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GUMBO**

OPEN WATER ZONE

- Spring Time Cranking**
- My Favorite Deep Baits**
- Must-Have Tools For Fishing**
- Cayenne Pepper for Soft Plastics**

ICE ZONE

- Make Some Noise**
- Finding Fish to Drop
Your Wheelhouse On**



ODU MAGAZINE™

The ICE ZONE, OPEN WATER ZONE and HUNTING ZONE are all here for you to enjoy. We start out the OPEN WATER ZONE with a full press on spring fishing for bass, walleye and crappie, including some really cool product introductions. The ICE ZONE is next with coverage for late ice walleye, trout and crappie angling. Ken McBroom brought us a nice recipe for those of you who chase crappie and we end again with the HUNTING ZONE.

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

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

And please, enjoy the outdoors.

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



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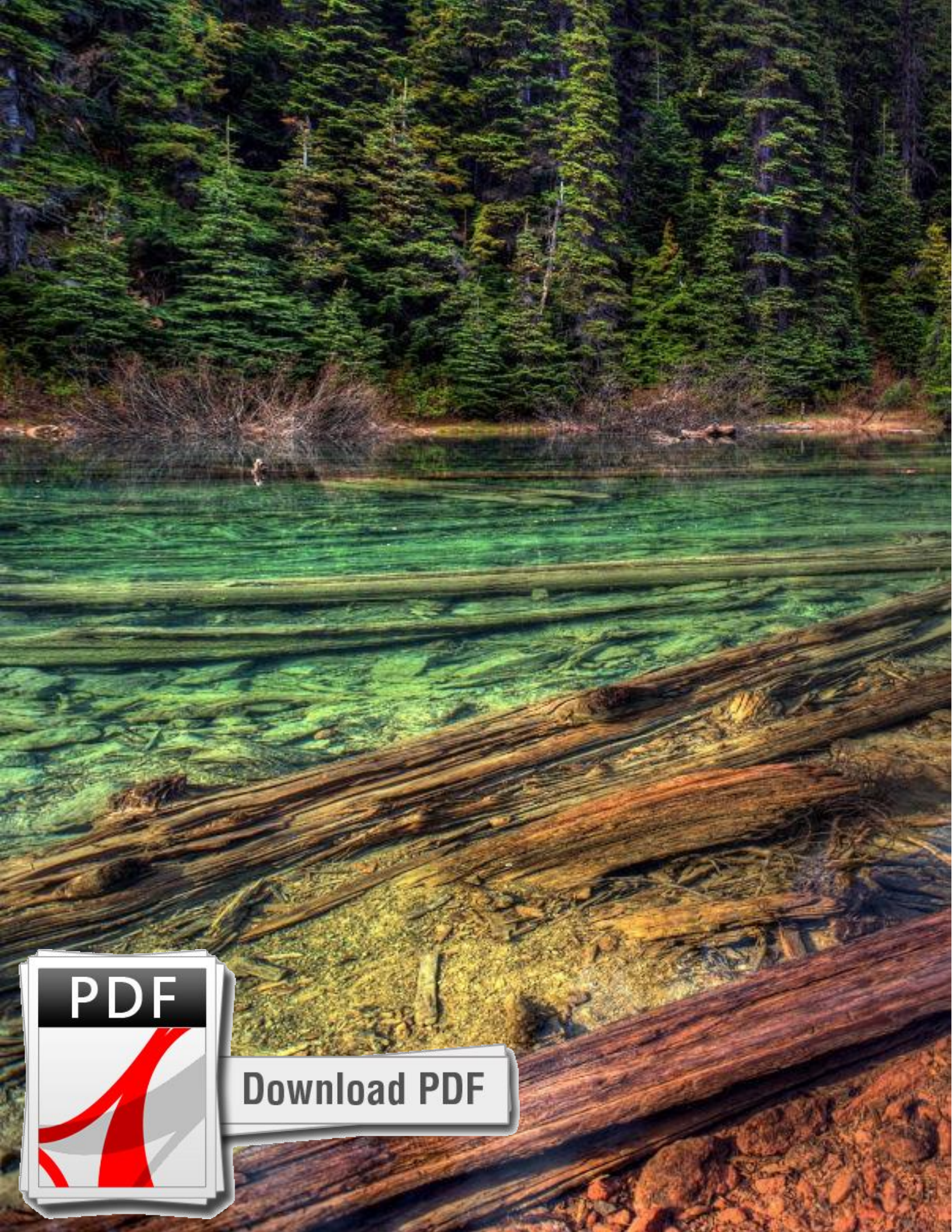
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ODU MAG's FEBRUARY – MARCH INDEX

SPECIAL TIMES AROUND A CAMPFIRE – Pg. 6

PRODUCT REVIEW-Garmont T8 Extreme GTX – Pg. 8

OPEN WATER ZONE

Droppin' on bass this season! – Pg. 11

The Wonderful World of Sound – Pg. 13

Must-Have Tools For Fishing – Pg. 17

Springtime Favorites – Pg. 19

My Favorite Deep Baits – Pg. 24

Experience Early Season Fishing Success – Pg. 25

2019 Spring Fishing Trip Planner! – Pg. 27

Shad Busts For Bass Action – Pg. 29

Your Boat Batteries Running Down – Pg. 32

Spring Time Cranking – Pg. 33

Frogs...it's what's for dinner...lunch...breakfast... – Pg. 37

Cayenne Pepper for Soft Plastics – Pg. 40

Don't Get Stuck Without Sticks – Pg. 42

Lock Your Lures in Place – Pg. 44

Super-Tuned Spinnerbait Bass – Pg. 46

Reservoir Bass: You've Met Your Match! – Pg. 50

ENJOY THE HARVEST-Crappie Chowder Gumbo – Pg. 54

ICE ZONE

Finding Fish to Drop Your Wheelhouse On – Pg. 58

Make Some Noise – Pg. 62

Rattle 'em High, Jig It Low – Pg. 65

Understanding Sonar Specifications – Pg. 70

Fish Flashers And Droppers Winter Success – Pg. 72

AUGER UPKEEP – Pg. 74

Late Ice Prime Time for Crappies – Pg. 76

HUNTING ZONE

Getting Ready for CCW – Pg. 86

The TenPoint's NEW Nitro XRT – Pg. 90

MEET OUR ODU GUIDES – 79

THE OUTDOOR EXCHANGE - 93



SPECIAL TIMES AROUND A CAMPFIRE

By Larry Whiteley

There's something really special about time spent around a campfire. Smoke drifts away or gets in your face. Wood crackles and pops. Flames dance and flicker as sparks float hypnotically upward into a dark night sky.

A campfire makes you feel better. It warms you to the bone. Magically it takes away stress and pressure no matter where it's at. It could be deer or turkey camp, on the banks of a river or lake, on top of a mountain or down in a valley, during a camping trip or in your backyard. It really doesn't matter because they're all magical.

Around campfires there are no TV's or electronic gadgets. There are no smart phones if you get no service or just turn them off. There are only friends and family, or the quiet and solitude of being alone.

Campfires are for cooking food, lighting the night and keeping warm. They are for sharing memories of other times and other places, talking about loved ones and old friends who are no longer here, the big one that got away or missing the buck of a lifetime. We turn our backsides to the warmth of its flames but still shiver as our eyes widen listening to someone tell ghost stories.

Campfires are where grandkids roast marshmallows and share time with their Papaw. They are a place to watch the flames dance as the worry of the work week melts away. They are a place for fish fry's, cookouts and fellowship.

It's easy to sit and watch the flames play for hours while someone tells stories, or you listen to night sounds. Flames of a campfire are soothing and always changing. As a campfire dies down to coals, the night slowly takes over and you know it's time to crawl into your sleeping bag or your own bed until the morning.



One of my favorite times around a campfire is in winter or early spring before the sun starts the day. While my wife still sleeps, I quietly head outside to build a campfire in the backyard fire pit. It doesn't matter how cold it is and if it's snowing that's all the better and I still go. Flames reflecting off the snow are beautiful.

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The best time is when the sky is still dark, and millions of stars still fill the night sky. The wood sizzles and pops, the flames dance and the smell of wood smoke drifts through the air. It's a quiet time. Not many people are up early like me. I warm myself by the fire and sip my coffee.

I think of my family and friends and how I am truly grateful for them. I think of my God and how much he has truly blessed me. I look up and thank him for the great outdoors that he created for us to enjoy and take care of.

My thoughts turn to all the outdoor memories I have made with my kids and grandkids. I sure hope there are many more to come before God calls me home. I stir the fire, watch the sparks and wipe away a tear. Smoke must have got in my eyes. Time around a campfire is something really special.

For 28 years Larry Whiteley has been the host of the award winning, internationally syndicated Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World Radio. His voice can also be heard on the overhead intercom systems and message-on-hold phone systems at all Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's stores, Bass Pro Shops restaurants and Tracker Marine boat dealerships across America and Canada. Larry has also produced the nationally syndicated Bass Pro Shops

PRODUCT REVIEW

Garmont T8 Extreme GTX

"Every year ODU Magazine gets several pairs of boots and separately, other footwear to review. So, I was recently asked why we don't post/publish a review about every piece of equipment we get. We only write about positive experiences. It's only right!"



Before Christmas this past year, ODU learned about a new Garmont Tactical Boots for cold weather conditions and we had to try it out. The boots are the Garmont T8 Extreme GTX, and they are a very well-made boot! Here's the link at Garmont >> <http://www.garmont.com/en/products/tactical/t8-extreme-gtx>.

Personally, when I am looking at a boot several features come into play: stitching, how far up the tongue (gusset) is attached, and lacing style. The sole matters, but when it is a quality boot the sole will show very little wear and tear from me in a few months. See the picture. On the comfort side I can say, no blisters and the Vibram sole is great. I have worn these boots in 40+ outings and the sole is great.

Garmont breaks the T8 Extreme GTX down like this: *"The T8 Extreme boot features a Vibram® sole for maximum traction, stability and shock reduction in nearly all environments and weather. Its durable compound ensures extended life and great friction on a variety of surfaces. The durable upper construction is quick drying and offers excellent breathability and ventilation."*

My observations:

Tongue (gusset) – Years ago when my dad and I would get boots for hiking and outdoor work, he always stressed a high stitched tongue. The tongue on this boot is as high as it can be, without hindering putting the boot on, and with the added stitching it is reinforced for extreme wear and tear. This helps with keeping debris out and of course make the boot extra warm.

Stitching – Throughout the boot the stitching is quality from the loop, throughout the shaft to the toe cap. I don't expect to see any loosening anytime soon. The stitching is doubled throughout and knowing how I worked & stretched the boots on a few hikes, I am impressed.

Lacing style – I think many boot companies don't make good decisions here, especially on some hiking boots. The T8 Extreme GTX has three styles of eyelets to allow the wearer to tighten the boot with ease and I think helped eliminate a break in period, of which there was none. The arch eyelets are metallic followed by closed hooks and a ball bearing hardware at instep. I feel these are the best style of all my boots!

To keep the feet warm "GORE-TEX Insulated Comfort" – This is where comfort over many other cold-weather boots shined. This feature made outdoor use in rain, snow and cold conditions happen with ease. They combine durable waterproofness and optimized breathability with insulation for use in cold weather conditions, which makes them an ideal solution for a wide range of outdoor activities.

What is a Vibram sole? – The Vibram Grivola outsole provides tremendous grip in all weathers. Its durable compound ensures extended life and extremely high friction on all surfaces. The Grivola is designed to expel unwanted stones very effectively on all terrains.

Garmont has been a huge name in boots for as long as I can remember and this boot, exceeds the grade. Living in Maine I tend to be in more cold weather than hot, so these boots will get their use for sure. They will even make the trip to Alaska for my bucket list trip. WS

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Outdoor World Tips for the past 25 years. In 2019 he will be inducted into the National Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame for his many years of communicating the outdoors to millions of people all over the world. Larry and his son Daron, grandson Hunter and granddaughter Anna head up The Great Ozarks Outdoors, Inc. a family outdoor communications business.



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OPEN WATER ZONE



Drop-pin' On Bass This Season!

By Mike Frisch

Some would lead you to believe that drop-shot fishing for bass is a somewhat high-tech endeavor complete with tiny baits, light line, and requiring lots of finesse on an angler's part. While there is something to be said for the finesse aspect, I find the drop-shot a simple rig, one anglers of all experience levels can have success with!



A drop-shot rig involves tying a hook "inline" with a tag line trailing below that hook. A weight is then tied on the tag's end. A bait is threaded on the hook and the weight is dropped to the bottom with the bait suspended above. The angler fishing the rig can use the fishing rod to manipulate the bait, imparting fish-enticing action.

Most drop-shot fishing involves the use of smaller "finesse" plastic baits presented to finicky bass. This is especially true for largemouth fishermen who often break out drop-shot rigs when no other baits seem to produce. Smallmouth fishermen, on the other hand, often have drop-shot rigs tied up regardless the aggressiveness the fish show.

For example, in my past tournament fishing days, I usually had a drop-shot ready when pursuing largemouth, just in case an especially finicky bite was encountered. Now, much of my drop-shot fishing involves smallmouth bass, particularly when the fish are holding in mid-depth or deeper waters. In these situations, I often "see" fish on sonar and drop the rig down, fishing vertically.

Regardless the bass species targeted, there are some keys that up the odds for droppin' success. First, this is often a light-line/small bait deal where the invisibility of fluorocarbon line helps. My preference is for 8-pound Tactical since, not only is this line invisible to the fish, it also handles

well on spinning reels and is strong.

The simple Palomar knot works well for tying hooks in line, and I like leaving about an 18-inch tag below the hook. Several drop-shot specific hooks are on the market, with those in sizes #1 and #2 often preferred. I use Tour Grade Tungsten Drop Shot weights since these dense sinkers enhance feel, are small in size for less drag, and are easy to attach. The ¼-ounce size weight gets the most play in my boat, though I adjust depending on water depths fished.

When finicky largemouth or deep-water smallmouth are my targets, I often select a small bait like a KVD Dream Shot or KVD Drop Shot Half Shell. These baits quiver and shake with the smallest of rod movements.

The final component to drop-shot fishing is the use of the right rod and reel. Medium light power, extra fast action rods around 6'10" long make great drop-shot rods. Lew's has several rod models that work well for this technique, including some designed specifically for drop-spotting. Pairing one of those rods with a Custom Pro Speed Spin reel makes an excellent combination, as these new reels have silky smooth drags perfect for fighting big bass on light line.

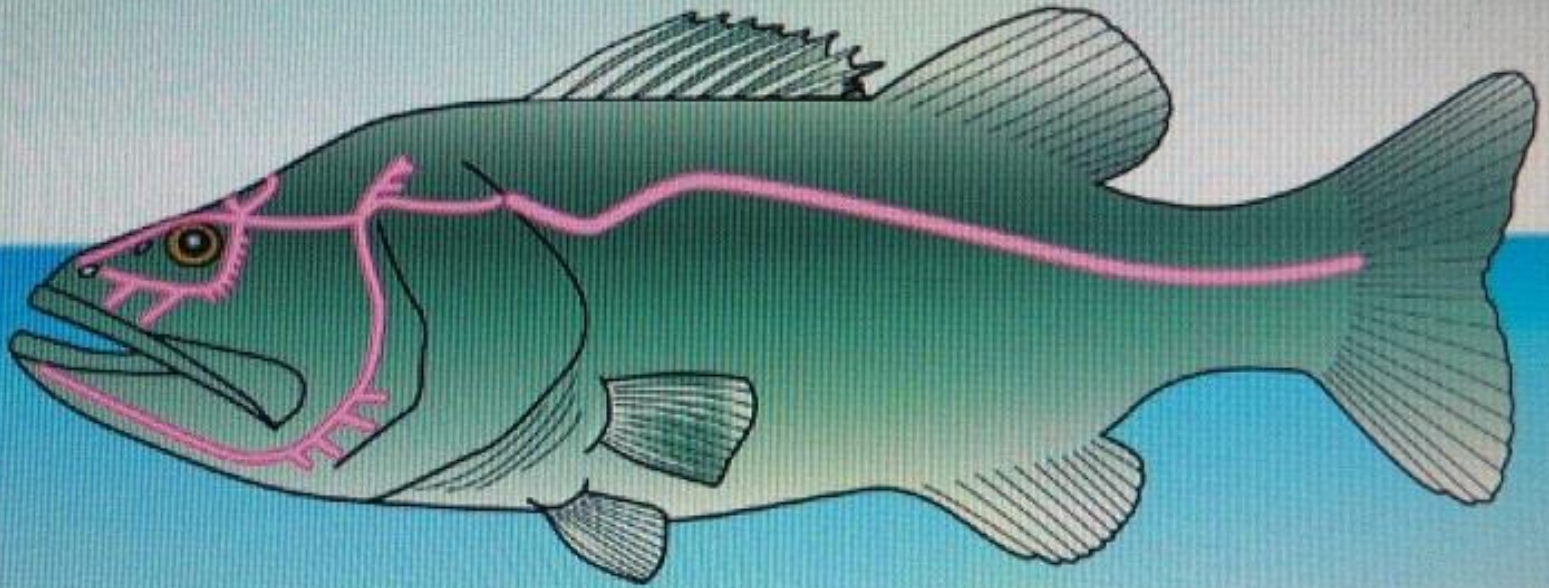
Big bass are fun to fight for any angler. As stated earlier, however, this can be a simple to fish technique. In fact, I often break out drop-shots when kids are in the boat as they can drop them over the boat's sides and the baits often get bit as the boat slowly moves along. This works especially well working along weed edges. Regardless the size of the fish hooked, bass on light line and spinning gear provide a sporting fight for kids and others. And, northern pike, panfish, and even the occasional walleye hit drop-shot rigs too!

