

MIDWEST **OUTDOORS** March 2025

DIGITAL EDITION

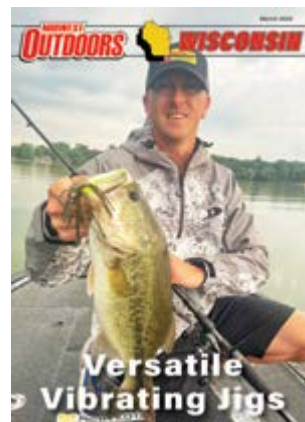
INCLUDES:
 Main section
 Canada Fever section
 Illinois section
 Minnesota/Dakotas section
 Wisconsin section
 Indiana/Michigan section
 Iowa/Missouri section
 Kentucky/Tennessee section



ILLINOIS
PAGE 55



MINNESOTA/DAKOTAS
PAGE 76



WISCONSIN
PAGE 97



INDIANA/MICHIGAN
PAGE 114



IOWA/MISSOURI
PAGE 131



KENTUCKY/TENNESSEE
PAGE 139



BUBBA[®] SMART FISH SCALE *Lite*



BEST-IN-CLASS ACCURACY
+/- 0.3% ACCURACY



DIGITAL LCD SCREEN
FULL COLOR AND BACKLIT



PAIR WITH BUBBA App
TRACK CATCHES AND TRIPS



60lb. WEIGHT LIMIT
UNMATCHED BEST-IN-CLASS

2024 Bassmaster Classic Champion Justin Hamner

“ *BUBBA changed the game with their Pro Series Smart Fish Scale. The new SFS Lite offers those same pro-grade features and gamification capabilities to your casual fishing trips with buddies, all at a price that everyday anglers can appreciate.* ”



See the full capabilities of the
SMART FISH SCALE *Lite*

BUBBA[®]



@BUBBA

#theultimatelifestyle #bubbahooked #watertoplate

www.bubba.com



ALL-NEW

MEGA LIVE 2

FORWARD-FACING SONAR

NEXT-GEN CLARITY. NEXT-LEVEL FUN.

What a time to be LIVE. New MEGA Live 2 Forward-Facing Sonar is your front-row seat to every epic catch, unfolding as it happens, with more action and clarity than ever before. Get a live look at fish and structure with jaw-dropping target separation, pulse-raising bait tracking and rock-solid image stability. See how fish react to your lure in real time, and dial in your attack with three viewing modes and 15 vibrant color palettes. MEGA Live 2 beats the hell out of staring at your bobber.

SEE **MEGA LIVE 2** IN ACTION



GO WHERE
THE FISH ARE

WORTH THE FIGHT

**QUEST™
SERIES**



**MOTHER NATURE MAY BE TOUGH.
THE QUEST™ SERIES IS TOUGHER.**

You don't need courage for the harshest conditions. You need the QUEST™ Series from Minn Kota®. These brushless motors don't back down from a fishing fight, built rugged with run-all-day battery life, a stealthy prop and game-changing torque to go where you can really prove your mettle. Choose between Ulterra® QUEST – featuring push-button Auto Stow and Deploy – or Terrova® QUEST for battle-tested toughness.

 **MINN KOTA®**

BEGIN YOUR QUEST



Buy, Save, Fish.

UP TO
\$4,000
INSTANT REBATE*
plus up to
\$1,000



eGift Card

(total of up to \$5,000 in value)

OR

5.49%
APR**

for 72 months

OR

6.49%
APR***

for 180 months



SCAN QR CODE®
FOR COMPLETE DETAILS*

LIMITED TIME OFFER
January 1 - March 31, 2025

WXR 2060



SKEETERBOATS.COM

LIMITED LIFETIME WARRANTY
Limited Lifetime Structural Warranty†
10 Year Limited Transferable Structural Warranty
3 Year Limited Component Warranty

†For the original purchaser; complete details in written Limited Warranty.

ENGINEERED LIKE NO OTHER



Visit Us On

*The instant rebate option is available to customers who reside in the U.S.A. or Canada only on select new (unused, not previously warranty registered) eligible 2024 & 2025 Skeeter boat models. The instant rebate of up to \$4,000 USD, applied at the time of final sale by dealer, plus a Tackle Warehouse® eGift Card of up to \$1,000 USD (exact amounts dependent on the model purchased) are provided at no extra cost. See dealer for model eligibility. Go to tacklewarehouse.com for gift card terms and conditions.

**Available for qualified tier 1 credit customers who reside in the U.S.A. only (not available in all states) and finance through Yamaha Motor Finance Corporation, U.S.A. Offer valid 1/1/2025 – 3/31/2025. 5.49% APR financing for 72 months at \$16.33 per month per \$1,000 financed based on pricing of 90% LTV or less, sales at MSRP will require 10% cash down plus payment of all taxes and fees to qualify. Must take delivery from retail stock by 3/31/2025 on purchase of new and eligible 2023 – 2025 Skeeter boats. Not all buyers will qualify. Higher financing rates apply for buyers with lower credit scores.

***Available for qualified tier 2 credit customers who reside in the U.S.A. only (not available in all states) and finance through Yamaha Motor Finance Corporation, U.S.A. Offer valid 1/1/2025 – 3/31/2025. 6.49% APR financing for 180 months at \$8.71 per month per \$1,000 financed based on pricing of 90% LTV or less, sales at MSRP will require 10% cash down plus payment of all taxes and fees to qualify. Must take delivery from retail stock by 3/31/2025 on purchase of new and eligible 2023 – 2025 Skeeter boats. Not all buyers will qualify. Higher financing rates apply for buyers with lower credit scores.

Yamaha Motor Finance Corporation, U.S.A., dba Yamaha Financial Services, is an affiliate of Yamaha Motor Corporation, U.S.A. offering financing solutions to support Yamaha Dealers and loyal Yamaha Customers nationwide.

©2024 Skeeter Products, Inc. All rights reserved. This document contains many of Skeeter's valuable trademarks. It may also contain trademarks belonging to other companies. Any references to other companies or their products are for identification purposes only, and are not intended to be an endorsement. Remember to observe all applicable boating laws. Never drink and ride. Dress properly with a USCG-approved flotation device (PFD) and protective gear. Boats may be shown with optional equipment. See your local Skeeter dealer for complete details. +Messaging and data rates may apply.

Shiver Me Timbers

Subtle crankbaits for cold-water bass

by Dave Csanda,
MidWest Outdoors editor

"Arrrgghhh! Shiver me timbers, matey! Y'er be walkin' the plank fer sure!"

No, we're not talking about the wooden leg of pirate Long John Silver. Rather, we're discussing the use of subtle crankbaits in spring, cold-water conditions.

Like many anglers, I carry a ton of crankbaits, but tend to rely on a few confidence lures. It's hard to argue with what works, most of time! Then again, if you don't experiment a bit with alternative lures, you'll never know what you might be missing.

No doubt, fat-bodied, hard-wobbling crankbaits do the trick for bass in summer and early fall. Their heavy vibration alerts fish to their approach and triggers aggressive strikes when they come within striking distance.

Yet sometimes, a typically good thing can be *too much of a good thing*. Like when the water is cold—50 F and down—during early spring and late fall. Aggressive pulsation and retrieve speed may actually be a turnoff to lethargic bass whose metabolisms are set to low thermostat by the chilly water. But if you tone down retrieve speed, and use lures that shiver, rather than throb, both largemouths and smallmouths may respond to their subtle persuasion.

In recent years, suspending minnow baits like Rapala X-Raps have been all the rage, and deservedly so. Give 'em a couple of slow, subtle pulls, followed by extended pauses, and they hang there, suspended before a



Subtle crankbaits are ideal for fishing flats, weeds and wood in cold-water conditions.

bass's eyes, just daring fish to strike. The only downside to this approach is that it takes a while to cover good areas, given all the pauses

involved. But they are indeed deadly effective.

As good as they are, this article isn't about those lures. But it is about others that you may already have somewhere in your tackle assemblage, especially if you fish "Up North."

First up, we're talking subtle shad imitators like the Rapala X-Rap, Bomber Fat-Free Shad and Berkley Bad Shad. These are extremely popular, multi-species lures, perhaps most popular with walleye anglers. But they catch all species, all year long, and are particularly effective in cold water, during cold fronts, and in the face of heavy fishing pressure. Thus,

today's big lesson is: Many subtle crankbaits used for walleyes all year long are also good for catching cold-water bass.

Often—though not exclusively—these lures are made from balsa, which makes them high-flotation when you pause your retrieve; they rise up toward the surface. Some also have what's described as a "lively" action when aggressively fished with twitches

and pauses. However, when you barely swim them along at slow speeds, with the occasional pause, their action is better described as "shivering," or at least a reduced wobble.

Many subtle crankbaits used for walleyes all year long are also good for catching cold-water bass.

TWO GREAT SHOWS!

MARCH 7-8-9, 2025

WARNER COLISEUM at the

Minnesota State Fairgrounds

Daily Admission - \$10 • 3-Day Pass - \$17 • 12 & Under FREE!

CASH ONLY AT THE DOOR



GEORGE'S TACKLE SHOP where kids make \$25 worth of muskie tackle and take it home **FREE!**

Retailers • Resorts • Guides
Tackle Manufacturers
Replicas • Factory Reps
Muskie, Inc. • Seminars & More!

KIDS MIDWAY with Games for Kids
Sponsored by Fishing for Life & **MUSKIES**

MINNESOTA ANGLERS

BOAT SHOW

Sponsored by:



Boats for Every Angler!

www.mn-muskieexpo.com

WAVEPRO
Patent Pending
HI-PERFORMANCE BOAT PEDESTALS

Available in 10", 12", 14" & 16" models

- Air cushion comfort
- Easy to install
- Tournament tested

WAVEPRO, LLC.
Phone: 612.834.4959
Email: sales@waveproshock.com
www.waveproshock.com

The Best Ride on the Water!

Moveable Hubs for Attwood, Springfield & Ranger bases

Unlike rounder-bodied, "fat" wobblers, they put out far less vibration, and sort of sneak or slither through the water, rather than pulsating. *Subtle* is a good descriptor, which is ideal for triggering strikes in cold-water conditions. In this case, less of a good thing is a good thing in cold water. Silent baits may outproduce those with internal rattles. You'll never know if you don't try.

