



Dec.  
2019  
Winter  
Edition

**ODU MAGAZINE™**

**Hunting  
Walleye**

**Fatty  
Tubes  
for  
Smallies**

**Basic  
Panfishing**



*Happy Holiday's from ODU Media and the small team that helps put this magazine out.*



So you might be thinking, it has been a long time since ODU released a magazine. Let's just say we have a new client and the editor (Bill) has been busy. I have been too busy to put 50 hours aside each month to pull a magazine together. Hopefully we find someone who has ambition to do it for us, otherwise we are quarterly throughout 2020. Anyone know someone?

**My holiday wish.** It comes from a new found love of fishing. Over the past six months I have met anglers from France to Norway, South Africa to Australia and Hawaii to South Korea, all because of a product called Spydro. Yup that is the name and it is the best inline sportfishing underwater camera on the market. Don't take my word, get one for yourself and see how this small camera will change the way you fish and improve your hookup ratios. I digress. One thing all of these anglers have in common is passion for the sport. It's amazing. Most are not competitive in tournaments. All of them taking fishing crazy serious. I hope all my friends who fish find a new level to their fishing, help secure fishing for the future by bringing a new angler to the sport.

This edition of ODU – The Winter 2019 Edition. Ice fishing and Open water will greet you.

Be safe on the ice, for those of you who venture out.

***Would you like to contribute a fishing or hunting story or tip, check out our writers guide at this link <https://www.odumagazine.com/writing-guidelines/>. Email them your inquiries to [odu.media@odumagazine.com](mailto:odu.media@odumagazine.com).***

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

***And please, enjoy the outdoors.***

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Co-Founders of ODU Magazine***

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***HARDWATER  
ZONE***



# ***New Ice Fishing Anglers***

**By Bob Jensen**

In the past several years, a number of anglers have mentioned to me that they would like to get involved in ice-fishing. We've talked about what it takes to go ice-fishing and I've learned that there are just a few things that need to be kept in mind if someone wants to try their hand at fishing through a hole in the ice. Let's talk about some of those things.

First, we want to be comfortable. Comfortable means keeping warm, but not too warm. And it is possible to get too warm when you go ice-fishing. It works well to drill a good number of holes over an area because some fish at times will school very tightly. Other fish at other times are spread out. Having the option to move from hole to hole quickly and easily is good, and it's also good to drill those holes before you start fishing and drilling several holes and walking between the holes can make a person too warm. It works well to layer clothing so

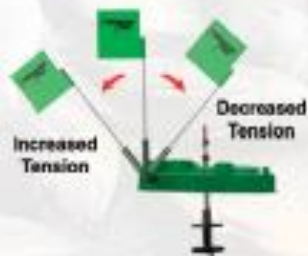




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you can add or subtract clothing to keep at a comfortable temperature.

Second thing: Many older anglers who enjoy open water fishing know how to use a spinning outfit. However, many youngsters don't. I have a good number of ice-fishing rod/reel set-ups, and I always have one set aside with no line. This enables me to show a young angler who has never

used a spinning reel how to do so.

Next, take a rod/reel with line and simulate a fish being on the line. Teach the youngster when to reel and when to let the rod fight the fish.

For anglers new to ice-fishing, and especially young anglers, I prefer to use baits that have just one hook: No trebles! It's much easier to remove single hook baits from a fish's mouth. The past couple of years I've been fishing with some youngsters and we've used, almost exclusively, Forage Minnow Jigs tipped with some sort of bait. These lures have a larger body and just a single fixed hook. They're very easy to handle, and the fish like them. In the hands of a beginning angler, that's a win.

It works so much better to make sure the beginning angler has a depth-finder to use. Share



yours. I was ice-fishing with a six-year-old last year. He was fishing, I was coaching. We had my Vexilar FLX-20. I showed and explained to my young partner what the depth-finder was showing us. In two minutes, he had it figured out. He could see his bait, and he was able to accurately tell me when he thought he was going to get bit, and he was usually right. Vexilars work very well because they read in real-time. When the fish mark merges with the bait mark, you can expect to feel or see the strike. And, if no fish are seen on the depth-finder, we move until we see fish. This prevents the new angler from getting bored or frustrated. We don't wait for the fish to come to us, we go looking for them.

Last thing: Go somewhere where the chances for getting bit are good. They don't need to be big fish, and it doesn't matter what kind they are. We just want something pulling back. Most anglers, regardless of age or skill level, want to catch some fish, and when they're in the early stages of learning, catching anything is a very good teacher and keeps them interested.

If you've got someone in your life that would like to go ice-fishing, keep these ideas in mind and you'll increase their chances for enjoying the experience.

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# DAN'S FISH 'N' TALES®



## Diamonds Are An Angler's Best Friend

By Dan Galusha

There is a song called "Diamonds Are A Girl's Best Friend". In the case of ice fishing, Diamonds are an angler's best friend – that is if they are Custom Jigs & Spins' Diamond Jigs.

*When crappies are holding in deep water, in many cases, it is important to get down to them quickly.*





Readers of this column know how much I use many of Custom Jigs & Spins' products, especially the Ratfinkee, Demon and Ratso for year-around fishing. Within the past few years a couple of other jigs this company produces – Gill Pill and Diamond – are quickly becoming frequently used items in my arsenal of ice tackle. The Diamond is especially important because of its size and weight.

The Diamond Jig is small, like most of the ice jigs used for panfish. However, it is much heavier, and because of that is a very useful lure in certain situations.

Its hook has a very short shank, which is good for tipping with wax worms, spikes, Gulp Waxies and Minnow Heads, and Power Crappie Nibbles. Anything larger, unless it is a Finesse Noodel or Wedgee, will not work as well.

While I've used the Diamond in regular shallower water ice fishing, its primary use has been in deeper water, and when needing to reach depths quickly. During each of these situations it is not when the fish need a slow fall to produce strikes.

Using a lighter weight jig in water over 10 feet, or if fish are suspended at any depth greater than that mark, is often frustrating having the line reach the spot, and have the proper feel. With the Diamond it will have the same size as the smaller jig but have the weight to get it to the deeper depth, and stretch the line enough for better strike detections, and presentation. By having the line stretched a "lift bite", where the line is moved upward, and a "jerk" bite can be detected much easier. It will also help when

*The Vexilar unit shows more fish suspended half the way down the water column, which is a time to get the Diamond Jig out for a quick drop back down to the level holding fish.*







using a coil-spring bobber, like the Frabill Panfish Popper, and the highly sensitive Frabill Titanium adjustable spring bobber, which I highly recommend when fishing deeper water.

There are times when the fish are so active that getting the lure to them quickly is extremely important, especially in a tournament. The fish will move into an area, feed quickly and get out. In this situation a slow falling presentation is not the answer. The lure needs to get to the fish as fast as possible, and normally takes very little jigging when it reaches the target area. The Diamond's weight is the perfect answer. Other jigs can be used, but a split shot has to be added, which I like to avoid if at all possible. Split shot is good, but when the fishing is fast it can get in the way of many things – catching on ice edges and causing a tangle once the fish is through the hole are just a couple of possible problems. With the Diamond it takes care of it all in one little “fish catching” package at the end of the line.

*A glow colored  
Diamond Jig, tipped  
with a wax worm, is  
responsible for  
catching a lot of  
deeper water bluegills.*

As with most jigs the angler has to give it the proper action. My favorite knot for jigs is a King Sling, which is a loop-knot. This sort of knot, and light line of 2 to 4 pound test is very important to the action of the Diamond.

Since it falls quickly to the “fish zone”, there is only the attraction of the lure itself, and the angler's presentation. Stopping it a few feet above the desired depth can make a slower approach by slowly working the jig with a slow-short pumping motion as the line is being lowered. I like to stop it about 3 feet above the area and work it downward. Many times, my Vexilar unit will show the fish starting to move upward, which indicates that they are in a feeding mode, and ready to take the jig.

If the fish don't hit after the depth is reached, then work it below the area holding the fish, and then back up above the zone, before heading back down.

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Another advantage to this heavier jig is the commotion it can cause. There are times when the fish will strike if the brush is bumped a little harder, knocking off a very slight amount of debris, or hitting the bottom when fish are holding close to that area. It can slightly stir up some of the debris on a flat or rocky bottom, which many times makes a fish investigate what may be burrowing.

I carry at least 4 fully rigged Frabill Ice Hunter rod/reel combos. One always has a Diamond tied on. Because there are several sizes and colors, I start with one that may be the best choice for the depth and body of water being fished – usually a medium size in a glow color, or a metallic jig with Glow-On painted on the bottom or top half. Of course, as with all fishing this will possibly change during the day, but at least it is ready to go for any of the aforementioned situations.

For more information about the Diamond you can visit the Custom Jigs & Spins website at [www.customjigsandspins.com](http://www.customjigsandspins.com).

**If you have any questions about this or another fishing subject, drop me a line through the Dan's Fish 'N' Tales® website at [www.dansfishntales.com](http://www.dansfishntales.com), or Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/dansfishntales](https://www.facebook.com/dansfishntales). The website also provides a link to the Dan's Fish 'N' Tales/Shoot 'N' Plink You Tube channel.**

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





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# Ice Plastics Closer and Closer to the Real Thing

By Joel Nelson

My first experience with ice-bait of any kind wasn't a wax-worm, euro-larvae, or or silver wiggler, it was with a humble goldenrod grub. Each fall we'd collect goldenrod bulbs in a cardboard box from around the farm, then sit in the basement and pry them apart. Holes in the bulb would indicate the grub had left, but an intact pod would be split just up until the center. After which, you'd extract the tiny white grub from the center and put it in small jars with corn meal. It was free and plentiful but took some time to pull those little buggers out. It also led to a few scars and plenty of frustration, though the panfish certainly appreciated them.

Fast forward a decade or more, and I

began to fall in love with plastics for ice. Anything with a flicker tail could be threaded on your favorite jig with the greatest amount of customization. I had color, shape, length, and rigging choices galore to fully experiment with, day-in and day-out. Ice plastics made me a better angler then, as I was able to spend more time fishing, less time re-baiting, and ultimately learn to fine-tune a presentation with utmost detail. You could adjust the angle of the plastic, rigging backwards, curling it up to cover the hookpoint; whatever the situation needed, you had a way to mimic or stand-out.

Now, as plastics designs have moved forward, we've gone much further than adjusting shapes, colors, and sizes. Attractants "baked-in" to the design of these plastics are all the rage, though simple scents have been a part of the plastics routine from day-one. Anise scent is commonly used in a variety of soft plastics, but the new breed is going as far as making them out of actual organic materials. You guessed it, fish food for lack of a better term. That said, you may see them expressed as "fish proteins," "amino acids," and even "donkey-sauce." All of which would seem like a good thing to both entice fish into biting, but also keeping them on the tasting menu.



While you'll see plenty of plastics labeled as "infused" or otherwise coated with scent, here's a few of the more interesting varieties with actual fish-food as part of the bait's construction:

Northland Impulse – I'll start with the plastic most similar to, well, plastic. Northland's Impulse formula has some organic materials and natural products as part of its makeup, and though the proprietary formula is a secret, they've certainly done their due diligence. Major university research showed in repeated experiments that fish retain the bait in their mouths 143% longer than the leading competitor soft plastics. Moreover, it won't firm up or be rendered un-usable after some time out of the water. Softness in the plastic/organic blend allows for more undulation in a variety of popular shapes and sizes, making it a go-to for those looking at the benefits of a hybrid. I've used these for years and have always been successful with this bait.

Eurotackle Mummy Worms – Next, we'll cover the real thing, literally. Euro's mummy worms are real wax-worms, but mummified. While the process is closely guarded, the key is that these things are well-preserved and ready to go in a variety of colors. What's dead already can't stink up your ice-bibs, and it's obvious that fish can prefer live-bait only at times, making this a great option on the go.

Beavertail Baits – Perhaps the most interesting item in the category is a series of completely organic ice baits from Beavertail. Based on the name, you might be able to guess the actual makeup of these ice baits, which begs the question, why beaver-tail? Andrew Gullickson, owner/operator has a few reasons. "First off, it has the









all day compared to lures that are dipped in scent and can get diluted.” He also mentions the durability of the product, which is always an issue with live bait. “This stuff is ultra-tough compared to bait and even your average plastic, making it a great for fishing gills and perch that are notoriously rough on bait,” says Gullickson. It also comes in various color options, allowing for different looks in different water clarity and color. Similar to the mummy-worms, Beavertail baits are preserved through a special process that allows shelf life and no stink.

The beaver-tail product shares another unique quality in that it is neutrally buoyant. Iowa guide Darrin Jones of Big Fin Guide Service uses these baits to fool the famously finicky gills of the gin clear Okoboji system. “I can fish these baits with extremely light jigs and get better kick out of them than traditional plastic,” mentions Jones. He also echoes Gullickson in describing how long they last on a hook. “I can catch 25 plus gills on a single bait, which is important for these clear lake gills in a shrinking bite window,” says Jones. More time in the water than out of it is important, but to Jones, so are the adjustments he can make to these baits. “I like taking the scissors to these and modifying them, with my favorite shape being a simple split tail created by cutting one lengthwise from one end nearly to the other,” says Jones. “They’re infinitely adjustable, giving me more options when fish are in a funk.”

I think we all could agree that more options out there is a good thing, especially when they are getting closer and closer to live bait. That said, these options with all of their other favorable qualities are giving the real thing a run for its money.



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# Turn Negative Fish into Biting Fish

By Matt Johnson  
Ice Team Manager

Can you turn a negative fish into an aggressive biter?

Maybe — but it can take some real effort. You have to pull out all the stops. Top anglers have several tricks to get the fish to bite when they don't want to.

Fish are simplistic, for the most part. They need to eat to survive. The idea of dropping down a tiny bite-size morsel for the fish to eat seems easy enough, but what about when those fish snub the bait and turn away an easy meal? Do we just sit it out or tell our friends the fish are not biting? Definitely not! It's time to dive into the bag of tricks and pull out methods that work.

Oftentimes we are quick to change the size of the presentation we are using, but we don't have to always follow the rules. I prefer to change the jigging action first. I'm a firm believer that every fish will bite if the bait is presented in the right manner and action. The fish will commit if it feels it has a suitable dance partner. Change your jigging sequence and you'll induce hunger. Also keep in mind the option of changing the direction of movement both up and down, meaning working the entire water column even when a fish is present on your flasher. Dropping the bait below a negative fish and holding it motionless can trigger a strike too.

Breaking away from the live-bait realm can also pay off in dividends. Switching to a plastic, whether scented or not, can trigger even the most skittish of biters. The finesse tails available today — like the Maki Mino and Polli — quiver ever so slightly and can force negative fish into a feeding frenzy.





One trick with these finesse tails is to never stop the bait from moving. I encourage you to keep the plastic constantly quivering even when a fish begins its staring contest. We are too quick to stop the bait once a fish moves in and that can sometimes be the biggest mistake we make. Look for soft and subtle baits and don't neglect the offerings loaded with tentacles. Yes they might break off, but when the going gets tough you need to only plan for one bite at a time.

Another way to entice those negative biters is to keep things natural. By this I mean offer something in a dark brown, purple, black or blood red in color. Leave the glows at home and "match the hatch." The ice fishing community is so saturated with glow options that we now feel we're doing something wrong if we don't fish them. I'm not saying forget the glows completely, but I challenge you to try more natural colors when seeking that extra bite. Small blood-red noodle plastics can effectively imitate blood worm. Black jigs can easily resemble a variety of aquatic insects. These are just a few options of natural baits, look in your tackle arsenal and find more. Fish simple and slow, and give the fish what they already eat in the natural environment.

