



Jan/Feb 2019  
Ice and Open  
Water Fishing  
Edition

# ODU MAGAZINE™

**Winter Frog Time**  
**Buffalo Soldier**  
**Crocodile**

**Spring**  
**Walleye**  
**Tactics**

**The ICE ZONE**

- A Giant Cat
- Mid-Winter Feb Fishing
- Run Down the Fish





## EDITOR'S LETTER

ODU Magazine has a whopper of a magazine to share as we head into the last part of winter. Dare we say the largest. Bass, walleye, flathead cats, trout, sturgeon, crappie and much much more is covered.

The ICE ZONE, OPEN WATER ZONE and HUNTING ZONE are well represented. For 2019 to start, we have added an another new section called ENJOY THE HARVEST. One game meal recipe each month.

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

A shout out to the rear cover winners Ken McBroom and his son Garrett. Nice picture of them with a solid crappie, framing what fishing is and can be.



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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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**Thank You All!**



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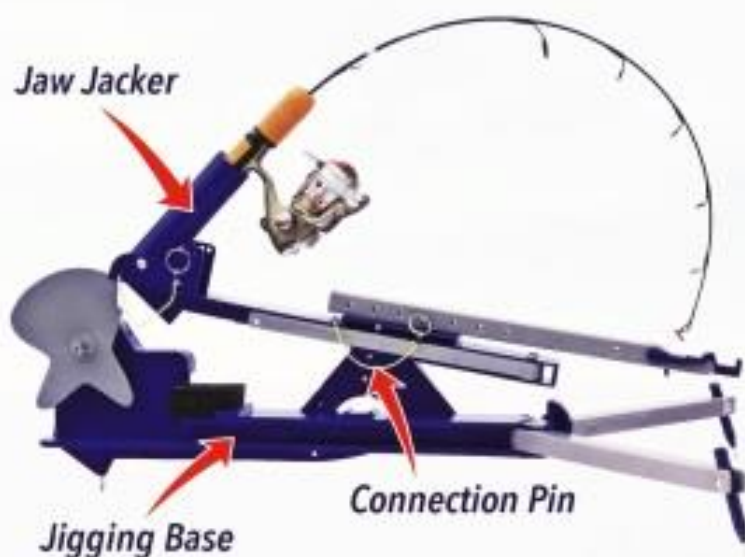
# ICE ZONE





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# Getting Down

*The Fine Art  
Of The Fast Drop*

By Chip Leer



Few feelings in ice fishing are as frustrating as the disappointment of spotting fish on sonar—then watching them swim away before your lure reaches the strike zone.

Thankfully, you can put an end to these missed opportunities. The key is choosing lures that fall straight down—fast.

While there are times for fishing a flutter spoon, swimming jig, gliding spoon, super-sized tube or jig-and-minnow combination, this isn't one of them. All of these presentations tend to fall slightly off to the side on the drop. The greater the depth and horizontal drift, the farther away they land from your target.

In fact, a bent-bodied spoon that strays just six inches sideways for every five feet of descent will land three feet from the fish in 30 feet of water. In low-vis conditions or when inactive fish won't swim that far to eat, even a near miss is as good as a mile.

My favorite fast droppers for walleyes include the Northland Fishing Tackle Buck-Shot Rattle Spoon, Macho Minnow, Sliver Spoon and Glo-Shot Jig.

While it's tempting to fish heavier lures to reach deep fish fast, be careful not to turn fish off by over-sizing your presentation. In typical walleye depths, 1/8-ounce spoons are my first choice,





though I do beef up to ¼-ounce options if necessary. When fishing a relatively small spoon in deep water, upgrading the treble for a larger, stouter option can boost your hookups.

Also keep in mind heavy, kinky lines are like underwater brakes that slow your lure's fall. I favor a smooth operator like Northland's Bionic Ice Fluorosilk. Its nylon copolymer core and slick fluorocarbon coating combine to help spoons

and other lures fall faster and straighter, yet still provides the muscle for solid hooksets.

On the tipping front, I like plastic trailers because they hang on for the ride better than natural baits, and are perfect for triggering reaction strikes at the end of a fast drop. Naturally, smaller tippings produce less water resistance and thus fall faster than larger plastics.

Collectively, these tips can help you fine-tune your game to put fast-dropping lures in front of your quarry's face before the fish swims off into oblivion. Use them anytime a slow fall prevents you from getting to the strike zone on time.

***Based in Walker, Minnesota, noted fishing authority and outdoor communicator Chip Leer operates Fishing the WildSide, an outdoor sports marketing and communications company. For more information look to [www.fishingthewildside.net](http://www.fishingthewildside.net)***





# RUN DOWN THE FISH

By Steve Weisman

As a guide, Kirk Moe knows the importance of doing his homework. It's no different than what the everyday angler should do to learn the water to be fished. Moe, an Algona, Iowa, native, Clam Outdoor and ice fishing guide for the past few years in northeast South Dakota, talked about this at the Clear Lake Bait and Tackle Ice Season Kickoff on Saturday, November 3.

Let's say Moe is fishing perch in northeast South Dakota. "Check the DNR data and information about the lake," he said. "What are

the top species in the lake? If there are not a lot of walleyes, then that's probably not a fish you will target. Use your Navionics and get to know the lake, the contours, the rocks, the transitions." Of course, checking out the area bait shops and if you know other local anglers having success.

Once on the water, Moe is constantly on the move. He will get his clients set up, spread out and started and then continue drilling holes, searching for fish in case the fishing slows. Often, if he has a school of, say, perch under his clients, sooner or later the school will move. By watching his clients and if the fish are cooperating, he can determine the direction that the school is moving. That then becomes the direction he drills more holes.

Electronics are a must. "I am constantly on the move. I move move move until I find fish," he said. "I won't drop a line in the water until I find fish." Once he finds the fish, he will work his lure above the fish. "I will fish aggressively with maybe a Clam Rattlin Spoon tipped with a minnow head or a Rippin Rap trying to bring up the aggressive fish," Moe said. When that slows down or the fish react negatively to the aggressive presentation, he will then turn to his finesse presentation going smaller and maybe putting on a Maki plastic.

"You have to allow the fish to tell you what they want, paying close attention to how the fish react to the lure and the cadence in which you jig," Moe said. When this fishing dies, it's time to move on. The key is not to sit on a hole and wait and wait and wait...the fish might have only moved a short distance away, so get on the move, drill some more holes or, as Moe likes to call it, "shed some light."

As anglers, we need to be aggressive ourselves and be on the move. I know it is hard for me to be constantly on the move. Maybe it's age, but after a while, it's easier for me to just sit. However, these are just a few examples why we need to run down the fish.

**Steve Weisman is a Clam contributor.**



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# A Giant Cat For The Bucket List

By William Schwarz

Late last week there was a rumor going around the internet of a giant flathead coming through the ice on the Saginaw River (Saginaw, Michigan). Well it is true, and it was clearly an Ice Belt Giant Flathead. Just over 55 pounds! And through the ice, if reeling in such a trophy is not hard enough.

[Christopher Bauman](#), an angler who targets catfish year-round landed the 49-inch giant. Saginaw River to many in the region is known for its great population of trophy catfish. And you will find more than just flatheads in the area.



On the same day Chris brought his trophy through the ice, many anglers were in the area catching cats, and the bite was on. Chris said a young angler had caught a 41-pound flathead earlier than him and Chris caught a sizable channel cat hour's before.

After speaking to Chris for a while last week, it was quite clear that without a little help from fellow anglers, this trophy flathead may not have made onto the ice. After hooking the cat, Chris received help from several anglers who widened the ice hole to allow him to fight the fish more effectively and to land the trophy. Chris's fishing partner Kevin Cox was a huge help during the approximate 18-minute battle.

Is it a record? According to [www.southeasternoutdoors.com](http://www.southeasternoutdoors.com) the state record is 47.50 pounds and Land Of Big Fish has the record at 49 lbs 12.96 oz. Sounds like he could have had the record books all to himself. Chris told me he is not into the records and has caught many other trophy's over the nearly 20 years he has been fishing the Saginaw. As we all know, it is hard to bring a live record to a certified scale and Chris let it swim free.

When I first heard of the catch, I figured the equipment might have been a bit specialized and I was quite wrong. Chris landed the fishing on a 36-inch Shakespeare medium





action ice rod and a Shakespeare reel. The reel was lined with 20-pound Power Pro – Yellow, which is a great choice.

The rule that big baits catch big fish, did not hold true in this catches case. Chris was using a 5/8 ball-head jig with a 4/0 hook, minnow tipped in a way that makes it hard to snag a catfish and improves the action of the offering. Here might be the reason Chris was having such success. Bradley's Catfish Bubblegum company provided Chris with an unreleased scent/attractor that really sticks to his style rig. It's waxy! Bradley's has a saying "ALL PINK. NO STINK". Visit them at this website and ask for the new catfish bait that landed the giant on the Saginaw - <https://catfishbubblegum.com>.



Chris works with other companies and groups as well: HTT Lures, [Murray's Lead Works](#), [MonstaFishin Apparel](#), [Hunters For Life](#), [Adventures of Backwoods Brock](#), his bait shop [Total-Firearms Gunshop](#), and [River Rodder Rod Holders](#). Thanks Chris, for the story!

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# Evolution of the Straight-Line Reel: From Beginning to Better

By Brian “Bro” Brosdahl

I’ve always found it interesting to watch how fish react to my bait when I’m ice fishing. I began noticing a trend – my lure was spinning when I fished with regular spinning reels and as big bluegills approached, they were getting spooked away. This was true for other fish, too.

Line Twist and Spinning Lures

So, what was the problem? My spinning lure was caused by line twist. Spinning reels retrieve line by spinning it onto an arbor. After several drops and retrieves, the line starts to get twisted on the reel. It’s only natural for this line twist build-up to unravel at the lure. Not good! When you pause your lure for the fish to strike, it spins. This spin is unnatural and scares the fish away.

It became obvious that the ice fishing world needed a solution. When a fly-style inline reel was incorporated into ice fishing, the Straight Line was born. With Straight Line reels, line feeds straight off the spool, eliminating line coiling and spinning tackle.

Frabill engineers continued to make improvements to this concept. The Frabill Straight Line 371 is the result of several generations of Straight-Line reels and is one of the most technologically advanced reels of its kind on the market today.





# 3 reasons why the Straight Line 371 is a must-have in my ice fishing arsenal:

## Speed

Fish any water depth with speed. The 371 picks up an amazing 22 inches of line for every turn of the reel which is faster than most reels on the market.

## Size

Size matters with Straight Line reels and the spool on the 371 is huge. I use heavier backing on the inside of the reel with a fluorocarbon leader on the outside of the spool to keep the business end of the line fresh without changing the whole spool of line.

## Versatility

Avoiding lure spin is good for any type of ice fishing. While Straight Line reels were originally developed for small lures and light line, the 371 can be used with heavier line for jigging spoons and jigging lures for walleyes with the same positive results. [Click here for more rod and reel ice fishing tips from Bro.](#)



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# Jig Them Up!

By Mike Frisch

My favorite part of ice fishing is sitting on top of fish (albeit when some are present) and trying to trick them into biting! Here are some things I have learned from many winter days spent trying to trick fish.

First things first. Winter anglers use baits, regardless the fish species sought, that they lift, drop, quiver, etc. in an effort to attract fish and get them to bite. The process of moving the jig to attract fish and entice them to bite is referred to as jigging.

So, this article revolves around keys, as I see them, for jigging up winter fish!

## Sonar rules

Ice anglers usually use a sonar unit or “flasher” allowing them to “see” bottom, their bait (jig), and any fish nearby.

Simply put, If we can’t see the fish and the jig we don’t know where the bait is in relationship to the fish. We also don’t know how they react to the jigging motions. Sonar provides the eyes beneath the ice we need to be more successful.

The original Vexilar FL-8 sonar revolutionized the ice fishing world years ago, with anglers using it to see fish and manipulate, at least some, into biting! Today it’s called the FL-8SE and, though it now has several “big brothers,” it’s still one of the best flashers around.

## Attract ‘em

With sonar showing lake bottom and the bait, the next step is getting nearby fish interested. I start with aggressive motions, quickly “ripping” the bait up and allowing it to crash down. I call this the “hey fish, here I am” phase!

Big Stone Lake (MN) ice guide, Tanner Arndt, accentuates and shows the importance of this attraction phase by using a “call in” bait on Big Stone’s roaming perch. Tanner rips a bright





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colored Rippin' Shad featuring a tight wiggle and rattle chamber. He rips aggressively to attract fish and aggressive perch may hit.

More often, however, Tanner quickly reels up and drops a tungsten jig to less aggressive perch that appear on sonar.

Not every angler goes to the extreme of switching baits, but it is important to create commotion by aggressively lifting/dropping to alert nearby fish to the bait's presence.

### **Trigger 'em**

Aggressive fish may come in and eat the bait, usually on the fall. Most days, however, attracted fish come and "stare" at the bait. Again, seeing fish on sonar tells us this is happening.

Now the cat-and-mouse game begins – the trigger phase. I often start by shaking my wrist, in an effort to



“quiver” the bait, often leading to a bite.

Some days, however, the game continues without a bite. My next action is steadily lifting the bait, “fleeing the scene” trying to tempt the bite.

If that doesn’t work, well, then all bets are off!

Sometimes I’ll quiver again or, if the fish starts to leave, I might crash the bait to bottom. Now may be the time to also consider a bait change. Or, maybe try something else or, some days, maybe the fish win.

### Land ‘em!

Experimenting to find what trips their triggers is part of the fun. And, at least a few fish can usually be tempted. Now, however, another challenge presents itself, fighting and landing that fish. One mistake winter anglers make is pulling too hard in an excited attempt to get that fish topside!

The short rod and short amount of line to a hooked winter fish supply less shock absorption than a longer summer rod and line give. For that reason, being patient and allowing a hooked fish to wear itself out before attempting to get it headed up the hole is wise.

Also, investing in a small, but quality spinning reel for your ice jigging rod is important in protecting light line and maximizing your chances for fish landing success. The Lew’s Lazer Lite LLS75 reels I use have smooth, reliable drags, handle the rigors of cold weather, and are affordable too.

Armed with a good reel and a good bit of patience, even big predators can be landed through an ice hole. If that’s your goal, give some of the tips provided a try this winter and you just might jig up a good catch!

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

**Mike Frisch is the host of Fishing the Midwest TV. Visit [www.fishingthemidwest.com](http://www.fishingthemidwest.com) or follow Fishing the Midwest on FACEBOOK for more “fishy” information!**

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# SOLVING SONAR INTERFERENCE

**By Vexilar Staff**

In the world of marine sonar and the modern-day angler, there is no doubt that as the electrical systems in today's boats get more complicated, the chance that your electronics will experience interference problems increases. Interference shows itself on the display of your depth finder with varying degrees. Minor interference, or noise, can be stray signals that can look like actual targets. Severe noise can completely fill the screen, making simple depth readings impossible. To combat interference, you must first identify which type of noise is giving you trouble. Also, understand that although most noise can be eliminated with fairly simple techniques, some can only be reduced to a more acceptable level.

First off, understand there are five different types of interference problems you may face. They will all look similar on your screen and distract from your ability to get a clear picture of the bottom below, but the remedy for each is quite different.



1. Acoustical Interference is caused by faulty transducer installation. You will see this noise on the screen only when the boat is traveling across the water, at or beyond the plane speed of the boat. It's caused by an uneven, or turbulent, water flow across the face of the transducer. This applies to transom and in-hull mounted transducer applications.
2. Sonar Cross-Talk Interference is created by another sonar of similar transmit frequency nearby. It will show itself as lines rotating around the dial of a flasher or diagonal lines across the screen of a graph. When two depth finder's transducer cones intersect, each unit will get confused as to which signals are which.
3. Ignition Interference comes from engines that introduce ignition noise into the power circuitry. These are power spikes that travel through the power wiring and into your sonar, causing noise to be displayed on the screen or heard in your radio.
4. Conducted Interference is usually caused by electric trolling motors that incorporate Pulse Width Modulation (PWM) in their speed control. This noise will be evident only when the trolling motor is activated and can vary in intensity through the range of motor speeds. The noise is conducted through the power line and enters your depth finder through the power connection.
5. Electromagnetic Interference (EMI) is created by the powerful electric trolling motors on the market today. EMI is radiated from the trolling motor's lower unit and power wiring into the air. It is then absorbed into the transducer cable that's attached to the trolling motor. This is a relatively new problem. As trolling motors get more and more powerful, the noise gets worse and worse, overwhelming the cable shielding and noise reduction circuitry that used to protect sonar from this type of interference.

\*Being able to pinpoint the type of interference you have will be the first step in getting a clearer sonar signal in all waters and conditions. Here are some simple and easy to follow steps to target and then address the problems you may be having.

### Acoustical Interference

If your transducer is mounted on the transom or glued in-hull for the purpose of reading depth while the boat is traveling across the water, you may be subject to acoustical interference being displayed on your depth finder. This type of interference makes reading the bottom almost impossible, once you reach a certain boat speed. The screen often is a total clutter of bad signals with a total loss of bottom signal. This noise can be reduced a great deal by adjusting the water flow rate over the transducer surface. This can be done by re-positioning the transducer.



### Transom Mounted Transducers

If you do not have enough of downward slop to your transducer, turbulent water will develop under the face of it. Increasing this angle by lowering the back of the transducer will help. Additionally, lowering the whole transducer can help you get down into a more smooth water flow area.