In profile, these lures resemble shad and other baitfish like perch, whereas rounder-bodied, aggressive wobblers better mimic crayfish and bluegills. Thus, they are most often purchased and used in silvery-white or perch-patterned colors, whereas popular rounder baits often resemble some form of reddish-brown crayfish or light blue-brown-greenish bluegill patterns. All are, however, available in a rainbow of shades and combos; it's just that anglers seldom experiment outside the range of familiar or "logical" patterns unless shown that something off-the-wall also works.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention my fondness for the Shad Rap RS, which is a plastic-bodied, neutrally buoyant shad imitator that suspends when paused, rather than rising like a balsa lure. It combines reduced action with deadly hovering when paused. And when moved, internal rattles produce sound that alerts fish to its presence. A better combination of features for cold water is tough to find.

Finally, and perhaps something you might not carry in your tackle bag—unless you fish "down South"—are flat-sided crankbaits like the Bagley Flat Balsa B, Lungerhunt Flat-Sided Squarebill and slow-rising Rapala Flat Rap (longer-bodied, hard flashing). These tend to be the province of southern bass enthusiasts who understand how effective their subtle, shivering wiggle can be in cold water. But for some odd reason, many of



Left to right: Balsa Shad Rap 5, plastic Berkley Flicker Shad 7, plastic suspending Shad Rap RS and Bomber Suspending Fat Free Shad.

these lures never migrated north, and their popularity resides south of the Mason-Dixon line for use in reservoirs and rivers. Perhaps because their triangular body shapes better imitate shad, rather than crayfish or bluegills? Who knows?

Work these lures like shad baits: slow, subtle, simple. They tend to retain a *tight action* even at slower speeds, rather than beginning to wobble when slowed.

One potential advantage is that most are more snag-resistant around wood cover than shad imitators. Just keep 'em moving fairly steadily across submerged treetops, brush, logs, and rocks, and they should climb over sticks and branches fairly clean, with minimal

snags; certainly better than longer, thinner, minnow-shaped lures which flail their trebles in all directions, seemingly reaching out to *try* to catch wood because their thin bodies don't protect the treble points as well as broader-bodied lures.

Since many of these lures are made from lightweight balsa, they can be tough to cast in the wind. Switching from casting to spinning gear, and using 8- to-12-pound-test mono line, makes them a lot more fishable. Heck, pretend you're fishing for walleyes.

Once again, no disrespect to suspending minnow imitators like X-Raps or PXR Mavriks. They work wonders across weed and wood flats, and across rocky bottoms.

But when it comes to bumping wood with subtle attraction, flat-sided baits are better suited for bass extraction in cold water.

The next time you're heading out for bass in cold-water conditions, don't forget to bring along a few "flats" and "shads" for experimental purposes. After all, it's easy to shift your box of shad imitators from your walleye gear into the boat, just in case, to give bass the shivers. **MWO**

Dave Csanda has enjoyed 45-plus years in the fishing communications industry at In-Fisherman, Angling Edge and now, as editor of MidWest Outdoors. He is an inductee of both the Minnesota and National Fresh Water Fishing Halls of Fame.



SV

CONCEPT

TATULA SV TW REELS WITH HYPERDRIVE DESIGN

ANYTHING LESS AND YOU'LL FACE THE BACKLASH

SV TECHNOLOGY MAKES CASTING LIGHT WEIGHT BAITS EASIER, WITH FEWER BACKLASHES.

TATULA SV TW 150

» WITH INCREASED LINE CAPACITY FOR LARGER BAIT APPLICATIONS

TATULA SV TW 100

» WITH SV BOOST FOR ADDED CASTING DISTANCE

HYPERDRIVE DESIGN

TWS

T-Wing System



For more info visit: Daiwa.us

Catch the Late-Ice Jumbo Perch Migration

by Brian 'Bro' Brosdahl

Late ice is welcomed in the North, with thaws allowing anglers to move freely around the ice, enjoying mild temperatures. The worst is behind us now as the long grip of winter's subzero temperatures is slipping away. We still need relatively cold temperatures to ensure that the thick sheet of ice on northern lakes holds out. But this is when anglers can enjoy milder weather while on the quest for late-ice jumbos.

Be advised: Winter isn't over yet. I have had to shovel snow off docks on the Minnesota May walleye opener. However, the days are longer, and ice is as thick as it will get, allowing us to enjoy warmer outside weather during the late-ice season. A few years ago, I ice fished while the temperatures soared into the 60s. Even though the ice may be thick—in the 30- to 40-inch range—this will only last for a week or less before it turns into thick, rotten ice. This also depends on overnight temperatures and cold front resets. But water running down the holes and through the many forming cracks flushes fresh water into the stale shallows, luring and creating monster schools of big, fat, jumbo perch.

Where are they going

When targeting late-ice jumbos, it helps to understand why and where they are going. As the angle of the sun increases and the days become longer, perch instinct takes over, telling them to move toward shallower weed flats where they will find weed stalks or stubble to soon stick their eggs to. Following ice-out on reservoirs and rivers, perch will use willows and brush to get the job done.



The biggest perch you will ever see are typically caught at late ice. Anglers should photograph-and-release the big females and keep the males, which have a flat belly and more meat than the females due to the females' distended bellies.

The result looks similar to clear pantyhose skeins littered throughout the available substrates. But let's get back to late ice!

Before I drill out an area on my quest for jumbo perch, I highlight the weed beds or food shelves on my Humminbird

LakeMaster maps. This simple tool will highlight these areas on my Humminbird XPLORE, showing me all available areas that fall into these depth contours. I rank the best-looking areas on my highlighted map to begin RAZRing holes.

Some weed beds on large bodies of water are larger than farms—a thousand or more acres. Break weed beds up into three areas: outer, middle and inner areas. RAZR your holes 100 feet apart through these areas, then micro drill key areas after you find the

BULLET-PROOF

NEW POUNCE™ FLUORO BASS LEADER
 BUILT FOR A BETTER BASS CONNECTION IN WEEDS, ROCKS, DOCKS.
 100% EXCLUSIVE SEAGUAR FLUOROCARBON. IN 6-15 LB TEST ON 25-YARD SPOOLS.
 SEAGUAR.COM //

Seaguar
PERFORMANCE FISHING LINES

©2025 KUREHA AMERICA INC.



The author uses LakeMaster maps with 1-foot contours to find spots. He also watches for when fish hit his I-Fish Pro Deadstick before the flag trips.



Divide and conquer: The author's wife Heather fishes in an Otter fish house while he covers water. Some days, sitting and waiting produces the most fish; other days, you have to hunt them down.

jumbos. You could drop a MEGA Live 2 downrod and scan for swimming fish up to 100 feet away, or fish through drilled holes. It only takes one jumbo caught to give up the pod of jumbo perch.

Bro Pro Tip: I power my Humminbird XPLORE—MEGA Live 2 with a 12-volt, 30-amp-hour battery from Amped Outdoors. This will run my graph from morning until night with full brightness.

Search spoons

When covering water to locate school of jumbos, I usually start with a 1/8- to 1/4-ounce Northland Thumper Spoon. This spoon is thin-stamped brass, allowing it to tumble to the side; when jigged, it will somersault and roll down. Wonderbread, gold or sneeze are my first choices as search colors. And don't forget the three basic food groups of jumbos: minnows, maggots and waxworms! Add a minnow head, a "chandelier" of maggots, or a kite tail of waxworms. I drop the 1/4-ounce first since I am looking for larger perch to attack it. Try the 1/8-ounce under cold front conditions or when fishing a known finicky bite.

On deeper weed lines, try a Tungsten Slim Spoon for a faster fall and slender profile. I use a 28-inch St. Croix Custom Ice Perch Eye Spoon rod and a SEVIN GS 750 reel with 5-pound-test Sunline FC Sniper fluorocarbon line and a small size 8 Gamakatsu Snap Swivel. This keeps your line from spinning and coiling, and the fish are not spooked by the swivel. Sometimes, the swivel/leader protects your line from a northern pike bite-off.

Find and set

You just caught a jumbo. Now it's time to find out how big the school of perch is. Make a small grid of holes within a 100-foot span—no more than a dozen evenly spaced in a square. Spoon-jigging catches the active ones, but inactive ones are big, too. I set up deadsticks with a dropshot Gamakatsu red hook 15 inches above the dropper, baited with a dorsal-hooked fathead. Set these rods up in an I Fish Pro tip-up. While I'm jigging, I watch for my jumbo mouse traps to set off. Some days, the jigged spoon out-fishes the deadstick. Other days, the deadstick catches more and bigger jumbo perch. Either way, use the extra lines allowed in each state or province.

Jumbo perch will grab the fathead minnow and pull until they hook themselves. Other species of fish, such as walleyes, tend to drop the bait if they feel resistance. Jigging and deadsticking adds fun while fishing with a group of people taking turns or racing each other to the flags as they pop up!

Bro Pro Tip: I carry two different RAZR augers in my Otter ATV Monster Box. First, a 6-inch RAZR Synthetic Ultra Lite for drilling large numbers of holes while spoon-search fishing for jumbos. Then, an 8-inch RAZR if I'm using bigger holes for my MEGA Live 2 forward viewing transducer. The drills switch out in seconds on my hammer drill.

Cold weather reset button

Many times on late ice, air temperatures can be above 30 degrees, but Mother Nature can throw a wrench into your fishing plans in a hurry: Such as a balmy, 50-degree set

of days with water running down the holes and anglers concerned about an early ice-out... and then subzero cold fronts roll in. When the weather hits the reset button and throws a big arctic freeze into your late-ice trip, just remember that perch are simple creatures. They tend to backtrack to deeper flats adjacent to spring weed beds—usually mud flats down the break with a reasonable distance of less than a mile. The retreating jumbos are still hungry and will bite on spoons and deadstick baits. Downsize spoons to 1/8-ounce tungsten with pre-rigged plastics such as bloodworm or mayfly imitations tipped with a single maggot or waxworm.

I run the ice with my AFTCO Reaper hoodie. It has a unique feature—a build-in neck gaiter—to cover your face while using an ATV or snowmobile. This time of year,

anglers usually spread out as a group and cover broad areas on the ice, which is a big difference from fishing in a shelter during midwinter, covering less ice.

The barometer dictates the bite any given day. On the ice, even during a cold front, the tiniest rise—even a tenth—will spark a late-ice bite and raise activity levels. One of the best parts about late ice is that we get longer and brighter days, which is great because perch have poor vision and cannot see well in low-light conditions. **MWO**

Outdoor communicator Brian "Bro" Brosdahl lives in northern Minnesota and is a walleye guide in the Cass Lake, Leech Lake and Lake Winnibigoshish areas. Bro is a four-season fisherman and is especially known for his ice fishing knowledge and skills. For guide inquiries, contact: brosguideservice.com.

Catch
Vermilion
Gold

in
Lake Vermilion
Minnesota

One of the best multi-species trophy lakes in Minnesota.