Probably the most effective trick when nothing seems to work is to just simply pack up and move. Moving can mean to a new spot on the lake or to a new lake altogether. Don't fall victim to sitting in one spot if the fish are not biting. I can assure you that there are biting fish somewhere, you just have to take the initiative and go find them. Making small moves across a piece of structure is a great way to start. Followed by more drastic moves where you take the cruise across the lake to a whole new pattern. And if all else fails, hop on the road and attack a new body of water. The old saying "don't beat a dead horse" can sometimes ring true when sitting out on the ice. Move and be the mobile ice angler I know you can be.

While our days might not always be plentiful, we still can expect to catch fish regardless of the conditions. With a little patience and adjusting, we can entice even the most negative fish into biting. Change your action, string up a finesse tail and dust off the black jigs: the fish are waiting.

***Matt Johnson is the Ice Team  
Manager and also guides in central  
Minnesota.***





# Ice Fishing For Lake Trout

By Tim Moore

The two most common ways to ice fish for lake trout are jigging and tip up fishing. The debate over which method is best has gone on for many generations and will likely continue for many more. Both techniques are extremely effective. Which one works best usually depends on the day and angler preference. Some days lake trout want to chase their prey, which makes jigging an effective method. Other days the fish will only eat live smelt, and tip ups will far out-fish the jig rods.

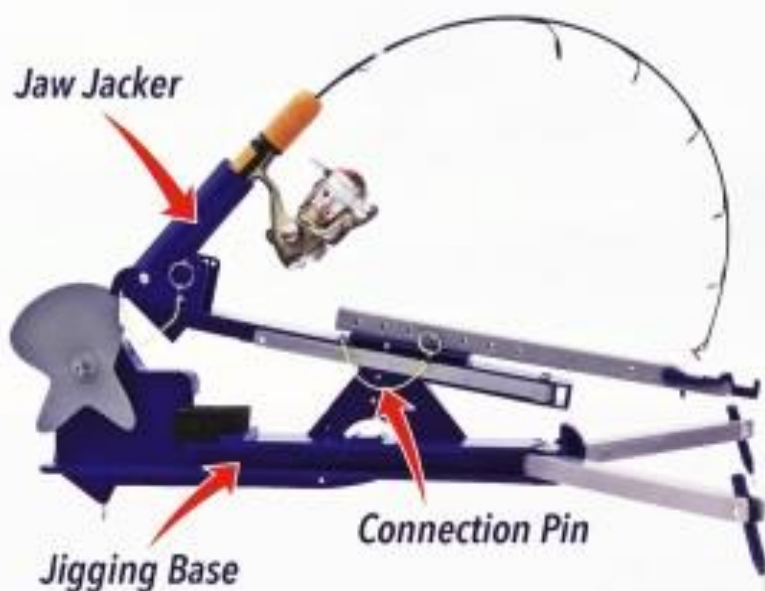
Jigging is generally more active and allows anglers to be more mobile. Spoons and bucktail jigs are common lures





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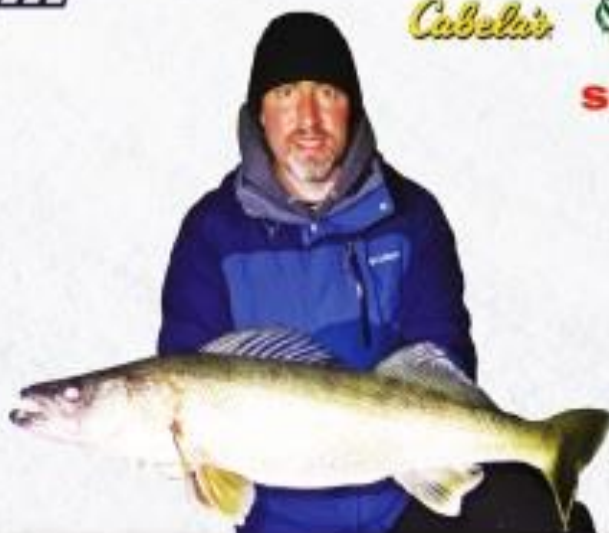
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among lake trout anglers. Spoons use sight and vibration to attract lake trout in hopes of triggering their predatory instinct to make them bite. Bucktail jigs work great when paired with a strip of belly meat from a sucker. Suckers can be purchased at bait shops near almost any lake trout lake. An effective jigging method is to drop your lure to the bottom, pound it a few times to stir up some silt, and reel up a couple feet before jigging.

Mobile anglers will often use a run-and-gun technique to hunt lake trout. Run-and-gun fishing allows an angler to cover more water and put their lure in front of a greater number of fish. It is most effective with highly-pressured fish, or on days when lake trout are less active due to bright sun and high barometric pressure. The general rule is that lake trout will be more active on cloudy low-pressure days, and less active when the sun is bright, or the wind is blowing hard.

Tip up fishing relies largely on the movements of the lake trout. Tip ups allow anglers to spread their lines out over a greater area and wait for a flag to pop up. Many anglers prefer this method because the in-between time allows them to be more social, and many love racing each other to the next flag. Tip ups are often rigged with some sort of braided nylon line. Attached to that is a swivel and 6' – 8' of fluorocarbon line with a hook. A small non-lead spit shot is used to keep the bait at the desired depth.

When lake trout spawn in the fall they do so in 30' – 40' of water. Many of those fish remain at those depths throughout the winter, but that is not the rule. While most avid lake trout ice anglers target those same depths all winter, some believe bigger fish will be caught in deeper water. Inside turns, humps, and steep drop offs are key areas as they are all prime feeding areas for lake trout.

Some studies suggest that lake trout grow 2" – 4" per year for the first four years of their life. Then growth slows to 1" or less. Recently, a lake trout that was tagged in Lake Superior, and caught 7 times since tagged, was shown to have grown less than a quarter of an inch per year over an eight-year period. I encourage my clients to practice catch and release and consider replica mounts.

While the way many ice anglers fish for lake trout might differ, the reasons most of us do it is universal. We love the chase, the camaraderie, and the excitement of those big lake trout head shakes. Lake trout fight hard, often feed aggressively, and present a challenge for even the most seasoned ice angler. Whether you fish tip ups, or prefer to jig, get out there and enjoy yourself this winter. Just remember, safety first. Don't take unnecessary risks and always have safety gear with you.

***Tim Moore is a full-time professional fishing guide in New Hampshire. He owns and operates Tim Moore Outdoors, LLC. He is a member of the New England Outdoors Writers Association and the producer of Tim Moore Outdoors TV. Visit [www.TimMooreOutdoors.com](http://www.TimMooreOutdoors.com) for more information.***





# The Skinny

By Kevan Paul

It's that moment when you pull down to the local access and look across that new sheet of ice that just gets your hair standing. Early ice has to be one of my favorite times to fish. Not only can it be the most rewarding, but it can also be some of the most difficult.

I want to talk about the skinny: the skinny water depths of 3 feet or less and skinny ice less than 6 inches thick. Skinny water and skinny ice is almost like peanut butter and jelly: they match perfectly.

When I see people hit the lake for the first time each season, they typically look for a safe area to target that is away from shore. I can tell you from my experiences that there are a lot of fish that we all walk right on by early in the year.

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I stumbled across this phenomenon three years ago. I was that guy at the ramp with drool pouring out of my mouth as I gazed across the new, fresh ice. After taking a quick look at the ice I decided I was going to put on a set of ice cleats and take my spud bar and give it a quick check. The ice was thicker than I thought. I gave it four hard hits before it poked through. This told me that the ice was around 2.5 to 3 inches thick and for me that's enough to fish close to shore.

### **Safety**

When approaching ice for the first time I can't stress enough that safety is, by far, more important than any trophy fish. There are many great products on the market that will help to keep anglers safe. I like to keep handy my buoyant Lift suit, safety spikes, rope, ice cleats and spud bar, which is my most important tool. My spud bar always enters my truck in the middle of November and stays until ice out regardless of ice predictions or ice thickness you never know when it may come in handy.

With my spud bar in my hand and ice cleats on my feet, I made my way out onto the ice. I decided to take the safe route and walk to the north over the shallow water. Picture this: I'm on 3 inches of nice, clean ice and the water clarity is great so I can see the bottom. After taking a few more steps I thought I saw a flash of a spooked fish so I decided that my next few steps were going to be much more quiet. Sure enough, after three or four more soft steps, I saw a school of panfish making a break for it. These fish in less than 20 inches of water opened my eyes and gave me something to think about. At that moment I backed up and left them alone. Later that day, at home, all I could think about was how I was going to catch these fish and what was I going to use.





### ***Game Day***

All night I thought, “What’s it going to take to put some of these fish top side?”

The next morning I packed up everything and I took off to the lake. I pulled down to the same boat ramp and I made my way out to the same spot, walking the same trail with my spud bar. I pulled my one-man flip over with just enough accessories to be successful like my auger and a rod bag with a little tackle.

I needed to fish light, soft and be stealthy. The house seemed like a good idea but, after I set up and didn’t have any fish come close, I knew I needed to be much smarter. So after a little trial and error I decided to drill out 10 holes and then back off and let them cool down. I pulled everything back 20 yards and I let the holes rest 20 minutes before I went on the stealthy attack again.

This time I approached the hole slowly and dropped the line while still 3 feet away with my 48-inch Jason Mitchell Meat Stick. This longer rod gave me just enough space to hide and keep back so they wouldn’t see me when they approached the hole. I was now fishing by feel not by sight. After standing there for a good 10 minutes I noticed the fish started to come back. I saw a crappie and a huge yellow bass move in. I knew at that moment it was game on. It was just a matter of time before things were going to get fired up.

### ***The Bite***

I don’t think that I have ever fished in water so shallow. Watching the fish come from all angles was pretty cool. As I stood dead still with that 48-inch rod rigged with a small drop jig and a piece of Maki plastic it wasn’t long before the action picked up. I think the tiny quiver of my hold was just what they were looking for.

If you have ever watched the bugs and other invertebrate move under the water most will just hover or quiver in a tight motion and drift with the water current. Fishing with longer rods and having a steady grip can give the jig a sweet cadence. The first few fish I landed were 9-inch yellow bass and it wasn’t long before I caught a 10-inch crappie.

I started to notice that, after each catch, the fish were getting spooked. The more I caught the longer it took for them to come back. This was now a great time to try out the other holes and, after making a quiet move over to the next hole, it didn't take long to catch another one.

After a couple hours of hole-hopping and fishing like a ninja it was time to pack my bags. I took home more than a dozen fish that day and it was one of the most rewarding trips for me because it really made me open my eyes on the shallow water. Sidebar: don't forget live bait and to stay mobile.

### **Challenges**

There are so many challenges when it comes to fishing in shallow water, starting with confidence. Who would have thought that 3 inches of ice and less than 20 inches of water was going to catch me some nice eaters. Being able to see the fish really makes you think twice because if you can see them they can surely see you. While building confidence is important, safety still comes first. Properly using the spud to work your way out and fishing with the appropriate accessories will lead to success. Remember to let the fish teach you.

***Kevan Paul from Clear Lake, Iowa, is a professional fishing guide and promoter. He spends a lot of time giving seminars and targeting fish across the expansive array of Iowa's glacial lakes.***

[www.paulsfishingguide.com](http://www.paulsfishingguide.com).

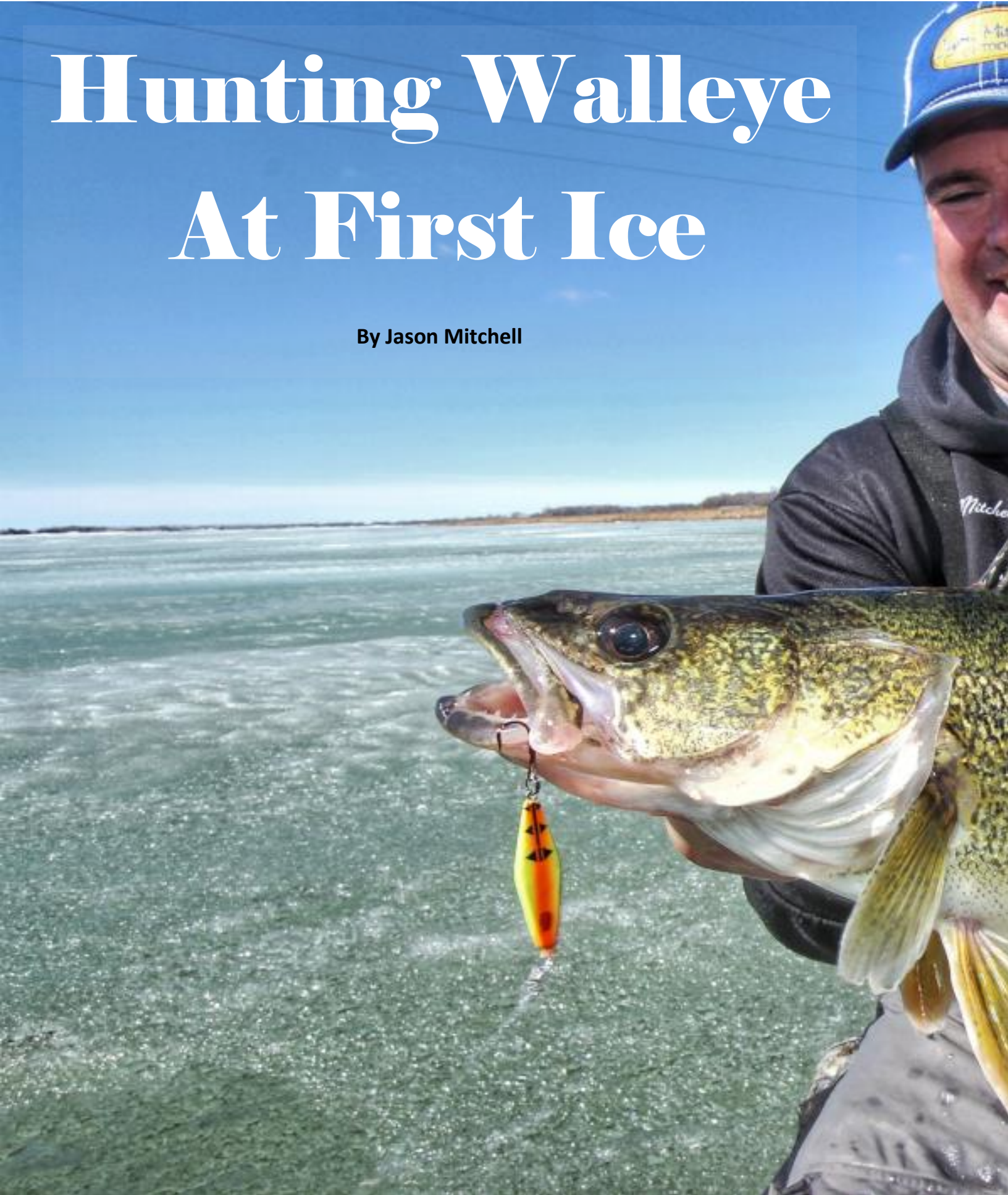


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# Hunting Walleye At First Ice

By Jason Mitchell



The first ice period often offers opportunities to catch aggressive walleye in shallow water. On many fisheries... prime time is typically around sunrise and sunset. Ice anglers often anticipate





this prime-time period and experience great fishing. While these fish can be aggressive and easy to catch, landing in the right place at the right time is the key to finding and catching walleyes.



time period and experience great fishing. While these fish can be aggressive and easy to catch, landing in the right place at the right time is the key to finding and catching walleyes. What so many ice anglers underestimate is the importance of landing on the right place at the wrong time... let me explain.