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However, going down too low can cause the transducer to shoot up water in a “rooster tail”. If you have adjusted the angle and not gotten much improvement, then the transducer has been set in a position of what we call dirty water, where bubbles are coming off the hull due to a rivet, bad weld or bend in the hull. You’ll need to remove the transducer and reposition it in another location on the transom where the water flows more smoothly. Many newer hulls have very steep keel angles, so mounting a transom style transducer so you’re shooting at a downward angle can be a challenge. Generally, you want to mount as close to the keel line as possible, but you’ll have to balance performance and location.

### **In-Hull Mounted Transducer**

With this mounting application you have limited adjustment options. The key is to make sure you choose a good location and get a good installation in the first place. However, if your puck is already stuck to your hull, then it’s time for some rework to get things right again. Before you get out the hammer and chisel, see if you can improve the reading by changing the weigh distribution or modifying the trim setting of your boat. Getting the bow to run a little lower may help things considerably. If not, then you’ll need to remove the transducer and reattach it in a better location. Usually, dead center, about a foot from the transom, is best. But if there’s a strake or a bad spot in the fiberglass there, you’ll need to work around that. Testing the location, by setting the transducer in about a half inch of water while you run across the lake, is good way to find the best spot. Doing this is easier said than done and may require ingenuity or a willing helper in some cases.



## Sonar Cross-Talk

If your unit has interference with nothing other than another sonar running in your boat, then you have sonar cross-talk interference. For most depth finders, the only real solution is to move the transducers further away from each other. This can help keep the transducer cones from intersecting, but because cones get wider as the depth increases, the problem cannot usually be totally solved by position only. Changing one of the sounders to another model that runs on a different frequency than the first will solve the problem. Some modern depth finders, like the Vexilar FL-12 and FL-20, have interference rejection technology that will permit you to simply knockout the interference by pressing a button repeatedly until you see the cross-talk signal disappear on both units. These depth finders can have transducers mounted right next to another unit that runs at the same frequency.

## Ignition Interference

Ignition noise can be a sign of problems with your engine. However, if it seems to be performing well, or you would just rather run her 'til she blows, a Ferrite Core can stop the noise from getting into your depth finder. These are small parts that you pass the depth finder's power wire through, often wrapping it through several times. Contact us here at Vexilar to get one: [www.vexilar.com](http://www.vexilar.com)



## Interference from Electric Trolling Motors

Whenever you use an electric trolling motor on the same boat as a depth finder, you are likely to see noise from the motor on the display of your sonar. Today's high-tech motors perform better than ever, but can be very unforgiving to other electronic devices in the area.

## Conducted Interference

If you disconnect your transducer from your depth finder and you continue to see noise when the trolling motor is running, then you are dealing with conducted interference coming in through the power connection. This can happen when the boat's electrical system does not have one common ground that connects to the water. Using a multi-meter, available at places like Radio Shack, check for proper grounding in your boat's electrical system. Set the meter to measure resistance or continuity. Then connect one lead to the negative battery post that connects to the trolling motor and the other lead to the negative post on your starting battery. The reading should show zero and the meter may beep. Also, check between the negative starting battery post and an unpainted portion of the outboard motor, like the prop shaft or trim tab. You should also measure a complete circuit here as well. If the ground connection is missing between the trolling motor battery and the starting battery, add a small gauge wire, about 18 AWG, with a 1 amp fuse. This will complete the ground connection here. If the ground to the outboard motor is missing you should take your boat into a service shop to see why the ground is missing. All outboards should have this ground. If yours is missing something is wrong. If all grounds are in place, but noise is still a problem, a Ferrite Core can solve the problem.



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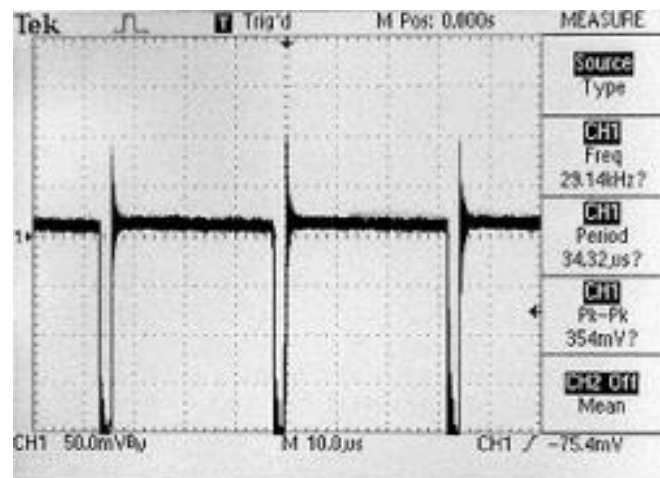
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## Electromagnetic Interference

While your electric trolling motor is running, disconnect your transducer from the back of your unit. If the interference goes away, then you have EMI created by the rapidly switching voltage and powerful DC motor in the trolling motor's lower unit. Proper grounding and Ferrite Cores can be a good remedy for this type of interference. First, be sure your system is grounded properly as described above. Incorrect grounds are a common source of problems. Vexilar has even incorporated a very unique grounded puck transducer in our sonar systems that will insure the electrical system is grounded to the water at the point of the interference. This helps keep EMI under control, but may not eliminate it completely.



Actual view of EMI signal as measured in air near the trolling motor.

\*By knowing how to identify interference sources, you will be able to eliminate or greatly reduce the troublesome noise that can render your electronics worthless. It may take a little time and effort in some cases, but it will let you get the most out of your sonar in all conditions.



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# MID-WINTER FEB FISHING

By Brian "Bro" Brosdahl

The days are getting longer and the coldest part of the winter will hopefully pass soon. The death grip winter has had on the lakes during January will begin to loosen as February progresses and by the time February is over, anglers should start seeing some signs of spring.

The lakes slowly begin to come alive again as the days grow longer and temperatures begin to moderate. The fish will get more active as temperatures warm and start to move closer to their spawning sites as spring approaches.

Long stretches of cold weather and lots of snow are two things that slow down the progress in



the lakes during February. The cold keeps the lakes in suspended animation and deep snow cover blocks out some of the sunlight, which slowly lowers oxygen levels in the lakes, both in shallow water and in the deepest parts of the lakes.

Things that speed up the progress towards spring include warmer temperatures that cause some of the snow to melt and allows fresh water to begin flowing into the lakes. The melting snow allows more sunlight through the ice, which eventually starts to reawaken the shallows.

Melting snow flows back into the lakes along the shoreline, through cracks in the ice and also down old ice fishing holes. The flowing water raises oxygen levels in the shallows and fish located in deep water may begin to suspend further from bottom, to stay along the edge between light and dark in the water column.



Many fish have been located in deep water during the coldest part of the winter, feeding on insect larvae in the mud basin of the lakes. The shallows are largely abandoned in many lakes as decomposing weeds rob the shallows of oxygen.

The massive amount of insects in the mud basin gives fish of all sizes a dependable food source during the leanest part of the winter and supports the bulk of the food chain when the lakes are frozen solid during the coldest part of the winter.

The situation for the fish begins to change as the weather improves during February, which triggers most fish to get more active. The fish will slowly start to increase their activity levels as they begin to get into position to begin their spawning migrations sometime in March or early April.

Anglers often need to follow the fish as they move out of the basin and begin to relate closer to structure. Walleyes get more active and will make longer feeding movements in the mornings and evenings and the day bite will slowly begin to improve on lakes with stained water.

Many times several different species will share the same areas during the winter, with walleyes, northern pike, tullibees, eelpout, perch, rock bass and minnows often occupying some of the same







structures.

I like to use my Micro Revolution Pro 5.0 AquaVu to see what is going on under my hole, especially when I am fishing out of a fish house. The small but powerful camera clamps easily to one of the poles in the fish house, so I can have the camera at eye level and see my lure and the fish in real time.

That way I know what kind of fish is looking at my lure and can adjust my presentation accordingly. The quick retrieve spool on the camera winds up fast when I change locations and keeps the cord from getting tangled in the fish house.

Sometimes the fish short hit baits or become shy of anglers more aggressive presentations later in the winter and would rather have a plain hook and a lively minnow on a dead stick, rattle reel or bobber rig.

Another presentation that works well when the fish get finicky is a dropper-rig or what I like to call a "Bro-dropper". Anglers can put a small jig a couple of inches below a jigging spoon and tip it with wax worms, eurolarvae or a minnow head for perch and other panfish. This presentation also works well for whitefish and tulibeets.

The dropper-rig concept can also work well for walleyes. Anglers can modify their jigging spoons

by adding several split rings hooked together to distance the hook from the spoon.

Northland makes Super-Glo Dropper Hooks that can be hooked on the end of a jigging spoon or anglers can suspend a Super Glo Treble Hooks as a dropper, either with fluorocarbon line or with several split rings hooked together.

Anglers should consider switching out the small hooks on some jigging spoons, so the hook is large enough to hook a minnow head properly or to hold larger fish better than the smaller hooks from the factory.

Anglers using minnow heads for bait can actually turn the minnow head upside down and hook the minnow through the top of the head instead of through the bottom of the minnow. That way the hook can be centered perfectly in the minnow head, which helps hold the minnow head on the hook longer.

Location is another key factor for catching fish. If you can't find the fish, you can't catch the fish. Isolated humps and structures further from shore will become depleted later in the winter, after receiving fishing pressure from anglers. Many of the remote locations don't replenish with new fish very quickly once the resident fish are caught.

Anglers are usually better off focusing on larger structures or groups of structures that are close enough to other productive areas or to shoreline structures, so the spots have a better chance of replenishing with new fish.

Proximity to spawning areas is also an important locational factor as the winter progresses. One of the best real life examples of this is the Pine Island Area on Lake of the Woods, which blocks the entrance to the Rainy River, which is a major spawning river for walleyes.

Walleyes from all over Lake of the Woods will stage up around Pine Island late in the winter, where they will feed until they are ready to head up the Rainy River to spawn.

The walleye season runs through February 24, 2019 for inland waters of Minnesota, but there are extended seasons on many Border Lakes and places like Devils Lake North Dakota are open year round.







# Just What the Angler Ordered

By Jim Edlund

**Building on the success of the Golden Shiner Rattlebait, LIVETARGET introduces the Yellow Perch Rattlebait**

From bass anglers looking for a better ‘trap’ to fish on world-renowned waters El Salto and Lake Fork, to walleye anglers jigging trophies through the ice on Lake Winnipeg and Erie—and for just about every species on every water in between—the LIVETARGET Golden Shiner Rattlebait quickly became a classic.

Well, Golden Shiner Rattlebait fans take heed! LIVETARGET is back with another rattlebait design sure to quickly climb the ranks. Welcome the Yellow Perch Rattlebait, soon available in three sizes and four predator mashing colors.

The LIVETARGET Yellow Perch Rattlebait combines a biologically precise profile and color patterns with many of the same design characteristics that made the Golden Shiner Rattlebait an MVP the world over. On waters where Yellow Perch or European Perch are a forage base, the new LIVETARGET Yellow Perch Rattlebait is sure to shine.

Accommodating differences in forage and quarry size, the LIVETARGET Yellow Perch Rattlebait is offered in three sizes: the 2” and 1/4 oz. YPR50; 2 3/8” and 3/8 oz. YPR60; and 2 7/8” and 5/8 oz. YPR70. Each features a perfectly-balanced internal composition for laser-precise fan casts, Hail Mary distance casts, or vertical yo-yo style retrieves. With regards to vertical “video game” style fishing, expect the LIVETARGET Yellow Perch Rattlebait to earn its place in your tackle box, whether presented directly over the side of the boat or through an eight-inch hole in the ice.





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In addition to the lure's tight, electrifying action on the retrieve, you'll appreciate its castability. The Yellow Perch Rattlebait sails with superb aerodynamics, travelling farther than competing baits of the same weight. Moreover, its streamlined flight path keeps the hooks from tangling in the air, minimizing wasted casts.



All three sizes of the LIVETARGET Yellow Perch Rattlebait are available in four ultra-realistic color schemes to replicate the common varieties of perch encountered in European and American waters: Natural/Matte pattern (100); Metallic/Gloss pattern (102); Fluorescent/UV pattern (221); as well as a vibrant, long-lasting Glow/UV pattern (222). In addition, each bait features a loud harmonic rattle that can be heard chiming from well below the water's surface.



# Hole Hoppers

By Dan Johnson

Since the dawn of the Ice Fishing Revolution some three decades ago, hardwater luminaries have preached the gospel of mobility. Even the very evolution of our gear, from Clam Fish Traps and Edge augers to cutting-edge electronics, engenders ambulant approaches on ice.

While this has made us far more efficient than during the sport's Dark Ages, it begs the question — how long should we give a particular hole before pulling the plug and moving on? To help make sense of it all, we polled a trio of Ice Team Pros on the subject. As expected, whenever you tap the largest, deepest talent pool on ice, their thoughts provided a wealth of pertinent insight.

"Everyone wants to hear an absolute time limit," grins Great Lakes guru Ross Robertson, whose winter fishing grounds include mighty Lake Erie's Western Basin and Lake Huron's legendary Saginaw Bay. "But there are so many variables, there's no one-time-fits-all answer."

Chasing giant, wandering walleyes across Erie's deep, sprawling flats, for example, dictates different timing than when targeting fish schooled on shallow structure, as can be the case on Saginaw Bay. "Shallow structure fish are either there or they're not, and typically whack it if



***Ice Team  
Pros share  
thoughts on  
how long to  
fish a hole***



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they're going to bite at all — especially at peak feeding times — so they get less time per hole than walleyes roaming deeper flats,” he says.

On Erie's 25- to 35-foot flats, for example, Robertson isn't concerned if he drops his transducer into a hole and doesn't immediately spot a fish. “On big water like this, you can't drill enough holes to expect to hop around and mark them,” he explains. “Rather than jumping from hole to hole, I spend time calling the fish to one location.”

To do so, he recommends aggressively jigging a blade bait or lipless rattlebait like the Clam Psycho Shad for up to 20 minutes per hole. When a fish comes in but doesn't strike the attractor, he quickly throws down a subtler presentation, such as a Clam Blade Spoon, to seal the deal.

### **Due Diligence**

Fellow Ice Team Pro Terry Tuma likewise fields countless queries on the topic. “I hear it all the time at seminars,” he says. “Everybody wants an iron-clad rule on when to move — whether it's 30 seconds or half an hour — but variables including weather patterns, forage and fishing pressure dictate different time frames.”

Rather than handing down a rigid schedule, Tuma advises ice fans to assess each situation and reposition accordingly. “Above all, I caution them not to move too soon,” he says, admitting that a lifetime of icing fish of all stripes has left him skeptical on the practice of perpetual motion.

"If you become obsessed with hole-hopping, pretty soon you start fishing holes and not fish," he warns. "It's more important to pick a good spot to begin with, then have a variety of presentations pre-rigged on different rods, so you can give the location the attention it deserves. If you're only going to fish a hole 30 seconds with one presentation, why did you drill it in the first place?"



Taking time to experiment with different lures, tipplings and cadences also allows an area to settle down after the initial commotion associated with setting up shop. "You can't expect fish — pressured ones in particular — to bite a minute or two after you drill a hole, especially in shallow water," he notes.

Discussions on timing also raise the issue of what to do when the action slows. "People get antsy and want to move the second the fish quit biting," Tuma laments. "But the best thing to do is try other presentations, especially if you're still marking fish on sonar."

Case in point: When active, suspended crappies suddenly disappeared from his Vexilar screen during a recent trip, Tuma resisted the urge to pull up stakes. Instead, he switched from a high-riding bobber-and-minnow rig to a waxie and teardrop dangled low in the water column. In short order, fish began lifting off the bottom to inhale the fresh presentation.

In the end, Tuma believes that when you're set up in a solid location, having patience, keeping a positive attitude, and being versatile with your presentations are far more important than being in a hurry to move on.

### Species Specific

Veteran ice guide Kevan Paul applies species-specific guidelines when plying Hawkeye hotspots such as Spirit Lake or West Okoboji. Take yellow bass, for example. "They're aggressive all day long, but the trick is finding them," he begins. "I may drill 30 to 40 holes in a promising area, and move quickly from one to another until I locate the fish." By quickly, he means 30 seconds or less. And when a hole dies, he's just as quick to move on. "By quickly checking holes around me, I can usually determine which way the school went and stay on top of it," he explains.

Conversely, bluegills often demand more patience. "If you're sight-fishing 'gills in clear water and lake-wide the fish aren't active in general, you're better off trying to figure out how to finesse the fish you can see than moving around trying to find an aggressive school," he says. "On the flip side, if you're not seeing any fish, it's time to go."

On low-vis, lightly pressured farm ponds and similar systems where hungry fish roam largely featureless basins, he recommends a more active approach. "In these cases, keep moving until



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you find them," he says.

Whenever he finds a pod of tight-lipped panfish during midday, Paul remembers their location for return trips during prime feeding times. "If you find fish during the day in a particular area but they're not biting, make sure you set up over the spot during key bite windows early and late in the day," he says.

During those magical periods when the food chain fires on all cylinders, it pays to sit tight on hot holes, as waves of hungry pans prowl through the area. Running and gunning now will only cost you precious high-percentage fishing time, and possibly spook fish out of areas where, had you set up early and hunkered for the duration, you could have enjoyed epic success.