Request your FREE guide & map at
LakeVermilionResorts.com
218-666-5850

See Us At
MN Deer & Turkey Classic - March 14-16
Canterbury Park in Shakopee, MN

MIDWEST OUTDOORS

111 Shore Dr., Burr Ridge, IL 60527
(630) 887-7722

MidWestOutdoors.com • info@midwestoutdoors.com

PUBLISHER	Dan Ferris
MAGAZINE EDITOR	Dave Csanda
MANAGING EDITOR	Dena Gervasi
GENERAL MANAGER/MEDIA DIRECTOR	Chuck Gekas
ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGER	Tina Pelletier
CUSTOMER SERVICE	Amanda Heino
PRODUCTION MANAGER	Dena Gervasi
ART PRODUCTION	Ann Littleson, Karin Pecoraro
PHOTO & ART EDITOR	Wojciech Mietka
SALES DIRECTOR	Mark Hunkeler
ADVERTISING SALES	Larry Ladowski, Jim O'Neil
MINNESOTA SALES	Roger Cormier, Greg Jones
MAILING DEPARTMENT	Charlie Birong
TV & VIDEO DIRECTOR	Dennis Leppell
FIELD PRODUCERS	Seth Meyer, Tim Pumper
SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR	Jim O'Neil
FOUNDERS	Gene and Gail Laulunen

SENIOR CONTRIBUTORS

L.P. Brezny, Brian Brozdahl, Dan Brozowski, Joe Bucher, Brandon Butler, Roger Cormier, Dan Dauw, Mike Cyze, Brad Durick, Dan Galusha, Dave Genz, John Hageman, Mike Iaconelli, Jim Kalkofen, Don Lamont, Scott Leysath, Mark Martin, Walt Matan, Jason Mitchell, Dave Mull, Dr. Ken Nordberg, Anne Orth, Jerry Pabst, Spence Petros, Ted Pilgrim, Paul Prorok, Andrew Ragas, Tony Roach, Jim Saric, Ted Takasaki, Tom Watson, Marc Wisniewski, Mike Yurk

CONTRIBUTORS

Keith Bell, John Bennett, Jerry Carlson, John Cleveland, Andy Douglas, Mike Frisch, Capt. Lee Haasch, Joe Henry, Jack Hirt, Tim Huffman, Bob Jensen, Larry Ladowski, Alison Marie, John Murray, Phil Piscitello, Ashley Rae, Mike Schoonveld, Colby Simms, Ray Simms, Ron Stresing, Bill Takacs, Doug Thalacker, Blake Tollefson, Johnny Wilkins, Cory Yarmuth

ILLINOIS CONTRIBUTORS

Dan Brozowski, Don Banning, Dan Dauw, Don Gasaway, Jeremiah Haas, AJ Hauser, Jason Houser, Chauncey Nizio, Jim O'Neil, Jerry Pabst, Mike Ratter, Mike Roux, Mary Satterfield, Colby Simms, Bill Takacs, Phil Trager

INDIANA-MICHIGAN CONTRIBUTORS

Tom Berg, Brandon Butler, Andy Duffy, Rick Fowler, Michael Graves, Bob Holzhei, Ken Mitchell, Jack Payne, Darin Potter, Mike Ratter, Mike Schoonveld, Jack Spaulding, Bill Takacs, Vikki Trout

IOWA-MISSOURI CONTRIBUTORS

Brandon Butler, Chet Donath, Jeremiah Haas, Tony Humeston, Mike Roux, Steve Weisman

MINNESOTA CONTRIBUTORS

Jerry Carlson, Dennis Foster, Mike Frisch, Josh Hagemeister, Marlene-Odahlen Hinz, Steve Mattson, Scott Petersen, Troy Smutka, Glenn Walker

TENNESSEE/KENTUCKY CONTRIBUTORS

Troy Basso, Don Gasaway, Josh Honeycutt, Ken McBroom, Lee McClellan

WISCONSIN CONTRIBUTORS

Len Harris, Jerry Kiesow, Joel Kunz, Tom Luba, Stephen Norling, Doug Thalacker, Blake Tollefson, Loren Voss, Marc Wisniewski, Mike Yurk

MidWest Outdoors (ISSN 0747-3648) is published by MidWest Outdoors Ltd., 111 Shore Drive, Burr Ridge, IL 60527. Periodicals Postage Paid at Oak Brook, IL 60527 and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to MidWest Outdoors, 111 Shore Drive, Burr Ridge, IL 60527-5885.

© Copyright, 2025. Written permission must be obtained to reprint photographs and editorial material.

MidWest Outdoors magazine is published 10 times per year, with 8 monthly issues (January thru June, November and December) and 2 double issues (July-August and September-October) by MidWest Outdoors Ltd., 111 Shore Drive, Burr Ridge, IL 60527-5885, www.MidWestOutdoors.com, Phone: 630-887-7722. Subscription rates: one year, \$19.95; two years, \$39.90; three years, \$59.85. Single copy price, \$4.99. Digital edition: one year, \$9.95.

Unsolicited manuscripts and photographs are welcome, and all will be considered. All submissions and photos must be emailed to: info@midwestoutdoors.com. Any material accepted is subject to such revision as is necessary in our sole discretion to meet the requirements of the publication. For writer guidelines and/or instructions on sending photos via email go to midwestoutdoors.com/mwo-writers or send requests to info@midwestoutdoors.com. Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author's and do not necessarily represent the views of MidWest Outdoors Ltd.



On the cover

Versatility reigns supreme, but trying to cover all the options can get out of hand. Andrew Ragas suggests limiting yourself to a couple of rods, a few key smallmouth lures, and then honing your skills for success. Read all about it on page 18.

Short Shots & Small Catches

Dan Dauw

They just won't go away

We're talking about the invasive zebra mussels. Some states have tried various methods to get rid of the pesky mussels. They came over to North America via contaminated ballast water in cargo ships. They were first discovered in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but were probably in our waters earlier.

So, what's all the fuss about the tiny inch or less zebra-colored mussels? To start with, they multiply quickly and attach themselves in high numbers to native mussels, eventually killing them. They can be spread from lake to lake, river to river. They hitchhike on watercraft, trailers, boat docks, etc. In short, they disrupt aquatic animals.

One of the best ways to help eliminate or slow the critters from going to other waters is to clean your boat, outboard and trailer after you have pulled it from the water. Also, get rid of the water in your transom and livewell before your next boating trip. We cannot eliminate them completely, but we can keep them in check by not spreading them to other bodies of waters.

'Toad' you so

Like frogs, toads start off as small tadpoles. It takes about 30 days before the water breathing tadpoles turn into air-breathing adults. Unlike frogs, a toad's skin has lots of bumps and no, you won't get warts if you touch a toad. However, they can produce a toxin, which if ingested, can make a predator sick.

Red-headed woodpecker

This is my favorite of all the birds that stop at our birdfeeders, although I only saw "Woody" one time last year. It may be that we're not putting out the right type of seeds. I've read that they store snacks, like acorns (we've no oak trees in our backyard jungle) and other seeds. They like grasshoppers, too. Red-headed woodpeckers like to hang out in dead trees, and I'm not sure our cottonwoods fit the bill.

Bambi gets older

As white-tailed deer grow older, their antlers grow bigger. Male fawns are called, "button bucks," and have small nubs on their heads. Later in the year, the majority of bucks have "spike" antlers. By the seventh year, a buck's antlers are usually as big as they will ever get.

Grasslands important

As time marches on, we have less and less grasslands in our country. Much of grasslands are being converted into farmland. I can understand it, as farmers need to make a living, and corn, beans, wheat, etc. are obviously more cash productive. On the other side of the coin, grassland birds and other animals need to be conserved. Hopefully, some legislation proposed could provide landowners or businesses with incentives to save all or a portion

of grasslands. Hopefully, the new Administration and Congress will act on saving our important grasslands. The Izaak Walton League of America is a good watchdog and advocate of preserving our lands and waters.

Yet another non-profit organization with the same intentions is Living Lands & Waters. Since 1998, Chad Pregracke, founder and president, and his band of 134,813 volunteers, have done an outstanding job of helping to clean-up our environment. For example, his organization has removed 13,595,555 pounds of junk from some of our rivers and streams. They have also planted 2,139,378 trees over the years.

Mouthwash

There need to be more studies done, but alcohol-based mouthwash may cause bacteria associated with gum disease. Alcohol-free mouthwash is available.

Freshwater jellyfish

Yes, there is such a thing! Most of us only associate jellyfish with the oceans, but depending on where you live, and if the surface water temps reach 80 degrees, you might see one in fresh water. They can sting like their marine cousins, but they won't break the skin. Their sting usually causes itching or redness, if anything at all. I remember years ago, I stepped on a saltwater jellyfish on my birthday in Corfu, Greece. That was not a pleasant way to spend a birthday!

One ugly bird

I'm referring to the turkey vulture. The two kinds of vultures most often seen in our country are the turkey vulture and the black vulture. The former having a red head and white beak. The latter has a gray to black head. It also has white patches at the end of its wings.

Vultures actually slow down the spread of diseases. They gather to a rapidly remove animal carcasses. If left to rot, the buildup of rotting flesh harbors bacteria, parasites and other disease-causing organisms. Vultures may be ugly, but they do some good.

Humor

We should invent a beer they call, "Occasionally." So, when asked, I can honestly say, "I drink occasionally."

Last night my obese parrot died. It was a huge weight off my shoulders.

Yesterday my doctor said I had six months to live. I told him I couldn't pay the bill, so he gave me another six months. **MWO**

Dan Dauw writes outdoor columns for two local newspapers and MidWest Outdoors. He first became a writer while in the U.S. Navy, writing articles for his ship newspaper. He has been an avid hunter and angler for most of his 76 years. Dauw retired from the U.S. Postal Service in 2000.

Access your Digital Edition today!

FREE to every MWO subscriber

INCLUDES:

- » ALL six state sections—30+ articles per month
- » Additional marked lake maps
- » More than 30 past issues of MWO

Read MWO
on-the-go on any
online device!

HOW TO ACCESS YOUR DIGITAL EDITION—

1. Go to: MidWestOutdoors.com/mysub
2. Enter your account number & zip code (located on your magazine label)
3. Click "View Digital Editions"

MidWestOutdoors.com/mysub

WANT TO SUBSCRIBE? PRINT + DIGITAL \$19⁹⁵ yr. | DIGITAL ONLY \$9⁹⁵ yr. MWOMag.com

Give Your Live Bait Some Extra Bling and Action

by Walt Matan

Live bait is always effective, no matter what species of fish you target, be it through the ice or in open water. We have all used live bait at one time or another, and most of us used it when we first started fishing as kids. That being said, when I'm heading out fishing this month, I'll be bringing along some live bait. You should, too!