If getting more fish to bite is your goal this coming season, consider the drop-shot. Using the riggin' tips just provided can, in fact, probably lead to more fish-fights in your boat this summer. As always, enjoy your time on the water and remember to include a youngster in your next outdoors adventure!

Mike Frisch hosts the popular Fishing the Midwest TV series and is a co-founder of the Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's School of Fish. Follow Fishing the Midwest on Facebook to see more from Mike.



The Lateral Line of a Fish



**Simplified diagram of areas
effected by Lateral Line**

The Wonderful World of Sound

By Jake Bussolini

For several years, I have been writing books and articles that lean toward the scientific aspects of the sport of fishing. My theory is that if we anglers understand the science behind the lives of the fish that we seek and the waters in which they live, we can use this knowledge to become better anglers, better sportsmen and women and better environmentalists.

My first encounter with sound in the sport of fishing was, of course, when Sonar was introduced as a tool for locating fish. That encounter was easy to understand because the science was obvious. A sound wave is sent down into the water and bounces off any object that has density, That sound is processed in a simple computer and displayed in a manner that was very easy for the average angler to understand.

I live on Lake Norman in North Carolina and as such I spend a great deal of time on the water fishing and doing research for my books. A few years ago I was contacted by the inventors of the Hydrowave. They asked if I would be interested in running a series of tests of that invention to validate its effectiveness as an aid to anglers. Of course, I agreed.

The theory of the Hydrowave is that the unit emits a series of different sounds that are

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transmitted down into the water. These sounds supposedly are similar to the sounds of schooled bait fish like shad and shiners in different stages of activity. The objective of the Hydrowave was to excite otherwise lethargic bass, causing them to investigate the noise, bringing them toward the emitting source, the angler's boat.

Having spent much of my career as an engineer, I was skeptical, and I designed a series of tests spanning nearly a year in order to encompass different seasonal variations and weather conditions taking very detailed data of my catch rates when the unit was turned on and when it was not operating. The results shown below gave me cause to pause with my skepticism.

My catch rate with the unit turned on was nearly twice the catch rate with it turned off. The concept was certainly valid and the unit worked as advertised.

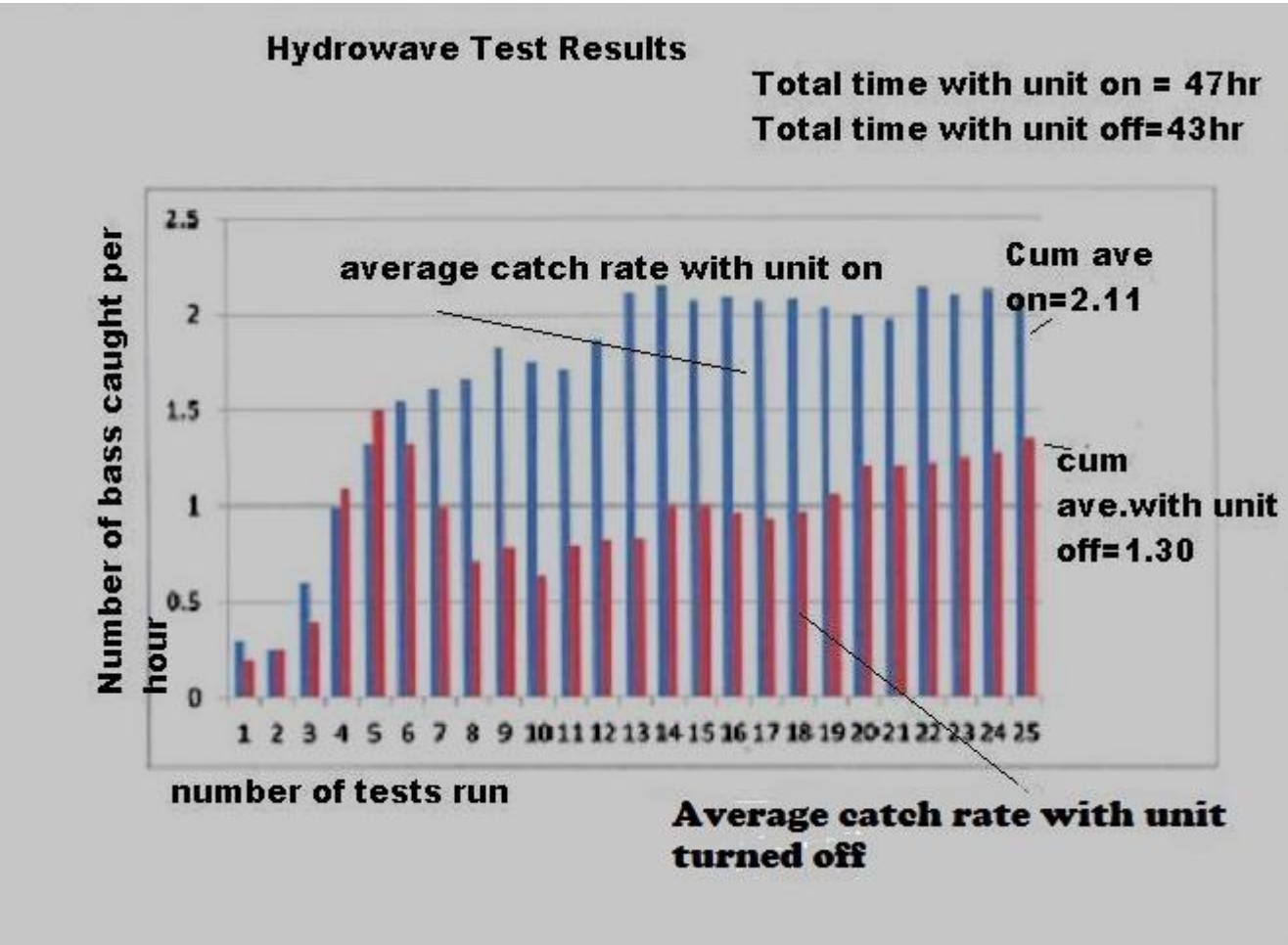
Now, a short few years later we are being subjected to the "Thumping" craze where anglers appear to be having improved catches by thumping a regular beat on the bottom of their boat. Some have claimed that they can observe fish on their sonar screens rising to their bait when they "thump" the boat. Striper and hybrid anglers are flocking to this new technique, claiming super results with increased catch rates of these species. Other anglers fishing for bass and crappie are claiming the same results.

My problem with my science-based mind is that I cannot develop any scientific rationale for this phenomena. Biologists have understood the functioning of the lateral line of a fish as shown below for many years.

This lateral line system, along with the inner ear of the fish and the swim bladder all seem to work together to permit a fish to detect and interpret vibrations and sound waves. We also know that sound travels four times faster in water than it does in air. Lure manufacturers have taken advantage of this knowledge and have been producing lures for many years that generate all types of vibrations and noises to draw the attention of the fish. Experienced anglers now know that sound is often the first attractor of the attention of a fish, especially in water that is clouded and the sight distance of the fish is reduced. BUT! Scientifically, why does "thumping" cause fish to move toward the thumping sound? It must have something to do with the repetitive nature of the thumping sound. Those who are using thumping do not believe that there is any specific thumping frequency that needs to be used, only

that the thumping has to be continuous and at a repetitive frequency and that it seems to be most effective in deeper water that is cool. This would make the thumping technique most valuable in the fall and winter months when the water is cooler and the fish are deeper.

Some thumping advocates believe that the thumping sound has a greater effect on the schools of bait fish drawing them toward the sound. The sound of the scampering bait schools would then have the same general effect as the Hydrowave, drawing the predator fish toward the bait schools rather than the sound itself.



I have witnessed the Hydrowave effectiveness so I will not quickly dismiss the thumping benefits. I do however intend to build a thumper and perform the same type of tests that I performed on the Hydrowave. After I collect the proper amount of data, I will be sure to report it back to you all.

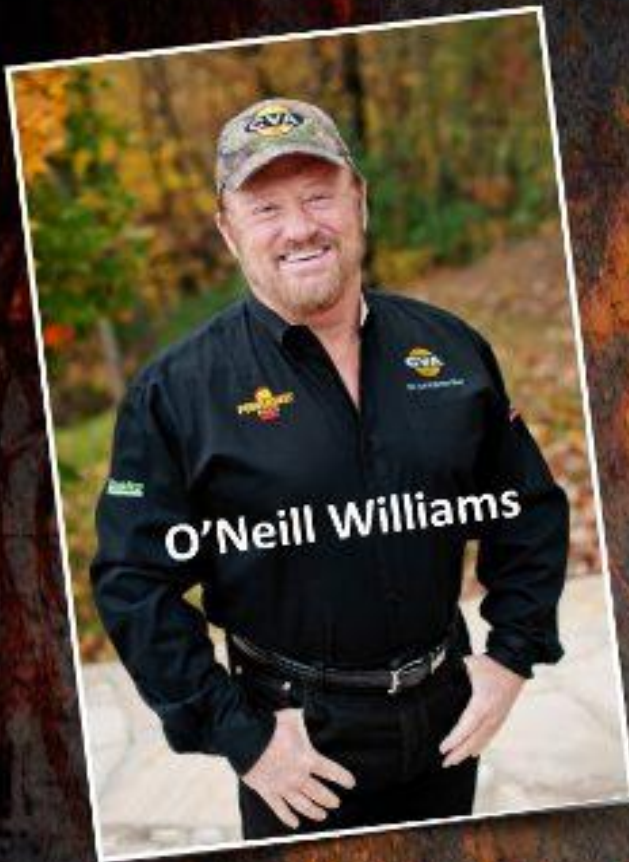


Jake Bussolini is a freelance writer who has written several books about freshwater fishing. His books can be viewed at www.booksbyjake.com.



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Must-Have Tools For Fishing

By Bob Jensen



Some fishing friends and I got into a conversation recently, and as usual, the talk turned to fishing. We talked about ice-fishing and we talked about open water fishing. We talked about techniques for fishing and we talked about favorite places to go fishing. After exhausting all those topics, we got into a conversation about the tools that we use to go fishing, and then we got a little more specific. What are some basic fishing items that we need for both open water and ice-fishing? Not the obvious things like rods and reels and lures and those sorts of things. What are some very necessary tools that we often over-look? Following are some things that we came up with.

The first thing that everyone agreed on was a line-cutter. Most in the group had a fingernail clipper that was worn on a lanyard around their neck. Others had several clippers on lanyards that were on boat cleats at the corners of their boat, and a couple had clippers on lanyards attached to the handles of their tackleboxes. The superlines of today absolutely require a clipper: There are some anglers that have a special clipper for superline. Superlines are tough and hard to cut, and that's a desirable trait when your line is rubbing against rocks and stumps and such. But monofilament and fluorocarbon lines are also tough and should be cut with a clippers, and the clippers also enable us to trim knots up a bit.

Another mandatory tool was a long needle-nose plier. When ice-fishing with a spoon with treble hooks, or when open water fishing with crankbaits, a good needle-nose provides safety for both the angler and the fish. They're also beneficial when a fish gets a jig or hook deeper than can be easily reached with fingers. If you're going to release the fish, the needle-nose allows us to get the fish unhooked quickly. That's good for the fish. With multi-hook baits, the needle-nose keeps our fingers away from the hooks, and that's good for the angler. Be sure to keep the needle-nose well lubricated so it operates easily.

SWARM MAGNUM

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Another item that has become almost mandatory to some anglers is a good set of bibs. When ice-fishing, the bibs provide warmth, but they also enable us to kneel by an ice-hole when fishing or when landing a fish. Good bibs will keep you drier, and warm, dry anglers enjoy their fishing more.

However, many anglers also wear bibs in the open water season. They provide warmth in the spring and fall, but they also again keep us dry. Sometimes fish flop when we're holding them, and it's easier to pin the fish against our waders to help maintain control. Holding a fish against regular clothing can be wet and smelly, but it's not so bad against bibs. The Guidewear bibs that Cabela's (PICTURED) offers are some of the best. Many anglers have an unlined pair of bibs for warmer weather and lined bibs for cold weather and ice-fishing.

The last thing several in our group deemed mandatory when fishing was their phone, but it wasn't so they could make calls or receive text messages. It was for the camera feature. They take their phone fishing with them so they could record their catches.

Next time you go fishing, do a quick check to make sure that you have the tools just mentioned. If you do, you'll enjoy your time on the water or on the ice even more.

To see all the newest episodes of Fishing the Midwest television, fishing articles and videos go to WWW.fishingthemidwest.com.



Springtime Favorites

By Gary Maerz

It's the end of February; this winter has been no different than those passed. I spent my last day on the water two months prior,

"Fishing isn't entirely about fish..
Casting into the water is like
asking a question and somehow
an empty hook is still a
satisfactory answer."
~Steven Rinella



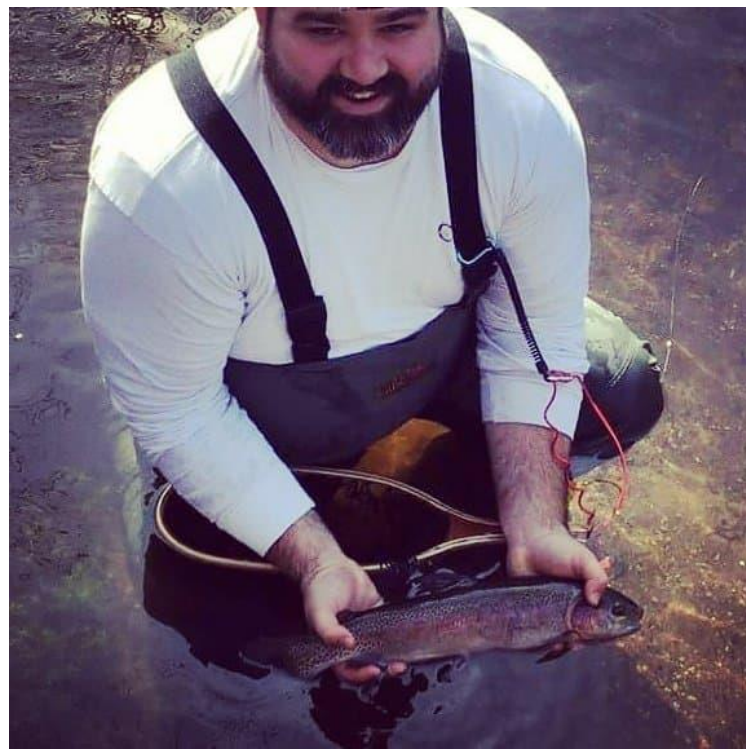
cleaned/stored my gear,

and started watching outdoor programming constantly. The duties of home have called and been answered, keeping me mostly indoors. Yet my mind has remained afield.

The itch is strong. I cannot help but think about some of the amazing opportunities for spring fishing we can all enjoy. To be clear, the below noted timeframes are a general point of reference. The fishing described is more dictated by conditions than any given month. Regardless, anticipation will only be quelled by a spring on the water.