The sunrise and sunset windows are often short and intense. Maybe an hour of prime time. Doesn't leave you with much time to find fish. If there is one thing I have learned over the years, the reality is that you can break down a lot of water and find fish during the day. What you can find during the day will pay off when the sun begins to set.

The key to finding fish during the day on fisheries that are notorious for producing low light bites is to simply cover water and hit as many fresh spots as you can. The reality is that if there are a lot of fish on any piece of structure, you can often catch a few and see fish on your electronics during the middle of the day. Use the entire day if possible so you land on the best spots come evening. This holds true in shallow water. On Devils Lake for example, we often find wild shallow water walleye bites in less than seven feet of water and the best time is usually around sunrise and sunset. Moonrise or moonset can swing that window earlier or later and there are of course exceptions but that is the base line... first hour and last hour of the day. Even in shallow water, we can often pick off fish during the middle of the day. The bite might not be good or intense but it is revealing. If there are a lot of fish somewhere, you can find them during the day.

Now the reality is that you can miss fish on spots by hitting good spots at midday. Especially when looking for them in shallow water but what I find is that I am in a much better place come sunset if I eliminate some water during the day and sample as much water as possible for activity. The reason I believe that using the entire day to look for fish is so important with shallow water walleyes is the simple fact that most bites only seem to last for maybe three days. You just can't camp out on the same spot over





and over for multiple days and expect great fishing. You wear out your welcome, the fish spook and everything changes. Finding fresh fish is the key to having great success on the ice. The hour of prime time just doesn't leave an angler with enough time to find fish at times.

So, we have a couple of strategies with shallow sunset walleye. We can roll up to a good spot and drill a bunch of holes and wait or hope that the fish do what they are supposed to do. This strategy can work and might be the only option if you are short on time. There is definitely some merit to this strategy.

Here are some other realities. When word gets out on a shallow bite and people begin to gather, the bite is often doomed. You put all your eggs in one basket and wait for the bite. I have been burned with this strategy more times than I care to admit.



My most successful strategy by far is being much more aggressive before the sun gets low and simply hit what I consider as many good spots as possible long before the fish should be there. If you can hit a dozen spots long before sunset and crack a few fish off one spot, you are usually going to catch way more fish off that location come sunset. You might have time to check several spots versus just a single spot if you simply get out of your head that you can't catch walleye during the day. You can catch walleye during the day. You can eliminate a lot of water during the day and find fish. You will be in a much better place come sunset if you do.

There is a general rule of thumb that fish slide up on tops of reefs, points or move shallow when the sun gets low. Keep with that mentality when you are looking for walleye during the day. Hit



the same spots during the middle of the day where you would expect to find them come sunset when you are trying to find fish. During the hunt, the key is to keep hitting new spots with fresh ice where there has been no pressure yet. If there are a lot of fish on a spot, there will be a few that slide up shallow much earlier than they should. Don't get bogged down with fishing the deeper adjacent water or the sides of the structure. Use that strategy after you find fish and want to pick off a few more fish as you wear out your welcome or the sun gets higher in the morning and you need to extend the bite window. When looking for fresh fish, focus on the money spots and hit as many as you can.

The reason this is so important so often is simply because shallow walleyes often don't slide deeper during the middle of the day, they often simply seem to lay on the bottom and quit cruising. That is why you often can't sit in one spot and catch multiple fish out of one hole during the middle of the day. The fish must keep moving underneath you for you to be able to do that. Come sunset when fish are cruising on the prowl, you can catch several fish out of one hole. That is why fishing much more aggressively during the day is important... you must go to them and land a lure nearby.



I have often stated and still believe that I can usually extend a bite window by downsizing after the primetime period is over. The first hour of daylight for example, the fish might be smoking a ¼ ounce Rattlin' Blade Spoon (pictured). As the sun gets higher, the fish get tougher to catch and simply downsizing can account for a few more fish at the end of the bite window.

When I am hunting, I like to err on the side of big and aggressive because fish that are laying on the bottom often must get turned around. The odds of landing right in front of a fish is slim. The odds of landing within twenty feet of a fish are much better. The fish might be facing the wrong direction and laying on the bottom. Finesse just isn't going to move that fish or turn it around. Hard pounding however can get these fish to respond. When I am looking for fish during the middle of the day, I like to use the same lures I expect to use at sunset.

The very best bites for early ice walleye in shallow water usually indeed happen at sunrise and sunset but by utilizing the middle of the day and using that time to hunt for new spots with fish, you can be in a much more fluid position of staying on good bites. Don't just sit and wait. Hunt for fish and use the rest of the day to get you on the hot bites happening when the sun hits the horizon. You will be amazed at the schools of shallow water walleye you can find during the middle of the day. You will also be rewarded with some epic and aggressive bites in shallow water once the sun gets low.

***Jason Mitchell Outdoors airs on Fox Sports North at 9:00 am on Sunday mornings. Follow Jason Mitchell Outdoors on YouTube, Instagram and Facebook or go to their webpage;***

***<http://www.jasonmitchelloutdoors.com>***

# Favorite Ice Fishing Locations

By Bob Jensen

As ice-fishing season gets closer, I'm making noting bodies of water that I hope to return to this year. It's been my good fortune to have experienced memorable ice-fishing in many locations, and it can be difficult to get to all of those locations in a limited amount of time. With that in mind, following are three places that will be at the top of my return-to list.



Big Stone Lake lies on the Minnesota/South Dakota border near the town of Ortonville. Big Stone is billed as “Minnesota’s Hottest Perch Lake”, and from what I’ve seen on recent trips, it certainly must be considered one of the Midwest’s best perch fisheries. Big Stone also has good supplies of walleyes, and the largemouth bass and bluegill populations are growing at an impressive rate.

The perch here keep moving, so if you want to be successful at catching them, you need to keep moving also. On my last ice-fishing trip to Big Stone we used Tungsten Banana Bug jigs tipped with waxworms or small minnows effectively. The perch get finicky on any body of water, and small-bodied jigs are what it takes to put them on the ice. Tungsten jigs provide that smaller body. To learn more about this outstanding perch fishery, go to [www.bigstonelake.com](http://www.bigstonelake.com).

My first ice-fishing trip ever was to Clear Lake in north central Iowa. That was a long time ago. Since that time, two things have changed regarding ice-fishing on Clear Lake, and I’m glad for both. The equipment is so much better, and so is the fishing.

Yellow bass have become a popular target on this 3,600 acre body of water. Yellows are abundant, they like to get caught, and they’re great on the table. Anglers from as far away as Canada to the north and Texas to the south visit Clear Lake regularly to get in on the yellow bass action.

Yellow bass also like to roam. Keep on the move to keep on the action. Vexilar sonar units with their super-sensitivity are necessary if you want to be successful. They will reveal if yellows are present. If fish aren’t present, keep moving: You’ll know when you find them. Tiny spoons are yellow bass killers. In addition to yellow bass, walleyes, crappies, perch, even the occasional channel catfish



and musky make an appearance. Check Clear Lake out at [www.clearlakeiowa.com](http://www.clearlakeiowa.com).

Another favorite year 'round spot of mine is the Alexandria area of Minnesota. Alexandria is just off I-94 between the Twin Cities and Fargo, and it offers lots of lakes that offer lots of fishing opportunities. Some lakes are better for panfish, some provide a better walleye opportunity. The area offers outstanding options for entertainment, lodging, and all the other factors that make it a fun place to visit.

I've probably chased crappies the most during the winter season in this area. The bite at dusk is often the best, and a two inch minnow hooked lightly through the back under a sixteenth ounce Forage Minnow Jig has fooled lots of slab crappies. I prefer to fish this set-up under a slip-bobber. Again, your sonar unit can be invaluable. Keep an eye on it to see what depth the crappies are running at, then set the bobber so your bait is about a foot above the fish. Learn more about the fishing and other opportunities that this area provides at [www.exploreaalex.com](http://www.exploreaalex.com) or [www.alexandriamn.org](http://www.alexandriamn.org).

There are many other outstanding places to go fishing in the ice-fishing region and a limited number of days to explore them. This year, I hope to visit many of those, but I know that I'll have to make choices where I go, and when that happens, the three locations just mentioned will be at the top of my list.

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

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# LAKERS ON ICE IN THE NORTH

By Jason Mitchell



Lake trout are a fascinating fish to target through the ice and I would dare say the popularity of lake trout has grown immensely over the past decade. When we first developed the Mackinaw series of ice rods in our Jason Mitchell Rod lineup back in 2005, there were very few rods on the market designed for lake trout fishing. The niche was small at the time. The rods being marketed as predator or lake trout rods at the time had too short of handles and the actions weren't heavy enough. The options were either pool cue stiff fiberglass rods that featured three guides or getting a rod built in a custom rod shop. I remember Berkley making a predator rod in the Dave Genz Lightning Rod lineup that was a great rod at the time but the rod was discontinued after a few years. Once that rod was discontinued, the only good option was Thorne Brothers.



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When we developed the Mackinaw Baitcasting Rod, we incorporated a spiral or Robinson wrap where the guides started on top of the blank near the reel seat and rotated around the bottom of the rod blank. The idea for that design came from the late Ed "Backwater Eddy" Carlson. I can still remember showing the rod design to bait and tackle shops with puzzled looks. I will never forget one occasion where I showed the rod to a tackle shop owner in northern Minnesota.





"You have some serious issues with quality control," explained the shop owner. His face was wrinkled as he ran his fingers down the rotated guide train.

I explained the purpose of the rotated guide train and his expression changed. The grimace turned to a smile and he told me, "I'll take twenty of them!" The spiral guide wrap became popular as many ice anglers switched over to braided line when fishing for lake trout over deep water. The spiral wrap allowed a smoother line route to the baitcasting reel when the rod was loaded up and the guides collected a lot of the ice at the rod tip. Line wasn't as apt to wrap around a guide. In our quest to build the ultimate lake trout rod, we took a few risks.

The challenge back then was simply numbers, at least stateside. One of the biggest markets for our very first Mackinaw rod at that time was the Lake Superior fishery. We also had some pockets of lake trout anglers in northern Minnesota and upstate New York. We were selling ice rods to small bait and tackle shops but sales for that rod action blew up when anglers in Canada discovered the rod. We soon began selling the Mackinaw Series in many of the big box retail stores and other rod companies sat up and took notice. Several other rod companies began selling a more seriously designed predator rod and the competition was ultimately good for the consumer. Since that beginning, lake trout have become a much more sought-after fish, at least for anglers in the Midwest.

What has really drove the increased popularity of lake trout in my opinion is that more anglers are willing to travel today. Once you get bit by the lake trout bug, you find yourself driving to reach them every winter. Today's world is just so much smaller than even twenty years ago. There is more information available. There is better and more reliable equipment. Anglers aren't as intimidated to venture to remote areas. There are more guides specializing in lake trout ice fishing today. When we first developed the Mackinaw Series back in the day, we worked extensively with the late Jim Hudson on Lake Superior. At that period, there were very few guides who specialized or spent any significant time targeting lake trout through the ice in the United States. There was so much less information available and the learning curve was much longer and steeper. Lake trout had a mystique and we were ecstatic if we caught a single lake trout in a day of fishing.

Enter a vast exchange in information courtesy of the age of internet that includes so much technical advice. Enter better mapping and understanding of deep structure. Enter better equipment with more anglers using that equipment. There was a time when a simple auger rack on a snowmobile was a new novelty. There was a time not that long ago when having tracks on an ATV was unheard of. In some regions, there weren't even any overnight lodging options available. Lake trout fishing can



still be difficult, can still be remote and as we often joke, “the highs are high and the lows are low” but there is no doubt... these destination adventure trips are much easier to do today and more anglers are discovering this incredible fishing opportunity.

There are many premier lake trout fishing opportunities and some of these opportunities like Lake Simcoe and Geneva Lake are relatively close to a lot of people. Some fisheries like Pactola Reservoir in South Dakota are the result of creating a new fishery through stocking efforts. Perhaps the original lake trout destination for many Midwest and particularly Minnesota based anglers is northwest Ontario. More specifically, Lake of the Woods but there is some tremendous drive to destinations just north of the border near communities like Kenora and Nestor Falls. Manitoba has become much more accessible over the past twenty years with more lodging options available through the winter. Manitoba fisheries like Clearwater Lake, Kississing Lake, Cranberry Portage, Bakers Narrows and Reed Lake all offer some of the very best drive to lake trout water particularly for the coveted fish over the thirty-five-inch mark. What I love about Manitoba lake trout destinations is that you feel like you are traveling back in time. There is very little pressure and not many tracks. Some of these destinations were almost inaccessible to anglers outside the area not that terribly long ago but better roads and winter lodging options have blown this remote region up. When we look to the west, Fort Peck Reservoir in eastern Montana is perhaps one of the best fisheries in the lower 48 for numbers of quality fish.

For catching sick numbers of nice lake trout at least stateside, Fort Peck would be tough to beat. For the very biggest trout in the lower 48, the Apostle Islands of Lake Superior is tops when the ice conditions are safe. For adventure and unbelievable unpressured lake trout options for both numbers and size, northern Manitoba is at the very top of any list. For ease to reach for many Midwest based anglers with consistent ice and fishing, northwest Ontario is still a viable option. All these destinations are worth the travel to reach.

No doubt that the lake trout fraternity is growing each winter and more anglers are falling in love with these powerful predators. A fish that can live for several decades on some fisheries. A fish that can push your equipment to the max. A fish that can burn drag for a hundred feet before turning. A fish that can grow to awe inspiring size. Lake trout are king wherever they swim and you will feel like a king when you catch one of these amazing fish.



# Joel Nelson Outdoors



## Ask Joel - What's Your Go-To Knot?

By Joel Nelson

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Kory T. Asks: "Hey Joel, hope all of your preparations for this years ice fishing season are going smoothly, I've been watching your new and some older videos lately to touch up on my game!

What is your go to knot from your fluorocarbon leader to your hook/lure?"

"Thanks for the question Kory, though I wish I could boil it down to one single knot. My go-to line is Sufix Invisiline Ice - here are my go-to knots:



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The first is the improved clinch and is built for speed and spoons. I tie this knot when I'm in a hurry, as I can do it more quickly than any other on account of sheer practice and familiarity. I also tie it when I've already got a great deal of "play" or action in my offering. For jigging spoons, this usually is the ticket as there's multiple split rings and other movement that gives the bait action. My knot doesn't need to add to that.

Next is the loop knot. I tie this one directly to panfish jigs primarily. It's a bit more time consuming for me at

least, especially with smaller diameter lines, but it's paid dividends on certain days against other line ties. It's also something I've seen across the ice belt with guides and other professionals. I fished with a guide out of the Mosquito Lagoon area in Florida a few winters ago who used this loop knot exclusively for everything. Jigs, topwater baits, you name it, that's all he used, and he felt very strongly about how many more fish it helps him catch. Learn and add to your repertoire!



# Out Fishing With The Boys

By Kelsey-Rose MacDonald



It was early morning and we were all set for an ice fishing trip Dec 2018. The night before our trip, I had butterflies and was extremely excited. I always get thrilled when I know I am going ice fishing the next day! I tossed and turned the whole night but couldn't get to sleep till 1 am. We had to be up at 4 am, but my mind kept thinking about that first fish, what I was going to use and how I was going to catch it. The morning came quickly as I hardly slept a wink. We awoke to dark, freezing -25-degree temperatures. I asked John as I peeked out from the warm covers, "do we really have to go, it's freezing out there".