March is the month of opportunity for fishermen. There are so many choices for the Midwestern angler that it's hard to decide. Should I fish the river for walleyes and sauger? Head south for crappies? Or hit the ice up north a few more times?

March ice fishing is some of the best of the year. While a lot of ice anglers are worn out by now and just want the weather to warm up, not me; I'm still fired up about ice! I've had some of my best ice fishing in Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota and on up into Canada in March and even April. Remember, as the ice thins, safety becomes a big concern; it's time to use your spud bar to test the ice for strength. I wear my Graff-USA float suit at all times this month.

This winter, I've caught more fish (of all species) on Custom Jigs & Spins old, reliable Demon Jig and the New Puki jig—a tungsten version of the Demon. My most productive colors on the Demons and Pukis are the Wonderglow colors. Whether I give them a little jolt with a UV flash or just lower them down the hole, they are hot!

One reason that these jigs are ultra-productive with live bait is because of their thin-wire hooks. Whether you are piercing spikes or waxworms with the size 10 or adding a minnow to the size 6 or 4, your live bait will still remain lively... which is the whole point of fishing with live bait.

When I'm ice fishing for bluegills, the size 10 Demon is a go-to lure on one rod at all times. A slow jiggle on the lift and a controlled slow fall, followed by an extended pause and jiggle, is usually all the action that's needed to catch a "mess" of gills! Plus, the Demon's light weight allows a bluegill to suck it in without any resistance. It's when they feel resistance that they tend to drop it.

If I'm in my tent or it is calm outside, the Demon is the way to go. When I'm fishing deeper (over 10 feet) or it's really windy and hard to detect bites out in the elements, the extra weight of the tungsten Puki is what I need.

Crappies are a different story. A crappie will come in and slam the jig; a little extra weight of tungsten doesn't reduce the number of strikes like it does with bluegills. I'll catch crappies all day long on that tiny size 10 Puki, but the added size and flash of the size 6 and size 4 really gets the larger crappies going.

Spikes or waxworms produce on crappies, as do minnows. Match the minnow size to the hook size; use a crappie minnow on the size 6 and a larger, walleye-sized one on the size 4. For crappies, I'll set up a deadstick with a tail-hooked minnow, which



The author with a pair of giant crappies caught on the size 4 Puki.



The light-wire hook and bright colors of the Puki will bling your bait.

sometimes is more effective than jigging.

Walleyes really love a size 4 Demon and Puki. While most anglers prefer jigging with heavier spoons, sometimes—especially in late season—a finesse approach is more effective. I'll use a minnow head or a whole minnow on these jigs. I'll also use them on tip-ups, deadstick and rattle reels. The little extra color and flash of these jigs gives the minnow that extra bling!

When it comes to open-water fishing in March, I'm after walleyes, sauger and crappies. When I'm fishing the Mississippi and Wisconsin Rivers, I like to use two rods in the boat. On the Wisconsin, I'll anchor up with the Spot-Lock when I see walleyes or sauger on the Sidescan, and then cast up-current with a BfishN Tackle H2O Jig tipped with AuthentX Plastic like a Pulse-R or Moxi. The jig needs to be just heavy enough so that the jig-n-plastic slips slowly, ticking bottom occasionally.

I'll hang an extra rod or two in the holders with a 1/2- to 3/4-ounce Lindy weight with a swivel and 2-foot leader to a Wonderglow Demon 4 and a fathead. If there are short strikers, I'll slip on a stinger hook. You could use a hook with a Lindy weight, but if you watch the action of that Demon in the current, you will never use a plain hook again! It shimmies and shakes and really attracts.

When I'm on the Mississippi, I'm a Dubuque rig kind of guy. I'll tie on a three-way swivel, put a 1/2- to 5/8-ounce H2O jig six inches below with a Pulse-R or Moxi, and then two feet back off the open swivel goes the size 4 Demon with a minnow. Sometimes, I'll put on a few beads ahead of the Demon, even adding a little



Open wide!

most anglers use, and it is very deadly. It has color, flash, action and a little extra bling that crappies love!

Well, there you have it! March is a great month to fish; you just need to figure out where you want to go and what species to fish for. Bringing along a Supply of Custom Jigs & Spins Pukis and Demons and some fresh live bait guarantees success! **MWO**

Walt Matan has been a writer and television host for MidWest Outdoors for more than 30 years. An avid ice and open-water fisherman, he currently lives in the Quad Cities on the shores of the Mississippi River. He is the chief lure designer for Custom Jigs & Spins and B Fish N Tackle, customjigs.com. Follow/like Custom Jigs & Spins, B-fish-N Tackle, Walleye College and Walt Matan on Facebook.



Nice fish taken on the Demon deadstick minnow setup.

propeller on the line or a small Indiana blade on a clevis; there are lots of options!

Early-spring, open-water crappie action occurs around piers, channels, brush piles and weed edges. This is float and Demon time! Walking a shoreline around a marina, or casting to piers in a boat, is a great way to fill a stringer, catch dinner or even a trophy. I like to use a small Rocket Bobber with a size 4 Demon or Puki and a top-fin-hooked minnow. This is a different presentation than

Where the golden age of resorting still exists.

FREE MAP COUPON

Receive a **FREE 17"x22" Map of Lake Chippewa Flowage**

Includes all resort locations and member businesses. Also camping islands, river channels, snowmobile and ATV trails.

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____
 State _____ Zip _____

Where did you get this coupon?
 Sports Show Where? _____
 Subscription Other

Mail to: L.C.F.R.A. Maps
 P.O. Box 1055 • Hayward, WI 54843 MO 2025

Wisconsin's Largest Wilderness Lake!

- Year Round Fishing & Wildlife Watching
- World Class Events
- Shop, Golf, Kayak, Swim, Fish, Eat & Relax
- 600 miles of Snowmobile & ATV Trails
- World Class Cross Country Skiing & Mountain Biking

DOWNLOAD MAP HERE

Visit chippewaflowage.com to check out places to stay, up-to-date fishing reports, fishing tournaments, local eats & more!



Whistles are Essential Signaling Devices

For many outdoor enthusiasts, no matter what their arena of adventure, the most basic of survival kits is a trifecta consisting of a knife, a ferro stick or other fire starter—and a whistle! As a primary and very effective piece of signaling gear, many times the whistle is added as an afterthought, a mere, toot-producing, referee whistle-shaped chunk of plastic to clip onto one's "real" survival equipment.

Upon closer understanding and awareness, however, the virtues the whistle as a crucial sound-signal reveal how critical a piece of "survival" gear it really is.

A whistle has three primary functions/uses in the outdoors: 1) an audible signal for help; 2) used to convey pre-determined field messages/presence to others in the field; and 3) used to ward off/deter predators. Of these—and other uses—the whistle should be considered as a major tool for signaling for help in nearly any emergency situation.

How long do you think your vocal cords will hold up if you are crying out at the top of your lungs, hour after hour, as you lie injured—off the beaten path—or anywhere that might visually mask your location and situation? A good signaling whistle, with its prolonged sheer, piercing blast of high-pitched sound, can produce an audible signal for as long and as often as you can blow into it; and depending upon style/design, can push that sound outwards of hundreds of yards, and perhaps even a mile or more, depending on a variety of factors.

A "whistle" can be created using a tube with one end plugged (the soda bottle technique). Using the body of a ball-point pen, or even fashioning a tube from the thin, but stout bark of a tree or plant can work, too. However, it's better to rely on a dependable emergency whistle as a main component of your survival kit.

The most significant criteria for whistles are the levels/intensity of sound they can produce. The many dynamics of "sound" all play into the overall effectiveness of the whistle. A whistle specifically designed as a signaling device is much louder than what you hear from a referee's whistle in a gym or even playing field.

Most whistles are designed to house one or more sound chambers and resonators; the more they have, the louder the sound they will produce. The intensity of the sound they are capable of producing is measured in decibels (dB). Most whistles produce a sound in the range of 100-140-plus dB. Anything over 125 dB will cause permanent damage on unprotected ear.

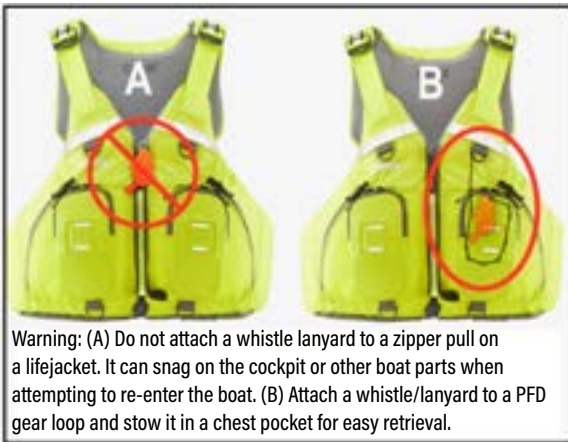
Here are some average, everyday dB levels of common sounds:

- Conversation – 60
- Shouting – 89
- Power Tools – 90
- Snow Machines – 100
- Jets at take-off – 120-140
- Chain saws – 121
- Gunshots – 140-160

As these levels increase, so, too, does the level of damage that sound can cause:

- 105 dB – pain
- 107 dB – dizziness
- 120 dB – nausea
- 130 dB – instant pain
- 135 dB – instant ear damage
- 152 dB – ruptured ear drum
- 170 dB – immediate deafness
- 200 dB – instant death

Some of the loudest whistles caution users to cover their ears when using their high-dB-level devices (some even furnish earplugs with the whistle).



Warning: (A) Do not attach a whistle lanyard to a zipper pull on a lifejacket. It can snag on the cockpit or other boat parts when attempting to re-enter the boat. (B) Attach a whistle/lanyard to a PFD gear loop and stow it in a chest pocket for easy retrieval.

Note that the increase in dB levels is logarithmic, meaning that 10 dB is ten times as loud as 0 dB; but 20 dB is 100 times more than 10 dB.

Sound travels in waves of vibrating particles and is affected by the environment, notably the characteristics of the air through which those sound waves travel. Sound can travel through water, air and solids, but not in a vacuum. How many, and what form of particles, can influence the quality of the sound produced by the wave. Changes in moisture content, velocity of the wind, and air temperature can all alter the sound wave's path from whistle to target.

Wind is the most common wild card in how effective a whistle will ultimately be in projecting the higher levels of dB needed to be heard across expansive areas.

Many kayakers who carry whistles know that those "referee" types with the rattling pea inside tend to clog up due to caked-on saltwater that causes the ball/pea to stick and render the whistle useless. Today, most every "survival/emergency" signal unit is "pea-less." They are much less prone to clogging, sticking or otherwise jamming up. In fact, a few models can produce sound underwater due to the chambers built into the housing.