Dan Johnson is a  
Clam contributor.



# ENJOY THE HARVEST







# Bacon Wrapped Venison Medallions

By Ken McBroom

The whitetail deer provide us with a delicacy second to none in my opinion. backstrap over an open flame in camp is my favorite way to cook the fresh whitetail backstrap, but this recipe is simple as well and is great on the grill or an open flame. I have enjoyed this recipe for many years and now my family enjoys it with me. When my kids hear I'm making bacon wrapped backstrap they smile and can't wait for dinner.

## Ingredients

Toothpicks to secure the bacon  
1 pound of venison backstrap  
1 bottle of Italian dressing  
1/2 pound of bacon  
Optional shredded cheese and jalapenos

## BACKSTRAP PREPERATION

Backstrap preparation begins in the field. Much has been written about field dressing the deer quickly to get the meat cool as soon as possible. Field dressing obviously aids in the cooling process. Another tip that so many hunters overlook or are just not aware of is the aging of venison. Properly aged venison is much more tender and tastier than venison that is frozen shortly after the kill. You can hang your deer to age or quarter it and place it in a refrigerator if available. If the weather is warm and you're camping then a cooler with ice will work fine, but let your venison age a few days before freezing it.

Before preparing bacon wrapped backstrap just remove all sinew and fat from the meat with a good knife. I like to use a fillet knife. Once you have your backstrap free of fat and sinew, cut it into medallions slightly narrower than your bacon strips. Venison is lean and won't shrink. By cutting it slightly narrower than your bacon it allows the bacon to wrap around the sides as it cooks.

## THE MARINADE

Add 1 bottle of Italian dressing to a Ziploc bag and place the backstrap inside one cut at a time, this allows even coating of the meat. I like to use a Ziploc vacuum bag to help force the marinade into the meat, but you can use a bowl. However, with the Ziploc vacuum bag it can cut your marinating time in half. If you just use a regular Ziploc or a bowl you should marinate your venison for 2 to 4 hours. With the Ziploc vacuum bag 1 to 2 hours is plenty. After marinating, rinse and pat dry. Drying the meat will keep the bacon from sliding off the cut while wrapping. Cold bacon helps with this as well.

## WRAP THE STRAP

Once your backstrap has air dried you can begin wrapping the bacon. Work fast, if the bacon is allowed to warm the fat will make wrapping a difficult and messy process. You can stick the bacon in the fridge or freezer if you need to cool it down a little then continue wrapping.

One slice of bacon is usually just the right length

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# About the NPAA



to make it around the backstrap. You can trim the excess overlapping just enough that a single toothpick will pin both ends. You can leave a little toothpick exposed and use it to help you with the cooking process. I prefer thin sliced bacon, but you can use thick cut.

### COOKING THE BACKSTRAP

You can cook your bacon wrapped backstrap flat in the skillet. I like to start by standing the medallions on the edge and slowly rolling them to cook the bacon a little and get some grease in the pan. The bacon will keep your venison from cooking, so doing this first will cook the bacon a little more while maintaining the desirable medium rareness we're looking for.

When the bacon is cooked all the way around and there is a little bacon grease in the skillet, cook each side of the backstrap until medium rare or your preference. The bacon won't get crispy because the meat is insulating and taking some of the heat so just cook the bacon until it is browned.

The bacon will continue to cook while you are finishing the medallions leaving you with a great morsel of venison with a little crispiness on the edges. Remove the medallions from the skillet and set aside to rest for just a minute before digging in. A great touch to this recipe is a little shredded cheese on top. I like a pinch of pepper jack and a spoonful of jalapeno pieces. Enjoy the Harvest!

**About the Author - Ken McBroom is a freelance outdoor writer/photographer based in Kentucky.**

Visit his website at [www.ramblingangler.com](http://www.ramblingangler.com).

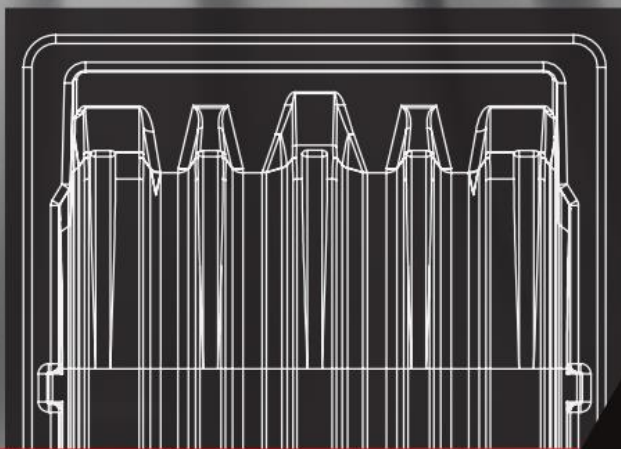
**"Bacon wrapped backstrap is a great way to share a successful season."**

**Photo by Ken McBroom**



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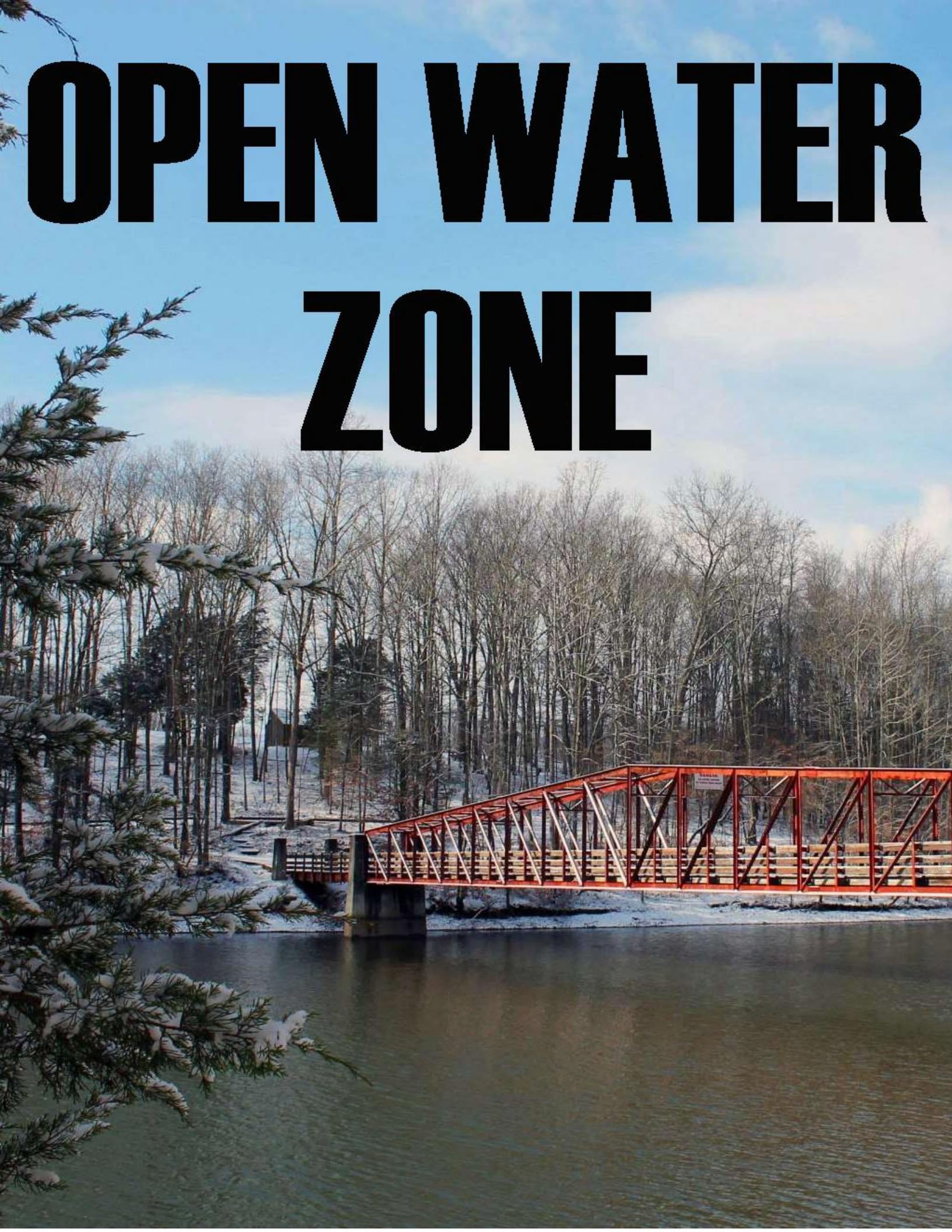
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# OPEN WATER ZONE





# Winter Time, Is Frog Time

By Rob Thames

The Dead of Winter is no time to ignore your Snag Proof frogs. The water is cold. The air is cold. The wind bites right through me, and I seem to spend all of my time daydreaming about warm water, aquatic vegetation, and big ole bass blowing up on my frog.

Catching bass on a frog this time of year may not be in the cards; however, this is the perfect time to get your frogs tournament ready. Every year I'll have a handful of frogs that seemed to produce consistently, so those frogs literally get abused and are in need of some maintenance to be game ready when the frog bite comes back around. The maintenance items are usually repairing





punctures in the body, replace the hook if needed, make sure the belly weight is secure, and replace worn out skirt legs. Replacing the skirt legs is what I'm going to address today.

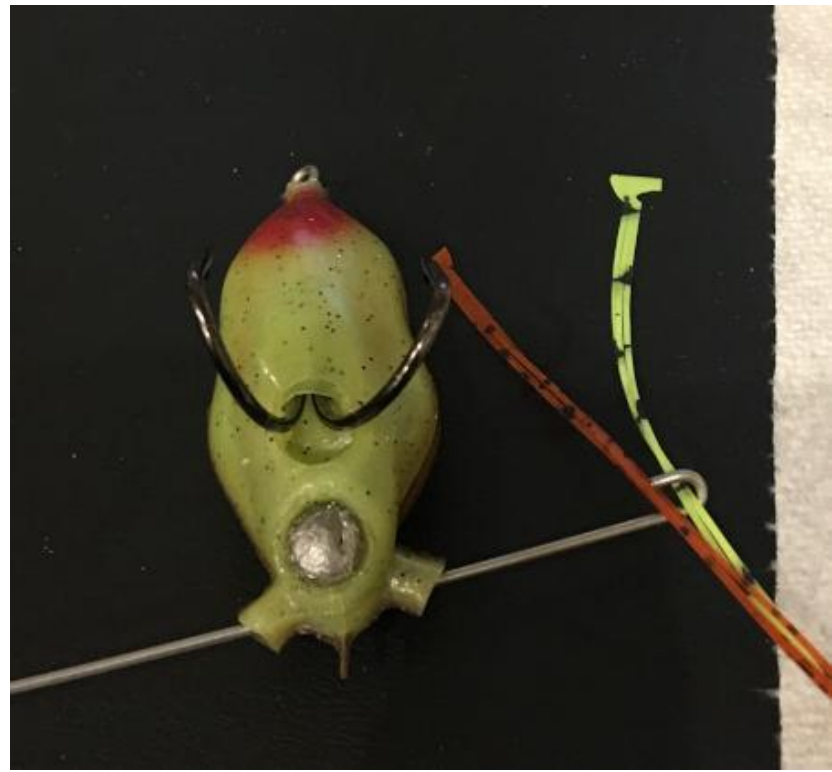
The first thing you'll want to do is get your items out: skirt material, the frogs you want to work on, scissors, and a device to pull the skirting through the frog. The device I use to pull skirt material through is simply a paper clip I've straightened out then formed a small hook at one end to hold skirting and pull through the leg holes.

I like to use round cut rubber and I'll add silicone strips for color contrast. The rubber is my primary material, and I'll cut about an 8" length. Tie an overhand knot as near the center as possible and





leave it loose enough to thread the color silicone strips along the legs on each side of the knot. Once

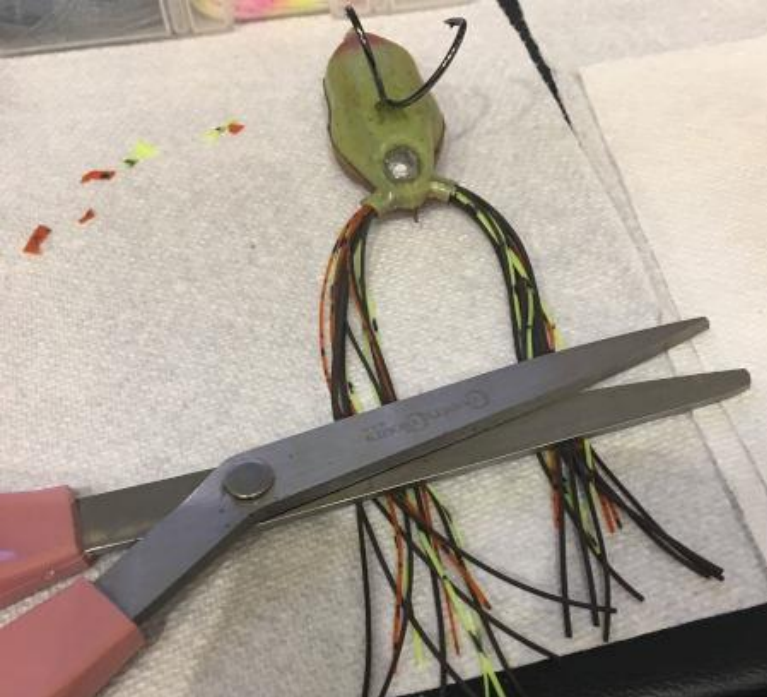


you're happy with the placement cinch the knot tight. Using this method, the knot is small enough to pull through the leg hole but large enough to keep the skirt legs in place once in the frog.

Once the skirt is tied run the paper clip through the leg holes and lay one end of the skirting inside the hooked end. Carefully pull and ease the hooked end holding the skirt back through the leg holes. When the hooked end of the paper clip clears the exit leg hole put the paper clip aside and continue carefully pulling the skirt through. When the skirt knot reaches the leg hole use your fingers to pull and manipulate the knot into and through the leg hole.







With the skirt material cut to your length the frog

At this point we have the hardest part done. Now, let's separate all the skirt material so that each strand is free of other strands. Then use your scissors to cut to your preferred length.



is ready to fish. However, I'll go one more step. I am a frog psycho, so I will trim each individual strand to stagger lengths. This extra step isn't necessary to get bites on your frog, but by staggering the lengths of each strand the skirted legs will enticingly fan out when the frog is at rest. That little bit of movement can make the difference in drawing a strike from a hesitant bass.



This one is ready to go. A gorgeous Brown Bullfrog Snag Proof Bobby's Perfect Frog with fresh new brown, orange, and chartreuse skirted legs. This frog has caught a pile of bass already and is now ready to catch a whole bunch more.





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# ***Treachery Within The Ranks***



By Len Lisenbee

While I cannot confirm anything at this time (it's not yet cut in stone) it definitely appears that the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Division of Law Enforcement (DLE) is changing leadership. Not willingly on the part of this venerable organization, but conducted with subterfuge with a near-perfect political submarine action. Let me explain so all this becomes just a bit clearer.

At first, back in 1880, the Division of Law Enforcement consisted of a handful of dedicated officers that were called Game Protectors. They were scattered across NY State, and did their best to prevent poaching of game fish and animals. In 1885 they were joined by Forest Rangers who were charged with protecting NY's forested lands. And for 138 years they worked together at their various assigned tasks.

For the record today, there are approximately 300 "Conservation Police Officers" whose primary missions are: "To conserve, improve and protect New York's natural resources and environment and to prevent, abate and control water, land and air pollution, in order to enhance the health, safety and welfare of the people of the state and their overall economic and social well-being."

There are approximately 120 Division of Forest Protection's Forest Rangers dedicated to





protecting NY's forests. These Rangers, as police officers, wildland firefighters and wilderness first responders, are prepared to protect the state's forests and the people who use these natural resources from all kinds of problems. Each day DEC Environmental Conservation Police Officers (*pictured to the left*) and Forest Rangers patrol Department-administered public lands and easements by vehicle, boat, ATV, snowmobile, aircraft, bicycle, foot, skis or snowshoes.

And now for the crux of this sneaky, dastardly situation. The New York State Forest Rangers, in

conjunction with the DEC commissioner and more than likely the DEC ECO's own union (which is active under the Department of Prisons), have apparently initiated a hostile takeover of the environmental conservation officer's jobs in a letter sent to the NY Civil Service by the DEC Human Resources office. I have read that letter, and it certainly details how Forest Ranger duties, salaries (at all levels), and training could all be altered in such a manner so as to make this agency the premier law enforcement group within the DEC. That means Forest Rangers will be assuming many of the responsibilities that the ECO's have held since 1880.

If this situation is implemented, then as of April 1, 2019 the Forest Rangers will essentially become that premier LE agency within the DEC. They will also continue to do their specialized search and rescue functions, and they will no doubt use their takeover of DEC ECPO job duties to argue for a significant increase in their own pay.

All of this subterfuge was orchestrated and supported without any knowledge by anyone within the Division of Law Enforcement (the ECPO's). To say they have been blind-sided by this decision, if it is implemented, would be a monumental understatement. The Forest Ranger Division has even requested that the Civil Service change the DEC ECPO's probationary period and requirements.

The sportsman groups within New York should be furious. The fact that the DEC's commissioner, Basil Seggos, was obviously behind this situation and supportive of it is beyond unprofessional. Oh, and Seggos is leaving his commissioner's job within just a few weeks. I guess this is his way of saying goodbye to the dedicated men and women who protect our fish and wildlife resources and so much more.