March Browns (Brooks and Bows)

Water temperatures start creeping back to the high 30s and day-dreaming about time on a river is in full swing. Start looking at stream reports for temperature and stream flow (cubic feet per second or cfs) trends to maximize the chance of success. Trout are back on the move after frigid waters begin warming, but turbidity is your enemy.

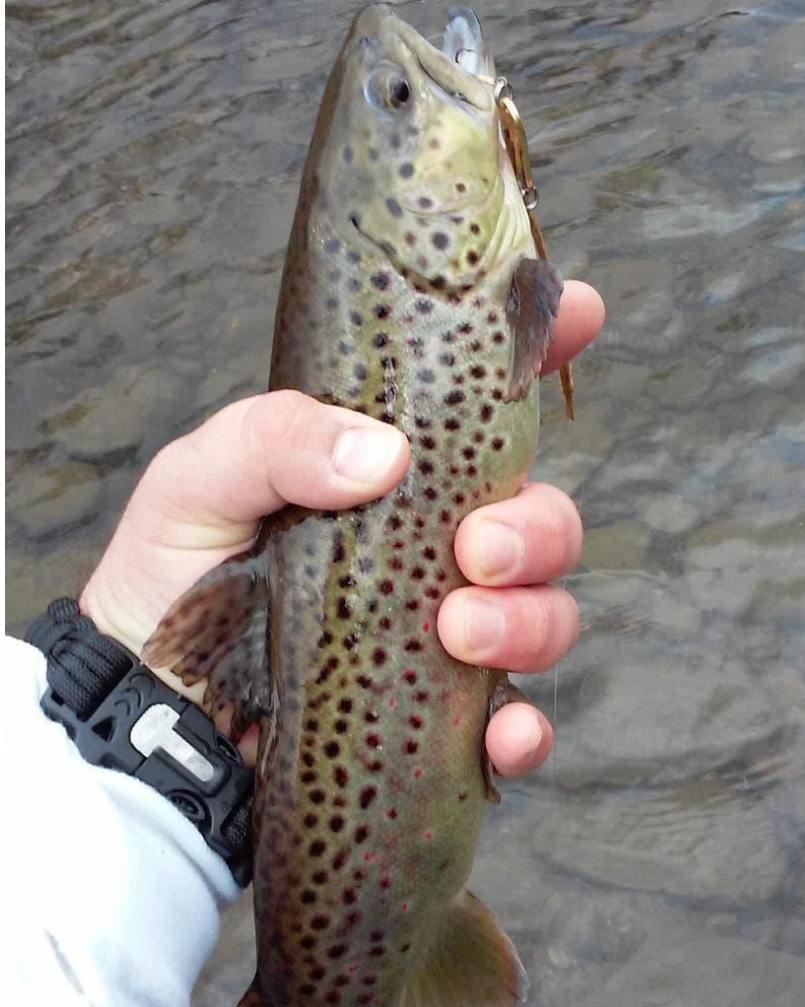


Look for increasing (or at least stable) temperatures and cfs trends that may indicate clearer water. Watch for stable stream flow or a period of high water followed by a precipitous drop to normal levels. These trends are indicators that possibly suggest clear/clearing water.

Streamers and woolly-buggers are good choices with a fly line unless there is a notable hatch. Additionally, an attractor pattern such as a yellow-humpy has been successful. For ultra-light spinning gear, rooster tails, panther martins, and spoons (Thomas' Little Tiger for me) do an excellent job of imitating protein packed baitfish.

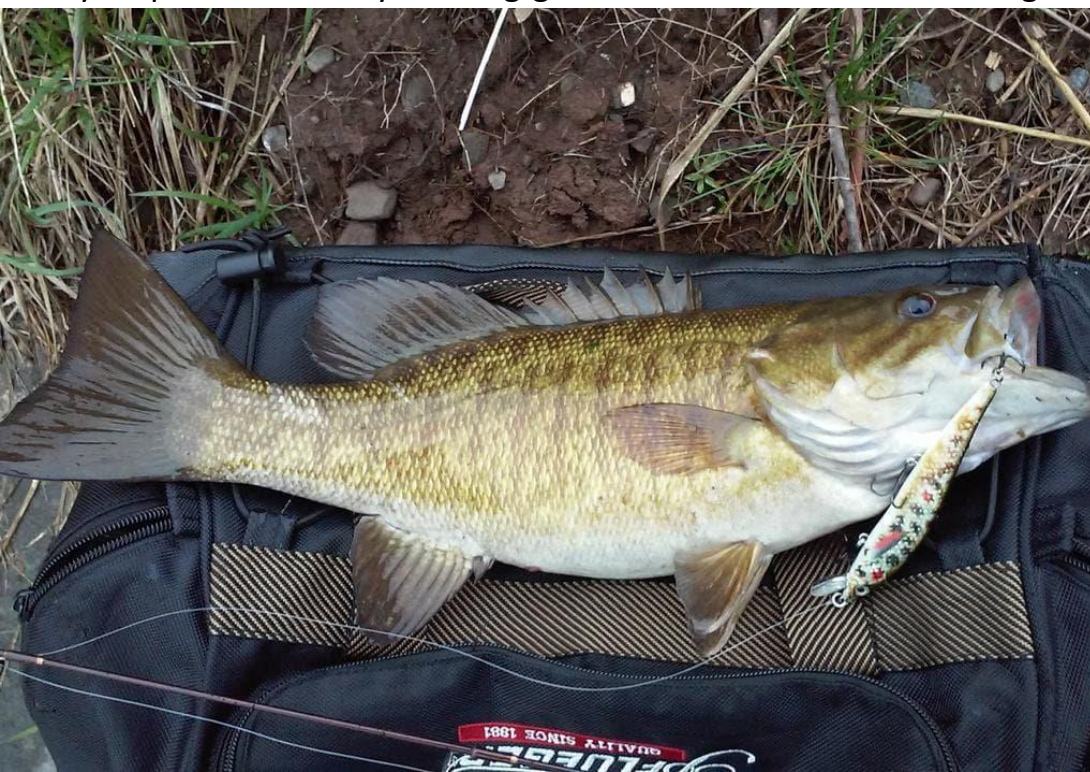
I begin to target larger trout with medium-light spinning gear as April rolls on. Warmer water has the biguns' on the hunt; they are more than happy to smack a baitfish imitation. My favorite jerkbait presentation is a 4.5" EOC (usually a trout pattern but any baitfish pattern is suitable) worked through current breaks, eddies, and slower water.

A slow, steady retrieve with the occasional twitch will trigger strikes from trout 16 inches and greater. Switch to a floating stick bait if the water is shallow and employ a similar retrieve. These techniques work on smaller trout as well but be sure to downsize your lures.



Pre-Spawn Smallmouth

April marches toward May and water temperatures begin move into the upper 40s – low 50s. This is truly a special time of year. Big girls move out of their wintering holes and start feeding in shallower water: the smallmouth bass pre-spawn.



The arduous task of pescatarian labor is about to begin. Before this, females pack on weight after the general austerity of winter before the eggs start to drop. Baitfish and crayfish (crawdads) will hold a special place on the menu. Jerkbait (again) are a fantastic option for this time of year. Vary your retrieve until you determine which twitching cadence and pause

length or retrieve speed will trigger the most strikes. This is the technique I have had the most success (and experience) with and is a confidence presentation to be sure.

Slow-rolled soft swimbaits and large curly-tail grubs also work well during this time of year. Additionally, many anglers will employ a jig with crayfish trailer. I have not had a great deal of experience with a jig, but all those other anglers can't be wrong and are using jigs for a reason.

A new presentation for this upcoming pre-spawn period will be a bladed jig (or chatterbait) with a crayfish trailer. After having had quite a bit of success with bladed jigs and grub trailers for largemouth bass this past summer, I look forward to trying this combination slow-rolled for smallmouth as a follow-up to the jerkbait.

Mixed Bags of May

A good portion of my time on the water has been spent on the Delaware River, specifically the region designated the Upper Delaware River which runs south from Hancock, NY to Port Jervis, NY. This fantastic fishery is home to several species such as trout, smallmouth bass, walleye, and a bountiful run of American shad. A peak time of year to fish the river falls between Mother's Day and Memorial Day as a "Grand Slam" (or greater) is always possible. If you have a local river with a similar abundance of game species, be sure to verify its potential.

Trout and bass can be caught on the fly, spoons, spinners, and jerkbaits. Walleye can be caught on jerkbaits but crankbaits and soft plastics are also excellent choices (smallmouth also). Chain pickerel (sturdy "gators" known for drag screaming runs) are often a nice bonus during this time of year as well. Shad are typically caught with shad darts; colored jig heads often adorned with bucktail or feather. The variety of gamefish readily available at this time of year will keep you entertained and in the action.

Spring is Near

The grip of old man winter loosens, mother nature becomes a little more



forgiving, and springtime fishing opportunities are a welcome distraction. I will relive springtime fishing moments until new experiences can manifest memories for next winter. See you on the water and tight lines.

Gary is a nationally published, freelance outdoor writer with a focus on fishing related content.

He owns/operates www.GermanikAngler.com and is currently a contributing writer for Rambling Angler Outdoors. You can visit his social pages on Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube.



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My Favorite Deep Baits

By Captain Mike Gerry

With the fish moving off shore and the spawn slowly turning to post spawn I thought I would give you my favorite baits that I use when the bass move deep as we progress into summer. Let's face it deep fishing is a different challenge and fishing deep requires confidence so the first thing you need to do is determine what deep baits are your confidence baits.



The first love I have is for a deep running crank bait like the SPRO Little John DD 70 or 90 it's a bait that I have the most confidence in because when the bass initially move deep they school up and become highly competitive. There is no bait that fires up a school and gets them competing better than a deep running crank bait. Keep the colors natural in most situations unless the water is deeply stained, find the fish on your Lowrance Structure scan and work your crank bait at different angles until you find a depth, angle and speed they will react too.

My next favorite deep fishing bait is a Tight-Line football jig, the versatility of a football jig can be wide and catching fish in deep cover is its best attribute. It also allows you to fish structure at different depths, so if the cover drops from different depths you can slowly work your jig off the edges and drops until you find the right depth. Football jigs are designed to be worked on the bottom, so the key is to keep it there; use a dragging technique keep contact with the bottom structure and you will catch fish.

If big fish are your passion Picasso Lures makes heavy 1 to 2 oz. swim bait heads that allow you to quickly get a big swim bait to the bottom in deep water, it's a big fish machine. One of the biggest assets of the Picasso swim bait head is you can choose the size of the hook allowing you to fish an 8-inch swim bait on a swim bait head with a big hook catching big fish. There is probably no bait in the last 10 years that has caught more big fish in tournaments than a heavy swim bait head, causing the old saying to mean something. Big baits big fish and this is a true example of it.

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Experience Early Season Fishing Success

By Bob Jensen

I've been seeing more and more anglers on and in the water recently. Some of them are fishing from boats, some are wading, others are fishing from docks or shore. Some of them are catching fish, some aren't catching too much. If you want to catch more fish early in the fishing season, following are some ideas for doing so.

Early in the season you need to understand a little bit about the fish you're chasing. In the Midwest you can chase several species of fish on the same body of water. Keep in mind that, depending on where you live, northern pike are probably spawning or may even be done, walleyes are spawning or getting very close to doing so, and bass and panfish are getting ready to spawn. While you might want to catch walleyes, you will be better off trying for pike or panfish. When fish are spawning, that's what they have on their mind. They aren't real interested in eating, so, although some males might be willing to eat your bait, if you just want to catch something, you'll increase your chances for that if you try for pike or panfish.

Also, keep in mind that the water is still pretty cool, and many fish don't want to chase a bait in cold water. A slow presentation will often be best. If walleyes are the target, try crawling a stand-up Fire-Ball jig tipped with a minnow across the bottom. Give it plenty of stops as you drag it. The stand-up head is better this time of year, as it "stands up" when you stop it. The fish can see the minnow better with the stand-up head, which increases your odds for getting bit.

That's true for most other types of fish as well. A spinnerbait that's retrieved slowly will be good for pike, but an Impulse Jerk Minnow rigged weedless and worked slowly will be even better. If you are in an area that allows



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multiple lines, strongly think about putting a four or five inch minnow under a bobber out there. I'll bet that bobber goes down if there's a pike in the area.

If crappies are the quarry, hook a small minnow onto a 1/32nd ounce Fire-fly jig and fish it under a slip-bobber. Another good option would be a jig/plastic combination, something like an Impulse Jig'N Tail Bloodworm. These tails quiver with just a bit of rod-tip action, and that really tempts reluctant panfish. The slip-bobber will allow you to suspend a bait at a certain level, and that's a very important consideration at any time of year. You'll need to experiment to determine what the proper level is, but once you do, you'll be able to get fish to bite that may have gone uncaught. Remember that most fish see up better than they see down, so set your bobber stop so the bait is at the fish's eye-level or just a tad higher. Baits that are below a fish rarely get eaten.

When you're fishing with a slip-bobber for panfish, remember that because the bait is almost motionless, the fish are going to be able to get a good look at it. Many anglers go with lighter line to reduce the chances of the line spooking the fish. Also, small baits perform better. Four pound P-Line CX Premium is pretty much invisible, very manageable, and an excellent choice for this application.

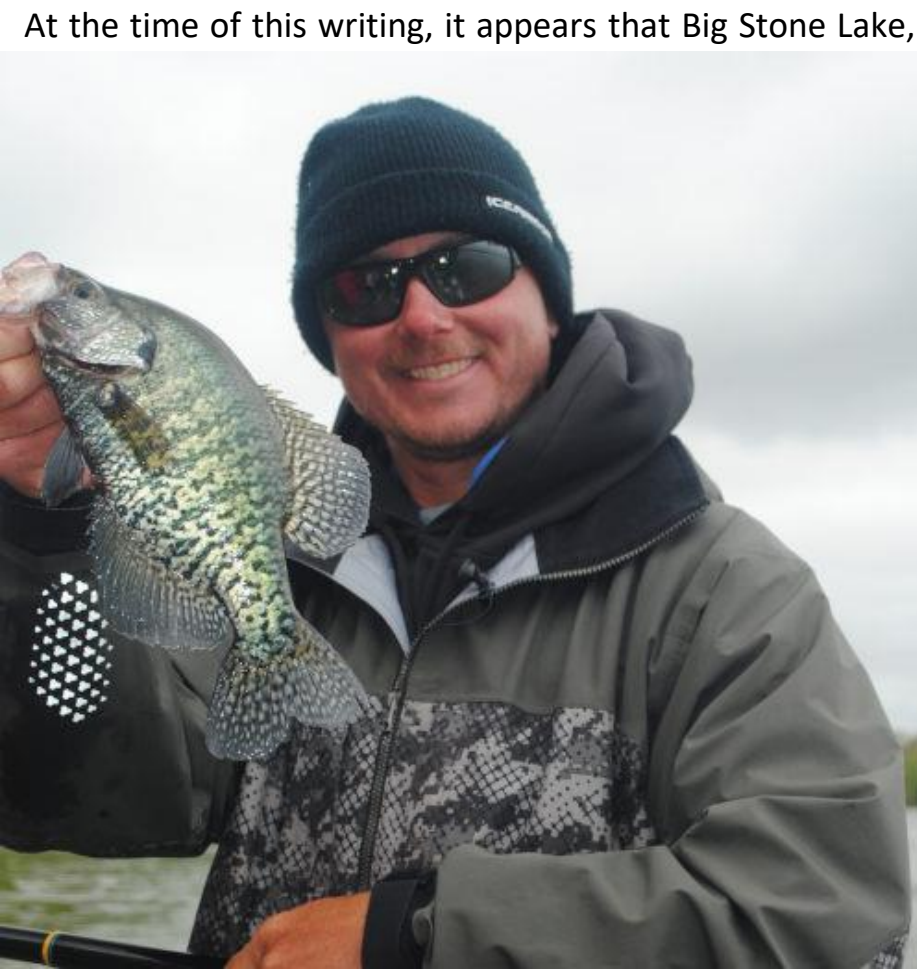
Keep these ideas in mind and you'll increase your chances for early season fishing success.

To see all the newest episodes of the Fishing the Midwest television series, new fishing related tips, and fishing articles from the past, go to www.fishingthemidwest.com.

2019 Spring Fishing Trip Planner!

By Mike Frisch

As the days get longer and the weather gradually warms, more and more of my thoughts are turning to open-water fishing. Since I live in Minnesota where inland lakes don't open to walleye fishing until mid-May, I often make several trips each spring to other places where walleyes are fair game. Here are a couple destinations that I am planning to visit that have the potential to produce outstanding catches this spring!