A word of caution to those who wear whistle while paddling (particularly kayaks): Do not attach the whistle to the zipper pull on your PFD/lifejacket! In the event of attempting a re-entry into your craft after a capsize, the whistle can catch on edges or lines on your deck and literally strip the jacket off you as you attempt to re-enter your boat. Some whitewater paddlers have also had their whistle literally pull down the zipper due to the strong, circulating current in a whitewater capsize, due to the agitation of the water constantly tugging at the whistle. It's better to attach the lanyard to a strap or loop and secure the whistle in a chest pocket.

Whistles are quite light whether made from thicker, more durable plastic models with the characteristic "referee"-shaped body such as the Fox 40 series of whistles, or the various styles in the ACME Tornado series (including the kazoo-shaped 649 Survival model; or the unique design of the Storm or HyperWhistle. There's also the metal tubular Vargo Titanium Emergency Whistle that weighs a mere 0.1 ounce! It's important to choose a design and materials that will withstand abuse and colder temperatures, too.

While the trio of survival units (knife/ferro/whistle) are good sets to carry anytime you are in the field, there is another option as well (albeit the whistles are sometimes of questionable effectiveness). Consider some of the multi-tools that feature a combination of compass, knife, ferro rod or other fire-starting options, blade sharpener and whistle (usually molded into the handle or body of the unit). Cheap recreational whistles or tiny, dime-sized compasses with a blow hole for a whistle are not realistic tools to be relied upon.

Important factors to consider when selecting a signal whistle:

- 1) **Value** – Don't break your bank; rather, find one that's reasonably priced. In fact, buy several and stow them throughout your gear.
- 2) **Loudness** – Obviously, it must produce sounds at levels to be heard afar (100-140 dB is the standard range); this is most often determined by the whistle's design and how hard you blow into it.
- 3) **Effectiveness** – About the same as loudness, but some designs offer chambering that makes the pitch higher or easier to produce.
- 4) **Durability** – Select thicker plastic or metal for withstanding abuse in the field. Balancing the weight of the whistle with the quality of the material should be a deciding factor as well.
- 5) **Versatility** – Can it be used underwater? (As a kayaker for over 30 years, I've never had a need to use a whistle underwater?) Can it be easily attached or hung from a lanyard? Is it incorporated into a multi-use survival kit/tool?

Giving a child a whistle to wear outdoors on camping trips or just walking in the woods and instructing them to use it as a signaling tool (and not a toy!), is good insurance towards them being found should they become lost or in danger.

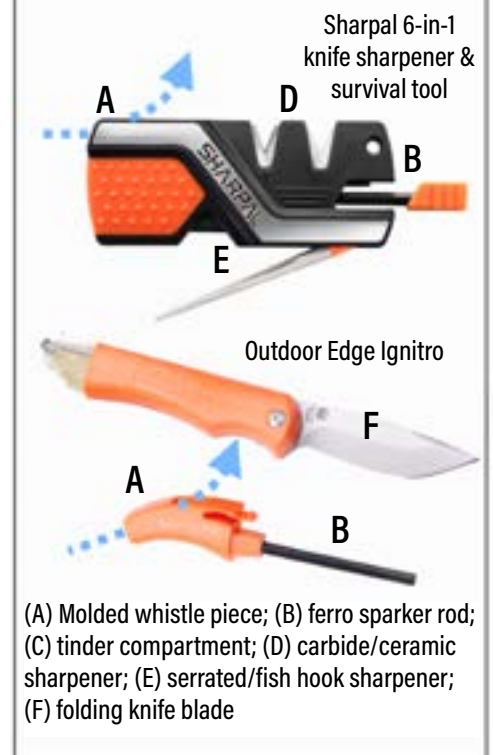
There are literally dozens of quality emergency whistles on the market, the loudest being an ear-damaging 140=plus dB. I suggest buying several and making sure that you always carry one with you (add one to your car keys' fob). Remember the old survival sense saying: "If you don't have it on you, you don't have it!"

Check out whistles on the web. It'll be hard to make a wrong choice among all those available, and the variations in dB levels produced, as well as other design factors, are minimal if you take your selection seriously. **MWO**

Tom Watson is a former team member of Kodiak Island Search & Rescue, kayak tour operator, and author of "How to Think Like a Survivor: A Guide for Wilderness Emergencies;" "Best Tent Camping—Minnesota;" "60 Hikes Within 60 Miles Minneapolis and St. Paul" and "Best Minnesota Camper Cabins." (All available on Amazon.) He's a freelance writer and presenter on self-reliance and other outdoor topics. tomoutdoors.com.



Multi-tools/Knives with Whistles

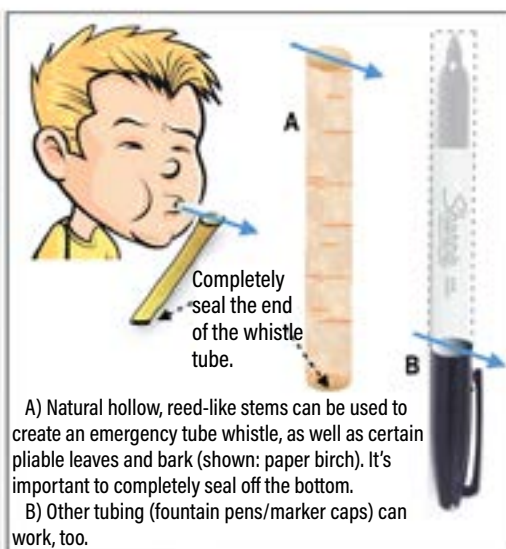
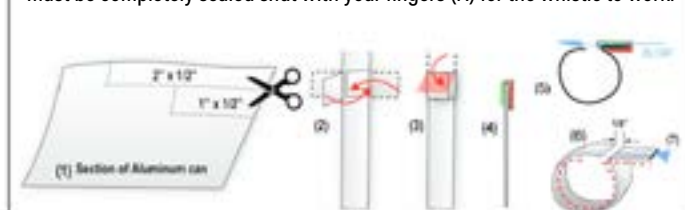


(A) Molded whistle piece; (B) ferro sparker rod; (C) tinder compartment; (D) carbide/ceramic sharpener; (E) serrated/fish hook sharpener; (F) folding knife blade

DIY Emergency Whistles



This tiny whistle, fashioned from two narrow strips cut from the soft aluminum of a beverage can (using scissors on a Swiss knife or multi-tool), makes a modest piercing sound that could carry a fair distance. Both sides must be completely sealed shut with your fingers (A) for the whistle to work.



A) Natural hollow, reed-like stems can be used to create an emergency tube whistle, as well as certain pliable leaves and bark (shown: paper birch). It's important to completely seal off the bottom.
B) Other tubing (fountain pens/marker caps) can work, too.

DUMPER DAN'S CHARTER FISHING FLEET

NEW CONDOMINIUMS • RIVERFRONT STORE
SHEBOYGAN, WISCONSIN

**PROVEN
#1 LEADER
IN THE
INDUSTRY!**

**DECADES OF
OVER 1,000
TRIPS PER
SEASON!**



AS SEEN
ON TV



30 POUNDER



20 POUND STEELHEAD



LUXURY RIVERVIEW CONDOS

- SIX ANGLER PACKAGE -
TWO 5 HOUR CHARTERS

Only **\$329** Each

LODGING INCLUDED!

- ADDITIONAL PACKAGES AVAILABLE -
1-6 PEOPLE PER BOAT (NOW BOOKING)

*Luxurious Riverfront Condo
Upgrades Available!*



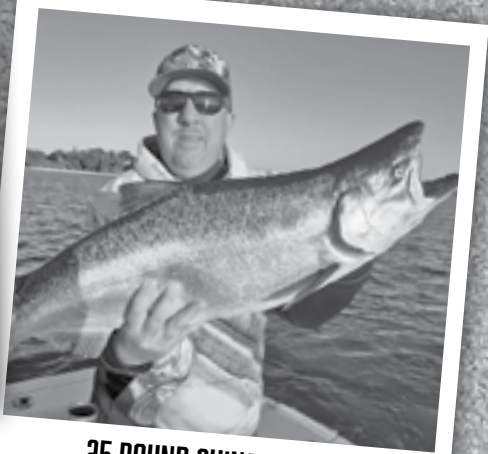
COHO SALMON BEAT DOWN



COOLER BUSTING CATCH



28 POUNDER



25 POUND CHINOOK SALMON

**FISHING PACKAGES
WITHOUT LODGING
(RATES ON OUR WEBSITE)**



FULLY STOCKED STORE



BIG KING SHEBOYGAN STYLE



MIDWEST OUTDOORS TELEVISION



BIG FISH FOR SHEBOYGAN'S MAYOR

- SIX ANGLER PACKAGE -
TWO 6 HOUR CHARTERS

Only **\$369** Each

LODGING INCLUDED!

- ADDITIONAL PACKAGES AVAILABLE -
1-6 PEOPLE PER BOAT (NOW BOOKING)

*Luxurious Riverfront Condo
Upgrades Available!*



IN HOUSE TAXIDERMIST



DUMPER DAN DAILY DOUBLE

- SIX ANGLER PACKAGE -
**5 HOUR & 8 HOUR
CHARTERS**

Only **\$399** Each

LODGING INCLUDED!

- ADDITIONAL PACKAGES AVAILABLE -
1-6 PEOPLE PER BOAT (NOW BOOKING)

*Luxurious Riverfront Condo
Upgrades Available!*

SINCE 1985

Catching the Most Fish ★ Running The Most Trips ★ Wisconsin's #1 PROVEN Charter Fishing Leader!

(A Proven Fact Indicated by Wisconsin DNR Records!)

CLEAN, MODERN BOATS, AN EXPERIENCED PROFESSIONAL CREW AND A ONE OWNER BUSINESS MAKES THE DIFFERENCE!

**YOU CAN'T
BEAT THE FLEET
6 BIG BOATS!**

Reservations, Information, Fishing Reports and Videos at:

www.dumperdan.com or call **920-377-1147**

**THE MOST POPULAR
NAME IN THE INDUSTRY!**



March Could Resume as a Transitional Month on Western Lake Erie This Year



This walleye far exceeded the 15-inch minimum size limit.

In the past, March was a transitional walleye fishing month on western Lake Erie, when the first half or longer was done through the ice; and the second half, give or take, occurred in the tributary rivers fished by shoreline or wading anglers, or on the western basin reefs area using boats.

However, in many recent years, ice fishing was only a nostalgic memory, and open-water fishing in the lake remained viable throughout the entire winter.

