high rate of employment in conservation hunting is significant

***In conclusion. There is place for all forms of tourism – and yes, conservation hunting is also a form of this. We need to respect each other and understand the crucial role each plays in conservation, ecological impact, contribution to GDP, job creation and the production and consumption of venison.***

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# One Chance In A Million

**By Jake Bussolini**

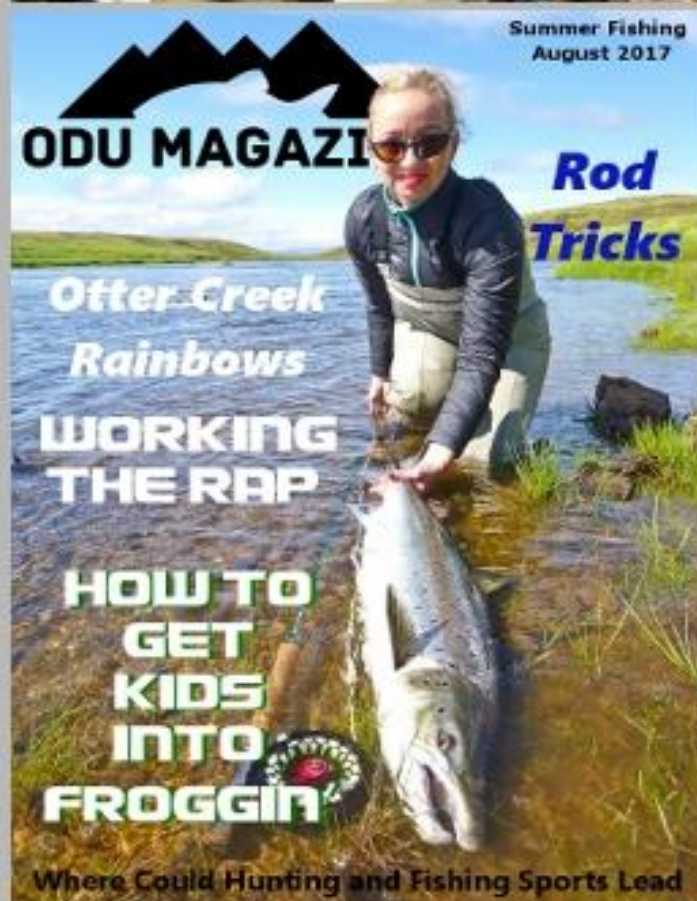
What started as a good bonding idea for a hunting trip with my son and two grandsons, ended up providing much more in terms of un-probable events. The pre-Thanksgiving deer hunting trip from North Carolina to upstate New York provided us with an early winter snow storm that turned a normal nine-hour drive into a fifteen-hour ice covered and accident clogged venture. The snow was so sudden that it caught local authorities off guard and many of the roads were never touched by snow plows or sanders.

Arriving at our hunting camp in Sullivan County New York one day before the start of the deer



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hunting season offered us a ten-inch snow base with the snow still falling, not an inviting environment for my two Grandsons, Anthony, an engineer from North Carolina and John, a Naval aviator from Texas. Anthony has hunted with me one time before but for John, this was his first deer hunting experience.

To say the least, the hunting conditions were not ideal. As the snow fell for two days, John kept his eye on a small six-point buck but felt that he would pass on that deer in favor of a larger one that he hoped would come later. Finally, on the third day he could wait no longer, and he shot his first New York Buck.

What happen next was the experience rarely witness by any experienced hunter. As John came down from his tree stand, he first checked to see that the buck was indeed dead, a procedure that he had been told to perform. So far OK, the deer was dead. As he took some time to calm himself from the excitement of the kill, he notices some clumps of hair several yards behind the dead deer. For an experienced hunter, this would not have been considered unusual but for this first-time deer hunted it was unexpected. He didn't realize that the 270 Remington that he was using provided enough velocity for a through and through shot and the hair that he had seen was from that bullet passing through the deer.

As he stood there admiring his prize, he noticed a straight line in the show expending from the hair about ten feet along the ground where the line suddenly stopped. It looked to him as though someone had run their finger through the soft snow. He walked to the spot where the line ended and looking



down into the snow, he saw a dark spot. Taking off his glove he reached down a picked up the shattered bullet from his 270 that had passed through the deer and lost enough speed that it was sitting hear the top of the soft snow. Even the heat of the spent round was not enough to cause it to bury itself in the deep show.

John didn't think a lot about this find until that night as he told the story of the kill for the fifth time and he suddenly took the bullet from his pocket and relayed the story. He laid the shell casing and the bullet on the table as we all were amazed by the story.