At the time of this writing, it appears that Big Stone Lake, on the Minnesota/South Dakota border, will no longer have a closed fishing season as a proposal to eliminate the closed season on Big Stone appeared to be all but final. That means that as soon as the ice leaves the lake, the fishing will start! Depending on the year, open-water on Big Stone can be expected by early- to mid-April.

Early season on Big Stone means hungry pre-spawn walleyes roaming the lake's expansive rocky shorelines. When I say shorelines, often that means the fish hold right tight to shore! Pitching small jigs tipped with minnows to the edge where water meets rock is often productive. Shallow roaming baitfish are present on these rocks drawing walleyes, and the fish use these areas for spawning as well.



Small 1/16-ounce Fire-Ball Jigs tipped with fathead minnows often yield good catches. The good early season fishing often happens in the northern reaches of this 26-mile long water. The bite progresses south as the water warms. Since there is lots of potentially productive shoreline to fish on Big Stone, staying on the move searching for that first fish is recommended. Once the first bite or two is had, it's not unusual to slow up and catch several more fish from an area!

Big Stone will be on my fishing menu this spring. If you are considering a trip of your own, check out www.bigstonelakechamber.com for more information about this top fishing destination and the surrounding area.

In addition to walleyes, good spring catches of largemouth bass, crappies, and bluegills are also common on Big Stone.

I had a chance to share a boat a few years ago in early May with Bob Jensen, Fishing the Midwest TV founder, and Kevan Paul fishing Clear Lake in north central Iowa. Bob has been fishing Clear Lake since he was a boy and Kevan is a leading guide on the lake.

We found numbers of shallow walleyes of all sizes and had a blast casting small jigs tipped with minnows and leeches to the fish. Since multiple lines are legal, we used additional lines to suspend jigs and bait below bobbers. This method caught several of our fish, including some of the biggest.

Interestingly, some of these fish were so shallow that we flipped our jigs (a la bass fishermen) under docks to reach them. Some of the walleyes were feeding on bugs hatching off the lake's bottom, so we used small Stand-Up Fire-Balls Jigs. The "stand up" design kept our baits squirming just above bottom providing easy meals for the walleyes.

Clear Lake also has a good crappie population and we spent part of our day in shallow shoreline reeds and cane dipping small jigs in openings within the vegetation for shallow feeding crappies.

I'm hoping for a return trip to Clear Lake in late April or in May. If you decide to plan a similar outing, visit www.clearlakeiowa.com to learn more about the area.

Mike Frisch hosts the popular Fishing the Midwest TV series and is a co-founder of the Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's School of Fish. Follow Fishing the Midwest on Facebook to see more from Mike.



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Shad Busts For Bass Action

By Dan Galusha

One of the best indicators of actively feeding black and white bass is a shad bust. These feeding explosions can be found on the surface in any depth of water and learning how to fish them to their maximum potential will make the difference in the numbers of fish caught.

The duration and size of a "bust" can vary. In shallow water it is often a quick violent burst of baitfish around some type of structure (weeds, stump, lay down, etc.). In deep water it may take on a look of boiling water as a school of bass come up to feed on a large group of baitfish, often called pods.



Lures for fishing shallow and deep-water busts vary slightly. A selection for shallow water would be a 1/4-ounce Rat-L-Trap, shallow running crankbaits, Natural Forage Baits Swim Bait on B-Fish-N Precision H2O 1/8 to 3/16 ounce jig head, 1/8-ounce to 3/8-ounce spinnerbait, NFB Jerk Shad, or new FT Shad on Daiichi Bleeding Bait Copperhead hook, and "finger jigged" NFB Lil Killer and Drop Shad, and B-Fish-N AuthentX Ribb Finn with H2O jig head. Baits for deep water would be a 1/2 to 5/8-ounce Rat-L-Trap, 1/2 to 1-ounce Blitz Blade, deep running crankbaits (including a deep stickbait), NFB Jerk Shad with Daiichi Butt Dragger hook, NFB Swim Bait with 3/16 to 1/2 – ounce H2O jig head, and a 1/2-ounce or larger double willow leaf spinnerbait. Part of the reason for larger lures in deep water is the ability to

make longer casts, which in most deep-water situations is essential, and allow the lure to go deeper when the fish drop below the schools of bait.

Shallow water busts can be the most productive for numbers of bass. In a stump field, on a point, along a weed line, or in an opening flowing into another area, several quick bursts of feeding action can indicate that active bass are covering the area. While larger fish can be caught in these shallow busts, the deeper ones tend to hold a larger average size fish, but fewer numbers.



The starting lure choice for the shallows depends on the structure being fished. In most cases a Stanley willow spinnerbait is a good all-around choice, but on open points, around weed patches and along weed lines a Rat-L-Trap can be deadly. When the action slows down continue fishing the area with a Jerk Shad or Swim Bait, such as the Natural Forage Baits mentioned above or an oyster shell B-Fish-N Pulse R, and then go to a plastic worm, such as the NFB R7 7-inch ribbon tail. If there is a deeper water ledge, weed line or some type of structure, out from the shallow area, fish this spot before moving on.



With deep-water busts the Rat-L-Trap, along with the Blitz Blade is are excellent starting lures. As the surface activity starts to fade use the Jerk Shad and Swim Bait. Once the surface is clear, begin fishing the deeper running crankbaits, or allowing the Rat-L-Trap and Blade to sink deeper. Try using a rip-and-pause retrieve with a deep running stickbait like a Spoonbill Rebel, which will resemble a crippled shad, or a stop-and-go retrieve with a Swim Bait. The Jerk Shad with the Butt Dragger hook can be allowed to fall deeper and twitch along to also represent a crippled baitfish. These fish are still in the area, and if dark patches of baitfish are still visible on or near the surface, then the bass will be back.

Another lure never to forget whether fishing deep or shallow, is the Road Runner in marabou, curl tail, Reality Shad, swim tail and Buffet Rigs. Be sure to have a variety of weights, for reasons previously mentioned, but always include the Casey's Head which can be rigged with some of the

aforementioned Jerk Shad and Swim Bait bodies.

When fishing feeding schools don't cast directly into them. This will, in most cases, result in a fish, but in all likelihood, it will be the only one caught in the school.

Fish the outer edges first and make long casts past the bust.

Take note of the time of day at which these fish were feeding in a certain location and return to this and similar locations the next day, at the same time. Early morning action can also mean late afternoon action in the same area. There are those very rare days when the feeding will continue in the same area all day long.



No matter what body of water is being fished, or at what time of year, always remember to watch for "shad busts", and be ready to experience some first-class bass action.

If you have questions about this, or another fishing subject, drop me a line through the Dan's Fish 'N' Tales® website at www.dansfishntales.com, or Facebook page at www.facebook.com/dansfishntales, where you can also click on the "like" button. I also invite you to subscribe to the Dan's Fish 'N' Tales®/Shoot 'N' Plink™ You Tube channel at www.youtube.com/dansfishntales.

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



Back in the early 80's, Keith Lundahl, former owner of Pop Topwater Spoons, was a master at finding productive shad busts in the Mississippi River backwaters, while using his 15' SeaNymph aluminum bass boat, with a stick steered 35hp outboard.

Your Boat Batteries Running Down

By Capt. Mike Gerry

Today's fishing has become a game of computers, we are spending thousands of dollars on electronics in order to be the best we can be on the water. The trouble is all this money being spent is adding up to other problems occurring with your boat as the amp draw on today's electronics runs your batteries down and causes you headaches during your fishing day.

The problems are many, sometimes your seeing your electronics flickering and shutting themselves off when you go to start you boat, sometimes your batteries aren't strong enough to start the boat without a jump start and many times other things like live wells or running lights aren't working all because your drawing so much current to run your electronics that it shuts your system down. The key is how do you solves this issue.

Well here is a few ideas that I have as I for one have been struggling with this very problem running three units on my boat. First, you must realize that there is not a traditional battery made at a reasonable price that will run your electronics all day long. The only battery made is these highly expensive Lithium batteries at about 3 grand each. That doesn't work for me and probably not for most of us. So, what to do, here what I have done; I have added a second AGM 31 amp starting battery to my boat and hooked it up positive to positive to the original starting battery. This hook up along with the grounds being connected allows your boat alternator to charge your starting battery and hence your 5th battery when your moving or running the big motor. With today's alternators especially in the new Mercury 4 stroke Pro XS they are putting out 80 plus amps to quickly recharge your system and add life to your battery. With just some normal movement every couple of hours you can recharge your system this way, add live to your dedicated battery for your electronics and have a day on the water without interruption.

Some of the older model boats don't have thick enough internal wiring and the older motors charging systems are not putting out the recharging amps of the newer ones adding some other issues to deal with. I don't have the answer in this article for the older models, but these are the issues and most good boat mechanics understand the problems and can help you with your older model systems.



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Spring Time Cranking

By Gary Parsons and Keith Kavajecz

Spring means warming waters and shallow baitfish. The north shorelines, larger flats, shallow rocks, and longer bays warm faster than the main lake. Somehow, shad, shiners, small bluegills, and other bait know exactly how to find comfortable water. Well, the walleyes follow.

Post-spawn fish are spread out so moving fast is key and crankbaits facilitate speed. Jigs are often just too slow covering water. Casting cranks is a fun way to work a shallow water area. For equipment, look at a 7-foot medium light Cabela's Prodigy Walleye Spinning rod because the extra length helps with casting distance and the slightly softer tip gives some initial shock absorption before the hook. These fish are not leader shy so tie a #1 Berkley Cross-Lok snap directly to 10-lb Berkley Fireline



Ultra 8-Carrier braided line. This line allows you to feel the lure vibrating as well as when the crankbait ticks bottom. This new Ultra 8 is also smooth and thin to help lengthen each cast and allow the lure to dive a bit deeper.

Shorelines are never consistent when it comes to depth and steepness, so having different crankbaits that dive to different depths gives an angler the tools to effectively keep a bait in the strike zone. The standard Flicker Shad in the 7cm size is a workhorse. It dives quickly and can be worked on a cast up to 7-8 feet deep. The smaller 5cm size is a little less aggressive and will hit about 6 feet on a long cast. Most people do not realize that the 6cm size dives similar to a #7, but it is weighted to suspend and in colder water, if you pause the retrieve, that feature can produce more fish.

If you get up even shallower, this is where the new Berkley Shallow Flicker Shad shines. The 5cm and 7cm sizes dive to about 3 and 5 feet respectively. Using a standard Flicker Shad in this situation would dig bottom. The larger 7 Shallow Flicker Shad has a proven action very similar to the “standard” 7 Flicker Shad. The 5 Shallow Flicker Shad has a subtle action and is great for walleyes in a finicky mood.

In all cases, align the retrieve speed with the water temperature. If the water is still chilly, crank a bit slower. As the water warms, move faster and crank faster. Use a steady retrieve unless the no-stretch Fireline indicates that a fish swiped at the bait (feels like the bait vibration pauses). In that case, pause and twitch a few times to get them to come back and strike again.

For larger flats and long tapering shorelines, walleyes can chase bait all the way up into a few feet of water,



but also could be hanging in 6 or 12-foot depths. In these large areas trolling becomes the best option. Line counters spooled up with 10lb Fireline is our first choice for trolling, but even spinning rods (the same rods I cast with) with Fireline can be cast out quickly and adjusted so the lure stays in the strike zone. At the deeper end of the spectrum, you might even consider a lead core setup (18-pound Bass Pro Magibraid with a 15-foot leader of 10# Fireline) to get shallow running baits down close to the bottom.

Especially during the shad spawn or on windy days, walleyes will move into less than 4 feet of water. Trolling a 7cm flicker shad would only be 10 feet behind the boat! Here are a couple of options for a better presentation.

First, when up this shallow, consider trolling with your electric trolling motor. Our quiet Motorguide Xi5 is great for this because we can use the Heading Lock to point the engine the direction we want to troll, and the motor will

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automatically keep us on course. Second, you will want to spread the lures away from the boat either with a long rod or preferably with planer boards.

We use the Off Shore Tackle OR12 Side Planer Boards for walleye because they track through waves and handle all of the standard crankbaits with ease. These boards are easy to see, and the tattle flag system indicates if a lure has picked up debris or a smaller fish. Running a lure 10 feet behind a planer board is a common presentation and the shallow fish never notice the boat.

Each lure in the Berkley Flicker family comes in over 20 colors making the aisle of crankbaits at Bass Pro Shops a bit intimidating. When starting out buy a selection of sizes to cover the depths you will be fishing – be sure



to get both 5cm and 7cm sizes so you have different actions to handle the different moods of the fish. For colors, start with lures that have contrast - colors like Chartreuse Pearl, Uncle Rico, and Fire Tiger. But never leave the store without some "Mouse" colored lures (Pearl White). Once you start to have success, pick similar patterns of baits but with different colors to really fine tune your lure collection.

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By the way, standard springtime trolling speeds are as low as 1.2 mph - go faster as the water warms – up into the 1.8 mph range.

Active spring walleyes do not need a slow jig to bite. A crankbait moving through their space is often more effective at triggering a strike. Go shallow, cast or troll cranks and get **The Next Bite**.

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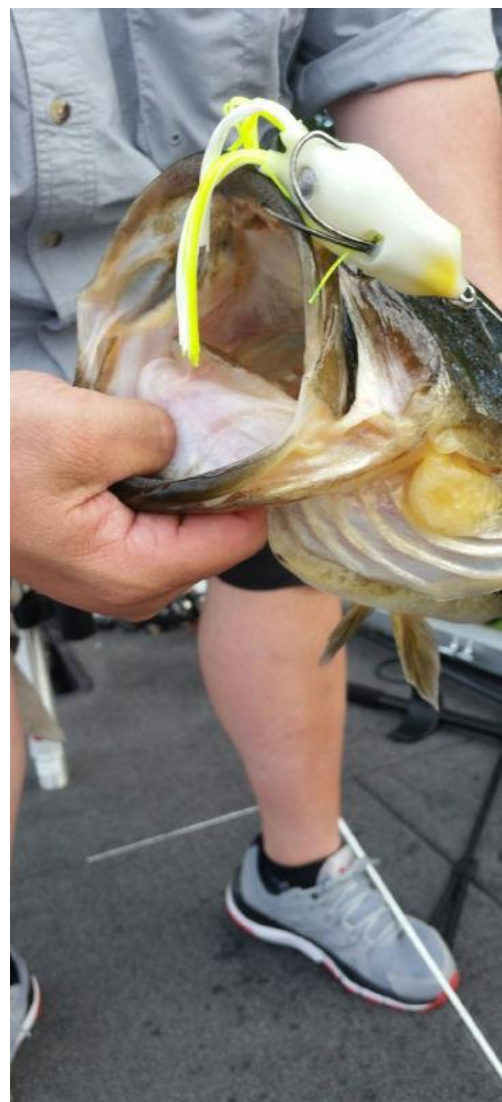


Fishing Tips From The Pros

Frogs... it's what's for dinner...lunch... breakfast...

By Frank Akey

A question I get asked a lot when doing frog fishing seminars is when to throw one. To me, the answer is very simple...only on days ending in "y". There is never a time that I go fishing and not have a frog rod, or 2, or 4. When in my kayak in the Everglades I will try to keep things pretty simple, maximum of 6 rods, and 2 or 3 will have frogs tied on. On the bassboat that number increases to 4 rods and everyone has something different, whether color or model, i.e Perfect Frog and a Buzz Frog, Black or White and a natural color like a Green or a Brown. Now, I tried going by the book as to my frog choices but...Bass have not read the book.