While the "end of the 2025 winter weather" story, as it relates to fishing as of the time of this writing in late January, is not fully played out, at least some ice fishing has been possible and will occur at least into February in places.

By the second week of January, anglers were able to begin ice fishing between the Bass Islands, specifically off South Bass Island, where the village of Put-in-Bay is located.

By January 14, residents of nearby Middle

Bass Island marked their trail that serves as a winter road to Put-in-Bay, providing them access to some of the amenities found there, such as an open restaurant and a hardware store, beverage center, and gas station. Each provides groceries, and snacks and various supplies that are not available on their own island during winter.

One important commodity that eluded the island's anglers ahead of the ice cover this year was emerald shiners, which normally swarm the docks in great numbers.

Residents usually stockpile their own supply of these favored minnow species ahead of the ice fishing season since there are no bait and tackle shops on the islands that sell minnows.

Although emerald shiners were present by the millions during November, savvy anglers know that to crowd these fragile fish in their custom-built, screened-in wood or plastic barrel enclosures, called "minnow cars," before their scales harden is a certain



Walleyes will bite the ugliest lures when on the prowl. Photos: John Hageman



Mixed bags are possible through the ice.

recipe for high mortalities.

Once water temperatures drop below 40F, the rate of fungal infections spreading throughout the crowded, enclosed, schools of bait drops significantly.

As the calendar page turned to January,

the minnows remained "no shows," and the Miller Boat Line announced the end of their commercial ferry boat season, residents of Put-in-Bay made arrangements through ice guide Aaron "Vern" Schroeder to order their supply of emerald shiners at the going

#1 Port for King Salmon

ALGOMA

Capt. Lee Haasch

Haasch
GUIDE SERVICE

3 Large Boats
Grand Illusion 3
Corporate Decision
Hakuna Matata

- King Salmon
- Trophy Steelhead

- Brown Trout
- Lunker Lake Trout

All Equipment Furnished • USCG & DNR Licensed
Charter packages available for any size group

1-888-966-3474

fishalgoma.com

Capt. Trevor Haasch

ALGOMA, WISCONSIN!

www.algoma.org

Fishing. Festivals. Fun!

SPRING IS UPON US
IN ALGOMA!

Explore hiking and biking trails and the area's famous, world class, open-water fishing—Algoma is open for business! We look forward to many summer events like:

Shanty Days Festival
Soar on the Shore - Kite Fest
Summer Concerts in the Park

Visit our website for current information on these events and more.

Capt. Lee Haasch

Haasch
GUIDE SERVICE

3 Large Boats
Grand Illusion 3
Corporate Decision
Hakuna Matata

- King Salmon
- Trophy Steelhead

- Brown Trout
- Lunker Lake Trout

All Equipment Furnished • USCG & DNR Licensed
Charter packages available for any size group

1-888-966-3474

fishalgoma.com

Capt. Trevor Haasch

ALGOMA, WISCONSIN!

www.algoma.org

Fishing. Festivals. Fun!

SPRING IS UPON US
IN ALGOMA!

Explore hiking and biking trails and the area's famous, world class, open-water fishing—Algoma is open for business! We look forward to many summer events like:

Shanty Days Festival
Soar on the Shore - Kite Fest
Summer Concerts in the Park

Visit our website for current information on these events and more.



A gorgeous sunset marking the end of another day on Erie's ice.

wholesale rate of \$70 per gallon.

Some 44 residents bought 80 gallons of this prized bait from Port Clinton's largest shiner wholesaler, A-N-J bait, to ensure that they would have some on hand if the ice continued to form to a fishable thickness.

By mid-January, hundreds of ice anglers, residents and guests alike were able to experience what Lake Erie can offer in the form of ice fishing success when the stars align.

For example, on January 16, Put-in-Bay resident Susan Byrnes caught a walleye that weighed a little over 10 pounds in the first 5 minutes of her time on the ice, accompanied by her husband Mike.

Easy come, easy go, as during the next few hours until sunset led to no other "nibbles," as she called them, and they had to settle for her lone trophy fish, but one that would provide multiple meals.

As Lake Erie swarms with tens of millions of catchable walleyes thanks to a recent string of successful hatches, there is no need to feel guilty for keeping whatever fish you choose to take home, as long as the daily limit of 6 fish over 15 inches is obeyed.

Ohio's Fisheries biologists on Lake Erie have shown no relationship between the

numbers of brood stock fish and spawning success. Small populations have produced monster hatches, while large populations sometimes fail to measure up during spawning seasons.

Weather conditions, such as storms and rising water temperatures, which affect the timing, abundance and visibility of plankton blooms when larval fish switch from absorbing their yolk sac to eating tiny zooplankton prey, is far more critical to their survival rates that determine year-class strengths.

Timing is just as critical for the formation of ice, as a deep, insulating snow cover over thin ice can substantially slow the thickening of ice.

At the time of this writing, Toledo, Ohio, the closest town with TV station meteorologists, had received less than 6 inches of snow for the season, after going for more than a year without any snow accumulation events greater than 1 inch.

Luckily, this "perfect storm" of arctic temperatures with very little snowfall at the critical ice-making period during the first half of January made ice between the islands that, by the third week of the month, was averaging 10 inches thick, and for the first time since

2018 brought real hopes for a long ice season.

Off the Ohio mainland, during this same period, the ice off Catawba Point was absent beyond the cove, and open water still remained in the South Passage between Mouse and Kelleys Islands on January 22.

Nonetheless, as soon as one day later, anglers were pushing their luck by traveling right to the edge of ice and open water, begging for a ride on an ice floe when some of it breaks off in a south or southwest wind, as happens virtually every year that open water remains within sight further out.

I hope there is no need for the U.S. Coast Guard, volunteer first responders, and private towing and salvage companies to perform any emergency rescues, and especially no recoveries.

However, I fear that a scenario of anglers needing assistance getting back to shore is almost inevitable, as ice-starved anglers press their luck whenever the now-rare ice cover entices them to take chances after years of open winters.

In any event, as March arrives, the ice will clear out, and the trollers and jiggers will track down pre-spawn fish around the reefs and islands, while eager throngs of wading and bank fishermen seek their walleye rewards in the Maumee and Sandusky Rivers.

This is the way I picture and remember March—the walleye fishing transition month—before climate change began raising winter temperatures in this latitude and limited the frequency of seasons with good ice occurring. **MWO**

John Hageman authors about 120 articles per year. He was the Manager of The Ohio State University's Stone Laboratory Biological Field Station at Put-in-Bay for 25 years, began working on Lake Erie research projects in 1977, ran ice fishing charters for 15 years and enjoys fishing for multiple species.

Share your bright idea!

Have you got a favorite fishing, hunting, camping or outdoors tip? Share it with us. If we decide to use it in our column, we'll send you a useful thank you gift.

Email your tips to:
info@midwestoutdoors.com

or mail to:
Tips Editor at MidWest Outdoors
111 Shore Drive, Burr Ridge, IL 60527

Please be sure to include your name and mailing address where we can send your prize.
Prizes will not be sent until/unless your tip is chosen for publication.

Follow
MIDWEST OUTDOORS
on our Socials

youtube.com/MidWestOutdoorsTV

facebook.com/MidWestOutdoorsUSA

instagram.com/MidWestOutdoorsUSA

twitter.com/MWOOutdoorsUSA

MARK I SPORTFISHING & LODGING
A DIVISION OF BAYS EDGE

Lake Erie • Lake Erie • Lake Erie • Lake Erie

ONE STOP SHOP!

Wake at your townhouse
On-site store for supplies
FISH ALL DAY!

Fish cleaned on-site
Dinner/drinks on your deck
Sleep in your townhouse
NOW THAT'S THE WAY TO FISH

Captain Mark Cahlik says, "There are more Walleye in Lake Erie than ever before. We'll get'em on your line."

Call Misty 419-635-6326
email: mcahlik@gmail.com
www.mark1sportfishing.com
Port Clinton, Ohio

Member of St. Croix Fishing Team



Bomber Water Dog

In 1944, a small business was set up in Gainesville, Texas based on a small, wooden, football-shaped lure with a metal diving lip that would dive deep for bass in Texas Reservoirs. Within a couple of years, this bait, the Bomber, would become famous, and the Bomber Bait Company would gain fame in the region, and eventually worldwide. Millions of these baits were made, as were an array of other baits they designed. An entire book could be written on just this bait or the company.

The bait I want to discuss today is another one of the very early lures that Bomber produced, and probably their second-most-successful "early" bait: the Water Dog.

Bomber Water Dog

The Bomber Water Dog was introduced in 1958. There is some speculation as to the exact date. However, when looking at catalogs and advertisements, this is the year that collectors arrive at.

The Water Dog is a long, thin lure with two bumps/three sections and a diving lip. It has treble hooks and a small spinner on the back.

Note: It is often confused with a Whopper Stopper Hellbender. The Hellbender was a competitor which imitated the Water Dog. You can easily tell the difference between the two by the shape of the lip. The Water Dog has an oval lip, while the Hellbender has a heart-shaped lip.)

The Water Dog came in three sizes: 1500 (3 1/2"), 1600 (4 1/2"), and 1700 (5 1/2"). These sizes are the length including the lip.

Per Bomber's 1958 introductory message:

"The new BOMBER WATER DOG is an EXTRA DEEP RUNNING lure which has a fast-vibrating motion as it runs through the water."



A March 1958 ad for the Bomber Water Dog.

The broad diving-bill sends this lizard-like bait to depths never before attained on a lure of this type. The bill also enables the WATER DOG to be run through brush, logs, rocks, etc. with a minimum of hanging.

The whirling motion of the spinner attached to the tail is unusually effective in causing stubborn fish to strike. Since the spinner is attached to a snap, it can be readily removed and a trailer fly, skirt or bucktail, attached without impairing the action of the lure."

An October 1958 catalog insert showed the Water Dog available in 17 attractive colors and 3 sizes. See the accompanied advertisement announcing the new Water Dog lure from March 1958.

I could find no other mentions in old archives about the Bomber Water Dog prior to 1958, making me believe we have discovered the correct date, especially when taken in correlation with the postmarked 1958 catalog. Bomber is one of the lure companies that did an excellent job of using newspapers for both articles and advertisements to promote their products.

The Water Dog was a very popular product for Bomber and a mainstay in their line through the 1960s and '70s, adding colors as new technology arrived. The Water Dog, like the rest of the Bomber lures, saw a switch from wood to plastic around 1971.

I am often asked how to tell the difference between wood and plastic on these lures. The easiest way is to flip the lure over and see if the lip is secured to the body by a small screw. If it is, then it is a wooden lure; otherwise it is plastic.