I have relayed this story to several experienced hunters and they have all expressed complete amazement that the bullet performed as it did. No one had even heard of this type of experience and we simply called his kill and the find a "one chance in a million." Not bad for a new hunter first kill. Thank you for your service John. You will tell this story many times before next year's hunt.





# *A Real BB Pistol*

By Dan Galusha

In the past BB guns, were just that, and looked like BB guns. These days it is difficult to tell at a distance and without them being fired. Umarex has several such models, but one that is so real that police departments are using it in house for training, is the S&W M&P 40.

I've been fortunate enough to be able to try out this S&W BB pistol, which uses CO2 cartridges. The cartridges are part of the realism in that they load into the magazine, creating weight to resemble a fully loaded "powder burning" S&W.

Loading the cartridge is one of the downsides of this gun. You have to use a separate wrench that is provided, rather than having a built in tightening screw like many other Umarex models, including the Beretta, which will be another review. Two things provide a problem with this style of magazine – the wrench having to be stored somewhere, and the cap, which can be cross threaded,





and is sometimes difficult to get lined up properly once the cartridge is inserted.

While on the subject of the magazine, it will hold 15 rounds, which is the second problem. They are somewhat difficult to load, in that the follower has to be held down to about halfway of the magazine to have access to the loading port. A strong thumbnail is a must for this task, as the follower will not lock down as with Umarex's stick magazine found in other models. Having a spare magazine would be nice, but this means that both have to have a CO2 cartridge loaded.

I've used five brands of BBs in this gun but recommend two - the Hornady Black Diamond and Umarex Steel. Both of these performed about equal, with a very slight edge going to the Black Diamond.

Velocity is in the 300-fps range. With that I would recommend not planning on a lot of center shots past 10 yards, although I did get a few in the center at 15 yards. The best range is the 5 to 7-yard line, but I prefer the 7 and 10. Of course if you are just plinking then center shots aren't that important.

In regard to the operation of this model it is great. You slide the full-size magazine in place, which has a normal release button, and load the first round by pulling back the all-metal slide as with the real pistol. It even has a teardown release where the slide can be removed, and slide lock back as in the actual S&W M&P40. Even the blowback is harder than many airguns, and stays open after the final round is fired, as with the real one. This even adds a bit of a recoil.

A drawback to the realistic blowback is that the CO2 is used up quickly. Only about 3 to perhaps 4 full magazines can be fired on a single cartridge, and by the last one shot are pretty weak and falling low on the target.

As for the CO2 cartridge, I recommend the Umarex High-Grade, and using a drop of RWS oil on the tip of



the cartridge. This drop of pellet oil does two things – provides a better seal and lubricates the barrel and chamber area when fired.

The overall weight of the gun definitely adds to the realism, as does the three-dot sight system (rear fixed, front adjustable for windage). At this point it should be noted that I did not have to adjust the sight for windage but did have to learn where to place



# GAMO MAGNUM



the sight on elevation, which was slightly upward.

It also has an ambidextrous thumb safety lever, and rail for mounting accessories like a light or laser sight.

There are three different rubberized grips that come with the gun so that you can customize it to fit your hand from small to large. This feature is a great plus for many shooters.

While there are a few cons on this model, as previously mentioned, it is still a very nice overall shooter. The realism makes this a great gun for training someone to use a real “powder burner”, not to mention to use for practice without burning up a lot of expensive ammo. It will even fit a standard holster.

Coming in at around \$107 it isn't the cheapest BB gun, but pick one up and you can see why, as the quality is definitely there, not to mention all the features and metal found in this unit. As with everything you can find cheaper pricing at different dealers and online. I've seen them on sale for as low as \$65 but are normally found in the \$80 to \$95 range.

If you want a “real BB pistol”, and can fit it into the budget, then by all means take a serious look at the Umarex S&W M&P40.

To check out on the features, and some of the other realistic Umarex models visit the website at [www.umarexusa.com](http://www.umarexusa.com).

A Shoot 'N' Plink™ video with this gun is available at <https://youtu.be/-d90JGmhe14>.

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





# Mentally Prepare For Your Next Hunt

By Taylor Maas

Confidence is a crucial aspect of many sports. There are

hundreds of sport psychology books about the importance of sound mental preparation. Often times, being prepared mentally, and having confidence in yourself, can be the difference between success and failure.

It's easy to understand the importance of sound mental preparation when thinking about some of the more conventional sports. How successful would an NFL team be if it went into a Sunday without a game plan? When Tiger Woods decides to hit a 7 iron into a green, do you think he is second guessing if he has the right club during his swing?