I hit the snooze button on my alarm until it was 5AM and we absolutely had to get up. I flew out of bed and asked Kelsey-Rose, "Why didn't you wake me up? We have to leave in 2 hours. I peeked out the front window to witness blowing snow. It looked cold, extremely cold. I shouted to John, "do we I have everything I need"? Boots I hope these are warm enough, I don't want my feet to freeze. Snow pants, do they match everything. Hat, what one shall I wear?? Got my jacket on. Oh, can't forget my many layers under everything. As you can see, I'm a fashionista and have to be warm to ice fish. John turns to ask, "are we ready to go now". Ah no we forgot food. John food, the heck do you need food for. I need to eat or I'll be hangry. 30 min later, Kelsey-Rose what all is that, Well I can't forget my Mr. noodles, chips, chocolate, pop spoon and a bowl. Ok are we ready now we must meet Jason at 8am and its 6 am now.

As we were driving down the road I exclaimed, John I have to go to the bathroom! John swivels his head, "can't you wait till we get there? No, I'm a girl and there is no were to go. Finally, we get to our destination and meet up with Jason. Ok we have everyone oh wait were Kelsey-Rose. Yelling from behind I'm comingggggg!! Waddle waddle waddle. We finally get the spot. First thing on the list, set up the ice hut oops forgot to tie it down. There it goes across the ice. Grab it quick. Kelseyrose I thought you were holding onto it. I was but the wind took it from me. second on the list get tent nailed down. 3rd on the list drill holes. 1-hole puff puff puff, 2 holes puff puff puff, 3 holes. John maybe next time you should have a power auger. 4 on the list get rods set up and put bait on. John is it



just me or is it hot in here! 1 layer, 2 layers, 3 layers. Kelseyrose what are you doing? It got hot in here.

Not even 10 min, I yell FISH ON!! Haha beat that you guys!! John and Jason trying feverishly to catch a fish. "Not wanting to be beat by a girl!" We were all using different types of lures. John was using his go to minnows and I was using a: SOLID CHARTREUSE slab grabber, and mine was the one that worked. John yells I got a fish. It fell in my bait bucket... LOL. All of us at once yelled FISH ON triple header. We got 3 perch all at the same time. Jason getting ready to leave, where's Kelsey-Rose. Looking in the ice hut; "What are you doing Kelsey-



Rose?" What does it look like I'm doing? I'm catching fish. As the day continued it was just John and I. What do you know, not even a few hours later John catches his biggest pike through the ice. Quick picture and it went flip flop flip flop back in the hole... nearing the end of the day packing up we see a gorgeous full moon as were walking back to the car.

**Wow, what a great day of fishing.**



## **CATCH MORE WALLEYES THIS WINTER WITH VMC® BLADED HYBRID TREBLES ON YOUR ICE BAITS**

VMC's new Bladed Hybrid Treble, the tweak that makes fish freak, will work its magic through the ice as well as it does in open water. Add one to your VMC® jigging spoons and Rapala® Jigging Raps to catch more and bigger walleyes this winter.

"When you're jigging with it, you get the added flash of that blade," says Ice Force Pro Brad Hawthorne, an in-demand Minnesota guide. "It's really a cool deal. I'm actually wondering how we've gone so long without this, it seems so must-have now!"

The Bladed Hybrid Treble makes baits extra-fishy by being extra-flashy. It comprises a small silver willow blade attached by a resin-sealed swivel to the back of a 1X-strong, wide-gap, short-shank, high-carbon steel VMC Hybrid Treble. In-Depth Outdoors TV host James Holst is among leading ice anglers who will be fishing this winter with bladed trebles on select baits.

"A little extra flash and vibration will be especially helpful in stained and dirty water," he says.

Because it's suspended on a swivel, the Bladed Hybrid Treble's willow-leaf blade can rotate 360 degrees, so a bait's built-in action can make it kick out in any direction. Each time it does so, it will catch any light penetrating the water column and flash. That's what makes it a great addition to a VMC Rattling Spoon, says Ice Force Pro Joel Nelson.





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# PIKE POLE FISHING

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"I like it for the types of spoons that tend not to have as much flash, roll, or action on their own," says Nelson, an ice-fishing expert featured on Angling Buzz TV. "That's where adding the Bladed Hybrid Treble gives you the perfect trifecta – rattle, color and flash."

Hawthorne this winter will fish his 2-inch VMC Tingler and Tumbler Spoons with Bladed Hybrid Trebles.

"It makes those spoons really erratic," he says. "It can make them drift head first, it can make it go sideways. There's no way of predicting how it's going to go."



A Bladed Hybrid Treble will slow a spoon's fall rate by about 40 percent, Hawthorne estimates. "When you jig up and that blade catches the water, it slows it right down," he says.

Another benefit of rigging a jigging spoon with a Bladed Hybrid Treble, Nelson says, is that it

enhances the bait's profile without decreasing its hooking percentage.

"There's a lot of people who will use a whole minnow on a jigging spoon in order to make it twice as long and make it a more enticing snack to bigger fish," Nelson explains. "But sometimes the problem with that is you get short strikes. The cool part about this bladed treble is it will bulk up your presentation without being too long that you get short strikes. So, you can go ahead and just tip with a minnow head or plastic."

A Bladed Hybrid Treble can improve your hook-up ratio with Jigging Raps as well. Fish will instinctively attack the flash in the center of the bait.

"That blade makes it a focus point, so get a lot more fish T-boning that bait, rather than just nipping at ends or tails," Nelson says.

A Bladed Hybrid Treble will also give a Jigging Rap a distinctive, slower fall.

"When you put it on the belly hook, it acts kind of like a parachute and causes the bait to drift sideways and kind of pendulum down in a wider jigging circle, which is really awesome," Hawthorne says.

Nelson agrees.





"You're still going to get a decent amount of glide, with a slowed-down action," he says. "Especially walleyes, when they're super finicky, you don't want to be making big sweeps and swings with a Jigging Rap®. They'll come up from below and hit that bladed treble."

VMC® Hybrid Treble hooks are available in four sizes: 2, 4, 6 and 8. The No. 8 size fits well on larger jigging spoons and Jigging Raps, making it mostly a walleye tweak. That being said, "there are times where you can upsize for some really big, trophy crappies," Nelson says. "Perch too. A good-sized perch will definitely eat a big, minnow-size bait."



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A photograph of a winter landscape. In the foreground, there is a calm body of water reflecting the sky and the trees. The middle ground shows a line of snow-covered trees and bushes. The background is a pale, overcast sky. The text "OPEN WATER ZONE" is overlaid on the right side of the image in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

# ***OPEN WATER ZONE***



# The Float-N-Fly Technique

By Billy 'Hawkeye' Decoteau

If you have never experienced the uniqueness and fish catching productivity by utilizing the Float-N-Fly technique...Then, you are missing out on one of the most enjoyable multi-specie, fish-catching techniques I have ever experienced!

Labeled strictly a 'Cold-Water' technique the Float-N-Fly system was developed within the southern states. While in pursuit of those tasty winter slabs known as Crappie. Once the water temperatures drop within the low fifties and continue to decline the Float-N-Fly technique only gets better and more productive. Thanks to those Tennessee Volunteer cold-water anglers on Dale Hollow Lake as well as those on Kentucky's Lake Cumberland, today's Float-N-Fly system is no longer just a cane pole with a fly tangling from a bobber!



The basic Float-N-Fly concept still remains simplistic. However, advancements within the fishing industries Research and Development arena now have technique specific extra long fishing rods designed explicitly for the Float-N-Fly technique. One excellent example is B'n'M' manufactures 2-piece 8-foot Float and Fly FFCS82 spinning rod. Which is also available with a Tennessee Handle. Any open-face spinning-reel will work just fine, but those with smooth drag systems and back reeling capability are preferred. (Float-N-Fly purists suggest rods ranging from 8 to 11 feet long.)

When it comes to spooling specific line Float-N-Fly anglers have different opinions as to what they use! Yet, the majority agrees lower pound test line ranging from 4-pound to 8-

pound test is normally utilized. The difference is within the type of line spooled: monofilament, fluorocarbon, braid or a combination? Here again the majority seems to spool small diameter braided line and utilize fluorocarbon line for their leaders.

What about the 'Fly'? Hand tied small compact flies made of craft hair, marabou, deer hair or duck feathers are common with ultra sharp fine wire hooks. Sizes vary with 1/32, 1/16 and 1/8 oz. the most popular size mimicking small baitfish.

Tying your main line from the reel to a three-way swivel starts the assembly of the Float-N-Fly rig. With two sections of the swivel remaining tie your leader with fly (Length determined by the depth of the fish.) to one section and attach your Bobber/Float clip to the other section. Bobbers/Floats play a key role within the Float-N-Fly technique and as with the technique itself Float-N-Fly anglers have their own opinions as what Bobber/Float they attach to their rigs! Will it be weighted, non-weighted, wood, plastic or foam and what color?

As I pondered through my pile of notes from a previous Float-N-Fly trip I took on Tennessee's Lake Chickamauga a few years ago. My adrenaline started rising while my concentration for continuing to finish this article came to a sudden 'STOP'...It was as if I had just lost the fish of my lifetime. The only thought that kept flashing before me was a quote I once read about fishing the Float-N-Fly technique, "The Float-N-Fly method is so easy it is ridiculously simple!" Then, I yelled out "NO WAY"! And, to that my sweet wife knocked on my office door





and replied, "Did you call me?" No, I didn't.

But, I did need to make a call to one of the most talented year-round anglers and Lowrance Pro Staffers I have ever met. If anyone were willing to venture out on the cold open-water during our chilly New England winter it would be Dale Wyman (*pictured on previous page with a nice crappie*). Plus, Dale was extremely experienced with the Float-N-Fly technique. After a brief conversation we agreed on a date, time and rendezvous point. Ending Dale replied, "No need to bring any tackle I have everything we need."

Elated to say the least Dale and I launched his Ranger boat at 7:00 a.m. onto one of his favorite Crappie lakes in Massachusetts. Weather conditions consisted of air temperatures idling at 40-degrees, overcast sky and calm waters registered a surface temperature of 51.3-degrees. Dale informed me he had been to the lake a few days earlier and did very well. However, with the evening air temperatures dropping into the 30-degree range, Dale suggested we scan the deeper weedlines and steeper contours searching for both baitfish and Crappie.

After rotating through three of Dale's best areas scanning with his Lowrance HDS-9 Live units, we decided to start on a long deep weedline ranging from 10 to 25 feet. Dale's Float-N-Fly arsenal consisted of a Dobyns 7'4" M-SF spinning rod and I was armed with a Pflueger 7'4" M rod. Our spinning reels were spooled with Berkley 10 lb. white FireLine secured to 3-way swivels. "You will notice that our bobbers are actually weighted. This is important especially when it comes to detecting subtle bites", replied Dale. Adding, "Our Gamma TOUCH 5 lb. fluorocarbon leaders are

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different lengths, this will keep our Red Rooster flies above the fish at two different depths within the water column. Allowing us to determine the most active depth much quicker.”

With Dales Ranger in 18-feet we made long cast over the tapering weedline as we slowly kept the Ranger parallel to our target. “After your cast allow your bobber to sit still as our 3/32 oz. Red Rooster flies fall slowly and reach the depth of our leader lengths. Then slightly twitch your line this will impart movement to your fly. It’s imperative to keep your eyes constantly watching your bobber for any movement as many times a Crappie will take the fly as its falling”, instructed Dale.

It wasn’t long when Dale and I started to entice the Crappie to bite. However, Dale seemed to be getting hook-ups on just about every enticement...Three to be exact! And, I seemed to either drop the fish or just never get a hook set? “Okay, what am I doing wrong?” I inquired. “Cast your Float-N-Fly next to my rig, and I’ll try to see what your doing on your hook set,” instructed Dale. With our Float-N-Fly rigs within eight-feet of each other we seemed to get bites simultaneously. Watching me as he set the hook on his Crappie, again I missed getting a hook-up. Then I heard Dale’s kind voice softly reply, “You’re setting the hook with a sideward sweeping motion. The Float-N-Fly technique requires a smooth soft straight over your head hook set. This allows the long rod to pickup the line as the rods parabolic action loads and assists the hook set.”

Digesting what Dale said made total sense! My mainline was basically on the water and went straight to my bobber/float and the three-way swivel, but my leader made a 90-degree turn dropping straight down from the bobber/float and three-way swivel. Reflecting back to my earlier statement, “The Float-N-Fly method is so easy it is ridiculously simple!” I thought to myself ‘Easy-Simple’...Only, if you take into consideration the mathematics and physics involved within the proper hook-set!!!

Moving unto Dale’s second area we came off plane about 100-yds from a rocky point. “The largest Crappie I ever caught in this lake came from this area. They were all in the 16-17 inch range, but I haven’t been able to replicate that size again?” Utilizing our trolling motor to maneuver us into position, we monitored the dual Lowrance screens at the bow. Dales HDS-9 unit on the Port side was in the mapping mode, while his Starboard side HDS-9 unit

ran in the Live mode (pictured).

Fan casting our Float-N-Fly rigs throughout the entire rocky point we managed only two-bites. Dale landed what he called an average size Crappie and I managed to land a small Bluegill. By now it was close to 10:30 a.m. and several other boats were now on the lake as well.





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

Suggesting we go straight to his third area Dale and I made the ride across the lake passing one more additional boat.

The third area was a large 5-7 foot flat stretching across a small cove, about 100 yards from shore the contour changed quickly dropping to over 25-feet, with vegetation ranging within 10-14 feet. The skies continued to be cloudy and at times seemed to threaten us with rain, our water temperature stayed fixed at 51.3-degrees, as the air temperatures climbed to the mid 40-degree range.

Dale suggested we start deeper and change as the bite dictates. With the Ranger in 20-feet we made our cast to the same side of the boat. Noticing Dale's cast seem to be longer every time, I inquired if our braided main lines were different size. Dale replied they were from the same spool of Berkley FireLine. With that I answered back, "Okay coach tell me what I'm doing incorrectly." I made my cast with the same looping sideward movement as done when casting Carolina Rigs.

"There it is the Float-N-Fly is not cast like a Carolina Rig", chuckled Dale. Explaining, "Due to the long leader the Float-N-Fly rig requires a different cast." Then my Float-N-Fly Mentor explained, "First you need to have the rig out in front of you, then make a slow backward cast over your shoulder. As soon as you hear your bobber hit the water behind you then make your forward cast."

After several misfires and a few laughs, I was able to launch my Float-N-Fly rig much further allowing me to cover more water and stay in the strike zone much longer. Although, I found

myself at times making the sideward looping cast I quickly realized my mistake, as my casts were much shorter and less accurate! One other thing I noticed, there was almost no slack in my main line once my bobber hit the water. Plus, my rod was now pointing directly at my bobber. Just these two changes making the correct cast and pointing my rod straight at my bobber increase my awareness and hook-up ration.

After about an hour wherein we only caught a few Crappies, Dale sat down on his deck with a smile and said, "It's time to make a change in our baits. The Fly (Basically a small hair type jig.) is dynamite when the water temperatures range within the low 40-degree range. However, our water temperature has not changed all day from 51.3-degrees."

Cutting off our Red Rooster hand tied flies Dale tied on tungsten Zappu Cocho Cocho 1/13 oz. ball-head jigs. "These jigs have a razor-sharp Owner hook with a slightly larger gap and an awesome bait keeper barb along the hook shaft. Which make them a perfect match for reins 3" Bubbling Shaker." (pictured)



The color Dale chose was Kito Kito Shad. "And, you fish this plastic Float-N-Fly bait setup exactly the same!"