Folks, this is an environmental tragedy in the making. I was fortunate to have spent my entire law enforcement career in upstate NY working with ECO's in almost every county, and I cannot believe that this situation would have ever even be contemplated. I hope it does not become fact.







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But right now, that desire looks like a pipe dream.

\* \* \*

Anyone who reads these columns at least semi-regularly know my “feelings” with respect to deer spay and neuter programs. After all, they never solve the basic population problem, they subject the deer to extreme trauma, and tax payers always take it on the chin (and in the wallet) when the programs are finally declared to be complete failures.

Various places all across the eastern and mid-western states have tried various “soft-hearted” spay and neuter programs, and all have failed miserably. One of my favorites is Princeton, NJ where city officials loudly proclaimed that this procedure was the real answer to their deer over-population problems. But when the program was ended seven expensive years later, the city officials admitted total failure and asked archers to come in and hunt the deer.



Which brings us to Staten Island and its “enclosed” deer herd. After all, how hard could it possibly be to stop deer from breeding when you are dealing with a 58.5 square mile island and lots of houses and people (nearly 500,000) living there? And how much has it cost taxpayers?

Brace yourself. The wildlife ecologist (unidentified) running Mayor de Blasio’s deer-vasectomy project was paid over \$600,000 during the first two years of this project. And, Dr. Anthony DeNicola, the founder of White Buffalo Inc.(a nonprofit), was paid up to \$2,500 a day for 250 days of project “management” and “field sterilization” for both the 2016/17 and 2017/18 seasons (under a no-bid “emergency” contract). These salaries and other information were discovered by the NY Post newspaper.

DeNicola’s wife, Vickie, was a staff member during the project’s first season. Her job was shooting bucks with



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tranquilizer guns and then securing the drugged animals. She was paid \$1,600 every day for 150 days of “work”, or \$240,000. That type of job normally pays around \$30,000 per year. This husband/wife team accounted for around 30 percent of the project’s first year budget.

Other veterinarians working on this project earned \$1,000 to \$1,700 each day, even if they did not perform any vasectomies during any particular work day. But the vets must have earned at least some of their bloated salaries because the project reported inflicting 1,456 vasectomies on buck deer (a figure I have a hard time believing, by the way). Those procedures cost a total of \$2,652 per buck.

The budget for this program began at \$3.3 million. That figure was increased to \$4.1 million because the White Buffalo Inc. people apparently found more deer within the borough than expected. As any knowledgeable deer hunter would know, if there are 1,400 males on the island to be sterilized, there are has to be more than 2,000 deer there. My guess would be 2,400 or more total deer present.

So, what do Staten Islanders say about the deer population? Almost unanimously they say they are seeing more deer now than they did in 2016. Oops! More deer now, two full years after this project was started? And those urban-minded politicians are going forward, at taxpayer expense, with funding this project again in 2019. Mayor De Blasio has to be smiling at his success.

***Len Lisenbee is the Daily Messenger’s Outdoor Columnist. Contact him at  
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# Cold Winter Day Tips

By Captain Mike Gerry



When the cold wind blows off the water in the winter and you're wondering what I can do to get a bite, here are a few tips to think about! One thing I have always believed is that bass eat in the cold winter water when it's easy, they lack energy as their body is slowed down from the cold water, getting them to bite many times means hitting them in the head with your bait to get them to bite. I believe downsizing can make the difference when it's tough out there on a cold, winter rainy or windy day. With today's variety of baits and the endless amount of choices just about any bait can be downsized from swim baits to jigs or jerk baits and even A-rigs.

Let's start with the most obvious, if you have been fishing a big monster worm and getting no results, downsize to a small finesse worm the change in size will be an easy meal for a lethargic bass. Baits like jerk baits, crank baits, swim baits can all be downsized you can go from larger bodied jerk baits to ones with smaller profiles. You can change from wide wobble crank baits to tight wobbles with small profiles and so on.

We all have sat near a bridge and watched someone fishing for crappie catch a big bass, the reason is simple their fishing small jigs with small profile baits on the end of the jig. This process is simple, a crappie fisherman sits under these bridges and slowly bounces a 1/32 oz crappie jig off the



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bottom. To bass this is an easy meat in relatively deep water and it produces winter bites and is a testament to the down-sizing process for winter bass.

One of the best winter baits over the last few years is a rattle bait; most of us throw a ½ oz. to 5/8 oz. bait, but this bait can be downsized easily to a ¼ or even a 1/8 oz. allowing you to present the same bait, color and action in the winter yet smaller in profile. Cold winter days require patience and small baits cannot be worked quickly or they won't be effective; good winter fishermen understand the need to be precise with small baits.

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# Running Rough Water

By Gary Parsons and Keith Kavajecz

About this time every year it seems that fishermen start to get “the itch.” Cabin fever has set in, the ice is getting thin, and they all know that a great spring bite is just around the corner. For





many, the “cure” for this itch is getting serious about buying a new boat or putting something new on their current boat.

One thing to consider as you begin to think about the best boat and additional equipment needed to fit your needs is how rough the bodies of water you fish can get. Having the right equipment and knowing how to handle the boat in waves is essential to prevent a pounding and to stay dry during the ride.

Maintaining control of the boat is critical when you are in waves. This is where the WavePro boat seat pedestal comes in. These pedestals absorb the “shock” from the wave as seat goes down, but it has a soft rise that doesn’t spring you from the seat on the way back up, allowing you to maintain control.

When a lot of people look at boats, especially a deep-v walleye boat, they worry about hull weight. However, in rough water, weight is your friend! The boat will stay in the water and cut the wave instead of hopping it. Even if it cuts off six-inches of the wave, you will have a smoother and drier ride. Be sure if you are buying a heavier boat you are also buying a motor with the maximum horsepower it is rated for. The boat is going to need horsepower to power through waves and in the worst-case scenario, so it won't stall as it is traveling up a very large wave.

To handle a larger engine, good transom strength is also important when considering what boat to buy. The new trend in fiberglass boats is to no longer have a wall in the back to mount the motor on, but instead there is one solid piece to mount either the engine or a jack plate for the engine.

When traveling in waves there are two things to consider. The first is the direction the waves are running and the second is the equipment to handle them. Again, the types of lakes you fish will dictate the amount of equipment you need to handle the types of waves you will come up against.

There are several different directions that you can take a wave on from. The first is going into the waves. As you are choosing a boat, you will want to take into consideration if you will be fishing large bodies of water such as Green Bay, Lake Erie or Mille Lacs. On lakes like these, there tends to be longer spans between waves, which means that a 21-foot boat would be best suited for your needs. Shorter boats will handle waves in smaller bodies of water. Now, that doesn't mean you can't take your 18- or 19-foot boat out in big waves, but as soon as you can't span the waves and "run the tops" you will have to slow down.

The other thing you have to worry about when running into the waves is keeping the boat as flat as possible. The more you can do to keep the attitude of the boat level, the better your ability will be to run in waves.

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So how do you keep it level? One thing that all boats have the ability to do is trim the engine down. One extra piece of equipment you can add to your boat is a jack plate. On our Nitro ZV21 we use the Atlas HD Hydraulic Jack Plate to mount our Mercury 350 Verado.

A lot of times when people think of jack plates, they think they are used to lift the engine to get it out of shallow water or for getting to top end speed (a couple extra miles per hour). These are both valid uses of a jack plate, but we like to use it as a tool to keep the attitude of the boat flat by using the plate to lift the engine up while keeping the engine trimmed under the boat. This is key because not a lot of people use a jack plate for this. It really helps in rough water and more people would buy them if they realized this.

Now we are going to take a 45-degree turn and talk about quartering into the waves. The problem with quartering the waves is that they hit the front side of the boat hard. Because the waves are not hitting the bottom of the boat first, not only will the waves be hitting hard, but the water will be pushed ahead and out right into the wind, so you will be running into the spray.

So, to get a better ride when quartering waves you'd like to be able to lift the side of the boat that is getting hit. To do this in the past you would move people around the boat to weigh down the opposite side of the boat. A much better approach is the use of trim tabs. We use PowrTran's Pro Tabs. Trim tabs are two plates mounted on the transom, they tip down into the water and make the bow of the boat tilt one way or the other. These work wonders because you are able to change the left or right attitude of the boat without moving people!





The tilt is significant enough to have these quartering waves hit more of the bottom of the boat. On a boat like the ZV19 and ZV21 and even the aluminum Tracker Targa's the hulls have built in reverse chines and strakes which throw the water out flatter (thus a drier ride) and give the hull multiple re-entry points (thus a softer ride). By tipping the boat with trim tabs, these hull features can kick in and do their thing.

If you turn the boat another 45-degrees you will now be running the troughs (running the waves sideways). How well you run the troughs is really dependent on the skill of the driver, because you have to look ahead and see flat spots between the waves. This is where horsepower comes into play and it is why you want max HP on your boat (on our boat it is a 350hp Mercury Verado), so when we see the hump of the wave we can back off, get over it, and then accelerate on the flat spots. You can also use trim tabs in these conditions. Just tweak them down a little to put the down side away from the wave. Learning to run the troughs will come with experience.

If you make one last turn and run with the waves, you might think it is going to be easy from here on out because the waves are pushing behind the boat. In smaller waves that's the case, but on big waves each one turns into jumping ramp. Your boat will go up and the bow will lift into the air and then come down hard! This is also where the most potential comes for spearing the next wave (the bow is pushed into – not over the next wave). So how do we cope with traveling with the waves? You can literally try to keep the nose up by trimming the engine up slightly. This will help keep your bow on top of the water because the engine is pushing it up. You will have to slow down in this situation though because the bow will also be pushed higher into the air on top of the waves.

Some boats, like the Nitro ZV21 have a very buoyant /wide bow, so when it hits the water, it will tend to rebound quickly and not spear.

Now, if your boat tends not to spear waves, one way to travel on following waves more quickly is to try to keep the boat tight on the wave by using trim tabs. In this situation, put them both all the way down so the bow follows the wave instead of hopping it. You can also raise your jack plate a little bit. It should be noted if you try to do too much by giving it too much horsepower, you can still spear a wave. You need to know your boat and the acceleration and trim tab combos that work best.

Running rough waves takes good driver skill, the right boat and is easier with the aid of some accessories. But no matter what, is also important to always wear a PFD while running. There are a lot of inflatable versions that fit nicely and will inflate when you hit the water. In addition, always be sure your kill switch is on when running so the boat stops if you find yourself in trouble. Remember, you can never be too careful when running the waves on your way to your Next Bite!





# South Florida Circus

By Dustin Catrett

“Getting a bite?” asked my buddy Matt, as we sat anchored under an overpass crawling with iguanas. “Not sure,” I replied, watching as the light braided line bounced with my shad’s nervousness. Suddenly my rod rounds and a large silver fish thrashes out of the water in a tarpon-esque display. After several more jumps and a few missed attempts, we eventually scoop it with a net capturing what many consider to be the crown jewel of the south Florida exotic slam - the clown knife fish.

## Send in the Clowns

Within the Palm Beach County Chain of Lakes, interconnecting Pine Lake in West Palm south through Lake Clarke, Lake Osborne, Lake Eden, and ending in Lake Ida near Delray Beach, this thirty mile chain bisected with hundreds of residential canals is home to an aquatic circus of exotic gamefish brimming with peacock bass, midas and mayan cichlid, oscar, jaguar guapote, bullseye snakehead, sunshine and largemouth bass along with the clown knife. Recognized by

the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission as one of the only locations in the country where clowns can be found, these elongated triangular shaped fish native to Indochina and Thailand are believed to have proliferated from the booming exotic pet trade in the late 80’s as Miami became the



**Clowns,  
Peacocks, And  
More In  
Suburban  
South Florida**

main shipping hub for fish, birds, and reptiles arriving from the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa. Like many aquarium fish that outgrow their tanks, clown knifes are believed to have made their way into the south Florida canal system as releases from sympathetic owners unable to house them any longer. “After Hurricane Andrew in 1992 and subsequent storms over the last fifteen years, clown knifes started showing up in big numbers starting in 2008,” said Captain Bill Lepree of South Florida Bass Charters, who’s been a professional fishing guide on the chain for over twenty years. “I think a lot of what contributed to the exotic population in this region was from folks going without power to run their fish tanks for weeks on end during those hurricanes that didn’t want see their pets die and released them.”

Preferring the stagnant backwater canals branching off the chain’s main channel where low dissolved oxygen levels make conditions intolerable for most native gamefish, clowns breathe air in order to survive and trophy sized specimen reaching over ten pounds are targeted mostly at night using live shad or shiners as these nocturnal feeders seldom fall for artificial offerings. Lepree believes this characteristic may be attributed to what many of the older adults were reared on as juveniles while in tank captivity. Primarily nocturnal, adults are solitary spending most of their time around bridge supports and overhanging vegetation or docks. “The prime time to catch big clowns is during spring when they spawn,” said Lepree, “During the spawn eggs are laid near shore and fanned by the parents using their tails to provide oxygen. During the courtship caught clowns often exhibit bite marks found all over their bodies as a result of the ritual.

### **Peacocks**

By noon Matt and I had caught several peacock bass by cranking small twitch baits over a cluster of cichlid beds along a row of docks just north of Lake Ida. Introduced to south Florida in the 1980’s by the FWCC as a means to control the Mayan cichlid population, this voracious exotic flourished in the balmy tropical climate of Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami Dade Counties similar to that of its native habitat of Brazil. Unable to tolerate high salinity and water temperatures below 62 degrees, its range is geographically limited to the urban canal system along the southeast region of the state. Broward and





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Miami Dade are considered the heart of peacock country, but after several years of mild winters, large concentrations have migrated further north into the Palm Beach County Chain of Lakes. Preferring hard bottom, rocks, dock pilings, and seawalls, peacocks are almost always found near hard structure. During wintertime, metal seawalls are a great place to start in the morning as the sun heats the metal faster than rock or other organic material radiating heat within the surrounding water. During late spring,

the inverted space within each corrugated pane becomes the preferred hideaway for peacocks protecting their nests during the spawn. Sight fishing is one of the best techniques to catch them during this time while nest guarding and identifying the differences between a peacock and mayan will reduce time wasted on targeting the wrong species. Both are cichlids, yet the best way to identify one from another observing that peacocks have only three vertical bars going down its side and mayan's have five, were as oscars have dots.

For all their aggression, peacocks don't readily hit plastic worms, instead preferring small baitfish and bright colorful lures that mimic their main forage base - juvenile midas and mayan cichlids. Lake Ida is known for having massive schools of shad and can be easily found with a down image scan beneath bridge crossings where a skilled cast net throw will set you up with a day's worth of bait. Bright orange and green artificial jerk baits worked aggressively like a Rat-L-Trap mini-trap in strawberry sunfish and Yo-Zuri 3DS Minnow in Hot Tiger that will draw some impressive strikes, and for bedding fish use small 1/16th ounce jigs with small soft plastic bodies or a fire tiger colored 3-inch DOA shrimp.

## Bullseye Snakehead

The most aggressive of all the exotics in south Florida, snakeheads are an urban angler's dreamfish. Native throughout all of Southeast Asia, this voracious red eyed monster arrived on



**Gear** - Light spinning gear is the norm for most freshwater exotics, an Okuma Helios SX-20 spinning reels with 7' Medium action Helios rods spooled with 10 pound Yo-Zuri SuperBraid Blue and tipped with a two foot section of 20lb.Yo-Zuri Topknot fluorocarbon leader will do the trick. Peacocks have abrasive mouths and the larger males can reach up to eight pounds, so a minimum 20 pound leader is used to prevent break offs. The only exception to using fluorocarbon leader for all exotics is employing straight braid to the lure for targeting snakeheads. For live bait, a 2/0 Mustad demon circle hook rigged at the end of the leader with a nose hooked shad is the gold standard for clowns and peacocks.

the south Florida scene sometime around 2000. Distinguished from native bowfin by their torpedo shaped body and orange lined eye-spot on the base of its tail, they spawn throughout spring with a second peak sometime in August allowing anglers all summer to target them. Adults can be seen corralling fry along the shoreline and a stealthy approach along the canal banks around Coral Springs should get you in position to catch a few. The trick is to find them facing the opposite shoreline then cast a noisy topwater nearby to grab their attention as they are easily spooked if spotted. And don't worry about accuracy, these beasts will feast on anything that hits the water near them be it snakes, fish, turtles, birds, lizards or frogs. Soft plastic top waters like SavageGear's hollow bodied Fruck Duck or a soft plastic jerk bait that can navigate the thick vegetated areas





typically surrounding snakehead habitat will be a godsend. Just be sure to bring plenty of backups as the snakehead's teeth readily shred soft plastic after only few hookups.

**When to Go**

Warmer months are best, and you can make a day of catching multiple species as long as you can stand the midday heat during summer. During April the peacock's pre-spawn ritual consists of crushing topwater lures like their Amazonian cousins, clown knife are spawning, and bullseye snakeheads are always feeding making April through June the peak window to catch a trophy male

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# **Jaws Dropped When This Sturgeon First Exploded Out Of The Fraser River!**

By Brian Mack





What do guides do after a charter? Well, they go fishing. Yesterday was no different. Mike (one of the Sturgeon guides) hooked up with company owner Brian Mack around 5pm to hit the river and go Sturgeon fishing for a bit. The weather was beckoning them to go. They took Captain B's 21-foot custom welded jetboat up the Fraser River from the Mission boat launch about 10 minutes and dropped anchor.