How does any of this relate to hunting?

Hunting is often about the little details. Consistently successful hunters create their own success by controlling as many small factors as possible. It's easy to find tips on some of the different factors in magazines or websites. Often overlooked though, and possibly one of the greatest factors, is the mental side of hunting.

Anticipation, mental toughness, and confidence are three of the most important factors to put in your favor for every hunt.

## Anticipation

Anticipating, or thinking ahead, can give you advantages both before and during your hunt. Before the hunt, you'll need to learn about the topography in your area and how it affects deer movement. Knowing how and when deer are most likely to use the different trails on your property will give





you a better idea of where the best stand locations are.

Once you know how the deer are most likely to use the terrain features in your area, you'll also be able to plan how to get to and from your stands with the lowest chance of bumping deer. It will also make it easier to predict what winds would be best to hunt your different stand locations.

During the hunt, anticipate where the deer are most likely to come from, the different paths they are most likely to take, and where they will go. The best time to prepare for potential shot opportunities is long before your mind starts racing as a buck is quickly approaching your stand.

After getting set up, picture all the different shots you might have and what pins you'll use for the different shooting lanes around your stand. Once you know where your most likely shot opportunities will come from, you can work backwards to plan when you'll have the best opportunities to draw your bow.

The better you're able to anticipate the different situations that might arise, the more prepared you'll feel when the moment comes. There is nothing that can give you more confidence than watching a deer walk exactly where you planned, knowing your best opportunity to pull back, and the exact distance your shot will be.

### **Mental Toughness**

We've all been there, the last few hunts you've been on weren't great. You made a poor shot and missed your target buck, or maybe you haven't been seeing as many deer as you'd like. It gets really easy to start thinking about leaving the stand early or even skipping some days you'd



otherwise hunt.

Sometimes taking a day off to recharge can be just what you need to be more focused during your next hunt. However, if it becomes a habit, and you skip too many hunts, you're missing out on potential opportunities.

There are only so many days before the season is over, take advantage of as many as possible and grind through a hunt or two. Forcing yourself to hunt that extra day, when the going gets tough, might give you the edge you need.

### **Self Confidence**

Having confidence in yourself can completely change a hunt. Think through a hunt before heading out to the woods and make sure you're as prepared and as confident as possible. Take some practice shots with your hunting clothes on to make sure your string won't slap your coat. Know your effective range so you can be completely confident in your ability to make the shot. Practice shooting from some of the awkward angles you could have in a tree stand or blind. Second guessing yourself or having self-doubt won't help you at all once you're in the stand.

If the deer you're after appears, avoid self-defeating thoughts, and have confidence in yourself throughout the entire process. Rather than thinking I hope I make a good shot, or don't screw this up, go through all the mental checks you need to make an accurate shot and block everything else out.

One way to block out all of the distracting thoughts you'll have once your mind starts racing, is by staying absolutely focused on your target. Once you've decided to shoot a particular deer and are





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

waiting for the shot opportunity, pick out an aiming point and stay completely focused on that.

It's easier to block out a thought, by replacing it with another, rather than trying to avoid that thought completely. By staying 100% focused on where you want to aim, you'll give yourself no opportunity for distracting thoughts. It doesn't matter if the deer is out of your shooting range, stay completely focused on your spot.

Being mentally prepared, and having self-confidence won't make you a 'better' hunter, but will help you make the most of the opportunities you have.

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# A Grill All Outdoorsmen Might Want To Finish Off Their Hunts

**By Gary Elliott**

After going nearly, a year and half without a grill, I began looking around trying to decide what did I want, a grill or smoker maybe both? Pricing seem to be a bit on the higher end for pellet grills, so I began reading up on them. My concerns were not only can they be pricey but am I going to spend a lot on pellets alone. Also, what are pellets and why use them? So much to think about.

Let's begin with what are pellets and what is a pellet grill? A pellet grill has a pellet hopper that requires you to dump pellets into it and then it is powered by electric to auger the wooden pellets out to a fire pot where an ignitor will light the pellets. Some hoppers will have an electronic temperature control and one or two meat probes. So, when using a pellet grill, you will need a power source nearby. Pellets are very versatile and allow you to obviously smoke and grill, but you can also roast and grill. Depending on the grill you purchase. Pellet usage is not bad, and I compare it slightly to using charcoal. It all depends on how much you smoke or grill and how long it takes to smoke or grill it. But, overall it isn't bad at all. Pellets usually come in 20# bags and I have used my grill to smoke 4 times and grill 3 times and I still had a little over a third of a bag left.