It was like magic immediately Dale and I started catching Crappie within the deeper 12-14 foot depth by casting to the same general area. When the Crappie bite slowed down we would cast in different directions until we relocated another school then continue working that school. Utilizing his Lowrance HDS-9 Live mode Dale and I were able to actually see the Crappie come to our reins Bubbling Shaker as it fell within the water column. "Now that is Awesome and so much fun", I replied

Once again the bite started to slow down so we began to fan cast the area as Dale moved us into slightly shallower water. Making my cast in the opposite direction as Dale I instantly caught Crappie on back-to-back-to-back-to-back cast. And then I kept missing the bites or the Crappie would just come off, as I never was able to get a hook set?

So, back to Float-N-Fly class with my Mentor Dale Wyman. Under Dale's tutelage and watchful eyes I heard his voice behind me saying, "You just had several fish take your bait." But, I never saw my bobber go under or even move? Then Dale explained the importance of the weighted bobber to me. "When your bobber turned to the side a fish actually had your bait in its mouth! But, rather than



running with the bait the fish just stayed there. Sometimes it may be smaller fish like Bluegill, but more often than not you should set the hook."

It was now almost 1:00 p.m. and again the Crappie bite slowed down. Making a move to our first area, Dale and I found the bite to very subtle as we managed only a few Crappie and Bluegill. However, I was able to impart my bobber on its side hook sets with success. After about 30 minutes, Dale suggested we move back to our last area where we had great success.



Maneuvering his Ranger as he monitored his Lowrance sonars, we noticed the slight breeze was now growing stronger blowing directly into our small cove. As we began casting our Float-N-Fly rigs in opposite directions Dale and I began catching Crappie after Crappie. Until, Dale hooked into what he thought was one of those large Crappie. "This fish is pulling very hard and running deep. I have a feeling it may be a largemouth bass and not a Crappie?" Sure enough Dale had landed his second largemouth of the day and our largest fish as well.

Idling back to the ramp, we counted our blessing as our total tally caught was between 50-60 fish, and we managed to land six different species; Largemouth Bass, Crappie, Bluegill, White Perch, Pickerel and even a Bull Head, all on the Float-N-Fly Rig! Besides sharing a wonderful day of fellowship with Lowrance Pro Staffer Dale Wyman, I learned an important lesson. The Float-N-Fly method is Not so Easy nor is it Ridiculously Simple! Like all fishing techniques it requires a variety of specific equipment to implement the technique properly, practice to fine tune casting techniques, specific details to understanding and detecting bites, and certainly as in my case professional instructional guidance on the water!



**God Bless,  
Remember, "Just Have Fun"  
Billy 'Hawkeye' Decoteau**

# Lake Erie Offers Tons of Fun for Kids

By Capt. Julia "Juls" Davis

It's a different world today, then when I grew up. I don't have to go into the differences of what it was like growing up in the 60's, 70's, and even 80's, as compared to today. I'll simply say that my generation spent more time outside than the kids of today do, and those of us with Mom's and Dad's that taught us to fish and appreciate what nature had to offer, were pretty darn lucky, in my opinion.

Fishing has been a part of my life as far back as I can remember, and my earliest memory is one that took place on one of our annual family vacations in northern Wisconsin, on a lake called "Big McKenzie". I was 4 years old, and I remember there were a line of cabins across the street from the shore of the lake. My parents, along with some aunts





and uncles, and their families, rented several of the cabins for the week. They were tiny cabins as I recall, with nothing more than bunk beds, a kitchen and living room all in one, and no air conditioning. A tight fit for a family of 7, but we made it work.

I remember my father whittling me a long stick that he tied a line to...added a hook...and showed me how to find clams along the sandy shoreline to use their meat as bait to catch whatever would bite at the end of the long T-shaped pier. I also remember hating that big orange life jacket mom made me wear anytime I was out on the pier alone too.

I can still remember how it felt the first time a fish nibbled on the offering at the end of my line, and my amusement at teasing the fish I could see in the clear water in the corner of that dock. It would be an amusement that still lives with me today as I guide others here on Lake Erie.

Many of my clients bring their kids, or grandkids, out with them to give them an opportunity to experience the same thing I did as a child, or at the very least, to give them an experience they cannot get from any electron gadget that is out there nowadays. Nature offers simple pleasures, and the smiles on the kid's faces when they catch a fish is a priceless reward, that I wouldn't trade for anything in the world.

While Lake Erie is known for its outstanding walleye fishing, it offers great perch fishing too. Perch fishing with kids can be a great time, because they will not only catch perch, but they will have a chance at just about every fish species in the lake.

**Sheepshead:** These fish are often referred to as "Junk Fish", but I say, "Nay-Nay" ...they are the number 3 best fighting fish in Lake Erie! Only the Steelhead Trout and the Smallmouth Bass are ahead of it. These fish offer a great fight for anyone young and old, and while not a sought-after fish for the table, I'm told they can be quite tasty if prepared correctly. They can also get very big!

**White Bass:** The population of White Bass is plentiful here and can also get quite big. Their fight is that of a fish that I would put 4th in line. I would only suggest keeping this fish to eat during



the cold-water seasons.

Catfish: 5th in line, as the best fighting fish in Lake Erie. Everyone knows that catfish can be tasty if prepared correctly and are also plentiful in the lake.

Walleye: This one needs no explanation. It's wonderful table fare and also the population in the lake right now is unbelievable. I don't rank its fighting ability as that of a great fighter, because after a few head shakes it kind of gives in to its fate...until it gets near the boat, then it gives it one more attempt to get away.

Lastly, there is the White Perch: It's not native to Lake Erie, and this invasive species was brought in from the east coast waters through the discharge of the ballast water of big cargo ships. When a customer asks, "Is this a good eating fish?" I say, "Let me put it this way, the Yellow Perch is \$18.99 a pound in the grocery store, and the White Perch is a \$1.34". (Heck, I'm not even sure a store would offer it). They immediately throw it back.



And, that brings us to the Yellow Perch: It's what I call "Lake Erie Gold". They are favorites among people who love a good Friday night fish fry, and a good time on the water. They are one of my favorites to fish for, because when you get on a hungry school of them, the fishing can be fast and furious, and tons of fun!

To catch these little creatures of deliciousness, we like to use minnows that are native to the lake called, "Emerald Shiners". But, when there is a shortage of Emeralds, due to conditions that don't allow the minnow boats to go out and net them, the bait shops will get in a minnow called the, "Golden Shiner". While the Emerald is preferred, the Golden will work well too.

There are a couple different presentations used with the minnows, one is the "Spreader", which is basically a half-circle wire with a weight attached in the middle of it, with a short



mono leader and hook dangling off each end of it. The other is the "Crappie Rig", which is an inline creation with 2 to 3 hooks attached, and the weight at the bottom of the rig. I prefer the crappie rigs, and make my own, rather than spend 2-4 dollars on them in the bait shops. They are easy to make, and cost very little to produce. A few beads, a couple of hooks, a snap swivel, and a weight is all that is needed, along with a few hand tied knots.

Kids love this kind of fishing, because it keeps them interested and

their smiles are proof, they are having fun! So, if you're a parent looking to entertain your children, give perch fishing on Lake Erie a try. Not only will it get them outside, but it will give you, and them, memories for a lifetime.



For more information on my fishing charters, you can visit my website at  
[www.JulsWalleyeFishingAdventures.com](http://www.JulsWalleyeFishingAdventures.com).



# Suncoast Beach Bonanza!

By Capt Jim Klopfer

Anglers visiting the west coast of Florida south of Tampa have a unique and exciting fishing opportunity in the spring and again in the fall. Pelagic species including Spanish mackerel, false albacore, king mackerel, cobia, and sharks migrate along the coast and feed heavily in the nearshore waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Much of this fishing is visual as the game fish are targeted as they feed on the surface. This just adds to the excitement!

The key to this great fishing is simple; bait, and a lot of it. Prime conditions for this fishing are water temperatures between 68 and 75 degrees and an east wind. Calm conditions are important as it allows anglers to see the fish and bird activity on the surface. Fish can certainly be caught when it is choppy, but it is much more difficult to sight fish for them.

This is as much hunting as it is fishing. The fish must be found and then stalked as the boat is placed in position for a good opportunity.

Patience is a must! There will be days when the fish do not show well or are moving fast. Anglers must take their time; racing around usually accomplished nothing except putting the fish down.

Once in position, the lure is cast into or just ahead of the breaking fish. While live bait can be productive, artificial lures are really the most effective choice. Lures are heavier and can be cast further. Also, fish are excited and a fast, erratic retrieve will usually produce a jarring strike.

Plugs, spoons, and jigs are all good lures to use when casting to these breaking fish. All three imitate the small forage that the game fish are feeding on. In addition, they all cast well and can be reeled back in using a fast, erratic retrieve. The #8 Rapala X-Rap Slashbait is a top producing plug. 3" shad tail soft plastic baits on a ¼ ounce jig head are excellent baits. Any ½ ounce silver spoon will work well.

Spinning tackle is the best choice for this type of fishing. 7' medium action rods with a fast action work best. 3000 to 4000 series reels spooled with 10lb monofilament or braided line will



complete the outfit. A 3' section on 20lb to 30lb flourocarbon leader is used between the lure and the running line.

False albacore and Spanish mackerel are the most commonly encountered species. They are similar in habits. Both species school up in large numbers and feed ferociously on the surface. However, Spanish mackerel are easier to catch. They will stay on top for a longer period of time and do not move nearly as fast as the false albacore. False albacore can also be notoriously fussy at times. Anglers may need to scale down leaders and lure sizes to mimic the small glass minnows that they feed on.

Trolling is another extremely effective technique that produces a lot of fish in the inshore Gulf of Mexico. It works very well when there is a light chop and when fish are not seen on the surface. Trolling allows anglers to cover a lot of water at several depths. It is also a great way for anglers with less experience to have success. This technique is used often on Sarasota fishing charters that involve families with children.

Plugs and spoons can be trolled just below the surface. This works well when fish are seen feeding on top. It is best to use a small, black swivel between the running line and lure when trolling like this, as it will reduce line twist. The best approach is to troll around the edges of the fish and not right through the middle of them.

There are several methods used by anglers to get lures down deeper in the water column. These are sinkers and planers. Sinkers are pretty straight-forward. A trolling sinker is tied to the line. Then, a 6' to 10' leader is tied to the other end of the sinker. A spoon or plug completes the rig. The heavier the sinker, the deeper the lure will run.





Planers are a bit more complicated. However, they are very effective. Planers are sized, with #1 and #2 planers being used in inshore waters. The planer will dig down in the water, causing it to dive. When a fish hits, the planer “trips”, allowing the angler to fight the fish without the drag of the planer. They are actually clever little devices!

A #1 planer will dive down 5' to 7'. A #2 planer will dive down 12' to 15'. Longer leaders are used with planers, with 20' being a good length. As the angler reels in a fish, the planer will reach the rod tip. Another person must then hand line the fish the rest of the way in. Again, it is a bit involved, but it allows for lures to be trolled fairly fast at a determined depth.

Sharks, king mackerel, and cobia will often hover about just off the edge of the schools of mackerel, looking to pick off an easy meal. The best way to target them is to fish a live bait or chunk of cut bait 5' under a float. The bait should be cast just off the edge of the school. Fresh cut Spanish mackerel works great as does a live threadfin herring or blue runner.

**\*\*\* Anglers visiting the Sarasota, Bradenton, Venice, or Ft. Myers area in the spring or fall should give the inshore Gulf of Mexico a try! \*\*\***

Capt Jim Klopfer

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<https://fishinglidokey.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/SarasotaFishingCharters/>



A close-up photograph of a hand holding a very small, colorful fishing lure. The lure is shaped like a small fish with orange, yellow, and black stripes. It has a small orange bead on its tail. In the background, a man with glasses and a mustache is looking at the lure with an open mouth, as if in amazement. The text "EUROTACKLE" is overlaid in large, green, stylized letters at the top.

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Mike Borovic



# An Early Season Bass Fishing Trip To ALGOMA Country In Ontario Canada

By Wil Wegman

For many years now, I have been fortunate enough to enjoy the early catch and release bass fishing season that New York State has to offer. Trips to lakes like Chautauqua or Oneida at the end of May or early June were a great way to get a head start on the late opener we have throughout southern and central Ontario where I live and usually fish. When an opportunity however arose to experience and promote some of this province's home grown, fully legit, year-round open bass season – in an area of the province I where I haven't spent a great deal of time ... I jumped at it. From June 8 - June 12, 2019 my brother Marcel (aka Red) and I pulled my bass boat up to Northern Ontario's Algoma Country (located here) in Fisheries Management Zone (FMZ) 10; a six hour drive from the bottom of our beloved Lake Simcoe. On our way up, I spoke about our trip with Outdoor Journal Radio and Fishing Canada TV host Angelo Viola. A re-broadcast of that Sportsnet 590 the Fan radio show can be listened to here at: <https://fishncanada.com/radio/wil-wegman-june-08-2019/>



Driving on Hwy 17 west of Sudbury, I had forgotten how the topography changes from hilly and rugged Canadian Shield - primarily moose country, to flatter, tamer agricultural lands preferred by whitetail deer. As we approached the Town of Blind River, we knew we were only about half an hour from our first destination. For the first night of our journey, we



would stay with local fishing guide and personality Adam Valee of [www.anglingalgoma.com](http://www.anglingalgoma.com). Adam connected us with a largemouth lake which also had decent walleye ... both of which were not available at the lake we were staying at for the remainder of our trip. Fishing there Saturday afternoon and the better part of Sunday allowed us to catch plenty of pike, a few walleye, a Simcoe-size jumbo perch, an obscenely obese brown bullhead and of course some largemouth bass. That, and watching an eagle soar overhead was the prelude to what Algoma Country had to offer before we settled in to catching smallmouth bass and some pike at our main destination - **Birchland Cottages** - <http://birchlandcottages.com/> on Clear Lake.

The launch at their first 'largemouth-walleye' stop would have been ok if someone before them had 4 WD. When visiting and launching at these secluded wilderness lakes, that 'option' becomes 'not-so-much-optional'. Additional docks were not installed yet because, like water levels throughout most of the province that spring, they were still high. The No Charge launch fee was 'as-it-should be' though just like the vast majority of public launches throughout Northern Ontario.

## **Fishing Without an Electric Motor ... A Physical and Psychological Hurdle to Overcome**

The newly installed hydraulic steering on my 175 Merc worked beautifully as I pulled away from the launch after our six-hour drive and into our first spot. It looked like it would hold some nice largemouth... I was so pumped! I lower the bow mount electric troll motor and put my foot on the pedal. Nothing! I flick switches ... nothing! I check my breakers, inline fuses, all my connections, my batteries ... everything I could think of – still dead in the water! I call my buddy Gerry who runs Heels Electronics to see if there's anything else I could check ... but there really isn't! (A visit to a shop in Blind River later confirmed that the bushings went and it was time for a new one which I



bought after our trip.)

Even before I bought my first bass boat in 1986 (an aluminum with a bow mount electric) I have relied on an electric 'positioning motor' to move along in the various boats I've had while quietly and efficiently casting away. Unlike the term 'trolling motor' ... for bass anglers anyway, it's very seldom used to actually troll, but is considered perhaps the most important 'accessory' on our boats. Notwithstanding that this monkey wrench is admittedly a 'First World Problem' as far as hindrances go, there is not a greater handicap to start a fishing trip six hours from home, than trying to fish effectively from a big heavy bass boat without

a nice quite electric motor to move you along ... But that's exactly what we were facing and had to do. There was no alternative though than to get over it – and quickly because we had some serious fishing ahead of us!

One trick that I always take advantage of is using the wind to my advantage with or without a working electric. Oddly enough I've noticed many other boat anglers don't think of putting their big motor down all the way and turning the steering wheel/motor in the appropriate direction to help you drift straight. Basically, it acts as a very effective rudder and on this trip especially, it minimized the grief factor tremendously. In addition to the big rudder, we made the best of our situation by utilizing the wind to our advantage on most occasions ...