To find your best and favorite choices, identify which color and model is your main confidence

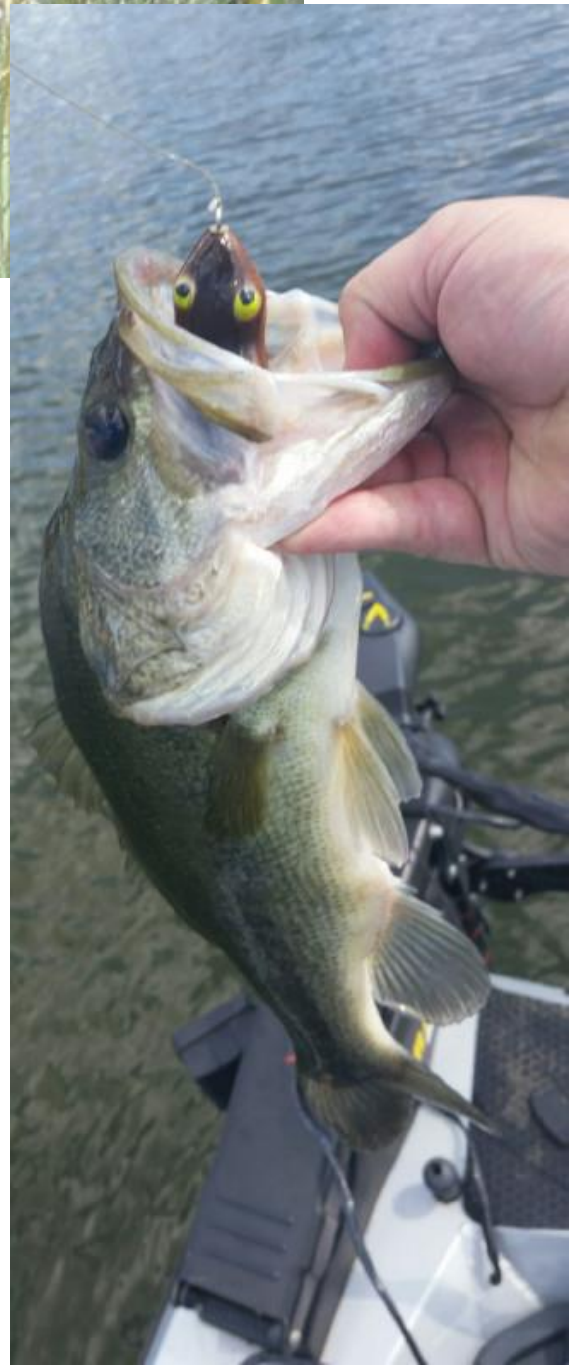


frog. Is it a Wobbletron? Maybe a Bobby's Perfect Frog? Ok, great...now when you have that narrowed down, what color? Tweety? Bullfrog? Again,

great...now choose a second frog totally opposite of your main choice. Keep rotating your frogs until you find YOUR lethal combo. Mine is a Perfect Frog in Tweety with a Bleedin' Frog in Pearl in bright conditions, and that same Tweety with a Wobbletron in Wild Bullfrog in overcast or darker conditions. This doesn't mean my choices are the way to go, just that they are my confidence frogs. I always have a Bobby's Perfect Buzz and a Poppin' Phattie ready to go if needed just in case.

Do you need to invest in dozens of frogs to be successful? Absolutely not, you can be a very good frog fisherman with a few frogs, just make sure styles and colors are different enough. Unfortunately for me, I have 8 3700's loaded with Snag Proof frogs, including discontinued models, slightly modified models, heavily modified models, straight out of the package models...making a choice is sometimes difficult. Don't be me...lol.

Ok, hopefully this helps get you closer to the frog addiction all of us at Snag Proof have. Grab a 6'10"-7'6" Medium Heavy or Heavy rod, 65lb braid, your reel with the drag locked down, and the Snag Proof frog of your choosing, and have fun. Remember, Frogs Rule...Bass drool. Keep an eye on this column for more frogging tips from Snag Proof.



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Cayenne Pepper for Soft Plastics

A solitary sparkle interrupts the abyss. Tiny tail-thrusts ping lateral lines like an aquatic drumbeat. In the brain of a bass, a solitary, silvery morsel is an easy opportunity—the inspiration behind Z-Man’s new TRD SpinZ Tail Spinner. Bringing bling to soft plastic baits, the SpinZ gives off subtle flash and vibration—those often-necessary strike inducements, especially critical in stained to dirty water.

A simplified alternative to screw-in style tail spinners, the TRD SpinZ employs a single, stainless centering wire and exclusive keeper design that’s easy to rig with all softbaits, including Z-Man’s state-of-the-art ElaZtech. “We tweaked shaft length and worked through at least nine different keeper arrangements before implementing a bulletproof design,” says Z-Man confidant and tackle-tech, Drew Reese. “This keeper configuration grabs and holds all soft plastic baits exceptionally well.”

Reese, who finished 7th at the first-ever Bassmaster Classic on Lake Mead, spices Ned rig style





baits, such as the Finesse TRD, with a TRD SpinZ during low light conditions and in dingy water. Interestingly, Reese says the TRD / SpinZ combo has also had a magnetic effect on rainbow trout, particularly in dirty-water lakes.

Referring to the tannic-stained waters of Lake of the Woods, where he spends summers chasing smallmouths, Reese offers further observations: “During those first couple hours of the morning, the Colorado-bladed SpinZ usually gets me bit right away.

“To get the blade turning, I use a slow-swimming retrieve. Two-thirds of the way back to the boat, I flip the bail open and let the bait helicopter to the bottom. The Colorado blade creates a lot of flash and vibration while it flutters on the way down. If you don’t already feel the weight of a bass after it hits bottom, give the bait a couple quick hops. Do this and you’ll trigger an amazing number of extra bites from following bass.”

Adding subtle enticement to a variety of softbaits, the TRD SpinZ marries with most Ned rig baits, Wacky or Texas rigged stickbaits and select dropshot baits. The new tail spinner offers an easy-to-rig centering wire and sharp, molded keeper prongs to grip soft plastic and ElaZtech equally well. The SpinZ even adds flash and vibration to the belly of paddletail swimbaits, for an “under-spin” effect.

Sold in three-packs, TRD SpinZ Tail Spinners are offered in willowleaf or Colorado style blades in gold or silver finishes, each riding a premium ball-bearing swivel for max rotation. MSRP \$4.99 per three-pack. Learn more at www.zmanfishing.com.





LIVETARGET Silver/Black Rainbow Smelt Jerkbait

Don't Get Stuck Without Sticks

By Chip Leer

Jigs are popular springtime walleye lures, but don't overlook versatile, slim-profile stickbaits in your quest for early season success.

Also commonly called minnowbaits or jerkbaits, these baitfish-imitating hardbaits are deadly weapons when schools of spring-run walleyes flood into tributaries and bottlenecks between lakes.

So many fish gathered in a small area creates opportunities for fast action. Your odds of landing a lunker also improve astronomically compared to your chances when fish are scattered on the main lake.

You can tap the spring run from a boat or the bank. Afoot or afloat, I like casting to prime near-shore shallows. Top spots include 2- to 8-foot depths

over a firm sand, gravel or rocky bottom.

Current breaks, eddies, seams between slick and slack water, and other disruptions in the main current are magnets to migrating walleyes. Running your lure through such areas is key to getting bit.

Cast slightly above the target area and retrieve the bait through the strike zone as the current gently sweeps it downstream. Keep the lure close to bottom, without dredging. Ideally, the stickbait should lightly touch bottom every 4 to 6 feet.

Experiment with the retrieve. Most often a pull-pause cadence is best, but other times

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the fish prefer a steady swimming motion.

For maximum lure action, I use a 6½- or 7-foot, fast- to medium-action fast-tipped 13 Fishing Muse Gold rod. I spool up with 8-pound-test Bionic Walleye Braid mainline then add a 4-foot leader of Bionic Fluorosilk, followed by a Loop Snap to allow the lure to work its magic, unencumbered by a knot.

Small stickbaits tend to perform best right now. My favorites are the 2¾- to 4½-inch baits in LIVETARGET's Yearling BaitBall and Rainbow Smelt Series. These lifelike lures allow you to perfectly match the local forage, suspend on the pause, and produce a variety of strike-triggering actions with different speeds and rodtip movements. (Note: To check out LIVETARGET's entire selection of walleye lures, visit www.LIVETARGETLURES.com)

The spring stickbait casting program heats up when walleyes move into the tributaries and channels. It extends into the early post-spawn, but you can catch fish casting these versatile minnow-imitators in current sweet spots and along windswept lakeshores all season long. So don't get stuck without sticks the next time you head for the water.

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



LIVETARGET Pearl/Natural Yearling BaitBall Jerkbait



Lock Your Lures in Place

By Bernard Williams

Every so often I run across an innovative and revolutionary product gets my total attention. I was introduced to the Lure Lock Tacklebox at ICAST; it won Best in Show Award for Tackle Management Systems. It's a proprietary ELASTAKTM GEL in the bottom of the tackle box that securely holds your lures in place. You can place your sinkers, hooks, lures, or soft plastics in place in the same compartment no matter how you flip or turn the box. Your lures are securely locked in place. You can flip the open tackle box upside down and your tackle stays in place.



The dividers are easy to install, no more trimming needed to install. That was one of the most annoying things about putting together a tackle box. You press your lures into the gel that fabricated to the bottom of the box. It keeps lure hook sharp and protects the finish of those expensive lures.

Lure Lock doesn't leave any film on your baits. The gel will not harm your lures, it's made from a soybean base ingredient that's totally environmentally safe and scent-free. Lure Lock will hold soft plastics a spinnerbait skirts without damaging them.

The tackle box is easy to clean; just rinse with water or run it thru the dishwasher. The gel will not lose its tackiness. The tackle box comes with a UV Blocker to keep it from breaking down. I hear it's been sun tested for 7 years.

The tackle box is not completely waterproof but the gel will continue to perform even if it gets wet. The tackle box has been tested in heat over 200 degrees and down to 15 degrees below zero. I wouldn't advise putting them in the oven or freezer, but it is heat and cold resistant.

The Lure Lock tackle box is made of pure polypropylene, it's the strongest box on the market. Other tackle boxes are made of regrind plastic, heat will destroy them and your lures.

The Lure Locker was designed to give anglers the ability to keep all of their Lure Lock cases organized and ready for their next fishing trip. The Lure Locker securely stores up to five Lure Lock cases for ease of transport. The Lure Locker is designed to easily hang on a wall or pegboard, keeping your Lure Lock cases off the ground and at eye level, when not in use.

ODU MAGAZINE VIDEO BLOCK
(www.odumagazine.com)



I spend lots of money on my tackle, I hate it when the latches come off, the separators come out and allow my lures to get tangled, or when the box flips over, and everything comes out. The Lure Lock Tacklebox solves this issue.

The Lure Locker is available at www.lurelock.com, Bass Pro Shops, Cabela's, Academy, Sportsman's Warehouse, Scheel's, Mill's Fleet Farm, Field & Stream, Tackle Warehouse, Tackle Direct, and key independent sporting goods dealers.

Super-Tuned Spinnerbait Bass

New Z-Man SlingBladz is already churning up the bass world.

“Probably the only painful part of throwing a spinnerbait is finding one that runs consistently straight and true,” remarks Miles “Sonar” Burghoff, rising star on the FLW Tour and a veteran of the blade game. Like many anglers, Burghoff had until recently lived with the reality of keeping spinnerbaits in tune, often unsuccessfully—bending wires this way and that, eyeballing the bait for perfect alignment. Even then, some spinnerbaits—even a few fresh from the package—simply wouldn’t cooperate.



For
Burghoff as well
as Bass Pro
Tour
angler
Luke

Clausen, the angst began to evaporate last year when a state-of-the-art spinnerbait arrived on the scene. Clausen, who helped design the new lure, likens its assets and bass-appeal to another bladed bait, the Z-Man ChatterBait JackHammer.

“There’s a reason almost every competitive angler out there is throwing the JackHammer right now,” notes Clausen, who’s competing in the inaugural season of the Major League Fishing / Bass Pro Tour. “It’s the most intelligently crafted lure in its category, by far. Catches a ton of big fish, too.

“We approached the design of the new SlingBladeZ



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spinnerbait in much the same way as the JackHammer,” says Clausen, “The goal was to address every issue and problem area with traditional spinnerbait design and fix it and make it better. Ultimately, we’ve given anglers the highest performing, coolest spinnerbait they’ve ever fished.

“Other than the fact the lure always tracks with the blade upright and aligned, the first thing that wows you about the SlingBladeZ is its intense vibration,” he observes. “You’re going to feel that rhythmic thumping right up the line, through the reel and into your hands. The bait’s low-vis 17-7 LiveWire frame really amplifies blade vibration. Fished on fluorocarbon, you can almost hear it.”

Wielding the lure at recent FLW events, Burghoff has been impressed with the innovative spinnerbait’s super-tuned construction. “I’ve never seen a spinnerbait head design quite like the SlingBladeZ. It’s got a low center of gravity with these



unique side flanges and a water-channeling underbelly that provides amazing stability. I've slowed rolled the lure and burned it on the same day and it always runs true. Pretty cool that I don't have to re-tune this bait after catching several bass."

While many anglers now throw a ChatterBait instead of a spinnerbait, Burghoff says both lures shine in different situations. "The rule I go by is to throw a

ChatterBait in any area with grass; it also works awesome for skipping under docks. But for fishing isolated pieces of cover or working through hard-cover such as timber, such as at Sam Rayburn, the SlingBladeZ excels; comes through brush exceptionally well. I also like the spinnerbait in places with at least a foot and a half of water clarity, as well as for working suspended bass.

"At some of the upcoming FLW tournaments, with bass in prespawn, and 55- and 64-degree water, I'll be using the bait to burn water for big bass. During shad spawns, too, the SlingBladeZ has been a total money bait." Burghoff adds that in clear or warming water, tandem willowleaf blades shine. While in dirty or colder water, a tandem willowleaf / Colorado configuration tends to excel. For Burghoff, color choice stays simple: "I really like the Mouserat color, an awesome shad pattern at places like Rayburn or

other clear lakes. With a little color in the water, chartreuse/white is tough to beat."

This season, two separate retrieves have produced Burghoff's biggest bass. "The stability of this spinnerbait means I can throw a heavier ½- or ¾-ouncer and really slow roll it in deeper water. I like to add a paddletail trailer to give fish something to key on, close to the hook. My favorite trailer, by far, is a DieZel MinnowZ. It adds buoyancy and unbelievable durability."



The rest of the time, Burghoff employs his favorite spinnerbait retrieve: fast and furious. “Again, you can’t do this with a lot of spinnerbaits, because as you amp up the speed, the blades tend to roll. But the SlingBladeZ is so well-tuned you can burn it through brush and elicit reaction bites without the bait coming off center.

“No need for a trailer here. The skirt and blades are more than enough incentive to draw feeding-frenzy-like bites. Instead of a chintzy rubber band, Z-Man used copper wire that makes the lure’s silicone skirt flare and breathe. It billows out really nicely, and when you stop-and-go, you get a beautiful pulsing action. I’ll trim the skirt maybe ¼- to ½-inch to really accentuate the billow-and-breathe factor.”

Clausen calls out another subtle design tweak that comes into play with heavy cover. “See that little bend just ahead of the head? We put it there for



even greater balance. But the bend also pushes grass and brush away from the hook, sliding the bait running clean through cover.

“While testing and throwing prototypes of the SlingBladeZ, I actually won a lot of tournament money,” he laughs. “But I rarely fish the bait in a straight line. Gotta add lots of random stops and quick-starts, which each produce a different vibration. Tell you another tip that works: Put a Z-Man Swimmin’ TroutTrick on the back of a big ¾-ouncer. Burn it as fast as you can. Big smallmouths absolutely stomp it.”

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Reservoirs, and the bass that live there, are different animals. Unlike natural lakes, where water levels are stable and bass action is frequently dominated by fishing grass and weededges, reservoirs offer an incredible array of places to find bass and ways to target them.

“When I moved from Michigan to Tennessee in 1990, I settled in an area with seven different reservoirs: Douglas, Cherokee, Fort Loudoun, and more,” noted professional angler David Walker, a seasoned veteran of the FLW Tour and the Bassmaster Elite Series who will be fishing in the inaugural season of the Major League Fishing Pro Tour. “Rocks, mud banks, bluffs, rapidly changing water levels – it was all new to me, and I needed to learn new ways to fish.”

“I am largely self-taught, learning by trial and error: what works, and what doesn’t. The most important lesson I learned? Reservoir bass love crankbaits.”

Indeed, with reservoir sizes measured in tens of thousands of acres, defined by hundreds of miles of shoreline, the key to many successful fishing trips is to cast cranks. “Cover water, keep moving, keep going: this is what crankbaits allow me to do. But one major limitation with crankbaits,” noted Walker, “is redundancy: so many cranks look and act just like the others. They just don’t stand out, and bass don’t react like you had hoped.”

Enter the LIVETARGET David Walker Signature Series Tennessee Craw, designed by David Walker and available exclusively at Cabela’s and Bass Pro Shops. Created in the heart of reservoir country, the Tennessee Craw was developed to tackle the specific structural elements found in reservoirs: rocks, ledges, bluffs, points, and shallow creek channels.