A big fish was spotted on the fish finder, so the location showed hope. Baits were carefully selected and cast into the depths where they lay deliciously on the bottom. Now it's time to wait. The 2 anglers didn't have to wait long, however. Maybe 5 minutes. Mike's rod went thump thump and



then the rod tip buried. Fish On!

Not 30 seconds into the fight and the fish came flying out of the river. Twisting and heaving its massive body back and forth in like a slow-motion fashion that had them screaming some expletives. During the 45-minute battle it jumped 6 times. They shared the burden on fighting this massive beast as it dealt a punishing battle that required everything they had. It was a hard fighting and smart fish. Barrel rolling and screaming runs were keeping them on their toes! And even the fittest of arms will grow weary when fighting such leviathans!

Successfully landed for some photos!

Upon landing the giant Sturgeon they immediately took a measurement. It was 108" from nose to fork of tail. This is in accordance with IGFA standards. Photos were quickly taken and then the fish was released back to the Fraser river depths.

***About [Silversides Fishing](#) Established in 1996, Silversides Fishing is recognized as one of the premier guiding companies in Vancouver & the Fraser River Valley. We let our long list of worldwide repeat clients make that decision for us through their repeat business and solid reviews. And there's also the TV production crews that always come back to us. What we do to earn this rating is have a total commitment to providing a truly professional service throughout our customers experience with us. For us, it's more than just giving our guests the ultimate chance of hooking more fish in our pristine west coast rivers. It's about delivering a quality experience by practicing proper etiquette and stewardship.***





# DAN'S FISH 'N' TALES®



## Bump It

By Dan Galusha

There are all sorts of elements to a lure that can attract fish, which are mostly something to make noise. Two main ones are rattles and water disturbance from blades and body movement. While all of the attractors work at one time or another, one of the best is simply bumping the cover.

No matter what sort of cover is being fished it can be bumped in some way. There is wood (brush piles, stumps, standing timber, log jams and fallen timber), rock, weeds, bottom, and miscellaneous objects, all of which can be bumped to induce a strike.





Quite a few years ago when I reported on tournaments with Dan's Tourney Tales and fishing report segments of Dan's Fish 'N' Tales® radio, I can remember a tournament on Truman Lake where bumping cover was the key to success. The angler was Hank Parker, who went as far up as possible in wooded creek arms and used a spinnerbait. The key to success was bumping the fallen trees, which he found would make a burst of baitfish from the wood, resulting in the bass coming out to take his lure. In this case it did two things – made a noise and stirred up bait – both of which attracted the bass.

Each lure can bump cover a little differently, and each type of cover can be bumped differently.

Other than when flipping and pitching, my favorite lure with which to bump cover, especially wood, is a spinnerbait. I like using the Stanley 1/8-ounce Baby Wedge, but for heavier bumping and slow rolling I've found the 3/8-ounce size to be about perfect in shallow to medium depths. Most of this sort of bumping is done when slow rolling the lure, and in shallow areas. Don't allow the bait to go too deep into the cover, but be sure to hit it hard enough so it will have to bounce over the cover. With weeds, definitely do not go too deep and only tick the tops of them. If there are too many weeds on the lure you know you went too deep. The spinnerbait and a Rat-L-Trap are my favorite search baits since they can be fished quickly, but the spinnerbait is the top in wood areas.

While on the subject of the Rat-L-Trap, it also can bump cover. Don't bump it too hard or deep, especially wood where it will easily get hung up. If bumping with a Trap it will mainly be the very tops of weeds, or bottom areas such as rocks, gravel and sand. Sand bottoms are great locations for finding white bass, and while they will chase a Rat-L-Trap on the go, there are times when bumping the sand, and making a few "puffs" will induce more strikes.

Billed crankbaits are fished like the Traps, but with a slightly different aggression. The bills can deflect off of structures, and will make more commotion on a bottom, such as the aforementioned sand area. However, it is not good for ticking the tops of weeds unless fishing them slowly, and going with stop-and-go retrieves. In fact, one way to bump wood cover is to stop when it hits the cover, and allow the bait





to wobble up a little and then start the retrieve again. Many times the strike comes just as the retrieve is re-started.

Jig combinations are a great bumping lure. These can be used for swimming, which is fished as with the spinnerbait, cast and bounced on all sorts of bottoms, and my favorite, flipped and pitched into and around heavy wood cover and stumps. When flipping and pitching, the bumping is at the maximum. The lure is crawled through and around all the cover, and in some cases if it stops against a root, log or limb, it is bounced back and forth, as if knocking on the door.

Texas rigged soft plastics of all sorts are bumped much like the jig, depending on the size of weight being used. A Texas rigged tube without weight, especially a Havoc Smash Tube, is great for bumping on top and around heavy weeds. I've used other tubes in the same way, but the weight of the Smash Tube, makes it easier in casting, and the design seems to be the reason for it coming through and over the weeds easier, while making plenty of commotion.

A soft plastic, which is a little different, is the swimbait. I use a B-Fish-N Pulse R or Natural Forage Baits' Swim Bait rigged on a Precision H2O or No Bling Road Runner jig head. These heads have an open hook, and would be bumped more like a crankbait so as not to get hung up, or covered in weeds. If bumping this lure I would rather use it for tops of weeds and bottoms with a stop-and-go or pump retrieve. As with the Rat-L-Trap, this lure can be very effective if bounced on a sand or mud bottom, but making sure it is a quick bounce, and not one that completely stops.

If using a bladed Road Runner of any model to bump cover, I would suggest wood and bottom, but not weeds. Weeds have a tendency to catch the underside spinner blade very quickly, and destroy the action/attraction. Even with the wood, be sure as to not bump it as aggressively as with a spinnerbait, and only use slight bumps. However, for various bottoms, have at it, making sure that the lure is picked up far enough to allow it to fall back and let the blade flutter. Just remember, this lure is at its best on the fall, and when being fished slowly, so bumping has to be adjusted accordingly.

The next time you want to knock on the fish's door, bump it.

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

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





# Lake Erie Spring Walleye Tactics

By Captain Julia "Juls" Davis

My first trip to Lake Erie was in the fall of 1999, when I was invited by one of the areas greatest walleye anglers, Rick LaCourse, to do a little night fishing out of Huron, OH. It was a balmy December night, with a light 5mph South wind, and the temperature outside was 60 degrees. There was a full moon lighting up a clear sky, that shimmered on the calm water, making it look like it was made up of diamonds.

The fishing was incredible, and the size of the fish astounded me at the time. I'm originally from Wisconsin, where the walleye fishing is also very good, but it was nothing like what I



experienced here for the first time at Lake Erie.

That night, we trolled with crankbaits behind Off Shore Tackle inline planer boards at slow speeds. The boards were lit up with glow sticks attached to the flags, so when a fish hit, it looked like a shooting star going back in the water. Seeing a large walleye, with a mouth large enough to stuff a grapefruit in it, coming up behind the boat elevated my excitement to the next level. I was hooked! I knew then that Lake Erie was the place I wanted to fish forever.

A couple years later, I had had enough dreaming and made the move from Wisconsin to Ohio. I had quit my job as a color correction specialist in the pre-press dept of Reiman Publications, sold my house, and moved to Ohio in pursuit of a career in the fishing industry. With much work and dedication, I have achieved that dream by first fishing for many years on the Pro/Am walleye circuits across the country, as a journalist covering the tournaments for Walleye Central, and for the past 8 years as a guide on the Lake I love. Many of my sponsors have been with me through this entire adventure and are the ones responsible for making all my dreams possible.

The first spring that I fished Lake Erie with Rick, he told me that they start by “ice fishing” out of the boat and then, by jigging with ice fishing baits. Then, as the water warms, they would start jigging with regular jigs, and then on to trolling with crankbaits. This made me scratch my head, because it confused me that we could troll in the fall when the water was almost the same temperature, but we couldn’t troll in the spring when the ice went out. It didn’t make sense to me, so I asked him if we could try trolling instead of ice fishing out of the boat. Being the kind of guy, he was, he indulged me, and we put the crankbaits out.

Now, I’m not saying that I’m the first one to try this, because I’m probably not. I’m just saying that in the circle I was in at the time, it wasn’t done that way. As it turned out, it was successful, and we never had to ice fish out of the boat again, which is something that made me very happy!

In the spring, the walleye spawn in the Western Basin of the lake, where there are plenty of reef complexes and rivers. This happens in late March and April as the water warms after a long winter. The opportunity to catch trophy sized pre-spawn and post-spawn fish is at its highest during this time, and several tactics to catch them can be used.

For those that like to jig the reefs, a 3/8oz to 1oz hair jigs (best used with stinger



hooks) are often tipped with Emerald Shiners, or soft plastics, but can also be successfully used without bait or plastics. Color can matter, so having an assortment of colors available to you will better your chances of catching fish. Popular colors are Purple, Chartreuse, Orange, Pink, Blue, Green, and Black.

For those who like to troll, most anglers will start out with some popular proven crankbaits like the Smithwick Perfect 10 and Top 20's (very similar to their earlier "Rogue" baits), Rapala Deep Husky Jerks (size 12 and 14), Bandits, Bomber Long A's, Berkley Flicker Minnows (sizes 9 and 11) and both the shallow and deep diving Reef Runner baits. I know other baits get used, and the list could be extended, but these are the baits I have used over the years and are the ones that I put in my boat each season.

I was taught that when the water is in the high 30's to low 40's, the fish are sluggish, so trolling very slow is key. A speed of .8 to 1.0 has always been recommended. However, that's not always the case. For instance, over the years, I would hear of someone trolling at much faster speeds, at the same time that I was trolling slow, and they were catching fish too. So, keeping an open mind and trying new things can make you a better angler and increase your catch rate.

If you're marking fish, and not catching for some reason, it only takes a few minutes to try a different speed. Get radical and try a fast speed like 1.5 to 2.0mph, to see if it triggers any response from the finny critters below. Sometimes, I'll use the "Rabbit" feature on my Minn-Kota trolling motor to speed up the baits, and then turn it off again, to slow it down. My thinking is, it gives the fish something to react to and can sometimes make the difference between a slow bite and a fast bite.

Changing colors often, until one stands out from the rest is another tactic I use while trolling. Sure, I have my favorites that I start out with, but if they are not in the mood for those colors, I have a plethora of other colors to try until I find the ones, they like best. It's a lot more work, but it's worth it when the bite becomes steadier.

Boat handling is another tactic I use to improve the catch rate. To help find the right speed, I will make turns during my trolling passes to determine if they want the baits faster or slower. When you make a turn using inline boards, the boards on the outside of the turn will be moving much faster through the water than the boards on the inside of the turn. If a fish hits on one side over the other, and it's repeated so I know it wasn't a fluke, I will slow down or speed up to give them what they desire.





The most actively feeding fish will be higher in the water, and not always seen on the sonar picture, so I always like to have at least one bait up in the top 10 foot of the water column, just in case. It's not uncommon to end up having all the baits running that high during the spring.

The walleye I see on my Humminbird's sonar screen, that sit close to the bottom out on the flats, are usually in a negative mood, and will not usually eat a bait that is trolled by them.

The walleye up on the reef complexes, that sit close to the bottom are fair game for the anglers who prefer to jig though. While I prefer the trolling game, I will take customers out to the reefs to do some jigging if they want to. Sometimes, it's fun to feel that bite at the end of the line and feel the weight of the fish as soon as it hits. I must say though, that a jigging trip is much more fun for my customers than it is for me, because I don't get to fish when we are jigging. I just man the net for them. It's not that I don't know how to jig, or that I'm not good at it... I just wouldn't want to chance catching a big one right out from under them and steal that opportunity for one of them to catch it.

If the chance of catching a trophy walleye is on your bucket list, then I highly recommend a trip to Lake Erie's Western Basin from March through the end of May. June and July have some tremendous fishing too, but as the water warms the bigger fish that migrated from the east end of the lake, have already headed back to their summer haunts by then. That's not to say, that some bigger fish do not stay in this area, because it's not uncommon to find a trophy walleye hanging around from time to time during the summer. But, if table fare is your desire, then June thru September is the time to come here. The catching can be very fast during these months, when conditions are right, and a ton of fun! Come fall, until ice up, the big fish move back from the east and we start the process all over again.

If Perch fishing is more to your liking, then I recommend looking at August thru ice up for limits of the green and gold treasures.

***Now is the time to book your Spring Lake Erie fishing Charter for a chance at a trophy walleye, so don't procrastinate, or you might be left wishing you had reserved your date(s) earlier!***

***For more information about my Lake Erie guide service you can find it online at [www.julswalleyefishingadventures.com](http://www.julswalleyefishingadventures.com)***



# Winter's Triple Threat



## Three Ways for More Winter Bass with B.A.S.S. Pro Mark Menendez

For many, winter's time to hang up the bass gear and wait until spring ushers in warmer waters and the magic of the pre-spawn period.

But for others, like B.A.S.S. pro Mark Menendez, winter represents a great time to focus on large bass, albeit in conditions that require more substantial clothing and thinking outside the warm weather bass box in terms of fish behavior, location, and presentation choices.



“There are three ways I really enjoy fishing winter bass and a couple deviate from what most of the crowd does,” says Menendez. “The first is I love to crank a crankbait in winter. Secondly, one of my specialties is fishing a suspended jerkbait, and the final way—which nobody seems to fish anymore but I have the gray hair to remember how effective it is—is fishing a curly-tail grub.”

All three techniques play into his focus on main lake structure when fishing winter bass. “This goes against the grain with what most anglers think about winter bass fishing, that all bass end up deep, but that’s not necessarily true,” says Menendez. “What winter bass want is the shallow availability to get a bite to eat and then move to deep water to metabolize that food. Another thing anglers forget is cold water affects big bass less than smaller fish. Big bass are just like us, in that when you go to the buffet restaurant, you’re trying to get the biggest meal possible for the least amount of energy expended, so that’s why I always like to sit right next to the buffet. When the water’s cold, big bass are the same way. That’s why they target gizzard shad, perch, and bluegills first rather than chasing threadfin shad, shiners, or those smaller minnows because they want to get the biggest meal possible, so they don’t have to feed for two or three days with their metabolism being so slow.”

That said, when winter bass fishing, Menendez is constantly on the lookout for any kind of shallow flat, ledge, or other shallow area with deep water next to it. “You have to remember that in winter, bass are feeding in a vertical manner, moving up and down in the water column instead of moving long distances laterally to the backs of creeks and things like that. So I’m basically fishing main lake oriented structure in the winter with vertical-oriented techniques.”

### **WINTER CRANKIN’**

Of Menendez’ favorite winter bass techniques, the crankbait rod is often the first to come out at the start of the day. And when it comes to how to work the bait, the key is exactly the same as it is when warm water crankin’—and that’s deflection. You still need to



get your bait down to the bottom and get that bait bouncing off rocks and structure to get bites.

“The real question you have to ask when choosing a crankbait in winter,” says Menendez, “is do you want a wiggle or a wobble? Traditional thought processes want a wiggling crankbait in clear water and a wobbling crankbait in dirty water. But

I tend to buck that system a bit in that even though bass are primarily sight-oriented feeding fish in cold water, I choose a wobbling versus wiggling bait. In the winter I like a crankbait with a very big, wide weight-laced wobble, so that leads me to a Strike King Series 4 crankbait, which is a little bit bigger than the average 10-foot diving plug as far as profile and it has a bill that extends at a downward angle for a really pronounced wobble and excellent deflection.”



Besides wobble and deflection, color also comes into play when chasing winter bass.

“One of the things that’s really important is how that color reacts under water and creates a pulse or flash. That makes Green Tomato (pictured above) my top choice—a red bait with a chartreuse belly and crawfish pattern. When it wobbles that chartreuse really throws a pulse of color out there so the bass can see it from a distance. My number two choice is Sexy Shad, a white-bellied bait that’s perfect when I’m fishing waters with gizzard shad. My third choice is actually a root beer color, which kind of gives me that perch or bluegill appearance.”

As far as gear for wintertime cranking, Menendez says line choice is critical and opts for 12-pound Seaguar InvizX fluorocarbon. “I’m bouncing that bait off rocks so extreme durability is key. I’m not doing it with a ton of force, but I am making that bait get down to the bottom and deflect and that’s how you get the majority of your bites. My favorite line for this technique is definitely Seaguar’s InvizX. It’s tough, nearly invisible to the fish, and extremely sensitive.”



Along with the line choice, Menendez is quick to share a line maintenance tip that’s been substantial in improving his winter bass game. “One of the tips I like to utilize in the winter—especially needing to crank slower in colder water anyway—is not filling the reel spool to the maximum. Always leave an 1/8- to a ¼ inch from the maximum spool fill and your reel gear ratio will actually go down to aid in slower cranking and will also make your line behave much better. You don’t have as many overruns on your casting and if you do have some ice or moisture



build-up you don't have to worry about that interfering with the behavior of the line and reel either."

By filling his reel with less InvizX, Menendez actually decreases the gear ratio of his Lew's BB1 from 5.1:1 to as low as 4.8:1 or 4.7:1, which he throws on a Lew's 7-foot composite medium-heavy David Fritts Perfect Crankin' Rod.