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g along while using the big motor sparingly to maintain course and even pulling out the seldom used paddle to help make that happen. Best of all, this trick would work just as well with smaller outboards on aluminum boats like the rentals available from Birchland.

Although much tastier to eat than they are pretty to look at, this bulging brown bullhead was our first fish and still loaded with eggs and live-released after a bit of clowning around.





The new Storm 360 GT Swimmer Searchbait proved to be one of the most effective lures of the entire trip and caught our first largemouth. Unlike its predecessor (Storm's 360 GT Searchbait) this swim bait has a short diving lip which gives this soft plastic on a jig inherent crankbait qualities. Red and Wil caught plenty of pike on it but nice largemouth like the one above, walleye and smallmouth liked it too.

The trusty Rapala X Rap jerkbait is always tied on to at least one of Wil's rods. Usually it's spinning, but for this trip he also had one on his Rapala Concept baitcasting outfit. This super smooth reel and sensitive rod with diminutive guides was coupled with a new line called Suffix Advance Hyper Copolymer ... a superior abrasion resistant monofilament with half the stretch of standard mono. Combined with incredibly supple and low-memory qualities it allowed for surprisingly long casts ... something he's a big fan of and so were the walleye like the one shown [here](#).



Compared to smallmouth waters, there are not too many largemouth lakes in Algoma Country, but when Wil heard there was one, he knew a visit was in order. To learn more about Algoma lakes, their regulations and what species they hold, check out MNRF's Fish On Line Site [here](#)



## On To Birchland and Clear Lake

Clear Lake has very limited public access and unless you stay at Birchland or have a one of the few cottages there, the chances of getting in to fish for the trophy sized smallmouth are few and far between. In order to retain this exceptional fishery, the owner of Birchland, Mark Graves wisely instills a catch and release code for his visitors, knowing full well that harvesting the extra-large bass there at any time would deplete the quality-





experience for his guests in short order. With plenty of decent, good-eating sized northern pike, visitors wishing a meal or two of these delicious fish are more than welcome to bring some back to a well-laid out fish cleaning station at Birchland.

At Birchland, the brothers had a cottage right on the water and beside the boat launch. The boat docks for each cottage were solid, extra wide deals where they were able to safely leave the bass boat for the duration of their stay. The luxury of not having to pull your

boat out each day and leaving all your rods and tackle in the boat, is always one they appreciate. The seldom seen, but frequently heard green tree frog to the left graced the brothers with its presence on their deck for the duration of their stay.

Two of the yet-to-be released lures field tested during the trip, were the Rapala Rippin' Rap with those outstanding new metallic underlay colors (left) and the new



jerkbait shown with Wil's smallie (read below to learn the name and more details). Both were extremely productive for all species Wil and Red caught. This smallmouth and many others were done with the spawn and already in deeper water.

more landlocked. It's aptly named too, even without the artificial influence of filter feeding zebra mussels. So for visitors coming from nearby Lake Huron or anywhere to the south with zebras ... be sure you follow the "CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY" edict before launching your boat at any lake in Algoma Country.

For first time visitors with a boat, knowing that these uncharted waters are hazard free ... i.e. no hidden shoals or dangerous rocks to run into, is good peace of mind.

Unlike many of the waterbodies on the south side of Hwy 17 that are connected to nearby northern Lake Huron via tributaries, Clear Lake on the north side is







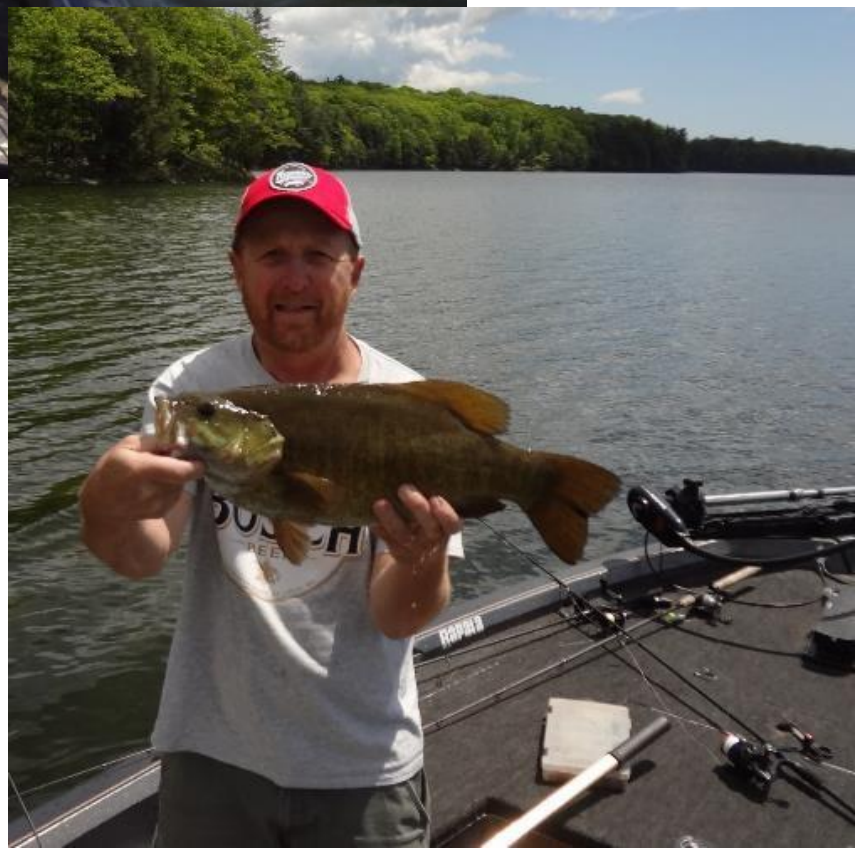
With the deepest spot only in the 30-foot range, much of the lake becomes very fishable waters as well – especially after the early spring season.

One day Wil's brother Red went on a hot streak where he could do no wrong ... catching multiple smallmouth like this in short order.

The Rapala X Pop was productive early mornings and later in the day on both lakes we fished – for largemouth or smallmouth bass.

## Spawning Bass Controversy

As with the largemouth day one and two, on Clear Lake, we found different stages of the smallmouth spawn. A few were still in shallow water and on nests and others had already finished and were deeper. Of course the whole notion of fishing spawning bass on nests is a hot potato north of the US border. On the one hand most US States, especially in the south allow year-round fishing and appear to have no issues with anglers fishing spawning bass as in many cases those fisheries are thriving. In the north, states like New York have immediate catch and





release only spring seasons until the spawn is over, around mid-June and those fisheries do not appear adversely affected either.

Catch and release immediately after the occasional quick photo was par for the course with all smallmouth and largemouth bass during this early spring bass fishing trip.

Credible science from both Canadian and US sources however suggest that removing a male bass guarding eggs or fry can be extremely detrimental to those offspring when high numbers of predators like panfish, crayfish (especially the invasive rusty) or invasive round gobies are around to quickly move in and devour all they can when the male is gone. In the case of FMZ 10's northern Ontario lakes,

bass fishing pressure is relatively light (walleye are still king here) and without round gobies a case perhaps could be made for targeting some nesting smallmouth if immediate catch and release was implemented. Across Hwy 17 however in Lake Huron's FMZ 14, way more predators are present-including thousands of destructive round gobies so combined with cooler water temps (delaying the



spawn) the season there doesn't start until the 4th Saturday in June. In any case, within the one small shallow area where we did see a few nesting bass on Clear Lake, Marcel and I did partake in some immediate catch and release. Most of the time though, it was fishing deeper water out from shore and catching those cruising or feeding bass.





## Fun Daily Routine

During our trip we would find ourselves in a very relaxing routine worthy of a true fishing vacation, capitalizing on best fishing times based on weather and other factors. We'd wake up fairly early – whip down a quick breakfast gulp down a couple mugs of black coffee and then head out and fish until 11 am or so.

We'd return to camp, have a big hearty breakfast, chill and work on tackle until 2 pm or so and then leave to fish until supper hour. After dinner we'd head out yet again for an evening bite. The beauty about being this far north early in the season, even here in Ontario, is that it stays light longer ... so even at 10pm, it was still light enough to see what you were doing.



Satellite TV's are in every cottage and one night when Adam came over, we watched the Raptors play-off game while on the road to winning their first NBA Championships. It was great to get to know this young full-time, multi species fishing guide, who sacrificed a steady career as a fire fighter to pursue his dream to make fishing a full-time career. He's already made a name for himself on the bass tournament circuit in northern Michigan – which provides Ontario anglers from the region a great (and closer) opportunity to fish high stakes bass tournaments. Anyone fishing at Birchland or Algoma Country could do a lot worse than to hire Adam for a day!

Red and I would also chill out on the patio or even jump off our dock to get a head start on the lake swimming season as the water warmed up to 64C during our stay. Although I had my goggles and could see well enough below the surface, my next trip will see me bringing my full snorkel gear to capitalize on the visibility of these clear waters to watch smallmouth up close and personal. Despite heavy blackfly (start of our trip) and mosquito (end of our trip) activity on the other side of Hwy 17, we were pleasantly surprised the



blackflies and mosquitoes were held at bay for most of our stay at Birchland. The owner of the lodge said it was an unexpected yet very welcome bonus when he bought the camp that for some unknown reason his area is not overly attractive to these pesky bugs.

Red's last smallmouth (previous page) of the trip before we headed home, but not before a quick stopover to fish Algoma largemouth one last time

## Last Day

With a six plus hour drive back home, we planned to fish the morning of our last day in Algoma Country at the largemouth and walleye lake where we started our adventure. Naturally we were sad to leave the great the smallmouth action at Clear Lake and the wonderful hospitality and comfy cottage at Birchland but we packed up and headed off. Back at our first lake, we were welcomed by a pair of eagles soaring at a spot we hadn't tried earlier. It was too windy there so we revisited a beautiful lush green, broadleaf cabbage bed that was already a metre high and screamed of more fish. We stumbled across it on our first visit here so I saved a waypoint on my Lowrance unit. Just like our before we caught several small pike around the shallow part of it near shore but I figured it could easily hold walleye or bass too if we really got to learn its many ins and outs a bit deeper.

That move paid off as with a decent 3 ½ pound eating size walleye that I would actually take home to treat the family with that evening. Fortunately, I had a fillet knife stashed in the boat so I grabbed the paddle to use as a cutting board, sliced off two nice fillets (skin left on to comply with travel regulations) and threw them on ice in a cooler.

***This perfect eater sized walleye couldn't resist the beautiful new Rapala RipStop Deep 12 jerkbait (above).***

We then nabbed some pike again before exploring the far outer deeper edges of those cabbage plants. I was field testing the new Rapala RipStop Deep 12 ... a deeper running jerkbait whose name I wasn't even permitted to release to the public until after the mega trade show, ICast in Vegas was over on July 12, 2019. I loved the action it provided and how it dug deep quickly yet would stop on a







dime and rise seductively in uber slow-mo when you let it. About five minutes into a cadence of jerk, jerk, pause I felt a solid thunk that stopped the lure dead in its tracks before it took offline and I set hook. Its jump was only a half-hearted attempt to imitate a smallmouth but that was fine by me because when I finally landed that gorgeous creature at close to 6 lbs, it ended up being the biggest largemouth I've ever caught this far north. When another bald eagle flew close by not long afterwards, we took it as a sign to pack er up and head home. And just like the first eagle we saw to start our trip in grand style this one ended it in similar fashion. We had a fabulous fishing adventure to Algoma Country ... and plans have already been made for not just one, but two return fishing trips there this year!

Wil Wegman is an award-winning outdoor writer, seminar host and tournament angler from Bradford Ontario. His fishing articles have appeared in most Canadian and several US Outdoor magazines. As former Conservation Director for the Ontario BASS Nation (1995-2010) and spearheading conservation and research projects Wil was recognized in 2017 for his dedication to the sport, by being inducted into the Canadian Angler Hall of Fame. It was the same year he won the prestigious National Recreational Fishing Award, an Action in Motion award and the Rick Morgan Professional Conservation Award. Wil can be reached through his website below:

Wil Wegman

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# Fatty Tubes For Smallmouths

By Jeff Gustafson

Now that the 2019 fishing season is pretty well finished up I have been looking through some photos from the past year and thinking about some of the great days I had on the water. My first year fishing the Bassmaster Elite Series was all I hoped it would be...I had a lot of fun, met some new friends and despite a few tough tournaments I had enough good days to qualify for the 2020 Bassmaster Classic at Lake Guntersville, Alabama. For anyone who fishes in bass tournaments, the Classic is the premier event in our sport and I think everybody has the dream of competing in it someday so I can't wait until March to take it all in.



Looking back at some of the good days I had this year, a few of my best days of smallmouth fishing stuck out to me and I was reminded of how many fish I caught on the Impulse® Fatty Tubes, both the 2.75" model and the larger 3.5" model. These tubes have been around for a few years now but I'm not sure that bass anglers know how good they really are. They are scented tubes, yet they are loaded with salt, a must for any tube I would consider using. The colors are good, including a really nice shade of green pumpkin, which is the most popular color for me and a lot of other anglers. Smallmouths simply love it everywhere.

When it comes to choosing which tube to use, I'm a big fan of the smaller model for most applications. For shallow water or pressured fish, the 2.75" Fatty Tube is a bite-sized morsel that emulates a crayfish or a goby. Smallmouths love small baits, even the biggest fish in the Great Lakes. Using the smaller tube isn't going to result in catching smaller bass. I've also had a lot of success fishing



shallow on my home waters (Lake of the Woods/Rainy Lake) over the years with the smaller tubes. In fact I begged Northland to make this tube for years and when they finally did, it turned out perfect.

I like the larger 3.5" model when I'm fishing deeper water, particularly on the Great Lakes or when I'm fishing for "minnow-eating" fish. It's a larger profile and holds a heavy 3/8 – 3/4 ounce jig head better. So, if I'm fishing shallower water, particularly if I'm casting to sand spots at Sturgeon Bay on Lake Michigan or pitching to shallow boulders on Lake of the Woods, I like the smaller tube. If I'm dragging a tube in 25 feet of water at the St. Lawrence River or fishing in big wind, the larger tube is my choice.

When I think back to some of my most memorable days of smallmouth fishing this year, a couple of good ones happened on the Great Lakes. The first was at Sturgeon Bay, on the second day of the Sturgeon Bay Open tournament that I fished with my pal Seth Feider. We were supposed to fish an Elite Series event in Oklahoma the same week as the Open but it was cancelled at the last minute due to flooded conditions at Fort Gibson Lake so Seth and I decided we'd team up for the Sturgeon Bay Open. We had a great time fishing together for a few days but the first day of the tournament was kinda round on us. We caught around 20 pounds and landed somewhere in the 50's or 60's after day one. On day two we fished some new water and had a much better day, bringing a 27 pound limit which was one of the bigger catches of the tournament. Seth caught some of the bigger fish on a small swimbait while I stuck with the 2.75" Fatty Tube. We were culling five pound smallmouths, it was pretty awesome.

Another time where the 3.5" Fatty Tube got the job done was at the Bassmaster Angler of the Year Championship at Lake St. Clair in September. I used a green pumpkin/purple flake tube most of the week and caught a pile of fish on it. Over the first couple days of practice it was really windy and the lake



was rough so I started using a ¾ ounce jig in my tube to get my bait on the bottom and keep it there. As the week went on and I was catching more fish on that tube than some of the others I had rigged with lighter jigs I realized there was something to it. I was snap-jigging the tube and bouncing it along aggressively and these smallmouths were smashing it. Something you may want to try on your home water.