By the late 1980s, the company push was really on to create newer-designed baits such as the Model A and Long A. The original Bomber and the Water Dog were just not as flashy or in favor with the fishermen the way they once were. Production was starting to be limited on these baits; you can notice it in the catalogs as colors were being cut back, especially on Water Dogs.

In 1988, Bomber was purchased by PRADCO (Plastic Research and Development Corporation) out of Fort Smith, Ark.. Once PRADCO took over, the slashing really began. In the 1990 catalog—PRADCO's first official Bomber catalog—they had discontinued all but a half-dozen or so colors in each of the three Water Dog sizes. They continued to dwindle until the Water Dog and the original Bomber disappeared for good from Bomber catalogs after 1992.

Colors and packaging

The initial colors as shown on a catalog insert in early 1958 were White (1), Black (2), Red Head (3), White, Black Ribs (6), Yellow Perch (7), White, Black Shadow (8), Frog (11), Black, White Ribs (14), White, Silver Flake (15), Yellow, Black Ribs (20), Silver Shad (40), Green Shad (43), Coach Dog (CD), Black Mullet (BM), Waco (WACO), and Smoke (SMOKE). Later that same year, they added Yellow Coach Dog (S9).

In the late 1960s, they added Silver Back, Yellow Belly (70), Purple Back, Yellow Belly (71), and Black Back, White Belly



Water Dog 1500 in White, Silver Flake Color (Christmas Tree).



Water Dog 1600 in Black Back, White Belly color.



Water Dog Yellow, Black Ribs color.

(72). In the 1970's, the colors really took off as Bomber began experimenting with their "metascale" and chrome finishes. During this time, they added so many colors that, in 1975 and 1976, there were actually 50 catalogued colors of Water Dogs! Additionally, quite a few uncatalogued versions can be found, most originating from this time period.

The Water Dog came in a variety of boxes starting with two-piece cardboard boxes and then sliding plastic top boxes.

Collectors value

A Bomber Water Dog in excellent condition without the box is worth anywhere from \$10 to 20 depending on the color. With the matching box in excellent condition, the price would jump up to anywhere from \$20 to 40. Uncatalogued colors can double those estimates. These make for an excellent display for collectors. For fishermen, a slightly used Water Dog without the box can easily be found for under \$10 and they remain fantastic for bass fishing. **MWO**

Keith Bell and his family live in Neenah, Wisconsin but spend a lot of time fishing northern Wisconsin. Keith has been an avid angler and outdoorsman his entire life. His passion for fishing is matched only by his passion for fishing history and preservation. He is the founder and owner of MyBaitShop.com, the world's largest online vintage tackle and history website. You can reach Keith at his website or at keith.bell@mybaitshop.com

We Sell & Buy Vintage Lures & Tackle

Check Out The Vault!

This is where we keep the rarest and more antique fishing lures you will find on our site. You can expect to see old Heddon, Creek Chub, Pflueger, Shakespeare, Paw Paw, South Bend and more baits and lures.

SAVE 10%
on your first order
Use Code MWO

25 Vintage Fishing Lures Worth A Fortune

Scan Code to read now or visit our website



Part of the Water Dog section from a Bomber catalog.

Next-Level Catching: Ultra Bait Care

by Johnny Wilkins

Live bait is the top fish-catching item and what U. S. fishermen spend the most money on. Bait, hooks and terminal tackle are the top expenses by all fishermen (as measured by a *Fishing Tackle Retailer* study). Over 75 percent of our fishing is done with live bait, live bait tackle and terminal tackle. The lure industry is much smaller than anyone would let on.

Most fishing is done from shore as well. I, like many folks, fish from shore and use live bait for success. Live bait coaxes fish to eat when they exhibit neutral behavior. We only get so much time on the water—so the majority of fishermen opt for catching fish with live bait vs. *trying* to catch them with artificial lures.

Bait care must be your focus for ultimate success. Great bait catches faster, as well as catching the bigger fish. Small fish are less likely to pause to consider the difference.

I covered the use of premium lines last month. Adding a premium leader line attached to very fresh and moving live bait will out-catch all lures. This is true throughout the year.

We all know that feeling of trying to leave to go fishing and discovering that your bait is not so good. This feeling is the flag telling you fishing is probably not going to be good. Bait care is one of my number one secrets to fishing success.

When I fished for Team USA in several world championships, we had a dedicated set of staff in charge of live bait care. The live bait had its own hotel room! The bait was taken care of better than our team.

Part of your fishing attack needs to be a great bait plan. Often, we will spend shipping charges, driving time, gas and even toll money on picking up live bait. Picking up the bait is an essential part of catching fish. When traveling, your local bait dealer can pack and prepare a week's worth of fishing bait for your trip. Special bedding for worms, and chemicals in the minnow bags filled with oxygen, will help get your bait to your destination.

A big cooler for bait care can transport the bait and then provides space to keep the bait during your trip. You can find big coolers at garage sales and customize them to fit your needs. Drill holes for air lines and add foam insulation in the cooler to help maintain temperature in heat. Most Igloo coolers have a hollow cavity that can be filled with insulating Great Stuff foam. This will turn your Igloo into a cooler that really retains the cold and keeps your minnows or worms healthy.

I use my big cooler to hold the minnows in transit along with an aquarium air pump and air stone. I plug this unit in and park it either just inside the door where I am staying, or in the shade outside. Many urban fishers keep it inside the room so their minnows and equipment are still there when they get back from fishing.

With this system, I include a foam filter that suction cups to the inside of the cooler. You can find this foam filter at a tropical fish store or cichlid dealer. This helps take the ammonia out of the water and filters your water. I usually take 8 to 12 dozen crappie minnows or 5 dozen shiners with me. You can transport more crappie minnows than



The spike is the ultimate, year-round fishing grub. A blue bottle fly larvae (maggot) can be bought in bulk and stored for months when properly taken care of. It is one of the author's go-to baits for trophy fish, fishing with kids and guiding. Those pictured have been stored for three months in a heavy-duty-seal container preventing the grubs from escaping. Do not cut corners on a great container. Store them next to the cold air supply in your refrigerator. Order them in bulk from your local bait store to get a discount, or from an online source such as VadosBait.com and split the cost with a friend. *Do not buy them from tiny gas station fridges!*

shiners because shiners are more fragile.

With the plugged-in air and sponge filter, changing about 20 percent of the water each day will keep your minnows flashing. Lively minnows last longer on the hook, and the flash attracts more takes and catches more fish.

Local tackle dealers sell licensed bait obtained from sources that quarantine the bait. You can transport this bait anywhere. Once it's in the lake, pond or minnow bucket, you should no longer hop to another lake with that bait. Do not transfer bait water from lake to lake as this could transmit disease and

is illegal. You could really damage a fishery by transmitting water-borne parasites or disease. Never transfer fish outside of their home water to another body of water.

If you have some money for minnow care, Frabill makes an incredible minnow bait system with a built-in air pump. The Frabill Magnum comes in three sizes and includes a built-in quiet air system that you can plug into your car, truck and park next to your friend for the ride. They also make a wall adaptor for keeping this in your room.

story continued on next page

EAGLE CLAW®
Starfire™ X Trolling

5 NEW MODELS

We've teamed up with established trolling authorities **Mark and Jake Romanack** to develop **5 NEW**, feature packed models tailor-made for modern trolling techniques.

John Wilkins *Mark Romanack*

BOTTOM BOUNCER
TRANSOM TROLLER
PLANNER BOARD
DIVER / WIRE / LEAD CORE
DOWNRIGGER

eagleclaw.com



When the author stays somewhere for multiple days to fish, he brings his homemade minnow vault. Start by nabbing a cheap, old cooler at a garage sale. Hit your local aquarium store and purchase a sponge filter and a dual Whisper plug-in air pump. You will need the air tubing and a splitter; the author added air control adjusters. The foam filter will keep your minnows super healthy. Park it in your room if you are in a dicey area or outside the room in the shade.

Perform regular daily water changes of 20 percent (remove old water with a container) and add the same amount of lake water from same container. Add a frozen ice block in the heat of the morning to keep your minnows rocking on the hook. You will catch more fish this way. Also use the vault to transport bags of minnows with ice from your local dealer. The dealer adds oxygen/air and sedative to the minnows for the trip.

Next-Level Catching...

...continued from previous page

makes portable rechargeable air systems you can attach to a 5-gallon bucket to take in the boat or add to your own custom bait solution.

On the tough side, two of my favorite baits are spikes (blue bottle maggots) and leeches. Both baits are tough to tear off a hook, entice fish better than worms and catch multiple fish. Both baits do well when refrigerated and can be kept for weeks (even months). Change the water on the leeches

about 20 percent daily and try to keep it the same temperature: *cold*. Chlorinated tap water is not the best, but changing some of the water with cold water is better than leaving the leeches in nasty, dirty water. Keep leeches on ice and in the shade in the boat or on shore for extended life. I carry a bait cooler with frozen ice packs (or frozen sports bottles). Ice, ice baby.

Spikes are my top travel partners on trips. These imported maggots are the kings of all baits. I have caught all species on maggots including smallmouths, walleyes, crappies, perch and even a muskie! The spike or blue



A 5-gallon bucket with a foam insert is functional transport for minnows. Add a USB lithium air pump so that you can charge the pump and take it on trips. When home, find the coldest, draftiest door to store your minnows next to during cold season. These same pumps can be plugged into the wall. Water changes keep minnows happy.

Side note: Once, when driving with the open 5-gallon lid, the author hit a bump on an off ramp; in the rearview mirror, he could see water coming down from the roof. A lid or two on the bucket would have saved an emergency stop and minnow rescue mission.

Old-timer trick: Float a couple of thick sticks or an empty water bottle in the top of the bucket to minimize splashes.

bottle maggot can usually be purchased from your local bait store; if they don't stock this, have them order from VadosBait.com to supply their area with this bait.

This bait, hooked on a quality steel hook like my favorite Owner Mosquito size 14, is a fish-catching secret weapon. This light and ultra-strong hook has helped me hook and land 17-pound fish. The lighter hook doesn't damage the slow-sinking grub, and fish can't resist the drop or the grub movement. I hook two of these on a hook and can catch four or five fish on the same grubs.

These even travel with me on airplanes in my carry-on. (They might freeze in checked bags.) On shore or in a boat, grubs not being immediately fished should be near the

bottom of your cooler, in the shade. Frozen-solid, Coke Zero bottles offer all-day bait care. Finding shade and closing your cooler are key.

Up your bait care game with great bait containers and pay close attention to keeping your live bait in top condition to catch trophy fish.