Remarkably realistic in appearance and action, this premium crankbait will Match-The-Hatch with LIVETARGET precision. With an effective depth range of 4’-8’, this tungsten weighted lure casts with pinpoint accuracy. Premium Japanese Kishida hooks are strategically aligned to generate a tangle-free cast. The Tennessee Craw dives quickly and stays in the strike zone longer, ricocheting off rocks and timber, proving highly effective on reservoir bass.

“The LIVETARGET Tennessee Craw is the most versatile crankbait I throw, and based on the results we





have enjoyed while designing and testing the bait, it has quickly become my total confidence lure,” asserted Walker. Indeed, the Tennessee Craw is an integral component of a total crankbait system that Walker employs on reservoirs to dominate his competition.

“The Tennessee Craw fishes beautifully, darting and digging just like the real thing. I use a steady retrieve with the Tennessee Craw, letting the lure do the work as it grinds along the bottom. Once I make contact, I reel with a regular, consistent speed, and let the lure’s natural escape action elicit strikes from nearby bass.”

“The hardware on the Tennessee Craw is specifically designed to optimize the lure’s performance,” stated Walker. “The hooks are unique – they are super sharp to pin fish at long distances, and have an Aberdeen-style bend which has great holding power. The hooks’ overall size is a great match for the lure: they are big enough to keep fish hooked, but not so large that they affect the lure’s action, or tangle with each other or the line on the cast.”

“When I fish the Tennessee Craw, I spool up with 10 lb fluorocarbon. The thin diameter of fluoro lets me make long, accurate casts. Because the line sinks, it doesn’t pull the lure up off the bottom, allowing it to dive deeper and really dig the bottom. I use a 7-foot graphite-fiberglass composite rod, with a good backbone to set hooks at the end of a long cast, and just soft enough to manage the fish at boatside.”

When describing his preferred presentation, Walker notes that he, “prefers to fish the Tennessee Craw parallel to bluff walls. I make long casts, and the precision weight and balance of the lure means that it lands where I want it to, which is a big factor in helping me outfish the guys around me. If the lure lands too far to the outside, I’m too deep and I never contact the bottom; too far to the inside, and I’m hung up and risk breaking off on the bluff.



ENJOY THE HARVEST





A cozy bowl of gumbo chowder to keep you company and help you enjoy the harvest. Photo by Ken McBroom

Crappie Chowder Gumbo

By Ken McBroom

I remember, as a young boy, watching Julia Child's cooking show. There was one particular show that was responsible for me only eating fried fish. In the show Julia was making Bouillabaisse a la Marseillaise and it incorporated all parts of the fish. As a young boy the scene was too much, but I got over it and love fish many ways now. I was motivated to try a fish chowder after revisiting the show on YouTube so many years later. This recipe has become one of my favorites and was derived from surfing the web for fish chowder recipes and as usual adding a little here and there to fit my taste. I encourage you to do the same. The name suggest gumbo, but I added the word gumbo because of the smoked sausage. It adds that personal flavor to the chowder. You can leave it out for a more traditional chowder if you like.

Ingredients

- *1 lb crappie fillets, or other firm white fish, tilapia works great, cut into 2-inch pieces
- *1 ½ cups heavy cream (warm separate before adding to pot)
- *3 large potatoes, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- *1/2 lb smoked sausage cut ¼ inch thick rounds
- *2 medium yellow onions, chopped
- *2 Tbsp chopped fresh parsley
- *1/2 lb imitation crab meat
- *1 teaspoon dried thyme
- *1/2 cup dry white wine
- *2 cups clam juice
- *Olive oil
- *Salt & pepper to taste
- *Flour

Directions: In a large pot add a little olive oil and white wine and bring up to a boil. Now add the onions and simmer until translucent. Next add potatoes and enough water to cover and bring to a boil then reduce the heat. Allow the potatoes and onions to simmer while you prepare the remaining ingredients. Maintain water level in the pot as the potatoes and onions cook.

Now, in a skillet, sear the smoked sausage and set aside. You can add each ingredient to the pot as you go or set them aside while the potatoes and onions simmer. Searing the sausage, even if it is fully cooked out of the package, does two things. It heats them up before adding to the pot and it leaves behind those flavorful crumbs in the skillet. These crumbs are packed with flavor and are left in the skillet when preparing the roux. The sausage is what made me add gumbo to the name.

THE ROUX

This step is one I added. It is a roux but it isn't a dark roux like you would make for traditional gumbo. This roux is used to help thicken the chowder. It also helps you to just add water to get the proportion right at the end and still maintain a thick chowder that will continue to thicken as it simmers. There are recipes that call for a blonde roux so there is such a thing as a white roux. This is how to make the roux for this Crappie Chowder Gumbo recipe.

In the same skillet you seared the sausage, along with the little bit of fat and crumbs, add about a tablespoon of olive oil and another tablespoon of the white wine. Now pour a little clam juice in for taste. You can use water in place of the wine if you prefer. Bring the liquid to a boil then introduce the flour slowly as you stir. Stir in enough flour to create a thick roux. The proportion being about the size of a golf ball. This roux not only thickens the chowder, but it also grabs all that sausage flavor and adds it to the chowder. Cook the roux only until the flour taste is gone. If you don't want to taste the flour then cook it



until thick. Cook until it takes on a light-yellow color. Add a little olive oil if needed to get the amount you want.

THE CREAM

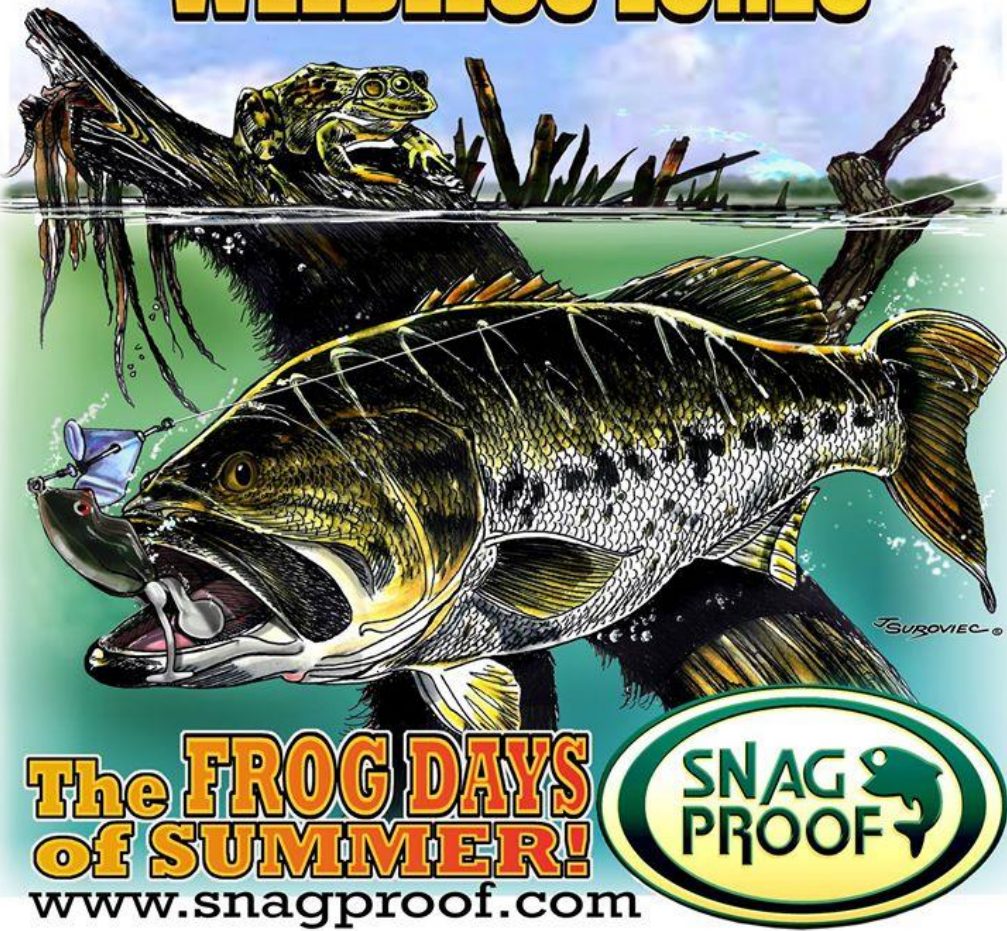
In a sauce pan slowly warm the heavy cream just until hot then turn off the heat. It's important to warm the cream before adding it to the pot. If you add the cream cold it will separate and curdle and you will not have a creamy chowder. This is especially important if you choose to use a light cream or milk for your chowder. Most chowders call for just the cream and clam juice, but since the water is used to cook the potatoes and onions the heavy cream helps to offset it.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

By now the potatoes and onions are tender. Do not strain them. Slowly pour the warm heavy cream into the pot while stirring. Now add the sausage. Allow the heat to come back up to a simmer, then add the rest of the clam juice. Add enough water to cover the ingredients by an inch or so and allow to come back up in temperature. Now is a good time to add the spices. The imitation crab meat is fully cooked and can be added now and stirred into the chowder. Add the crappie chunks and stir. The light meat of the crappie takes the least amount of time to cook. Add it last. The fish will break apart unless you have some really thick chunks, but that's OK. Once the chowder has simmered for a few minutes add the roux in small amounts and stir. Wait a minute or two before adding more because it takes a minute for the thickness to show itself. Add roux until the desired thickness is reached and remember the chowder will thicken more as it cooks.

Crappie Chowder Gumbo is just another excuse to get out there and do a little fishing this spring and another way to extend the outdoor experience into the night. This recipe is great at the campground and since it's simmered to perfection you can just set a pot on the grill and relax as other campers enjoy the aroma. Serve this chowder with your favorite breadsticks or crackers. It will last several days in the fridge. If you can keep from eating it all at once. Enjoy the Harvest

SNAGPROOF WEEDLESS LURES





**ICE
ZONE**



Finding Fish to Drop Your Wheelhouse On

By Joel Nelson



It always amazes me how a sea of anglers can be so willing to sit over a featureless, and often fishless, chunk of underwater real-estate. Such is commonplace among wheelhouse anglers who are as interested in the ice experience as much as they are the actual fishing. Far be it from me to tell them where or how to fish, but with a little bit of preparation and planning, you can have your fish and cook them too. Here's a few ways to maximize your time in the wheelhouse and stay on fish.

Scouthouse

The best scenario involves setting up a basecamp in a likely area, but one you are not married to. That is right, setup with the intention of eventually moving. Especially in the toy-hauler editions, wheelhouses these days go hand-in-hand with portable shelters, ATVs, and snowmobiles. Use these tools to go out and find actively biting fish, with the hopes that you will eventually move basecamp to the active biters. The Scouthouse concept is something I detailed a few issues back, and has been successful in the past for me. It's also something that's fun with a group of like-minded anglers, all willing to search out a great bite such that eventually you can drop the big-house right on top of a good pod of fish.



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Prep and Map-work

Of course, rarely is it as easy as picking a spot on a map, even with some great scouting, where fish are going to be active. That is where some homework comes into play. Navionics has a free, web-based mapping utility, and there are other good paid options out there too. Any good trip planning should focus efforts on identifying likely fish-holding areas, but big wheelhouses often can't just roam the open ice. That is where a discussion with your resort of choice on big lakes or some truck scouting on-lake personally can yield big dividends. At the end of the day, with enough snow, you will need plowed roads to make it to your destination, and the resort may need to plow a spot specifically for your house. Working with them will ensure the best result, and don't be afraid to offer a few extra bucks for a custom plowing job. The best waypoints on the lake will not yield results if you can't get to them, so first identify what's open if at all possible.



For walleyes, so often the deep structure mid-winter (wheelhouse season) has day-long appeal, especially in stained water, whereas classic hard-bottomed structure may be too shallow to attract any fish except early morning or late evening. All of which may be just fine if you're only going to be fishing in the wheelhouse during primetime, but keep that in mind. Deep water structure can mean humps, bars, and gravel, but it can also be mud or small depressions just off of that same structure. These secondary spots are often overlooked by the crowds and can yield great success.

For panfish, you are often looking to basins for open water crappies, and the edges of them for gills in many northern lakes. Do not forget about shallow fish however, and keep in mind that when crowds form in the community holes, there's usually a shallow weed-bite that you can have to yourself. Again, this is something that will take some previous scouting or expertise, as the best cabbage and coontail beds in the lake are not always easily identifiable. These shallow fish can be trip savers when deep snow or large crowds overrun other spots on the lake.

Fish the Crowd, or Stay Away

As winter snow persists, and on-ice travel becomes more challenging, you see on-ice communities get a bit too cozy for my liking. You would probably not be surprised then to learn that I like to avoid the crowds whenever possible. Even in deep water, the crescendo of noise from increasing numbers of generators, augers, and vehicles can turn off fish in general. Crappies suspended over deeper water seem to have some tolerance for it, but my experience is that there is often other areas and better fishing to be had on the same lake.

If I do join the crowd, I try to be strategic in my placement, thinking both above water and below it. From an underwater perspective, basin fish will often hang up on inside turns and use that to funnel from deep to shallow, so consider setting up on the edge of a community hole where such an escape route from the noise exists. If there are some small deep-water irregularities to the contours or bumps off the main structure that most people are on, I will park it to the edge and have those to myself.

Think about where the traffic is coming above ice as well, as I like to setup as far to the edge of the main roads and heavy traffic as possible. Heavy cracking and popping from vehicle noise spooks fish, plain and simple. Simple observation for a few minutes of your ice-fishing brethren will quickly tell you who's going to be noisy and who's there to fish. Do your best to stake out a spot that is kind to others on the ice, but also ensures you won't be crowded later by newcomers to the spot. A strategically placed shovel, bucket, and especially a tip-up will help fellow anglers keep a reasonable distance and prevent close-parkers.

Hopefully snow will subside, and we'll get great ice and easy travel, but even if that's not the case, some preparation and strategic placement can make all the difference for your next outing.



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Make Some Noise

By Tim Moore

As anglers, we spend much of our time on the ice trying to appeal to one or two of a fish's five senses: usually sight and smell. We spent countless dollars trying to "match the hatch" with lures that closely mimic what fish are eating, or we use scents in hopes that it will trigger more bites. While we often get

it right, sight and smell have their limits. When visibility is low and fish can't see very far, and current pulls your lure's scent away from your quarry, tapping into your target species' sense of hearing and touch can pay dividends.

Below the water's surface, sound is transmitted in the form of pressure waves and particle displacement, which fish detect using their auditory and lateral line systems. These systems are often referred to as displacement detectors. Fish tend to use their displacement detectors more in turbid or stained water, when visibility is low. The harder it is for fish to see, the more they will rely on noise and vibration to find food. This is when sound producing lures shine.

While they have no visible ear, fish have an inner ear that consist of small bones called otoliths that they use for balance and to detect sounds in the water. Sound travels 4.3 times faster through water than through air, so fish will often hear prey before they see it, which gives you an advantage when fish are on the move. A noisy lure can stop a school of roaming fish that might otherwise keep on going.

The other, more well-known displacement detector fish use, is their lateral line system. The lateral line system consists of tiny hair-like organs on the skin, or in canals beneath the surface of the skin, called neuromast cells. Neuromast cells are used to detect the tiniest movements in the water. When pressure waves meet the neuromast cells of a fish, the tiny hairs not only detect the vibrations, but also tell the fish which direction the vibrations came from.

There are times when sound is more important than color, size, or profile for bringing fish in from a distance. Wounded or dying bait fish make noises or vibrations that predatory fish key in on, schools of hungry panfish are attracted to the noise created by a school of baitfish, and opportunistic predators, such as lake trout, are often attracted to the sound of a feeding frenzy in hopes

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of scoring an easy meal. There are many situations when an angler can capitalize on the effectiveness of sound and vibration producing lures.

Some of my favorite lures include the Rattlin' Blade Spoon and Leech Flutter Spoon from Clam Pro Tackle. These lures are designed to make noise or create vibration using rattles, or simply by the water they displace when fluttering through the water column. Whether you are appealing to their curiosity or their appetite, these lures will get the job done.