The thing with a tube, especially if you're trying to get it to imitate a crayfish, goby or sculpin, is you want it on the bottom so using the heavy jig gets it there quickly and then makes it move a lot faster, which in some situations will generate more reaction strikes.

The smaller tubes I like to fish on 3/16-1/4 ounce jig most of the time. Simply cast them out and bounce them back to the boat. You'll know when one bites! I like to fish both tubes on a G. Loomis 7'3" NRX spinning rod, Shimano Stradic CI4 reel, spooled with 10 lb braided line and a six foot leader of 10 lb. fluoro. If you want to catch some smallmouths, give these Impulse Fatty Tubes a try.

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# Things To Be Thankful for!

**By Capt. Mike Gerry**

As we progress to the end of the year and the holidays start to make us think of the past, present, and future I find as Thanksgiving approaches that we as fishermen have plenty to be thankful for! It's really easy to get caught up in the day you caught your personal best, but did you ever think that years of research and technology have changed fishing and will affect it for a long time to come.

Just consider the change alone in trolling motor technology, the strength of the motor is the greatest its ever been, the ability to lock yourself on a spot with the trolling motor is beyond most of our wildest dreams; the pure fact that it can lock onto your mapping and follow a contour is nothing short of amazing. The use of 36 volts and brushless technology is beyond approach; the amazing thing is it didn't happen by chance, folks with great minds and probably wild dreams developed this and we should be thankful for their commitment to making fishing better for all.

Boats and motors have progressed to a point beyond my dreams; when I first started boating motors were a daily up-keep as they always broke down and you could not hardly finish a day on the water without a problem. Boats were at best capable of speeds up to 35 MPH and past that you would take your life in your own hands. Today's boats and motors are 4 stroke technology that will last for years without a problem with just a little maintenance. The boats are smooth and cut the water with precision and run over waves that years ago would scare you to death. They finished like glass bowls and sustain high speeds that one would never have believed not to long ago.

Yes, it's time to be thankful as the fishing industry is healthier than it's ever been, we have the best equipment, baits and clothing available to make a day on the water more fun than its ever been. It's time to give thanks to all the great companies that have spent time, money and energy developing what we all take for granted today; yes, they have made money, but we have benefitted from their wealth just like they have!

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## **Saltwater Specialists Break Down Three New Cutting-Edge ElaZtech Patterns**

In the ocean—home to some 20,000 species of fish— something is always biting something else. It's welcome news for anglers— and a fact that gives lure makers creative license to concoct as many color patterns as the fish and their customers desire.

For Z-Man Fishing, pioneers in space-age ElaZtech baits, developing a new pattern has



everything to do with giving fish what they choose to eat. Crafting radical bait recipes requires science and a little artistic flair.

“Designing new colors is a lot of fun for us because with ElaZtech, it’s uncharted territory,” says Z-Man president Daniel Nussbaum. “We’re working with a totally unique material with superior fishing advantages like durability, softness and buoyancy. But it also means we’re writing our own playbook to develop new colors and to give anglers the bait patterns they need.”

Fortifying an already-proven roster of dynamic saltwater colors, Z-Man recently unleashed three new inshore patterns, available in select ElaZtech baits. Each fresh color configuration has been





inspired entirely by on-water observation and relentless requests from Z-Man fans.

Cherry picked from the legendary Louisiana Delta, Z-Man's new Purple Death pattern has become a gold-standard color for attracting monster redfish. Offered in the MinnowZ™, DieZel MinnowZ, Trout Trick®, Swimmin' Trout Trick® and TRD TicklerZ™, Z-Man's new Purple Death pattern has also become a bona fide producer of big seatrout and smallmouth bass.

"Redfish guides in the Delta have been blown away by our Purple Death color," recounts Nussbaum. "It's a pattern that really lights up in muddy water. But its dark-light contrast also makes it a player in clear water."

"You look at a Purple Death bait and know right away it's a fish-catcher," says Mark Cowart, a top-level redfish angler with multiple wins on the IFA Redfish Tour. "Down in the muddy waters of the Delta, throwing this pattern on a DieZel MinnowZ™ has been money for big reds. And it's just as good in Florida, Texas and the Carolinas."

"This is an absolute go-to pattern on those bluebird days after a coldfront," adds Cowart. "Post-front fish are nearly always put off by a bright, flashy color, but they aren't spooked by Purple Death and its

muted-purple back. In fact, combined with the natural kick of an ElaZtech paddletail, the bait's subtle chartreuse underside gives off just enough flash to trigger unresponsive fish."

Unconventional among inshore redfish, snook and seatrout colors, Z-Man's second new hue, The Wright Stuff, couples



an earth-tone root beer base color inlaid with green and marigold flake. The new naturalistic color is available in the MinnowZ, 4-inch DieZel MinnowZ, Scented PaddlerZ and 4- and 5-inch Scented Jerk ShadZ™.

“I pleaded with Z-Man to make this color for years,” admits Jesse Wright, a Largo, Florida based kayak angler. “I happened upon a pattern like this when I was a kid and caught a big snook on it that very first day. Where I work at Betts Fishing Center, The Wright Stuff has become our best-selling color—even though it still seems to fly under the radar in many areas.

“What makes the color so appetizing to redfish, snook and trout is its near-perfect mimicry of two key forage types,” Wright suggests. “In the winter, the color really resembles a shrimp or a crab. But in summer, it also puts out that familiar shadowy hue that’s suggestive of a finger mullet.”

“The Wright Stuff has become a mainstay winter color for fishing mud bottom areas harboring sand worms,” adds Cowart. “Fish gravitate toward these warmer mud areas on cooler days and The Wright Stuff really resembles the muted shade of a sand worm, which redfish munch by the pound. We rig a 3-inch MinnowZ on a 1/8-ounce jig and hop it up off the bottom.”

“In shallow water, I fish a 4-inch Scented PaddlerZ™ on a 3/0 SnakelockZ™ swinging hook and lightly swim it with little twitches of the rod tip,” says Wright. “I’ll switch to a HeadlockZ HD™ jighead with the same bait when fishing that 3- to 6-foot zone and use more of a bouncing retrieve. Big 35- to 38-inch snook have just been crushing this color.”

A third exceptional inshore pattern, Creole Croaker represents one of the favorite meals of Gulf Coast seatrout and other inshore species. Nussbaum, an ardent trout angler, says Z-Man finally concocted the pattern after fielding constant customer requests for a realistic croaker imitation. Camouflaged with a faint iridescent yellow-to-green back transitioning to a lighter, pearlescent underbelly, Creole Croaker is available in the MinnowZ, 4-inch DieZel MinnowZ, Trout Trick, Swimmin’ Trout Trick, 4- and 5-inch Scented Jerk ShadZ and 4-inch Scented PaddlerZ.

“Croaker are prime seatrout forage all along the Gulf Coast,” notes Nussbaum. “We’ve been throwing this color since last spring with awesome results. Creole Croaker is just a really natural bait pattern that shines in clearer water. To me, it’s not just an elite imitator of croaker, but of a variety of flashy saltwater forage.”

“Creole Croaker is prime for sightfishing big reds on shallow flats, too,” notes Cowart. “I can track this color with my eyes in any light condition. That’s key. But we’re finding that fish get super aggressive on this color when they won’t hit a white or pearl pattern bait. It’s another cool Z-Man color that simply swims with the right look and vibe.”





# BASIC PANFISHING

By Jonathan Waschek



Panfishing is great for everyone. They are easy to catch, easy to find, and put up a great fight. In this article you will learn the basics about locations that could hold fish, lures that will catch fish, and rod and reel setups for panfish, and strategies to catch them.

## ***Locations***

The great thing about panfish is they can be found in almost every pond, lake, or river in the Midwest. Once you've located a body of water to fish, you can easily find them from shore, on a dock, by using an available fishing pier, or even a boat. Use the method that works best for you. The



opportunities are endless using any of these strategies. Bluegill like calm or slower moving water, choose a spot that is calm – such as a backwater of a stream, a protected area of a lake or pond, or near a structure like weeds, rocks, docks, or fallen trees. A local fishing pier is a great place if you are new to the sport. They are usually placed in great spots to catch fish, and there will likely be some folks there to give you advice or help if you need it. If you can walk around the lake and can fish from shore, look for spots that have shallow weeds or fallen trees. And finally, if you have access to a boat, look for weed lines, reefs, and rockpiles that will offer panfish protection and sources of food.

When targeting crappies, remember their preferred food in most areas are small minnows. In the spring, you'll have your best luck locating 1-2-inch minnows hanging around weed lines, rocks, or other types of structure in 4-10 feet of water.

## Lures

Live bait is the by far the best way to catch lots of fish. When fishing with nightcrawlers and waxworms, a simple method is to a slip bobber setup with a #6 long-shanked hook (the longer shank prevents them from swallowing it to far). Avoid using the round clip-on bobbers. The shape of slip bobber makes it easier to detect a light bite, and less noticeable by a fish that might be pulling on your line. When targeting bigger sunfish and crappies, I switch from a hook to jigs such as the Snyder's Lures Moon Fry (pictured above), Minnesota Rocker (pictured to the left), and Tear jigs up to larger 1/32-1/8 oz painted



lead jigs depending on how pressured the fish are, or how deep I'm fishing. After a few fishing trips you might discover that live bait will help you catch a lot of fish, but many are smaller. If you want to catch bigger fish, artificial lures are better. I like a jig and soft plastic combo. For this setup, you remove your slip bobber and ties on a #6, or #8 Snyder's moon fry



jig, tipped with a 1" or 2" white twister tail. This combination will give you tons of action from bigger fish.

## ***Rod and reel***

A basic spinning rod and reel is all you need to get started for a fun day of fishing. When fishing for sunfish, I choose a light 5-foot spinning rod with fast action. This type of rod will give you more sensitivity for feeling the bite of this small panfish, allowing you to set the hook quick. If targeting

crappie, I move up to a 6- or 7-foot rod. Crappies are finicky biters, and often need a lifting action with your your rod to hook them. The extra length will help you get more movement to your line quickly, without having to move your whole body and risk bumping into your fishing partner!

I typically have 4-pound monofilament line on my reels when fishing for sunfish. When crappies are the target, I move up to 6-pound monofilament. Not only do crappies fight harder and risk breaking a smaller line, but it's common to also hook a bass or northern while crappie fishing. The extra strength in the line is often needed to land those fish.

## ***Tips and Techniques***

Bobber fishing tips: Bobber fishing should be fun, not boring! If you are bobber fishing and your bobber hasn't moved for a while, or worse yet looks like it's moving but not going under (like the fish are playing with you) twitch the end of your rod every so often. This will give a little motion to your bobber and bait below. That small amount of movement will often create more interest in the fish if they think that potential meal is about to swim away. Once your bobber slips underwater, you need to stay calm and quickly raise your rod up. This will ensure your fish is hooked and will keep



tension on your line as you reel them. This requires some practice. Even the most veteran fisherman gets excited and start reeling before they even set the hook. This usually ends up is losing both the fish and your bait!

If you miss the fish, just cast back to that spot, wait about 30 seconds, and start twitching your rod again. They're likely still hungry and will come back

Jig fishing: If you aren't using a bobber, just cast the jig to your target, let it sink, and slowly reel it in. Every lake and fishing condition will require a different speed. You often need to try different speeds until you find the one that works best. Sometimes if you are fishing in a pressured area the fish might want you to just slowly retrieve the jig and barely "jig" it.

Jig fishing takes a bit more practice since you can't see what's going on under the water. You need to feel and imagine what a fish is doing. If it feels like fish are bumping your jig but not biting it, raise your rod a few inches then let it fall, do that a few times then stop and let it sit for a few seconds then repeat the process. It often triggers a bite. If you get a bite but the fish doesn't stay hooked, just stop reeling and jig it in place for a couple seconds before you start reeling again.

These are just a few tips and techniques that I've learned, but there are many other strategies that you can learn or discover on your own. The most important thing you can do is just get out and try. Good luck!!

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# Helios SX Low Profile Baitcast Reel

[www.okumafishingusa.com](http://www.okumafishingusa.com)

This is the second reel from Okuma that I have had the great opportunity to review. The first being the HCS series of baitcaster reels. For 2019 Okuma did not disappoint with the Helios SX series of Baitcast reels.

When I fish, I am like of other anglers' bass oriented and this reel was designed with bass anglers in mind. One of the main features I noticed right away was the friction free disengaging spool shaft system that really made me look good casting a baitcaster reel. I am not an expert when it comes to casting with a Baitcast reel, but this reel really did make me look good. Another feature that helps big time with me backlashing or as we call it bird nesting the reel is the revamped 12-point adjustable velocity control system and the 6.6:1 ratio which is at the high medium gear ratio has been great for throwing spinnerbaits, squarebills and my medium depth crankbaits. Also available are 8.1:1 and 7.3:1 ratio for your type of fishing. Another feature of this reel is the 11 Japanese ABEC-5 spool bearings which have ceramic balls and stainless-steel races, retainers and shields. So, the balls will never corrode and less rolling resistance allowing for longer casts. The low profile of the reel fits nicely into your hand allowing for better control and feel of the spool then add the new larger handle allowing for better cranking power. Listed below are the features of this reel:

- - ALC: Rigid diecast aluminum frame and side plates
- - CRC: Corrosion Resistant Coating process
- - Machined aluminum, ported spool for reduced weight
- - Aluminum gears for tournament feel and reduced weight
- - Multi-disc Carbonite drag system for power and smoothness
- - Micro-click static drag star for precision drag settings
- - Friction free shaft system allows for longer casts
- - 10BB + 1RB stainless steel bearings for ultimate smoothness
- - Precision Japanese ABEC-5 spool bearings, maximize free spool
- - Quick-Set anti-reverse roller bearing
- - New generation 12-point adjustable Velocity Control System
- - Oversized carbon fiber 100mm length handle for max cranking power
- - Helios SX reels are backed by a 3-year limited warranty

I paired this reel with the Helios series rod. This 3.5 oz. rod utilizes 40-ton graphite makes it highly sensitive but provides a phenomenal backbone when reeling up those nice size bass. I was shocked when I received this rod and felt how light it was. Yet when out fishing I feel everything and never doubt the strength of it. The rod I chose was the 701 MH rod with Alps mini guides. I appreciate the mini guides, but when using braid with a fluoro lead it makes you become an expert on tying the



two together. The handle is comfortable, and balance is sweet. There are many sizes and speeds to choose from in this series which makes it easy to pair with a reel.