## SUSPENDING JERKBAITS

Although Menendez loves crankin' for winter bass, he's quick to admit that fishing a suspending jerkbait often trumps all in terms of producing both numbers and good size bass during winter—and may be the absolute best way to catch your biggest bass of the entire season.

So why are jerkbaits so effective in cold water? Menendez explains it like this: "Here's something you can say about a jerkbait. You can flip a jig under a boat dock, you can skip it under a pontoon boat, you can throw a jig into a brush pile, pitch it around lily pads, whatever... Like a jig, with most of our bass techniques we're trying to position our bait towards the bass. But a jerkbait is the only bait we really have that the technique can pull the fish from the depths to the bait – so this is a lot of cat and mouse play that works well in cold water. You can also change your cadence on how you jerk the bait – mine's normally a jerk, jerk, pause – but sometimes you have to jerk the rod down two or three times and jerk the rod up once to get that bait to do something different. Sometimes it's just a single jerk, sometimes it's four or five in a row, sometimes it's sweeping the rod. So, you have to be cognizant of the jerk method and what makes the fish bite it. That will tell you how you need to make your cadence."

He continues: "The thing you have to remember is big bass are not affected as much by cold water. That said, fishing a jerkbait will catch you big largemouths, smallmouths, spotted bass, everything... The key to this is water clarity. You have to have a minimum of 18 inches of water clarity for jerkbaits to be effective. Anything less than that and the crankbait will shine."

With Menendez, the proof's in the pudding. Looking back, he won his first national B.A.S.S. tournament back in 1998 fishing a jerkbait in extremely cold water. What he discovered early on is the basic premise of jerkbait fishing is determining how hard to jerk the bait and how long to pause. Along those lines, the colder the water, the softer the jerk and the longer the pause. Of course, this requires a great deal of patience and angler control.

"One of the things I've found is when you're giving the bait a five, 10-, or 15-second pause, I'm much more efficient at fishing that bait when I sit down because as a person I'm far more patient sitting down

than I am standing up, and I can control that bait a lot easier. Most of the time we're on the main lake and generally exposed to wind in the wintertime and when I'm sitting down I have better balance, patience, and posture for fishing that jerkbait."

Menendez' solution? Take the back seat out of the boat and



put in the front! “It looked kind of funny but that simple solution helped me win that national tournament when I was fishing in three- to four-foot waves. Sitting down, I was really able to focus on the bait and pause for long periods of time and subsequently won that tournament by over seven pounds.”

In terms of jerkbait choice, he’s recently been fishing the Strike King 300 Deep Jerkbait which dives a bit deeper than most baits on the market, hitting that nine or ten foot level. And he chooses his colors like he does with crankbaits; it’s all about pulse and flash.

“On sunny days, I really like to have something that throws a good pulse like a chrome pattern or something white so the bass can see it from a distance. On overcast days, I’m fishing more of a solid white color or something that throws a lot of color,” says Menendez.

Case in point, Menendez was recently fishing with TV host Mark Zona, both of them fishing different-colored jerkbaits.

“Zona was throwing a Crystal Shiner pattern and I was throwing a Strobe pattern, which is a purple back with a silver insert and bright chartreuse belly and in the deeper water along the dam in the lake we were fishing, I got every bite. We were sitting in 22 feet and casting up onto 13 to 14 foot water. There, Mark did not get a bite. Then we moved up the lake a little ways to a major point that stuck out where the water was shallower – 7 to 9 feet adjacent to a 14 foot drop-off by the point, and Mark got every bite on the Crystal Shiner pattern. We could not figure out why I caught them all down by the dam and he caught them all by the point. In both spots we were targeting shallower flat areas with nearby drop-offs to deeper water. But what it illustrates is how

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important color can be, especially in different depths.”

Like his choice of line for crankbait fishing, Menendez says it’s “absolutely critical” when fishing jerkbaits in the winter. And although fluorocarbon is his primary choice, there are times when he’ll switch to monofilament for more control.

“I do like to fish jerkbaits on 10-pound Seaguar InvizX fluorocarbon 90% of the time but when the fish are ultra-picky in how they’re biting the bait I will go to 10-pound Seaguar Rippin’ monofilament because when they’re not biting very aggressively Seaguar fluorocarbon will transmit that bite to me so much faster and cleaner to my hand that I set the hook too quickly and actually pull the bait from the fish. With monofilament, which is not as sensitive, and has a lot more stretch than fluorocarbon but still a good deal of abrasion resistance, I’m fishing a little more blind and that allows the bass to get that jerkbait before I realize the fish has got it and I get better hookups.”

In terms of rod and reel set-up for winter jerkin’, Menendez uses a Team Lew’s baitcaster in a 6.8:1 gear ratio on a 6’ 7” Topwater Lew’s Custom Speed Stick.

### **A LOST ART: CURLY-TAIL GRUB FISHING IN COLD WATER**

With so many cold-water presentation options on the scene: Alabama rigs, swimbaits, float & fly, et cetera, grub fishing has pretty much become a lost art. But for anglers like Menendez,

they remember how effective the old-school technique can be, despite its decrease in popularity.

“The grub is a cold-water special, particularly in lakes that you have threadfin shad in; that’s what you’re mimicking. And it can catch a lot of fish,” says Menendez.

His choice? A Strike King Rage Grub. “The four-inch version on a ¼-ounce Tour Grade jig head is the one I use nine times out of 10, but it has a flange on it, and there are times when that flange creates too much disturbance, so take my pocketknife and slice off the flange to create a much quieter bait. So, depending on how I get the bite or how many fish I’m catching, I may or may not do that. I tend to cut that flange off in water with five or six feet of visibility just to allow the bait to move a little faster and quieter.”

In terms of grub colors, he keeps it pretty simple and sticks to three basic colors: Pearl Chartreuse, Pearl White, and the third is what he calls Bluegill, a Pearl White with smoked blue flake in it.

Again, line choice is important. “I use 8-pound Seaguar Tatsu fluorocarbon because it’s so soft, invisible, and behaves so well on spinning gear. I attach the bait with a Palomar knot and that’s it.”

When it comes to fishing the grub, Menendez describes himself as the laziest man in fishing and says if he can make a technique simpler, he certainly will. When it comes to grubs, that means two primary methods that have proven their efficacy in winter waters. And location-wise he’s typically fishing parallel to the bank, a bluff, rip-rap point, or a concrete structure along a dam.

“There are two ways I fish a grub in winter: I’ll swim it suspended in the water column or fish it on the fall. If I notice the fish are chasing shad balls in 10 or 12 feet of water, I’ll count that grub down 7 to 10 seconds and point my rod at about a 45-degree angle and then I’ll start a slow reeling, keeping that bait with those shad and off the bottom.”

He continues: “I want the grub near vertical habitat so I can work it horizontally in the same manner as the shad in these same areas and pull those bass to the bait. If I can’t get them to do that when they’re down 15, 18, 20 feet in freezing water, then it’s a complete vertical technique, and I let the bait pretty much fall on its own counting it down on a tight line 18, 20, 22, 25 feet to the bottom and then begin a very slow crawl back to the boat.”

In terms of rods for grub fishing, Menendez uses a 7-foot Lew’s spinning Custom Speed Stick Shakey Head Special Model with a 3000 series spinning reel on it.





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# Patience, Petite Tackle and Opening Day Muskies

By Ted Pilgrim

Eight months is a long time to wait between casts. When the season finally opens in May or June in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Ontario, casting withdrawal reaches maximum angst. It's just the sort of abstinence that can elicit a nasty case of lure charades, that nervous habit that makes certain anglers constantly change baits. A dude I used to fish with had it bad, manically switching lures in hopes of discovering the one. You know the type. When follows are sparse, lure-changer rotates through whole piles of baits, a new one clipped to the leader every ten casts or so. And most of these anglers carry a boatload.

Now, as a bit of a lure collector myself, I've been guilty of the occasional wild experiment, believe me. But most openers, good, bad or otherwise, I mostly limit myself to a couple favorite baits, throwing them uninterrupted for 12-hours. Not that I don't occasionally get tempted by what ifs.

For my friend, it wasn't so easy. One winter, he'd







accumulated a load of new baits—more ballast for his already over-crowded lure rotation. Things got dicey that particular opening day, as I recall counting 11 different lures clipped to his leader in the space of a single hour's fishing. Late that afternoon, it looked like a jack-in-the box of baits had exploded all over his casting deck. Which made it surprising to consider we'd managed to boat three fair muskies that day, while losing a forth biggie on a furious hook-ejecting headshake. From his perspective, the unfortunate part was that all but one of these had eaten my old brown Grandma's Lure. "Maybe if you'd just kept your lures wet a little longer," I'd offered, trying to be genuinely helpful.

Finally, very late that day, my friend connected when he semi-settled in with a jig and 8-inch plastic Reaper for about 30-minutes of uninterrupted casting. Having by then exhausted 95% of his other players, he was forced to stick with his emergency quarterback for the remainder of the game. "Nice Hail-Mary," I quipped, again just trying to be supportive. "Imagine if you'd thrown that ugly thing all day."



### **Muskie . . . Jigging?**

Interesting, indeed, that the single most popular lure category in all of fishing plays such a minor role among muskie hunters. In early season, however, a big jig and plastic tail or a 6 to 9 inch soft plastic Bull Dawg style creature can be an awesome primary presentation. Take the aforementioned 1-ounce jig and 8-inch Reaper and work horizontally across shallow weeds. Or rig a Bondy Bait St. Clair Jig (pictured above) with a big paddletail like a Z-Man Mag SwimZ. Or go weedless with a Bait Rigs Esox Cobra Magnum, dressed with your favorite soft plastic tail. A Red October Ninja Tube and Savage Gear's Burbot are two creature alternatives that allure early season muskies. For the ultimate in stealth, secure your jigs to 100-lb. test Seaguar AbrazX Musky Pike Leader, the tooth-toughest fluorocarbon ever made.

The beauty of a 1 to 5-ounce jig is that it allows you to retrieve fast over shallow flats, pausing to flutter the lure along drop offs. You can also kill the bait during boatside figure-8 maneuvers—occasionally a spectacular triggering move for following muskies.

Particularly appealing are the rods you can wield—without fatigue—for a full 12-hour day of casting. St. Croix's Legend Tournament Musky "Downsizer," a 7-foot 3-inch, 6.9-ounce feather lets you hoist  $\frac{3}{4}$ - to 3-ounce jigs, minnow baits and other small lures with precision and finesse, yet provides ample power to drive hooks home. For first-time muskie hunters and folks who prefer to steer clear of backlashes and baitcasters, St. Croix also builds a beautiful muskie spinning rod, a heavy power 8-foot stick in their Premier rod series.

### **Baby Bucktails**

Another early season trend, counter to the current lust for license-plate sized spinners, downsized inline bucktails definitely belong in "the one" category. On opening day and probably all through summer, you can clip a small spinner, such as a Buchertail 500 Tinsel to your leader, never



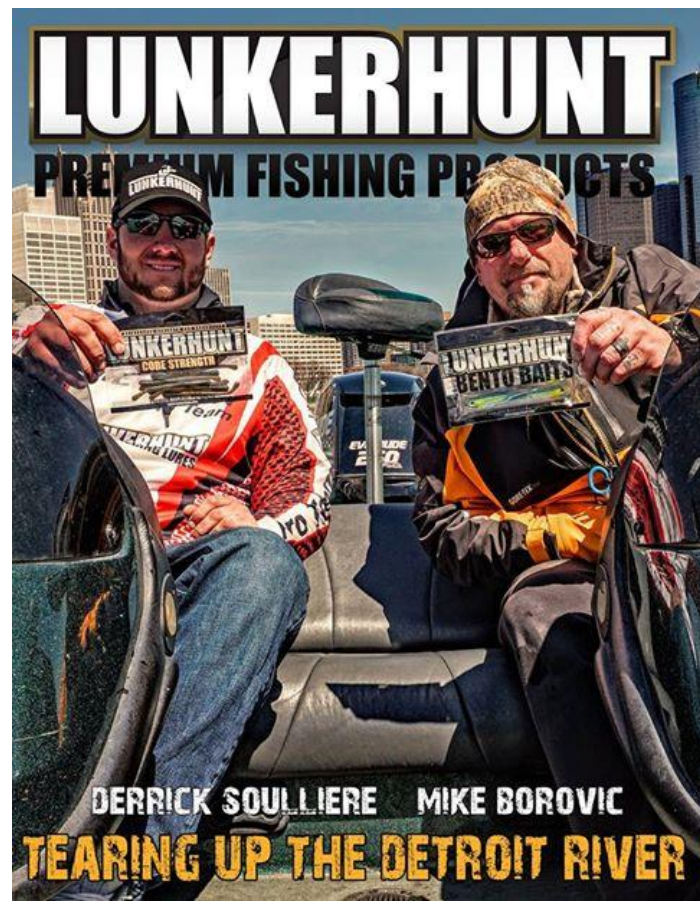
change lures once and proceed to put more muskies in the boat than everyone else. These compact yet heavy blades offer positive cues in abundance—flash, speed, and vibration—and cast effortlessly all day with the aforementioned St. Croix Downsizer rod, a 300 size reel and 50 pound Seaguar Kanzen braid.

If you really want to get funky, try a Baby Beaver, a radical weighted bucktail bait with a molded beaver-like head, tufts of deer hair and a flat, soft, beaver tail. Though the bait measures 12-inches, it pulls through the water with minimal effort, allowing for effortless cranking at slow, medium or super fast retrieves. You can also add a double blade attachment for flash and vibration.



## Flingin' Flies

Intriguing that one of the original reasons anglers chose bucktail as skirting for early in-line baits was its pulse factor. Bucktail provides a beautiful but subtle undulation effect when retrieved through the water. Fly tiers have leaned on this feature forever, and also on the fact that bucktail and certain synthetic similar materials stand up well to toothy bites.



Regardless of reason, fly-fishing for muskies is on the upswing. Rich Belanger of St. Croix Rods says that even if you're not a full-fledged fly guy, keeping a fly rod and streamer on hand as a throwback bait can be an awesome plan for converting tough to tempt, following fish, particularly in spring and fall.

"A 9-foot, 9 or 10 weight Imperial Fly Rod," says Belanger, "gives you the power to punch pinpoint casts with 6 to 10 inch streamers, all day. Keeping your fly in the water longer than anyone else is still the deal. And there's something magic about the natural, rhythmic action of a big streamer. Not a lot of folks have the chutzpah to fly cast for more than a few hours. But in a world where every muskie sees a thousand different lures, an organic looking fly can be a total difference maker."



# A Most Productive Open Water Technique

By Bob Jensen

Ice-fishing so far this ice-season has been strange. First the ice in my area of north Iowa is safe, then it isn't. I haven't been out much, which means that I've been doing a lot of thinking about fishing, through the ice and otherwise. Awhile back I shared two of my favorite ways to catch fish in open water: A small jig, probably an eighth ounce, tipped with either plastic or a minnow for walleyes, and also weedless baits fished for largemouth in shallow, heavy vegetation. Those are both ways that I like to fish, but when it comes to just catching

fish, numbers of fish and the chance for big ones, I have another favorite technique: I like to throw crankbaits. Here's why and how.

Back in the early 90's, there was a fishing event held on Gull Lake near Brainerd, Minnesota. It was a fund-raiser for a local camp, and it attracted some of the Midwest's best anglers. Boaters fished with a pair of partners in the morning and another pair in the afternoon. The format was to weigh your biggest walleye, largemouth bass, and northern pike from the morning and afternoon round. Sometimes your partners were accomplished anglers, other times they were folks who just liked to go fishing. I learned early on that we needed to employ a technique that was simple to use but was also attractive to those three species of fish. That technique was throwing crankbaits along a weedline. By doing that, the team that I was on finished in the top five every year but one that I participated, and everyone caught fish. We had a good time.

Crankbaits are outstanding for walleyes, pike and bass, year 'round, but especially from early summer into mid-fall. They catch fish along the weedline, over rock piles in the shallow to mid-



depths, and pretty much anywhere else where the crankbait can reach the depth where the fish are.

If I'm keying on walleyes, I'll probably be using a Lucky Shad. These are outstanding baits. My favorite colors are Violet Alewife, Chrome Blue, Chartreuse White, and Yellow Perch, although lots of colors will catch walleyes. Lucky Shad are long, thin baits. Spinning tackle works best. 15 pound test P-Line XTCB Braid on a Lew's Speed Stick in medium heavy 6'6" or 7' and a Lew's Speed Spin or Crush reel will rip through weeds easily and provide a solid hookset.

If largemouth are the preferred target, a shorter, fatter bait, something like Strike King's Pro Model Crankbait in the 4 or 5 size that runs in the 7-10 foot range will be tied on. In the summer, bass, walleyes, and pike along the weedline really like these baits. Bluegill, perch, shad, crawfish, or blue/chartreuse will be go-to colors. We'll be casting this bait with baitcasting gear: Again, a 6'6" medium heavy rod in one of the Lew's Speed Stick Series will be about right much of the time. Team it with a reel that retrieves line at a pretty fast speed. One of the Lew's BB1 Series will excel. We'll probably use the same line that we did for walleyes, or maybe go a bit heavier. Make long casts, cover lots of water and catch lots of fish, probably a mixed bag.

This summer, tie on a crankbait, find a deep weedline, and go fishing. If you do so, you are putting yourself in a position to have a very good day of fishing and catching.