Don't reserve your noisy lures only for stained water though. On one ice fishing trip to northern New Hampshire for lake trout, I was fishing in a lake with crystal clear water. The fish were there, but they were very finicky. I consistently marked fish on my Vexilar, but had a tough time getting them to commit. A fish would appear, rocket off the bottom to meet my lure, then swim back down. I tried every trick I knew, but could only get ¼ of the fish to bite. I decided to try a ¼ ounce white Rattlin' Blade Spoon. The first fish that saw it ate the spoon so deep there was nothing except line sticking out of its mouth. Every fish that saw the Rattlin' Blade Spoon that day bit and a frustrating day turned into a memorable trip.

Which type of lure works best (rattling or fluttering) depends on the species and conditions. There are numerous instances when fish will use noise to find food. Sometimes it's the noise alone that triggers bites, like was the case during my northern New Hampshire trip. While some fish are more skittish than others, most are curious and will investigate subtle noises, especially when they can't see the source. Experiment with different lures at different times to learn which ones work best for your style of fishing. It won't take long to discover when they work and when they don't.

Tim Moore is a full-time professional fishing guide in New Hampshire where he owns and operates Tim Moore Outdoors, LLC and the New England Ice Fishing Academy. Visit www.TimMooreOutdoors.com for more information.





Rattle 'em High, Jig It Low

By Chuck Mason

Walleye fishing through the ice on the Great Lakes is truly an experience of a lifetime. Just in terms of quantity and quality, pick a lake and have at it. Then throw in the chance for that 15-pound-plus fish for the wall from Lake Erie. The fishing on these waters is tough to beat.

It's no wonder that Lake Michigan, Saginaw Bay and Erie all have locations that lay claim to be the walleye capital of world. To be quite biased, it is Lake Erie by several pounds.

One of the presentations that has been working so well over the past few years is to rattle them high, then catch them low. You will catch plenty of fish on the rattle baits, but the combination of baits allows you to fish two different approaches simultaneously. This will let you target two of the three types of feeding patterns walleye typically display.

Normally I will be fishing two holes cut with my 10-inch auger, and then a smaller one in the middle for my Vexilar transducer. This allows for some double-fisted jigging, meaning a rod

combination in each hand without worrying about getting the 'ducker out of the hole. With the handles adjusted to reel with the opposite hand, I can quickly throw one combo to the back of the shack or out-of-the-way in a hub shelter while fighting a fish with the other hand.

I just want to get that presentation clear of any tangles while fighting the fish.

If you are not comfortable jigging with two rods at once, here is a quick tip so you can still take advantage of what noise can do. Rig up a second rod with your rattling lure and give it a good rip or jiggle now and then to make a racket. Then set it down in a holder and go back to fishing the more-subtle rig.

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With the quick substitution of a lure here and there with either a snap or a pre-rigged combination, you can cover all three bases in which these popular fish typically feed. I break them down into the “feeding frenzy,” the “I will eat if you stick it in my face” and the “tight-lipped, tick me off enough and I will eat out of spite” modes.

The feeding frenzy is all about fun fishing, watch the walleye dart in and just hope you don't screw it up. For this approach I like to place a rattling lipless crankbait up high in the water column, and on the big lakes, this would be about 3 to 4 feet off the bottom. Then for the second bait, a foot or 1.5 feet off the bottom, use either a swimming minnow or high-action spoon like Clam's Leech Flutter Spoon. Nothing will slow these fish down and you have to wait to see which bait they will take first.

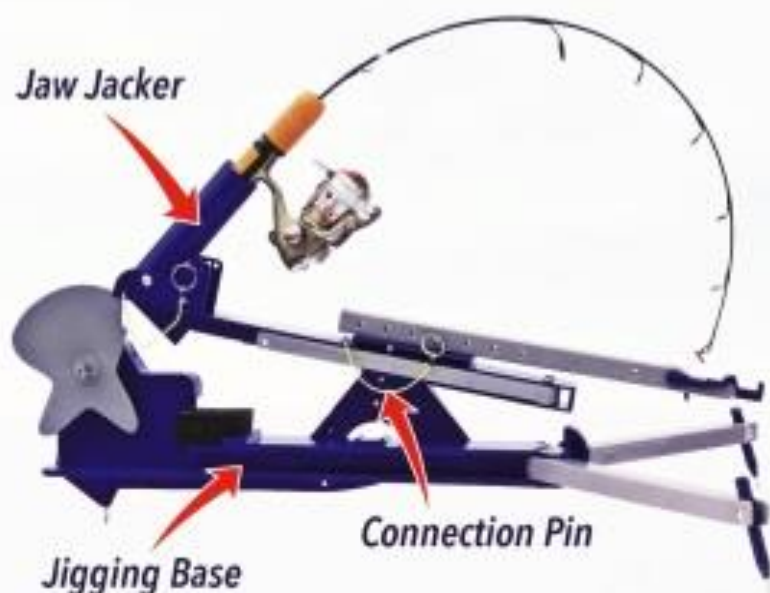
Sticking it in their face will drive the angler a bit crazy with anticipation but, more often than not, it will lead to success. In this scenario a Jason

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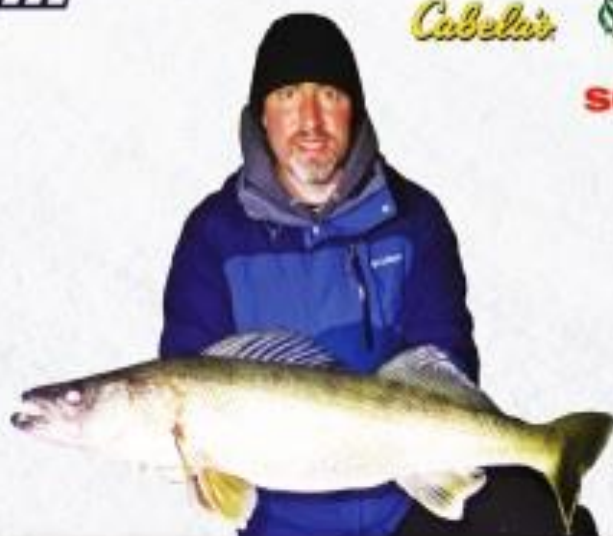
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SCHEELS



Mitchell Rattle Spoon with a mid-sized profile works well up high, with the non-rattling bait below. The second bait could be a smaller swimming minnow or a vertical Blade Jig. The old lift-and-fall method works best when the fish are in this mode of eating. They come up to investigate the noise and hang around for a bit, but are not ready to commit. Keep dropping the bait right in front of their nose on the fall and most of the time they will finally commit and strike.

The reluctant walleye that will eat of spite will make you work for your fish. I don't mean that aggressive snap jigging action; get ready to put some time in to catch these fish. I want a small Rattling Blade Spoon in the top spot to call the fish in. Go as small as your body of water will allow when considering depth and any potential current below.

In the basement spot I want to downsize while thinking about the current below the ice. For this approach I break out the horizontal Drop XXL tungsten jigs from Clam tipped with a mid-sized emerald shiner. I get the hook I want, but with a smaller profile, which won't spook those finicky fish. While you are doing a slight lift and fall with the spoon to call the fish in, either jiggle that tungsten a little while occasionally pounding the bottom to create a "dust cloud" that the fish will see and think there are tasty bugs down here.

Be prepared for some disappointment. These are the kind eaters that will follow your bait up 6 or 8 feet up the water column only to dart away at the last second. Just don't get too upset, you find a lot of fish like this when a front is coming in so keep the size of your presentations in mind when rigging your rods the night before. Chances are in your favor though with this approach.

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Employing noise from various rattle baits has drastically changed my catch rates when it comes to fishing for Michigan's big-water walleye. It's like using a deer call in the woods, but you are calling in walleye with the rattles. Like the calls, they bring fish in to see what you have down there, literally drawing fish away from the holes around you. They will either inhale it or take your more subtle presentation below almost every time.

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Chuck Mason of Ida, Mich., is a professional angler and guide across many large bodies of water. He is a well-known on-ice tournament angler who has many championship appearances.

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Understanding Sonar Specifications

Vexilar Pro-Staff



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

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

Our finders have always been designed with moderate output



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

Sonar resolution, or target separation, is the units ability to separate one target from another. For example, separating a fish from the bottom or one fish from another one close by. This is a function of the transmitters pulse width, or how long the transmit burst lasts. The shorter the burst the closer the sonar can separate two targets. The FL-12 series can separate targets within 3 inches or so on the 20' depth range. The deeper the range the longer the transmit burst, and thus, the separation increases.

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

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



Fish Flashers And Droppers Winter Success

By Chip Leer

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

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

Dropper rigs consisting of a small spoon positioned just above a tiny jig or fly are a common solution. To maximize the attraction, however, I





like to add even more eye-appeal to the mix with a larger spoon like or even a salmon-style flasher.

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

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

Below the flasher, tie on a 12- to 24-inch leader of 3- to 4-pound BIONIC Fluorosilk

(<https://shop.northlandtackle.com/line/bionic-ice-fluorosilk/>). Complete the setup with a Northland's Helium Fly, Larva Fly or Bro Bug tipped with IMPULSE (<https://shop.northlandtackle.com/soft-plastics/>) plastic and/or live bait.

When fishing a flasher rig, avoid the temptation to jig aggressively. You want the flasher to rotate, not flip, flop and flutter. If you're not marking anything on sonar, lift and drop the rig a few times, but otherwise keep jiggging to a minimum.

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

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



AUGER UPKEEP

By Scott Seibert

There are several keys to a good day on the ice, not the least of which is a working auger.

While it can be a solid piece of equipment, things such as ice and moisture could severely shorten your time on the ice — particularly for drill augers. The drill needs protection from these elements, especially when pulling a fish house behind your ATV or snowmobile with the auger strapped to



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the top.

I learned this the hard way with my brand new 9-amp battery. It only lasted three weeks because I did not protect it. Moisture got in between the drill and battery contacts, which turned green and did not recharge. Don't make this \$130 mistake. Instead, a little extra TLC and inexpensive products will protect your investment. For less than \$30 bucks and some time you can protect your drill and batteries.

For maintenance, I now remove my battery after every use to dry both the drill contacts and battery contacts.

I also mounted a set of Kolpin Rhino Grips on my Arctic Cat Bearcat to hold my Clam drill auger conversion kit. The auger drops down inside the Y with ease and stays put while traveling across the lake.

I don't use a power auger much anymore after Clam came out with the drill auger conversion kit. However, I can still use my power auger head cover that Clam sells to protect my drill.

Find these products, and other auger accessories, at www.clamoutdoors.com.

Scott Seibert of Oak Grove, Minn., is an Ice Team Pro, guide and tournament angler. He is especially happy when he can get kids out on the ice. www.sksguides.com.



Late Ice Prime Time for Crappies

By Kyle Lynn

As the ice season draws nearer and nearer to its end we begin to dream about the upcoming open water season with heavy anticipation. Tackle organization, spooling reels with new line, checking rods for fractures from the previous season's use, prepping the boat, and mapping out your first day on the open water. Many tend to jump into these routines the minute permanent ice houses are off the lakes and most overlook some of the best fishing of the year. Ice out is also the pre-game for the spawning season. All fish are beginning their transition from there winter haunts into the shallows to put on a heavy feed bag before the exhausting spawning season.

The majority of the lakes in Minnesota follow state regulations that game fish such as Walleye, Northern Pike, Muskellunge, etc. are no longer in season and cannot be directly targeted but pan fish like Blue Gills and Crappies are

year-round. You can chase them until your heart is content and 9 times out of 10 you run into game fish because they are staged with the pan fish getting ready to spawn. Shallow rock piles, weed lines, river mouths, and cabbage beds are all excellent places to start your search. Some lakes have special regulations that extend some game fish seasons into March. These lakes are a blast to fish once the general population has left with the hard sided shacks.

Now something everyone needs to keep in mind when fishing the late ice/ ice out is that the large swing in warmer temps causes the ice to expand, crack, shift, and break away from the shore line. Also Ice starts to honeycomb and deteriorate. It will start to turn dark colors and become soft and weak. It will sag under the weight of snow and vehicles, forcing water up old ice holes and cracks. This can be some of the most dangerous ice of the season as it melts at different paces in different spots around the lake. You can still have 12" of good ice in one spot and 15' away have a spot with only 4" of ice. Because of these dangers it is always a good idea to talk to your local bait shops and resorts for ice reports. Also float suits, ice pics, safety ropes, a nebulus, life jackets, ice cleats, and bringing a buddy are important safety precautions you should use. The last thing you want is to be dominating some fish and fall though the weak ice with no way to get out or call for help. Remember, no fish is worth your life.

Crappies are my favorite fish to target during late ice but patience is a must because they are slower to make their way to the shallows then Blue Gills. They tend to hang back anywhere from a few days to 2 weeks depending on the lake and water temps. If a lake temp rises it will move them slowly to the shallows but if we get a day or two long cold snap, they will retreat back into deeper water. They will shuffle back and forth until they are satisfied with the shallow water temps. Crappies stage

for spawn anywhere from 6' to 15' of water and typically spawn in 1' to 5' of water but depending on the lake they have been observed spawning in up to 10' of water. Typically an angler can fall back on the cardinal rule of starting your pre-spawn search in 5' of water and slowly working your way deeper until you find them.

Once you find these schools of roaming fish you can start picking away at them, searching for that ideal size for a fish dinner. Cold water Crappies are my personal favorite fish to eat. They have the best taste and are the perfect firmness one would desire in a fillet.

These fish are feeding on everything from bugs to minnows and matching the hatch can be tricky. Once I catch one I will check to see what they have been eating. Sometimes they will burp up a handful of bugs or a minnow clueing you in and allowing you to match the forage to the best of your ability. Once you are able to match the hatch you can proceed to pick apart the schools one by one until you find the larger fish. Don't forget to use that second line for your set line. A set line set up a couple feet away can be your golden ticket some days when the fish are skittish to the jigging that they have been subject to all winter long. Some days your set line may be the only reason you catch fish.

I typically rig my set line with 4lb to 6lb mono, a small tungsten jig or spoon, and a live minnow. The heavier line is a safety net for any larger fish that may bite. As for my jigging rod, finesse is the game. I rig it with 2lb mono line with a 4mm or 5mm tungsten jig and a couple spikes or a plastic tail. This two-punch combo is



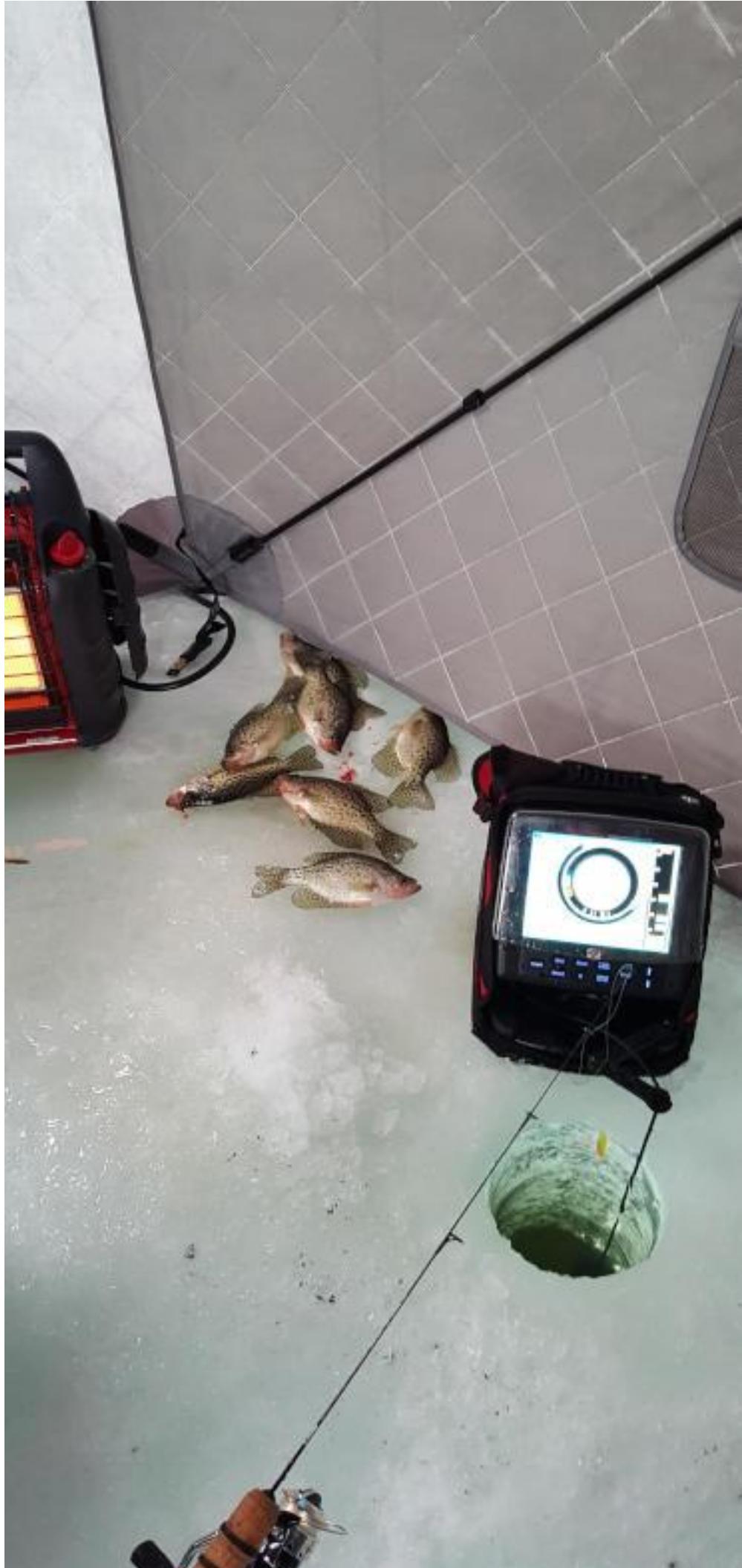
deadly to an active school of Crappies. Using an underwater camera is also a critical technique to locating schools of fish and understanding why they are there along with what they are eating. It allows you to find healthy green weed lines that will more than likely be holding fish and allow you to observe their behaviors to your cadence and bait.