After some research I settled on the new Campchef Woodwind SG grill. This is a versatile grill in



that it will smoke, grill and roast. I also bought the searing grill as well and will explain more in a bit on this. I will advise you I did receive a discount in return for an honest review after using it for some time. I received the grill, searing box and optional shelf surprisingly in less than a week. It all came in three boxes and assembly was cut and dry and within about 45 minutes I had the grill assembled and ready for a test run. Which they do recommend burning any oils off the grill. So, when you initially lite your grill it will smoke for a bit. Afterwards, I went to the store to purchase pellets. When I got to the store I was overwhelmed by the choices. Mesquite, cherry, apple, charcoal, Jack Daniels and the list goes on. So, I chose the competition blend and have not been disappointed. There is a lot of information on the web on pellets and I suggest spending a bit of time reading up on them as well.

We know the Woodwind SG smokes, but you ask, how does it grill? Well the new SG model has the new Slide & Grill Technology. This means you pull a lever to slide the plate off the fire pot and now you are using direct flame and that is what grilling is. Also, setting your temp at 300 or above on the grill will allow for this. The temp range on this grill is from 160 to 500 degrees Fahrenheit. This allows you to low and high smoke, grill and even bake. Yes, you can even bake a pie in your Campchef Woodwind SG Pellet grill. Smoking does not occur at high temps, so you do not get a smoke flavor. Smoking occurs at 250 and below. You can learn more about this on their website. I tested the temps with a good oven temp gauge and found that if you set the grill to 300 it will hold pretty good right at 300. Take note though, that opening the grill cover and colder temps will make the grill work harder to hold temps. Campchef does offer a blanket for the smoker/grill for cold temps.

Now you ask, what about clean up that must be a mess? It isn't and Campchef has made it very easy. When you are done simply pull the lever to dump the ash into a small bucket that is supplied and occasionally dump it into your garden or flower pot. Then after a few cooks simply vacuum the grill out. Cleaning the grease slide and racks are recommended and turning the grill up high to bake it is off works as well occasionally.

The SG has two large wheels and two casters which makes moving the grill very easy. The cover is optional and is a



very heavy-duty cover and helps protect your grill from the elements helping to keep your grill in great shape for many years since this is not a cheap grill. Retailing at \$999.00 on the website. With that said they currently give you free shipping, cover and bonus pellets. The grill comes in all black or with a stainless-steel grill door and handle. Below I will list the features and specifications. I find the 24" grill to be perfect size for family and guests. If you are a large family and host larger parties than the 36" may be a better choice for you.

Now to review the searing box. I decided to add this on for three reasons. To begin with, not only was I receiving a discount, but mainly because it allows me to still grill when there isn't any power. Then, I can use propane to still cook and the last reason is, to reverse sear any meat I cook locking in juices and making those great grill marks. The searing box is a 16,000 BTU stainless steel burner and reaches a temp of 900 degrees Fahrenheit. This unit works great, and you can use your old propane tank. The tank hangs on a hook that mounts to the back of the grill. When assembling I was concerned about hanging a large propane tank on the back but once I hung mine on the back I realized how secure it was. The cover does accommodate the tank also. The searing box was very easy to install and weighs 34 lbs. The total surface area is 184 square inches.

Overall, I feel I made a great choice and have enjoyed smoking and grilling more than ever. I did have an electric smoker and it required so much of my time to put in wood chips. Now with the auger it dispenses pellets as needed and makes my smoking more effective. I haven't baked in it yet, but I have bought a pork loin and will be giving it a try soon. While comparing to CampChef's closes competitors I found they ran close on hoppers and that but sometimes the little things give you the edge such as, wheels on all four legs, can opener, two meat probes, customer service is awesome, website and the plethora of information for the beginner and competitor just made them my overall choice.

\*Note: One thing I do want to bring to your attention! This goes for ANY pellet grill. Do not keep your pellets in the hopper for extended periods of time. I found that if the pellets are moist the ignitor may not light the pellets and will feed more in and soon you have a potential issue on hand as I did. The pot filled up began to smoke big time and when I opened the grill cover moments later a flame shot out once oxygen hit the smoking pellets. So, it is recommended to dump the pellets out and that is very easy with the Woodwind by pulling the hopper lever it auto dumps the pellets into your bucket. Also, store the pellets in a dry place. Humidity/moisture is your worse enemy. Otherwise, grilling and smoking on a pellet grill is fun.



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