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# Reading Your Mapping

By Captain Mike Gerry

While today's mapping has improved drastically; as everything from coloring to contours to self-recorded detail are available you still must understand what you're seeing on your screens. That for many can be a challenge so let me offer a little detail and hopefully give you some confidence that what you're seeing is reality.

All mapping for your electronics is not created equal, maybe at the time the map was originally recorded your detail was correct but all bottom structure changes with time from current and the natural silting and erosion process that changes the bottom over time. You must be able to improve your own mapping either with personal recording or enhanced mapping that is constantly being updated and not all mapping has that option.

Today's mapping software has many options one is coloring that allows you to set change of depths by color say red to blue to yellow or what-ever color you desire as there is many color choices as you progress down the depths and some have contours that are visible along with shading to see depth change. I use a combination of both to read my maps and use features of coloring and contour lines to determine where I want to fish. Contours if you're not aware are many times showing one ft. apart allowing you to see sudden drops or gradual drops approaching your position; the closer the contours the more sudden the drop and the farther apart they are the more gradual the drop. Coloring



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doesn't give you this detail alone so that is why I combine contours and coloring on my screens to see how the bottom is set up. It's also true that some new features of trolling motors are designed to follow contours from you mapping screens, and the actual depth allowing you to keep in a consistent depth with the touch of a button on the newest feature called spot-lock.

When you combine your mapping with trolling motor feature (spot-lock) you could really stay on a consistent pattern that can offer some great fishing as bass progress through the seasons. Understanding where you are on your map, the depth you're in and combining it with good bottom view can really make a difference in your catching!

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# **RAPALA DT CRANKS HELP BOLTON WIN FIRST FLW TOUR TOURNAMENT**





Key decisions to stay and go – and what baits to throw – helped longtime Rapala® Pro Terry Bolton win his first FLW Tour tournament Monday on Sam Rayburn Reservoir in Texas. The first decision? To stay on tour another year. The second? To go with Rapala DT crankbaits throughout the four-day contest.

“This is pretty big for me,” an emotional Bolton said on the weigh-in stage Monday, after clinching the win. “I was going to retire, but my wife talked me into coming back. I didn’t think I’d ever see this moment and today it finally happened. This is only 30 years in the making.”

Bolton caught most of the fish he weighed on Rapala® DT®-10, DT®-14 and DT®-16 crankbaits in Caribbean Shad and Demon color patterns. He threw them on 12- and 14-pound prototype Sufix Advance fluorocarbon line.

“DT” stands for “Dives To.” DT-series crankbaits dive fast to pre-set depths and stay in the strike zone longer than any other lookalike crankbait. A DT-14, for example, dives to and swims at 14 feet. Built of balsa wood, Rapala’s signature material, DT’s combine carefully placed internal weights, a tapered fuselage and a thin tail to create a unique crankbait action.

“They have such a subtle action that fish don’t get a tendency to get as used to them as some of the wide-wobbling crankbaits,” Bolton explained in this Wired2Fish fishing-tips video. “So it’s a great crankbait for ... pressured fish.”

That action on Rayburn helped Bolton catch four 5-bass limits for a total combined weight of 91 pounds, 3 ounces – just 12 ounces more than the runner-up finisher. That total included a whopping 33-pound, 9-ounce, 5-bass limit on day 2.

Bolton spent his mornings on Rayburn targeting “a handful” of bare spots near inside grass lines, where he said largemouth were eating shad. “I started out with a ... Demon-colored 14 and then I’d switch up to a 10,” he said on the weigh-in stage. “You had to get above them just a little bit.” Later in the day, he told FLW media, he threw a DT-16 on outside grass line drains in 15 to 18 feet of water.



Whether you prefer raking shallow shorelines or scouring off-shore spots, off-color water is often key to cranking success. In stained to muddy water, red, orange and chartreuse DT cranks generally out-produce brownish and greenish patterns.



### Should I Stay, or Should I Go?

Decisions to stay put on one day and to go elsewhere on another, proved fortunate for Bolton – despite some initial consternation about the former. On the day he caught the five bass weighing a combined 33-pounds, 9 ounces, he considered leaving his hot spot after catching the first 27 to 28 pounds. Instead, he stayed put. Soon



thereafter, he caught a 9-pound, 8-ounce largemouth.

“My staying there won it, because I stayed there and caught that 9-pounder,” Bolton explained. “I don’t know if you call it dumb luck or a good decision, but that’s the one thing.”

“I’m glad I caught ‘em while they were there,” he said further. “If I’d have run off and left them, who knows?”

A last-hour decision on day 4 to leave a hot spot also added key ounces to Bolton’s winning total weight. In that spot, he caught three bass bigger than three in his livewell, allowing him to cull the smaller ones and replace them with the bigger ones.

“I went back to the inside grass line and I caught those last three fish this afternoon,” he said. “That kind of put me over the top. Without them, I wouldn’t have won.”

Sam Rayburn is a great lake, Bolton said – and a great one to fish with Rapala DT’s.

“I caught a ton of bass,” he said. “It’s been a lot of fun.”

In 24 years on the FLW Tour, Bolton has earned more than \$1.2 million in prize money, won both an FLW Series and BFL tournament, finished in the top 10 in 47 tournaments and competed 13 times in the Forest Wood Cup, FLW’s tour championship. In winning his first-ever FLW Tour tournament Monday on Rayburn, he bested 170 other anglers.

“It was my turn, and it just worked out,” he said.



# Gila Trout: A Native Trout Conservation Story



**By Craig Springer,  
External Affairs,  
Southwest  
Region FWS**

That's the sound of a barbless beadhead nymph falling into a glassy glide of Mineral Creek, a headwater stream of the Gila River in southwest New Mexico. There's a short drift over a stony run, barely time to mend

your line. Then follows that transmutation of fish flesh to your forearm—the taut tug of a trout on your 3-wt. fly rod.

But it's not just any trout. This one is yellow like a school bus. Petite black shards fleck its flanks over a hint of a pink stripe and fading oval parr marks. It's not a rainbow trout—no, this fish is far less common. Rare, even. It's a Gila trout, a threatened species.

The Gila trout was for a time the only trout considered endangered in the United States. But decades of conservation work by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, U.S. Forest Service and other partners are pushing the fish toward recovery.

Gila trout were off limits to anglers for 50 years until it was downlisted. In 2007, select waters in the Gila National Forest were opened to anglers and remain so.

The crystalline water of Mineral Creek above the storied ghost town of Mogollon, New Mexico, is but only one place to catch Gila trout. Conservation work—much heavy lifting—employing pack mules with panniers filled with young trout or carrying in on foot freshly fertilized trout eggs in backpacks have improved the lot of Gila trout, and grown the number of places where you can catch them.

Success begets success. Excise taxes on rods and tackle and fishing license sales fund much of this on-the-ground conservation work via the Service's Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program.





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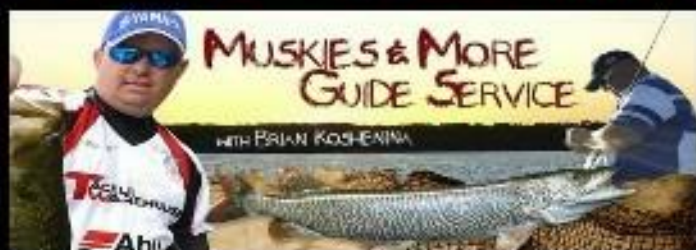
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# HUNTING ZONE








# Bears of Wekusko

By Jason Mitchell/ Passion for the Hunt Television





For many bow hunters in the Midwest and eastern half of the United States, much of our past experience archery hunting involves whitetail deer. Other species or opportunities often require a road trip. Canadian spring bear hunting is attractive to many archery hunters because this type of hunt is often affordable and easy to accomplish. For hunters who have never been close to a bear, these hunts can also seem quite exotic. Black bears are reclusive, but their strength and agility inspire awe.  Many a bow hunter has completely lost their nerves when a large boar walks to the bottom of the



ladder stand. Bears can give even the most experienced archery hunters the shakes. No shame. Battling composure during a massive infusion of adrenaline is why we bow hunt and exactly why so many hunters love to hunt bears in particular.

For many U.S. residents, Canadian bear hunting trips are turnkey. Licenses can typically be bought through an outfitter without the hassle of draws or deadlines. Most of the human population in Canada lives within fifty miles of the U.S./Canadian border. Much of the rest of the country to the north can be considered sparsely populated and remote, particularly in the Canadian Shield where the only industry is some logging, mining and tourism. Much of this land is what is referred to as Crown Land which is usually provincially owned land where individual outfitters have license allotments for specific regions. As you can probably surmise, there is no shortage of black bears.

We hunted spring bears this 2018 season in northern Manitoba near the community of Snow Lake with Wekusko Falls Lodge. Manitoba is a province that has a spring and fall season and is home to numerous really good bear hunting outfitters. Manitoba is also crawling with bears. We personally prefer the spring bear seasons and the spring season occurs in May or June. By hunting bears in the spring, the season doesn't conflict with other fall hunting opportunities and spring hunts are typically more successful year in and year out because fall berry crops like blueberries can make the bait sites much less appealing to bears. The other advantage of many Manitoba spring bear hunts is the close proximity to incredible fishing depending on your location.

Much of northern Manitoba consist of extremely dense forests broken up with muskeg swamps, rivers and lakes. You typically can't see more than twenty yards when you are in the bush. Because of the topography, spot and stalk is not a realistic option. Most hunts are done over bait either out of a ladder or tree stand or at times, a ground blind. Every outfitter has their own concoction of what they believe to be the best bear bait. Simply put, the very best outfitters work hard at







Wekusko Falls Lodge owner Bryan Bogdan points out some unique ancient pictographs located on Tramping Lake that were made by much earlier hunters. Identifiable animals included moose, caribou and snakes along with hand prints. Date of origin has been debated but this ancient artwork is believed to be anywhere from 200 to 2,000 years old.

baiting and monitor several sights attempting to place hunters on active bait sites.

There are many misconceptions about baiting. In this terrain, you would seldom see a bear that wasn't running without the use of bait. Baiting is also a tremendous amount of work where outfitters have to transport heavy containers either by ATV or boat into remote areas for several weeks. The mosquitoes and black flies make this miserable work. Even the best bait is far from a guarantee. When the

sows go in heat during the spring bear season, boars become more preoccupied with mating than eating. If you think bear hunting is as simple as putting a couple of jelly doughnuts on a stump and waiting for a bear to come running in, you are sadly mistaken or perhaps mislead.

What makes bear hunting fascinating is that each bear will have a very specific personality and in some cases... a very specific menu preference. Black bears can also live to be quite old and some bears learn to avoid bait sites or stand locations. If you have never hunted black bears over bait and think this hunting method is too easy without any strategy or skill, you need to get over yourself. The strategies are remarkably similar to hunting whitetail bucks over a food plot. Black bears also have a heavy bone structure with a large shoulder blade. Archery shots need to be close and surgical where ideally the bear is slightly quartered away with the front leg stretched forward to better expose the vitals. A bear's hide and hair also does a tremendous job of absorbing blood and bears are notoriously difficult to track. When the stars do align over a bait site, a hunter can wait for a good shot where they have time to judge the bear often within twenty yards.

Because of the heavy bone structure, many archery hunters tend to shoot fixed blade broad heads but more important than cutting diameter or bone penetration is simply accuracy. We personally shoot expandable broad heads with a Mathews Halon because we personally shoot tighter groups with expandable broad heads. Our own opinion is this, if you take a poor angle or make a bad shot, it simply doesn't matter what type of broad head you prefer. If a bear doesn't die within a hundred yards after the shot, you are going to have a tremendously difficult time recovering that bear. The

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kinetic energy of a fixed blade is not typically going to put a bear down if your shot is too far forward or back. Broad head selection of course is personal preference so shoot whatever broad head and arrow that gives you the best accuracy and most confidence. Primary concern however is simply hitting the vitals right behind the front leg. Also familiarize yourself with the skeletal structure and anatomy of a bear so you have the correct shot placement. What all bear hunters can agree upon is the importance of a Thermacell. The mosquitoes and black flies can be incredible at times and the Canadians don't put them on any of their brochures.

Manitoba is far enough west where there are good percentages of color phase bears and there are literally good opportunities for Pope and Young class bears all over the province. What separates the best outfitters is simply how hard they prepare. A good outfitter simply works hard at running baits. Bryan Bogdan of Wekusko Falls Lodge is a very reputable outfitter and one of Manitoba's best. Red eyed during the spring bear season, Bogdan's day typically starts at 6:00 am and doesn't get over until after midnight. During the heart of the season, the typical baiting and hunter logistics is interrupted with skinning and quartering bears and late-night track jobs. Bryan is the prototypical tough Canadian who will simply outwork you, but he also has a great team of guides who work just as hard as he does. Together, they run over forty bait sights and only hunt a fraction of them. This crew puts the odds in your favor of seeing a bear by sheer determination and sweat.

We had an opportunity to hunt bears this 2018 spring out of Wekusko Falls Lodge and harvested a magnificent boar that should qualify for Pope and Young, filming the entire hunt along with an



insane amount of walleye catches for our Passion for the Hunt TV series that will air on Fox Sports North this upcoming summer. What I enjoyed about this particular camp was the sheer number of active baits and the attention to detail. The bait sight locations were very strategic and spread out. The ladder stands were safe with shooting lanes prepared. The camp really does cater to archery hunts but there were other hunters in camp hunting with rifles and muzzleloaders.

The night I harvested my 2018 Manitoba black bear was memorable in part because of the sheer amount of bear activity. We came into the bait site by boat and walked an old mining road for about half a mile to sneak back into the stand. We saw two bears at the bait site as we approached the stand. As we approached, the bears stiffened and then disappeared in a blur. We hadn't been situated in the stand for half an hour when we saw a bear (which we assumed to be one of the bears we startled on our entry) circling us. Walking the perimeter about twenty yards into the woods, we watched the jet black body of what turned out to be a large sow with a white crescent on her chest. As the evening progressed, we watched a literal parade of bears inspect the bait site. A moderately sized boar soon joined the sow and we watched these two bears for perhaps an hour.

A short time later, I got a glimpse of another bear. A larger boar moved silently through the woods to our right. The bear then approached directly towards the tree stand. At about ten yards behind us, the bear stopped and focused up into the tree where we were sitting. The bear then stood up on its hind legs. The boar had a dark face with cinnamon brown eyes that looked through us like lasers. We didn't even dare move the camera to try and film. After what felt like five minutes, the bear stood down and circled up and around before finally coming into the bait site. As the larger boar approached, the other two bears stiffened and moved back into the woods. This particular boar was almost as tall as the barrel that was placed at the site.

About five minutes later, this mature dark faced boar jerked his head to the right and stood perfectly still. We initially couldn't see what the bear could see but soon, the glimpse of another jet-black bear could be seen moving through the woods. This bear walked in a straight line towards the black faced boar and as the boar closed the distance, the black faced boar turned to leave.

I clipped the release onto the arrow and waited for an opportunity to draw. This new bear was also dark faced and the largest of the four bears we had now seen. His shoulders were broad. A mature





boar with a wide head and a dark face. The sight of the other lesser boar seemed to irritate this new bear. As this large boar walked and stood broad side at seventeen yards, I shot the bear right behind the shoulder and the bear took off on a sprint that broke branches loudly for thirty yards before we heard a louder crash in the woods to our left. My hands shook as I waited for the videographer to rewind the footage to confirm the shot placement.

Byan Bogdan's policy at Wekusko Falls Lodge is to use a provided two-way radio to call back to the lodge and

notify staff when a bear is hit and to wait in the stand until help arrives. I called back to the lodge and at that point had nothing but time. Time to reflect on a memorable evening amongst conifers and bog swamps after a successful hunt.

Another side of Wekusko Falls Lodge is the incredible fishing. Located between Wekusko Lake and Tramping Lake, these two lakes offer some of the best walleye fishing in Manitoba. Both are tremendous fisheries but Tramping in particular has a reputation for producing a surprising number of thirty-inch plus walleye. Boats are available at the lodge or you can tow your own on black top the entire distance. Many bear hunters will kill a handful of hours in the morning fishing for walleye and pike. Simple and easy fishing exists a short distance from the lodge. There are also tremendous lake trout opportunities in the area. Most of the walleyes seem to be longer than twenty inches and you will typically catch a lot of fish with just a ¼ ounce jig and three to four-inch soft plastic although some anglers use frozen salted shiners.

Because of the diameter of trees in northern Canada and the importance of a double lung pass through shot, most outfitters seldom place ladder stands higher than twelve feet. Most bait sights are simply small clearings where you might have thirty yards of visibility at the most amongst extremely dense woods. A bear might give you a glimpse of black or brown resembling a shadow moving through the woods but what is so amazing is how often an animal as large as a bear completely sneaks up on you. Without making a sound, bears can move through the woods and completely startle you. You can stare and listen all around you only to glance down and get startled by a bear walking directly below your ladder stand. Bear hunting can be highly addictive and there are many hunters who make the trek each season.

Bear hunting also gives hunters an opportunity to get back into the woods before traditional fall seasons begin. An excuse to pick up a bow and shoot during the spring. Another chance to sit in a tree stand to wonder and wait. An opportunity to again listen and watch. The encounters are up close and personal, often enhanced with a good dose of adrenaline. An incredibly fascinating and beautiful animal to hunt that is also excellent table fare. For many hunters, bear hunting offers an additional and



alternative hunting opportunity that compliments other bow hunting passions closer to home. Economically, bear hunting is an affordable destination hunt for many hunters.