As always remember to be selective of the fish you harvest for dinner. The larger females in the 13" and up range should be released to promote good genes in the upcoming spawn. 10" to 12" Crappies are delicious and in most lakes a dime a dozen. Harvesting the smaller fish will help insure that the larger fish feed and spawn with greater chances of success. We are the stewards of our lakes and need to keep their best interest in mind every time we are out fishing. Only take what you need for a meal and always leave with everything you brought out. Good luck out there and remember, today could be your day!

Kyle Lynn Fishing Minnesota

Come follow along as we chase hot bites and share tips and tricks around Minnesota on Facebook and Instagram.

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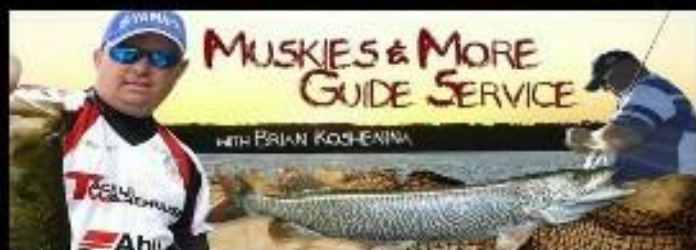
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GETTING READY FOR CCW

By Dan Galusha

A question that has been asked several times is in regard to practicing for CCW shooting qualification. This is required in 24 states and the District of Columbia to test the ability of people to be able to safely and accurately fire their weapon.

The question that I've had the most is in regard to what a person can shoot at to practice. To relate this to my home state of Illinois, you have a very big B27 silhouette target to hit, but must hit the middle (center mass) qualifying area with a minimum of 70% of your rounds for a score of 105. There are 10 rounds fired at 5, 7 and 10 yards.

Practicing isn't all that difficult. Some have said if you can hit a 9-inch paper plate you will qualify. This is true, but I have found another way that will also give a person somewhat the feel of shooting the B27. It is a free miniature B27 that can be downloaded from www.targets4free.com. This prints on a single sheet of regular paper, but to save ink use the draft setting on the printer as there is a lot of black

area. If you can place your shots within the 10"x8" miniature silhouette, it should be easy to qualify when faced with the 45"x20" B27. I suggest trying to hit the center area, up to the 9 ring (approximately 3"x4"), and if this can be done you are going to ace the shooting portion with a perfect 150 score. This is what I did using my Browning 1911.

I know there are questions about the scoring, which is very simple. Four rings, X-center, 10, 9 and 8, score 5 points for every round. The shots fired into the 7-ring count as 4 points each, while everything else within the silhouette counts as 3 points each.

Not only is this a way to practice, but a fun way to get out and shoot targets. Even have a competition with friends, or besting your own score. The more shooting and practice that you get the better you will do.

Don't sweat it. Unless you absolutely have never fired a gun, and couldn't hit the side of a barn, then you should be able to do this at a short range. Just don't get over confident. As with everything – stay serious, focused and safe.

Other questions about the CCW are what the course is like. That can vary from state to state, so again I'll use Illinois as an example, which I'm sure is somewhat similar to others, just a bit longer than some.

With most states' veterans get some sort of a break. In Illinois the full course is 16 hours, but veterans only have to attend the second day of 8 hours where all of





the laws taught and shooting qualification takes place.

In order to get a feel for the entire course, I was permitted to set in for a short time during the first day of the classes conducted by Mark Millichamp in Sherrard, IL, before I had to attend the second day. Mark is a great instructor, in fact one of the best, and I could see right off the bat that he had the control and respect of his students. He is an NRA instructor, as well as a former member of the military police. He and his wife Karen are also Cowboy shooters. So all in all, I got a good one to have for my qualification, as well as getting an idea of the whole course.

During the first day (8 hours) the students learned about the safe handling of their weapons, and how to fire them. Among other things they learned about ammunition, and the correct type to use. This was not just about the semi-automatic pistols that everyone thinks about when considering a “carry gun”, but also revolvers in single and double action/hammer and hammerless. Whatever needs to be taught on a firearm was disseminated in this part of the course. There was also a 50-question exam given at the end.

The following day (second 8 hours) was about state laws. This was the day when some fellow veterans and I took the course and did our shooting qualification. As Mark said it was going to get boring as he had to read the laws as the state has them set. However, it wasn’t as boring as one would think. Mark did an excellent job of explaining what was being read to us and took questions and comments along the way. At the end, by using some members of the class, he did a few re-enactments of situations that could happen. When anyone in the class thought it might be time to use force they would yell, “stop”. At that point Mark would ask why, and what should or shouldn’t be done. That drove home a lot of points.

We had one woman in the class, who attended with her husband. This was great, but a lot of

women feel intimidated by going into a class full of men. For that reason, Mark has set up a few Women Only classes.

At this time, I want to do a little preaching of something that we learned, and something that responsible gun owners should already know. A Concealed Carry Weapon permit is not a permit to use the weapon offensively. It is a permit for responsible, gun carrying citizens who are using it for defense only – again, DEFENSE ONLY. Your weapon is your last line of defense to protect you and others. People shouldn't, nor do they need to know that you are carrying your weapon. In other words, don't be flashing it around. You are not James Bond with a license to kill; you have a license to "chill" – stay cool and responsible.



Another item that you might want to consider is CCW insurance. As with selecting my instructor for the course, I took my time, asked other people who had already made their decision and shopped around. The insurance that I eventually decided upon was USCCA, but perhaps one of the others will better fit your needs. Again, shop around, do complete comparisons, for which there are websites to help, ask others, and take a little time in the decision process.

If you would like to take a course for the Illinois CCW permit (recognized in 26 states), whether open or women only, and are interested in Mark's teachings, or have questions, he can be contacted by phone at 309-235-9619, or by email at uguns65@gmail.com. You can also contact EZ Livin Sports Center in Milan, IL, where Mark now conducts his courses, at (309) 787-2244, or find EZ Livin Inc on Facebook.

No matter which state you are in, I recommend for anyone wanting to take a CCW course to ask around and find a well-qualified person for all aspects of the course; especially the firearms instruction and

shooting qualification portions. Even if you don't want the CCW I still recommend for newcomers to firearms to learn all that you can about guns and shooting and take a good NRA firearms handling course. It not only makes shooting safer for everyone, but also makes target shooting and plinking more fun.

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





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Fueled by RX7-Cams™ and SLING-SHOT™ technology, the reverse-draw bow assembly generates the unprecedented power. The innovative cam system rotates an industry leading 404-degrees which powers the DUAL FLEX™ limbs, while the SLING-SHOT technology provides an extra turbo boost to produce record-breaking speeds up to 470 feet-per-second, leading to devastating impacts. Meanwhile, the assembly’s revolutionary Vector Quad™ cable technology utilizes four cables instead of the traditional two for increased strength and stability. Connecting at the cam, wrapping around the turnbuckle, and terminating on the riser, the cable system creates perfectly level cams, generating straight-nock travel and pin-point down-range accuracy.

At the bow assembly’s foundation is a lightweight CNC machined 7075-T6 aircraft-grade aluminum riser featuring the company’s TRI-LOCK™ pocket system that ensures perfect alignment between the pocket and limbs for increased accuracy.

The bow assembly is mounted to a 20-inch TAC-LITE™ fluted aluminum barrel that reduces the weight and increases the accuracy of the crossbow. Its weaver-style dovetail is fitted with a nylon-filament arrow retention brush that improves arrow grip and alignment to reduce noise and vibration and improve accuracy. In addition, the Nitro XRT is equipped with the new T5 trigger, which features an auto-engaging safety and a DFI™ (Dry-Fire-Inhibitor). The combination of the new trigger and the reverse draw design make the Nitro XRT the smoothest shooting TenPoint crossbow to date.

An integrated string stop system is also included that fits into the end of the barrel to further reduce noise and vibration.

The Nitro XRT features TenPoint's lightweight, three-piece C3™ stock. Designed to reduce weight, noise, and vibration, the high-tech stock is fitted with an adjustable cheek piece and butt plate. The rubber cheek piece adjusts to three separate positions by removing the screws and sliding it to create perfect eye-level alignment. Likewise, the rubber butt plate adjusts to two positions to match the shooter's length-of-pull.

The bow and stock assemblies combine to create a perfectly balanced, sharp-shooting crossbow that weighs 7.4-pounds, measures only 30.7-inches long, and shoots up to a supercharged 470 feet-per-second – making it the fastest and shortest crossbow ever.

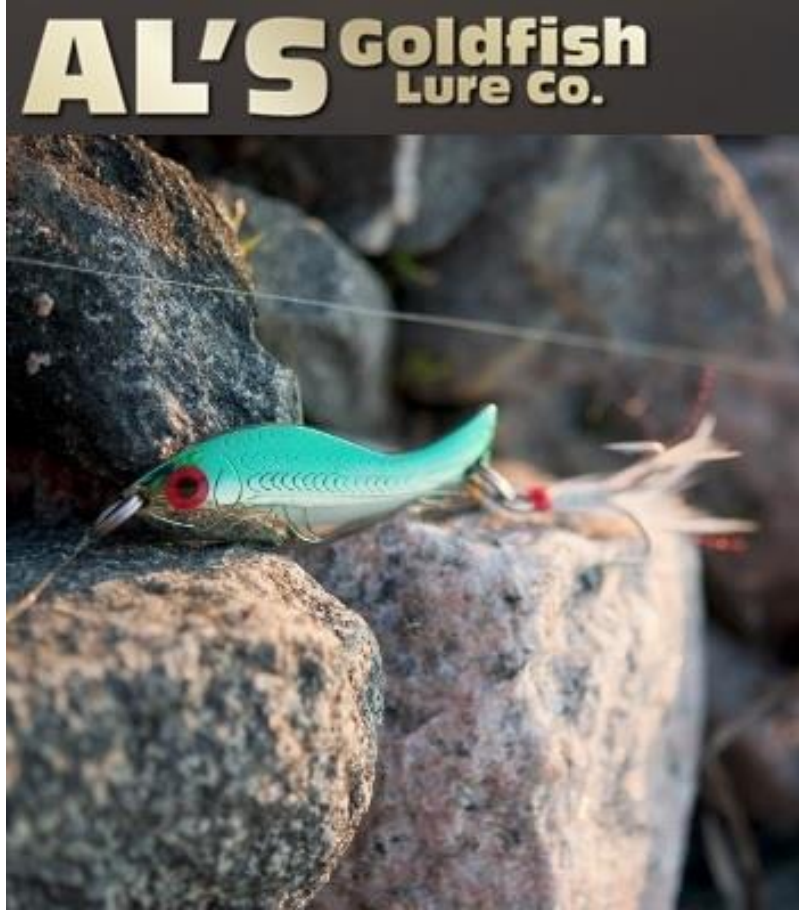
Like all TenPoint models, the XRT is equipped with dual-purpose rubber safety wings to reduce noise and vibration as well as helping to keep the shooter's fore-grip hand safely below the flight deck.

Double-dip fluid imaged in KUIU® Verde 2.0 camo, the Nitro XRT ships completely assembled and is available with an extensive Ready-To-Hunt package.

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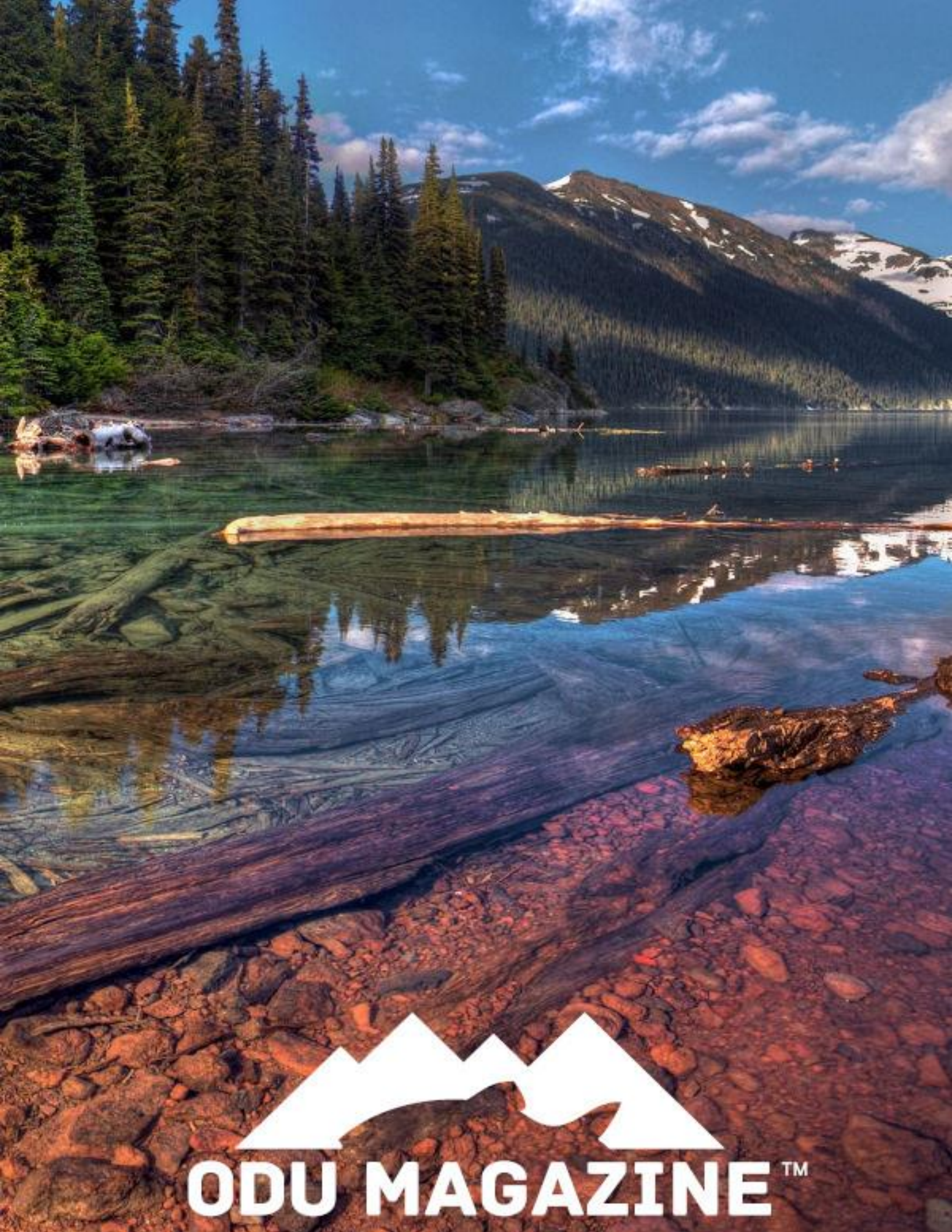
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