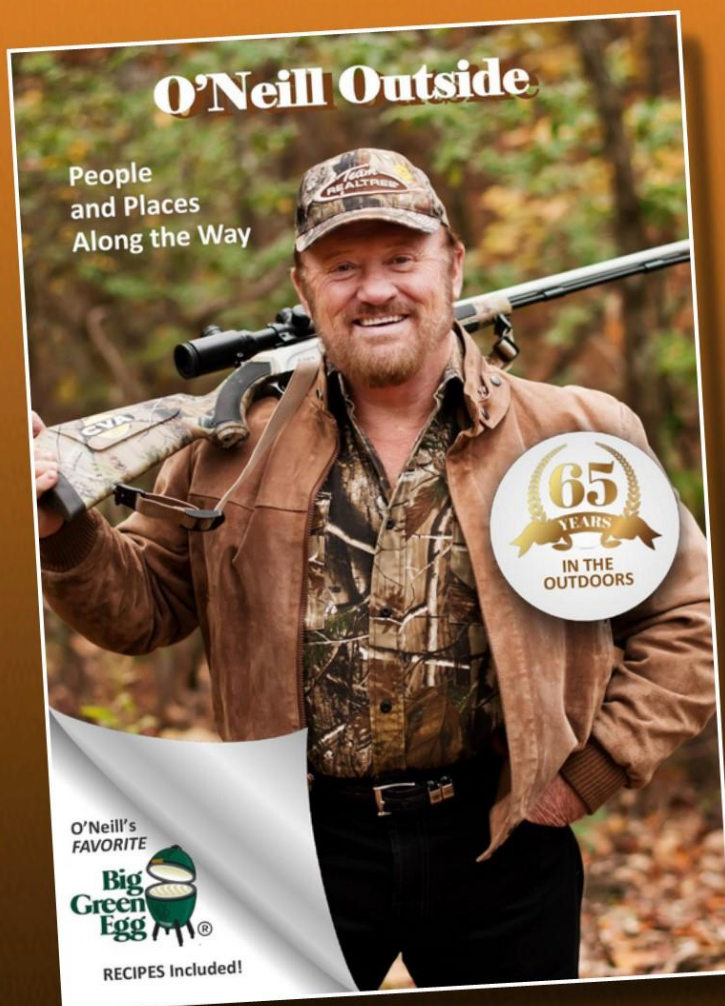
Overall, I find myself getting away from the spinning reel and finding myself using this rod and reel just because of the sensitivity of the rod and the smoothness of casting the reel especially when I am utilizing spinnerbaits and so on. Adjustments on this baitcaster are simple which is another reason I like this reel. Which makes going from lure to lure a breeze.

**Review written by Gary Elliott facilitator of Gary's Outdoor News and Reviews**

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# Transition Between Fall and Winter



By Capt. Mike Gerry

There is no doubt that there is a dead period between the fall bite and the winter bite; making the correct decisions during this period is key! What factors determine your decisions are the most daunting as being in the right place at the right time, or fishing where the fish are is the task at hand. What determines where to go, what to look for and what baits to use will be the topic of discussions.

What happens when we start to see this dead period between stages is key to understanding where to fish; the water first of all falls into the low 40's in water temperature moving the fish to areas of warm water when feeding. The bait moves, the bass move with them and feeding becomes rare during the coldest part of the day. Temperature readings become a key factor, looking for warmer water can be a difference maker as just a couple of degrees difference may make your day much better. As any time of year food source is always a factor in finding bass, so use your electronics to look for bait balls, or shad popping along the edge of some deeper drops can determine where you should spend your time. The sun is a big factor in this time of transition; the sun gathers the fish up, warms the water and becomes a factor in their competitive aggressive nature. It generally changes their feeding time from the natural early morning to more of a midday allowing you to start your day a little later eliminating the need to get on the water at first light.

When I see this transition time, I start first with reaction baits, there is probably no better transition bait for the fall to winter change than a jerk bait, it's a taunting, settling reaction bait that drive bass nuts this time of year. Especially the deeper runners that drop down to 10 ft. or more

allowing you to entice them off the bottom of 20 ft. water. There is no doubt that this time of year feeding is rare, but bass always react to quick jerks or baits being dropped off edges from shallow to deep water. Be persistent with reaction baits, find the right water and food source and you will be successful!

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# The All-New Hobie Mirage Passport 12

A passport can take you wherever you want to go... as long as you have the financial resources to support your adventurous aspirations. But money doesn't always have to be an obstacle. Hobie – provider of its own special brand of recreation and adventure – offers an ideal solution.

The latest addition to Hobie's fun fleet of exciting, pedal-driven watercraft – the new Mirage Passport 12 – is available now at Hobie dealers worldwide. The feature-rich value-laden Mirage Passport 12 can take anglers and other on-the-water-adventure-seekers wherever they want to go with world-class Hobie performance. Best of all, it does so at an appealing price point.

Building on the wildly successful launch of the Hobie Passport 10.5 earlier this year, the new Mirage Passport 12 is a longer, larger and more fishing-centric Passport. Available in Seagrass Green or Slate Blue and powered by the original MirageDrive® Classic with ST Fins, this highly manageable 12-foot kayak offers anglers an astonishing combination of features and value.



Those features begin with tried-and-true, legendary MirageDrive pedal performance for hands-free forward propulsion and smooth and efficient cruising. Passport 12's added length supports a host of angling situations, while extra width provides great stability while sitting or standing. Its Suspended Mesh Aluminum Frame Seat is lightweight and comfortable, while an EVA Padded Standing Platform accommodates comfortable and confident standing and casting on the redesigned cockpit. For additional comfort and safety while standing, Passport 12 is H-Bar-ready, offering two forward recesses that provide precise placement for simple H-Bar setup.

Passport 12 makes it easy for anglers to stow and access the gear they need for a great day on the water. There's an 8" Twist and Seal Hatch directly in front of the seat providing quick access to ample and secure in-hull storage. The bow offers an additional generous cavity with Bungee® and optional Twist and Seal Hatch for even more below-deck storage. In front of the seat, both right and left, are two recesses with Bungee closures to keep tackle boxes or other items close at hand. Two built-in rod caddies keep rods within easy reach just behind the seat.

Accessorizing the new Passport 12 couldn't be easier. It comes complete with Accessory H-Track Mounts for near-infinite mounting options for phones, fishing electronics, action cameras or similar items. A Forward Accessory Mount stands ready to accept the Hobie Mirage Sail Kit or Bimini Sunshade, and a handy fishfinder transducer cavity and mounting plate make transducer mounting simple and tidy. Behind the seat, Passport 12 provides ample deck space to accommodate an H-Crate for additional rod and tackle storage, and there's a recessed mounting surface to quickly install a Power-Pole anchor







system.

Easy to transport and store, every Passport 12 comes complete with an aluminum two-piece paddle to negotiate beaches and rocky inlets. Convenient carry handles are provided at the bow and stern.

At home in both freshwater and saltwater, Mirage Passport 12's excellent value, transportability, simple and sleek design and durable Thermoform construction make it an exceptional choice for any angler – from novices purchasing their first fishing kayak to experienced anglers looking to add an additional boat to their fleet. Best of all, it's available at Hobie authorized dealers right now at an introductory MSRP of just \$1,599 (excluding taxes and shipping).

**Get where you want to go with the new Hobie Mirage Passport 12. Learn more at <https://www.hobie.com/kayaks/mirage-passport-12/>.**

**See Hobie's complete line of kayaks featuring MirageDrive 360, MirageDrive 180, MirageDrive with Glide Technology or MirageDrive Classic pedal-driven propulsion at <https://www.hobie.com/kayaks/>.**





# ENJOY THE HARVEST





# Cheesy Venison Quesadillas

By Ken McBroom

I often hear people say they just have too much ground venison left from last season and are tired of the same two recipes they use it for. It seems that for some reason the only recipes they use venison for are the ones they got from a friend or relative and never really allow their mind to venture away from these tried and true recipes. The best way to overcome this common problem is to treat your venison just like beef and any recipe you use beef for you can use your ground venison.

I know what some of you are saying, well of course, but there are those that really never thought of it that way. I know this because when I mention pizza, hamburgers or this recipe for quesadillas they look at me like I'm crazy. They soon realize, after eating a few, why not make quesadillas with my ground venison. This recipe is delicious and was my way of using up the last of my ground venison before hopefully restocking the freezer with fresh venison.

## INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb. ground venison
- 1 package taco seasoning
- 1 green bell pepper, chopped
- 1 yellow bell pepper, chopped
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 8 inch flour tortillas
- 1 pack shredded cheese
- Jalapeño peppers, optional
- Guacamole
- Sour cream
- Salsa

1. In a skillet heat a tablespoon of olive oil and add your ground venison and cook on medium heat. Once the venison is browned, add the taco seasoning and stir into the meat and turn the heat down to let the seasoning meld with the venison while you prepare your peppers and onion.

2. Chop your peppers and onion and place them into a skillet with a tab of butter and cook to translucency. You can add your veggies to the meat to cook if you like, but I prefer to use them as a separate addition to my quesadilla. The flavor of the vegetables seems to stand out more this way. Add some jalapeños to your peppers and onion if you like.



*Cheesy venison quesadillas are easy to make and taste great. With a quesadilla maker you can have the little designs in your quesadillas too.*

*Photo By Ken McBroom*

3. Preheat your skillet or quesadilla maker and spray with non-stick spray. Lay your bottom tortilla down and layer evenly with shredded cheese, then add the venison and vegetables. To make it even cheesier add some more shredded cheese on top. You can put the ingredients on half of your tortilla and fold the other half onto it, like an omelet, or you can layer the whole shell and place another whole shell on top. It's easier to do the omelet style if you're using a skillet or a griddle because it's easier to turn the quesadilla. If you are lucky and have a quesadilla maker, you can build an 8 inch quesadilla and the machine cooks both sides for you. It works great. Once your tortilla shells have browned on both sides cut them into the classic quesadilla wedges and serve with salsa, guacamole, and sour cream and enjoy.

**Ken McBroom is a freelance writer/photographer . For more information visit [www.ramblingangler.com](http://www.ramblingangler.com). Questions/comments to [ken@ramblingangler.com](mailto:ken@ramblingangler.com)**

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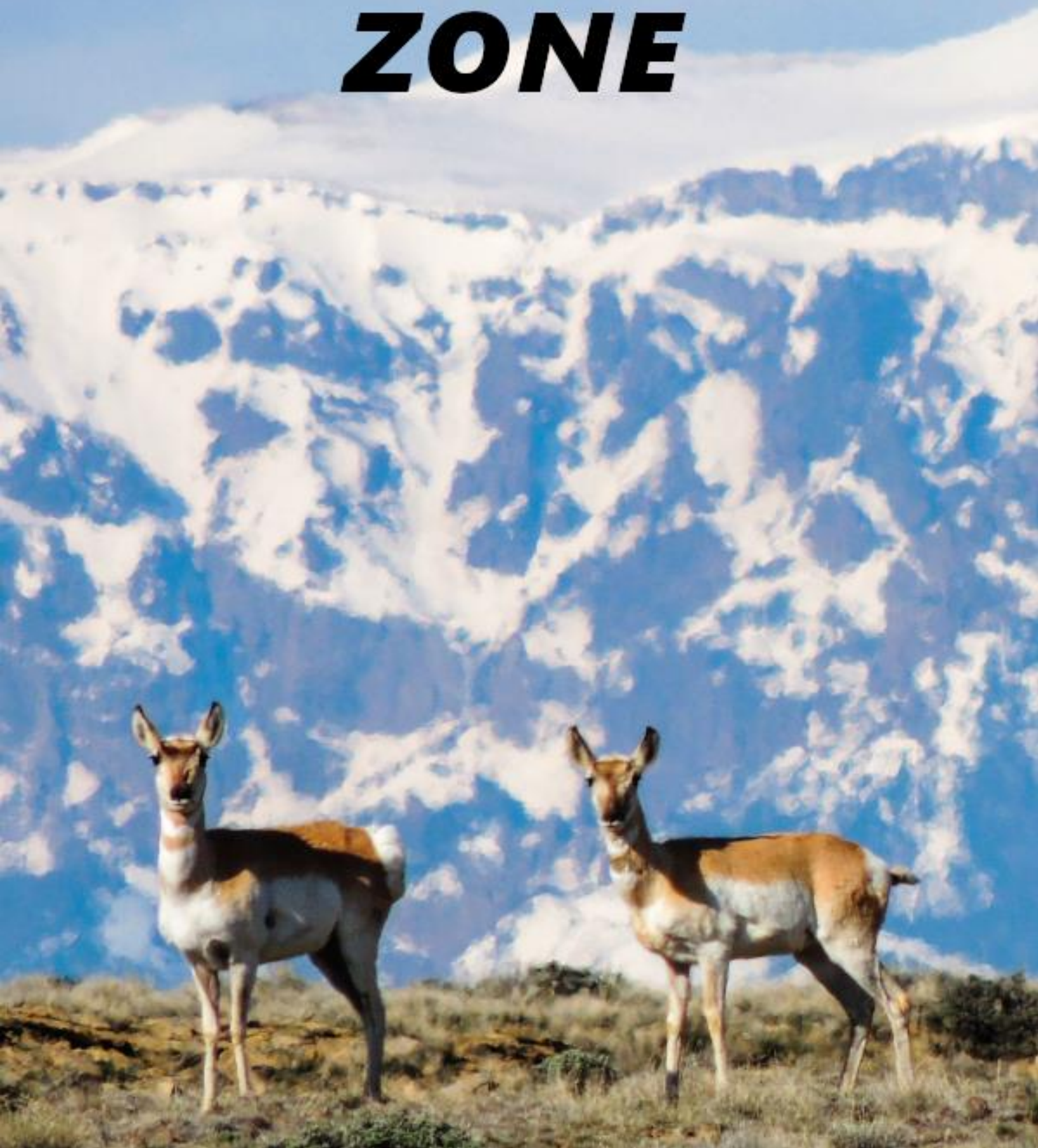
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# ***HUNTING ZONE***



# Old Hats, Old Men and Maybe a Deer

O'Neill Outside - [www.oneilloutside.net](http://www.oneilloutside.net)

Do you have a favorite fishing hat? In my days, I've worn all sorts of fishing hats. I'll bet you have too.

Around here I wear a fishing hat with various names on the front. Usually it's an O'Neill Outside logo. After all is said, advertising is everything. I buy them in bulk, so they don't cost much. I tell people that want one signed that the hat is worth about \$6 before I sign it, and \$3 afterward. They accept it anyway. The hats are thin and comfortable. However, my ears get sunburned and stay crusty all year long. I don't think that's good. Does that happen to you? I like hats though. When you have follicle challenges like I do, you tend to gravitate to hats. This challenge means I'm bald headed and have been since about the age of 23. Gail and I got married after I finished at Emory at age 21 have been married over 53 years now. When she's not around, I blame it on her.

One of my Grandfathers wore a straw hat when we were fishing in the small ponds around Loganville Georgia about 63 years ago. I was 11, he was about 65. He was a primitive Baptist preacher and wore a starched white shirt and tie, black wingtip dress shoes, a vested black pinstriped suit and white gloves with the fingers cut out when we went to the local catfish ponds to catch a few. You'd think I'd have been embarrassed about that. I wasn't. I was just proud that he thought enough of me to take me fishing. My mother's father wore a fedora like Indiana Jones. When we walked to the river along the railroad tracks headed to the swift waters of the Tallulah River, we'd stop and drink the cold, clear spring waters flowing from the rocks. We'd tip the sweet drops from the brim of that old hat. Sure wish I had it now. I'd wear it. We used cane poles with black nylon line and red wigglers dug up from around the barn.

This was supposed to be a column about deer and deer hunting, so let's get to it and make it simple. I'm about to run out of room, so I'll be brief.

Whitetail deer are lazy critters that don't do much except, eat, sleep, look nervous, stay alive and are active only during the rut. That staying alive thing is a big deal, and they're good at it. Did I say sleep? It's not my kind of sleep, no sir. Thirty minutes at a time max, usually only five or 10, and sometimes with their eyes open. Ears are always alert and hyper wary. Can you sneak up on one while he's asleep? No, you can't. You think you can, but you can't. If he doesn't move and you think you're being extra sneaky, it's because he thinks he's hidden and you'll pass by. He knows you're there.

We are asked to include photos when we submit these columns so the one here is the largest Whitetail I ever took. He scored 167 inches. He was awake when I shot him.







*Meet Abel, who was fishing a Waterville lake in Waukesha county Wisconsin in January 2019. It's not always about going out and catching the biggest fish (great when it happens) or sitting there waiting and waiting for a single flag, but to the family it's about taking their son, then 5 years old, out on a lake where you will be chasing flags all day!*