A new season of Passion for the Hunt TV will begin airing in July of 2019 on Fox Sports North. A Helpful resource we used to plan our Manitoba bear hunting adventure can be found online at [www.huntfishmanitoba.ca](http://www.huntfishmanitoba.ca). Wekusko Falls Lodge can be found online at [www.wekuskofallslodge.com](http://www.wekuskofallslodge.com).

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# A Special Frontier

By Dan Galusha

Although the Henry Long Barrel Frontier was introduced in the 2017 product lineup, people have still be asking about it. So, this column will toss out a review of the product itself, plus a little about my “Special Frontier”.

The rifle has a 24-inch barrel, which is four inches longer than the regular Frontier. I have the model H001TLB, which fires 22 short/long/long rifle, with a magazine capacity of 16 long rifle and 21 short. It





is also available in a H001TMLB, which is a 22 magnum, with a magazine capacity of 12.

Along with the regular long barrel there is threaded barrel version in two models (H001TSPR and H001TMSPR). This of course is for adding a suppressor, but because of that the magazine had to be shortened so that the tube could be removed past the suppressor to load it. This dropped the magazine capacities to 16 short, 10 long rifle on the TSPR and 8 magnum on the TMSPR.

All models come with the adjustable, white diamond, buckhorn rear sight and brass bead front sight. If a shooter prefers not to have the white diamond it can easily be reversed to the black side. I think a Skinner Peep Sight would also be a good addition.

It comes with a 3/8-inch dovetail mount so that a scope or red dot sight can be added.

I tried a scope at first, but decided that it is accurate enough to shoot with the open iron sights. After adjusting the rear sight upward a few notches, it was hitting right on the mark. I didn't have to do any windage adjustment.

I used two types of paper targets – a sight-in for the first shooting and a Shoot-N-C for the second shooting and filming a video. Later I plinked one of my favorite plinking targets - cardboard commercial toilet paper roll inserts.

The accuracy was very good with all targets, including hitting the cardboard “plinkers” dead center. However, when using the open iron sights I still feel the sight combination of the white diamond buckhorn and front brass bead is a great help.

Something else makes this particular rifle a “special frontier”. It isn't just the fact that it has a custom Shoot 'N' Plink™ serial number, but a friend at Henry Repeating Arms sent a butt stock that was engraved by Baron Technology, and says, “In Memory of Mom”.

On July 2, 2017 Mom passed away, and a week later this rifle arrived. Mom was only 4 feet 5 inches tall. Because of her size I had planned on taking a photo of her with this longer rifle.



Mom's method of shooting was a bit unorthodox. She would place the butt on top of her shoulder, rather than holding it into her shoulder as other shooters. However, it worked, and as they say, “whatever works”. So, I let her do what she wanted.

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Another shooter remarked that I would now always have my Mom with me. Well, I will when I shoot this rifle, and as good as it works, that is going to be a lot.


Some of you older outdoor show “goers” may remember my Mom, when she worked with my Dad in the Midwest Outdoors’ and Great American Outdoors’ booths during outdoor shows.

A couple of videos that I shot regarding the Frontier Long Barrel are available on the Dan’s Fish ‘N’ Tales® You Tube channel at [www.youtube.com/dansfishntales](http://www.youtube.com/dansfishntales). One was the initial shooting with a Shoot-N-C target, and the second was plinking the toilet paper inserts after the installation of the memorial butt stock.

As with all reviews there is a bottom line. I would definitely recommend this rifle, but not for beginners, children or anyone who may have a problem with a longer rifle. For them I would recommend some of the shorter rifles, such as the youth models, or carbines, especially the Evil Roy and Small Game Carbine with Skinner Peep Sight, which will be a couple of other reviews. I would also recommend the engraving for any special situation – whether a presentation, gift or, as in my case, a special memorial.

The nice thing about Henry Repeating Arms is that there is a model that will fit about any person and budget, plus, as Anthony Imperato, president of Henry, says, “It is made in America, or not made at all.” Until next time, shoot safe, and have a great day of plinking.





**AT THE GOING DOWN OF THE SUN,  
AND IN THE MORNING.  
WE WILL REMEMBER THEM  
2009**

# Buffalo Soldier Crocodile

By Jofie Lamprecht

*"Because of the danger of crocodiles, swimming or bathing in the Kavango (1) River was strictly prohibited, but, inevitably, there were those who ignored the rule. One of them was Second Lieutenant R.N. Brits, who was taken by a crocodile on 14 November. His body was never recovered."*  
(2)

Known amongst friend and foe as "The terrible ones". This rag-tag group of Angolan soldiers were recruited and formed into arguably the best fighting force ever seen in Africa - the most decorated SADF (3) Unit since World War 2. From an unorganized rabble, to a fighting force with discipline and military precision – forever known as the 32-Battalion, or more fondly the 'Buffalo Soldiers'.

Their reputation was derived from operational successes. From its inception in 1975 until its disbandment in 1993 it was the most feared unit by its foes in Angola and SWA (4) and accounted for





more enemy losses than any other unit of the SADF. 32-Battalion was probably the most controversial unit of the SADF and its story virtually untold of the SWA/Namibian Border War. A war which took place against the back-drop of the cold war and which was in fact anything but cold in Africa. The 32-Battalion, which also became known as the most successful counter insurgency unit of the SADF, was comprised mainly of former FNLA (5) and other anti-communist fighters from Angola who had sworn allegiance to the South African government.

Together with their South African officers, these troops forged a formidable Battalion that became known as the best operational Battalion of the SADF – if not one of the best in the world. It is interesting to note that this South African Battalion only spoke Portuguese in their ranks – as well as while on the battle-field – officers and regular soldiers alike.

The Battalion did not only play an integral part during Operation Savannah in 1975 as well as all other major external operations of the SADF such as the Battle of Cuito Quanavale (6) in 1987/88, but from 1976 until 1989 the battalion was deployed on an almost permanent basis to conduct offensive operations mainly inside Angola, acting as a buffer between the SADF's regular forces and its communist enemies.

This elite unit's activities covered a wide spectrum ranging from counter-insurgency and guerrilla operations, reconnaissance missions through to semi-conventional and even fully-fledged conventional operations during the last phases of the war. In the last phases the 32-Battalion were also tasked more and more to assist Jonas Savimbi's guerrilla movement, UNITA (7), against the FAPLA (8) and Cuban onslaughts. Due to the nature of its work, the 32-Battalion's activities were highly classified, and few were privy to the contribution this unit had made towards the war effort in southern Angola.

The Battalion saw action all year round, which resulted in an unmatched Esprit de Corps (9) that gave this elite unit its unique and unconventional character.

*After the end of the war in 1989, made possible by the disintegration of the Soviet Block and the withdrawal of Cuban and other Communist nations troops from Angola, the unit was relocated to South Africa and all its foreign members were given South African citizenship. However,*



*after the conclusion of the Namibian war, the usefulness of the battalion had disappeared which together with the new political situation in South Africa led to the uneventful disbandment of the battalion in 1993.*

Their base on the banks of the Okavango River was also aptly called Buffalo base. What is left of these barracks today are just ruins, relics of a by-gone era. Driving through what once was barracks standing abandoned and then down closer to the river a graveyard. Now overgrown where only Dugga Boys come to visit and only for the shade offered by the dense canopy. A military graveyard where man, women and child were buried –this base distinctively allowed the families of the soldiers to stay on base.

And only after doing extensive research one can imagine what once was the base for this exceptional SADF Battalion.

A privilege it was for me to hunt this area, known today as Bwabatwa West National Park in the Caprivi Strip in today's independent and happy Namibia. The Caprivi, like the base, is not known by that name any longer. Now changed strangely to the 'Zambezi Region'. The tented camp perched on the steep rock banks of the Okavango River, gently sweeping by with an extreme danger lurking beneath its surface. What history in this paradise.

Gary is an old hunting friend of mine and we started what was to be a memorable hunt for some of Africa's most dangerous. We had baited Crocodile, stalked Crocodile and every time with no success. On the banks of this mighty river, there are hundreds of these prehistoric beasts and giant ones at that. It surprises me that there is only one on license every year in this huge area. Bureaucracy is hard to understand at the best of times.







Those setting quotas and maintaining the law would most likely never have set foot in this area.

Gary had successfully brain shot his Hippo, in the same spot where a few days before a bullet from his .375 H&H had BOUNCED off the head a large bull Hippo. We know this because we played back the videographer's footage and slowed it down to see the bullet fish tail of the skull of this fatty beast. The recovery process was going to be a

tough one.

We were too far down-stream from camp to bring the boat down so the game rangers volunteered their "boat" for the recovery of the Hippo. This boat was only 1.5 meters long and could barely take the weight of 'Rooi-Kat' (10), one of our Bushmen trackers and myself. The enthusiastic little Bushman running and knocking his comrades out of the way to get into the boat. Getting into the boat that was dangerously low in the water, I started paddling towards our now floating bloated Hippo. Rooi-Kat was paddling backwards away from the Hippo so we made slow progress. I finally told Rooi-Kat to stop paddling. He refused, insisting that I was paddling the wrong way. I stopped paddling and after a while inquired as to "whether we were getting closer to, or further away from the Hippo?" He turned and exclaimed "the current was particularly strong in this part of the river..." With that I grabbed his oar and threw it onto the crisp white sand beach being left with only one paddle in my hands and we were shortly thereafter next to our prey in







the water. Once we were there, I handed Rooi-Kat the rope and said he should get in the water and secure the Hippo with the rope. With a shocked look on his face he looked at me and exclaimed, “I can’t swim sir...” So I asked “what the hell were you doing in the boat?” – “It looked like a good idea at the time sir...”

I slid myself off the side of the little boat with the rope and secured the Hippo. Taking the rope towards land we now had to decide how to retrieve the Hippo. The bush was too thick where we were, the water too high. We decided that we would drag the Hippo downstream by hand. Another enthusiastic Bushman in the boat now joined Rooi-Kat and they started paddling in circles in the river, trying to figure out how to go forward. As four of us started pulling the Hippo downstream, our only assurance was our number and my double rifle lying in the small boat, a boat that we was also in-tow downstream. My rifle a false assurance is something were to happen in water this deep. After a nervous 100 yards one of the Bushmen started singing with a quivering voice. As he got to the chorus our whole team picked up the song and it picked up speed as well as enthusiasm. Chest deep in water, the song made time pass faster, made us pull harder and before we knew it we were in sight of the recovery team and vehicles more than a mile downstream.

Hippos were telling jokes all night. We woke bone weary after slaughtering the entire Hippo, returning the trophy to camp and driving every ounce of meat to the Bushman community of 2000 that lived uniquely in this National Park.

Our applied theory of Crocodile hunting had brought us no success. They are thought to be the oldest species that has stayed unchanged through the millennia had proven a worthy opponent. Days were getting short before the end of our safari with Gary. We had already secured the before mentioned Hippo, Cape Buffalo, Elephant, Reedbuck, Lechwe and Kudu – the Crocodile was to be the final species on this already successful hunt.

Driving again through relics of military installations from a by-gone era, where terrorists are now



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

freedom fighters in the best-run country in Africa - my mind drifted to what it must have been like. Row after row of accommodations, bathroom houses, store rooms with a safe door still attached and the old entertainment hall with projector lying shattered in the middle of the floor. It must have been a well-oiled machine.

It was well after our picnic lunch in the bush when we stopped well away from the site of the previous days carnage. Driving down a valley that once was the shooting range of the 32-Battalion, shot up vehicles and other pieces of metal now unidentifiable, lay abandoned in the over-grown undergrowth. I jumped off the truck with two of our trackers, double over my shoulder for security. We walked swiftly and silently to check our slaughter site. We had seen really big Crocodile days before in this area and hoped that we would have attracted him with all the blood in the water. We drew closer and we slowed down to a snails pace. Scanning the shoreline. We passed a patch of thick grass on the waters edge and I reached forward and grabbed the tracker in front of me. Thankfully the lead tracker senses my urgency and slowly sunk to the ground. We lay there for a while before I eased onto my feet and peeked over the top of the long grass. There in the shallow water was a monstrous Crocodile. Basking in the sun, while lying in the relative safety of the shallow water. He was there. We need to get Gary.

Slithering away to find cover the two trackers asked me what I had seen. From my elevated vantage point I was able to see what they could not "He is there. We need to get our hunter!" The two of them started giggling excitedly. My serious mood lifted by the sounds of silent laughter. It was



no time before we reached the truck.

Gary was an oilman from Oklahoma. He always took everything in his elegant stride and was always ready for action. He loaded and shouldered his rifle and was ready. We approached the white sand we had already disturbed and peeked over the cover. We then got on hands and knees and crawled closer. We got to 40 yards from where our quarry lay and set up the shooting sticks. We now lay in the sand and told Gary to take a nap while we waited for our prey to relax. Having gone over shot placement many times before, Gary was ready. Back-up shots had too been previously discussed so we were ready. Gary shoots a lot, but this shot was heavily considered before it rang out. As the shot broke from Gary's .375 double, my .470 double barked behind it. I ran forward to use my left barrel as another anchoring shot.

He lay in the shallow water, never to swim in the deep again. His path would lead him now to a ranch in rural Oklahoma where many would see him while visiting the trophy room there.



In the days that past after this hunt two interesting things happened, as well as a mystery that might never be solved. Once the Crocodile was skinned, the contents of the stomach was removed. This is done to check he stomach contents as well as remove pebbles that Crocodile swallow to aid in digestion. These pebbles are usually given to the client as a memento. What was found shocked and puzzled us. A hand full of R1 (11) rounds were recovered from his stomach. Most of them live rounds and some had been in his gut for so long that the stomach acid had eaten away at the brass that the bullet heads and cartridges had separated. How had this Crocodile gotten these bullets in its stomach? The one theory was that e might have caught a solider and eaten him with either a webbing belt of bullets or a handful of bullets in his pocket. Was this





the Crocodile that killed Second Lieutenant R.N. Brits? How these bullets of war got there will forever remain a mystery.

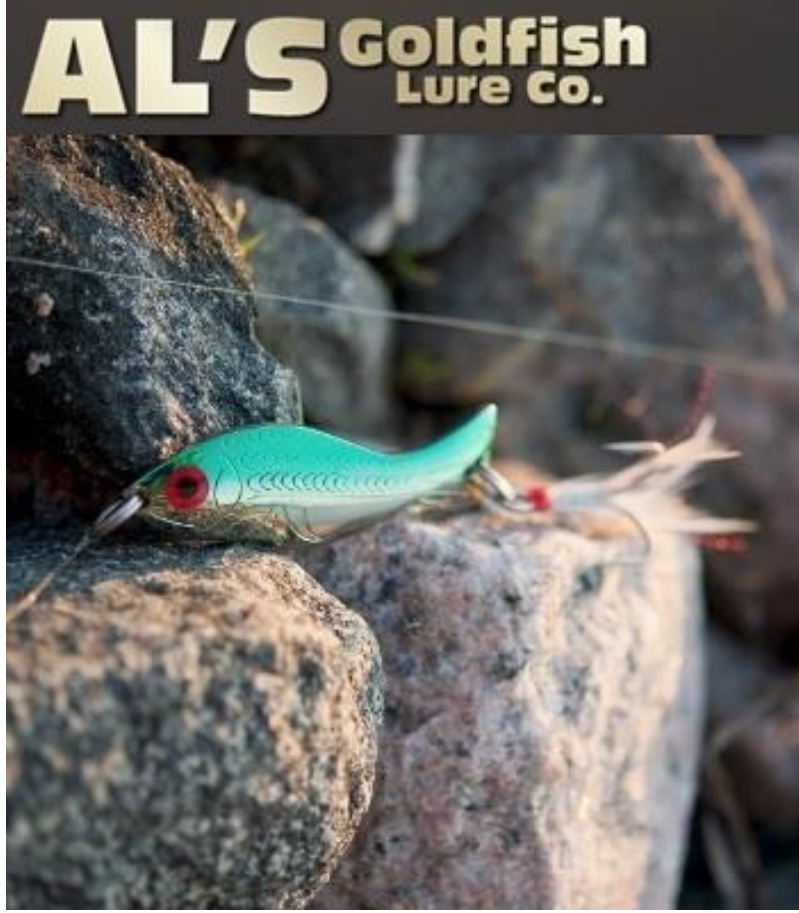
It is also interesting to note that this was the second biggest Crocodile ever to have been hunted in Namibia. Measuring 4.65 meters, we had almost 20 men struggle to pick him up – weighing easily over one ton.



*During the 1989 withdrawal the Okavango River was in flood and much higher than normal. According to Piet Nortjie the soldiers dumped vast amounts of ammunition – mostly R1 - into the river. The reason for this was never established. This was done between what was known as Kimbo and Buffalo base. Around April 1990 the river level was very low and the ammunition dump was exposed. Soldiers from the 32-Battalion were*

*sent back to Buffalo camp from South Africa to remove and destroy the ammunition. This is interesting historically because this would have been just weeks after Namibia's independence on March 21, 1990."*







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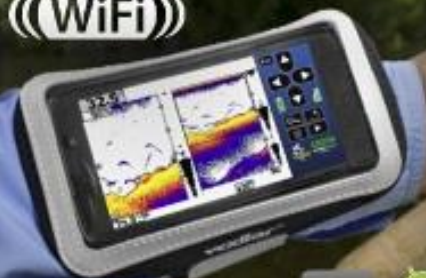
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