Great bait? Can't wait! Bad bait equals a long day of sad fishing. **MWO**

Johnny Wilkins is a float fishing expert, boat and bank fishing competitor, and teacher who fished in three world championships with Team USA. A Chicago area native, Wilkins placed second behind his teacher Mick Thill in his best U.S. Open Championships. He is the founder of the Chicago Fishing School and has his own line of floats.

ADVERTISEMENT



safeguard your adventures

WHY INSURANCE IS A MUST-HAVE FOR ATV/UTV ENTHUSIASTS

Are you an ATV/UTV enthusiast ready to hit the trails and explore the great outdoors? While the thrill of off-roading can be exhilarating, it's essential to ensure that you're adequately protected. ATV/UTV insurance—your key to a worry-free adventure!

ATV/UTV



Why ATV/UTV insurance?

Protect your investment

Your ATV/UTV is more than just a vehicle; it's an investment in your passion for off-roading. ATV/UTV insurance offers coverages that can protect your ride against unexpected events. Ride with confidence, knowing that your ATV/UTV is protected.

Liability protection

Accidents can happen, even to the most experienced riders. ATV/UTV insurance offers liability coverage, protecting you financially in case you're held responsible for injuries or damages to others while riding. Don't let unforeseen incidents tarnish your ATV/UTV adventures—let insurance be your safety net.

Protection beyond accidents

ATV/UTV insurance can cover events outside of your control, including theft, vandalism, hitting an animal, fire, and some weather-related damage, minus your deductible. Whether you're on the trail or your ATV/UTV is parked at home, enjoy peace of mind knowing that your insurance extends beyond just the basics.

Medical payments

ATV/UTV insurance can offer medical payments coverage, ensuring that the medical expenses for you and your passengers are taken care of in the event of an accident. Prioritize your safety and well-being with the right insurance coverage.

Don't let uncertainty hold you back from embracing the thrill of off-roading. Insure your ATV/UTV today with Progressive ATV/UTV insurance and unlock a world of worry-free adventures. Your passion deserves protection—ride on, confidently!

Progressive Casualty Ins. Co. and affiliates
Coverages subject to policy terms and conditions.

PROGRESSIVE

Scan to get a quote
in as little as 3 minutes

Go to progressive.com
to learn more.



TRACK GAME

GAME ON

Protection during work and play

Get coverage that goes beyond your homeowners' policy with comprehensive ATV insurance to protect your off-road vehicle, belongings, accessories and more – no matter where you ride.

1-800-PROGRESSIVE / PROGRESSIVE.COM

PROGRESSIVE

Quote ATV
insurance in
as little as
3 minutes



Progressive Casualty Insurance Co. & affiliates. Prices vary based on how you buy. Custom accessories coverage included with the purchase of comprehensive and collision coverage. Protection for personal belongings offered with optional Carried Contents coverage. Coverage subject to policy terms and conditions.

Minimalist Smallmouth Fishing Using Two or Three Rods and Only Five or Six Baits



The author stresses that limiting rods, reels and lure choices will greatly and quickly develop your skills. Concentrate on technique, lure delivery, application and presentation.

by Andrew Ragas

We've all observed that guy shore fishing from the riverbank, or standing at the front deck of his boat, who's brought with him all the gear he owns. He's got so much junk laying around everywhere that he doesn't know what to do. You'd wonder whether he has a hoarding problem, or didn't know any better.

Admittedly, I am that guy some days too. Even I get carried away by inexplicably bringing several dozens of rods and reels into my boat, along with far too many baits in their Plano stowaways that will never touch the water this season. I won't tell you how

many setups, or the thousands of dollars I've invested.

The sad part about this problem is, on good days, when the bite is on, I only need one rod and reel all day—or maybe two or three setups at most. Only a small percent of what's in my boat ever ends up getting used. What never sees water might be better off sold.

Whether you are a novice or expert, fishing has evolved into a complicated sport due to an overwhelming number of tackle manufacturers, a growing industry, and technological advancements. Industry experts say this is to make us more efficient anglers, and to simplify strategies, but I disagree.



Consolidate your few hard baits and plastics together in a single stowaway. Keep Z-Man ElaZtech products in their original packaging and separated from the rest. You'll be set for an entire year's worth of successful smallmouth fishing on lakes and rivers.

A lot of these problems are by choice. Being a guide and tackle provider for my guests complicates my rod rigging, tackle selection—and life—a lot!

I don't know about you, but despite keeping a tidy workplace and boat, I often find myself in complete disarray and clutter—especially when rigging rods, spooling reels and organizing my storage spaces in preparation for the next day. You know it's a problem when rigging sessions sometimes take up a valuable one or two hours.

Realizing that I have a problem, I'm no different than a hoarder. The amount of gear and clutter I keep in my boats and my storage rooms has affected my own fishing efficiencies and production.

Nowadays, I have too much, and I wish I could simplify my fishing system to what it once was.

Back in the good ol' days

As I got into bass fishing some 30 years ago, I recall starting off with three spinning rods. They were my dad's hand-me-downs.

I fondly remember those rods, a few of which I still have as keepsakes. One was a 7 1/2-foot Abu Garcia 500 Graphite MF spinning paired with an old Daiwa reel, spooled with 8-pound mono. I grew up a live bait fisherman; back in the early 1990s, this was the way to go on many of our Northwoods lakes. Floating a large, juicy, fathead minnow,

REELFOOT LAKE, TN

FISHING PACKAGE 2025

2 Days Fishing & 2 Nights Lodging

(EXCEPT MARCH 12- MAY 22, 2025)



SPORTSMAN'S Resort
THE QUAKE LAKE
REELFOOT LAKE, TN
"Operating since 1986"



Two Great Locations!
on Reelfoot Lake "North & South"

R.V. Fishing Packages with Full Hookup are Available at Both of Our Campground Locations

\$209⁰⁰

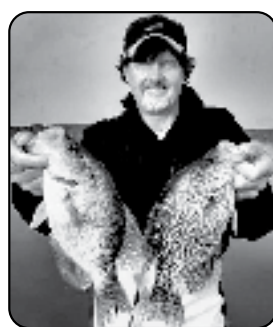
per person, plus tax min. 2 people

Includes:

LAKEFRONT LODGING,
BOAT, MOTOR, GAS, BAIT & ICE
KIDS 12 AND UNDER FREE

Limit 1 child per each paying adult.

\$50.00 Deposit Required Per Person Non-Refundable
You choose the day of the week to start.



Check out fishing reports and year 'round specials on Facebook at:

www.facebook.com/reelfootlakesportsmansresort

FISHERMAN'S SPECIAL

MARCH 12 THRU MAY 22 FISHING PACKAGES

2 Days & 2 Nights = \$269 + tax

3 Days & 3 Nights = \$369 + tax

4 Days & 4 Nights = \$449 + tax

per person, min. 2 people

\$100.00 Deposit Required Non-Refundable

100 Sportsman's Resort Lane, Tiptonville, TN 38079

731-253-6581 • reelfootlake.com • sportsmansresort@reelfootlake.com

redtail chub, or jumbo leech below a slip bobber was beyond deadly for bass and other species.

The second rod was a vintage, 7-foot, MF Berkley Series One paired with another reel and 6-pound mono. It was my setup for casting jigs and minnows, and the few artificials I had patience for.

The third rod I recall having was a 7-foot ML Shakespeare with a size 1000 reel, spooled with 4-pound mono. This was my setup of choice for catching everything from bass to panfish off the dock and in the boat.

Along with these three, I'd also sneak in a few casts and mischief with my dad's all-time favorite, a 6 1/2-foot ML Abu Garcia Custom Graphite paired with a (then Korean-made) Quantum Energy E3-1. Too bad that rod and reel met its demise. Today's gear doesn't replicate the durability and construction of what I grew up with in the past.

Not much from back then was made in China, either.

The fishing I learned and did was easy, efficient (minus the live bait upkeep and maintenance) and simple. The first smallmouths I ever caught at age 9 in 1996 came by marabou jig and leech, shore fishing a spillway outside of Minocqua, Wis. Bass fishing wasn't as specialized as it is now. We didn't have rods designed for specific tactics and strategies, and many of today's specialized riggings hadn't yet been invented.

And here we are today. I am the proud owner of at least a hundred-plus rod and reel setups, dozens of stowaways, and what would qualify as a full-scale tackle shop.

Some days, I just want to return to my roots and the basics.

The tackle box just got lighter

I stepped back into time two summers ago, when world traveler and outfitter Jim Riley of Riley's Outdoor Consulting hosted me on a backwoods kayak trip. Little did I know how minimalist and efficient our half-day trip would be at a secluded smallmouth fishery.

We walked and dragged our rigs nearly a mile through the woods. I was operating without a boat and motor. I didn't have 30 rods to tinker with. There was no fish locator and other marine technologies to rely on – and I had no idea what depths I was paddling over, or how the fish would be positioned. No Sirius XM sports talk-radio or rock music to listen to while fishing, either. For the first time since the mid 1990's—not counting the hundreds of times in my lifetime that I've waded for river smallmouths and walleyes with just a chest pack and rod or two—I found myself equipped with only two rods, and only a handful of baits.

Forty smallmouths later, I only needed one bait and one setup the entire time: a yoga pants Z-Man Finesse TRD worked on my 71MF St. Croix Victory.

Not only did kayak fishing with Riley slow down my fast-paced life, but it also forced me to drastically downscale my fishing gear and tackle and re-taught me the value and benefits of minimalist fishing.

Riley wasn't joking that I'd only need a single setup for success, and shouldn't pack beyond a second rod, or even think about bringing a third. Matching sensual pleasure at that level with everything else you do to catch smallmouths can be taught, and in my case rediscovered, atop a kayak.

Kayak anglers like Riley know a thing or two about efficiency.

In the two years since, I've gotten much better at reducing the clutter atop the decks, and not overpacking my boat, or myself, when I jump into friends' boats. Although some days when bites are fewer and far between, you can't help but lay out a dozen or more rods, try everything you have, and create junk piles of baits atop the deck. My goal each day now is to quickly dial into specific patterns (like within the first hour), and when the bite is on, a good day of fishing will reduce us to only three or four rods on deck by the end of day.

That's my proof of a great day of fishing.

With that objective my priority, one doesn't need dozens of rods to catch smallmouths. With a minimalist mindset, you'll fish more



Guiding and being responsible for other people's fishing success, the author admits that he has too much gear and boat clutter and wishes that he could simplify his fishing system.

efficiently, smarter, catch more, and be more in tune and focused with your pursuits.

Minimalist fishing

If you want to catch more fish and learn to be efficient, simplify your rod selection and lure choices.

There's nothing wrong with overpacking for a trip, but if you've fished long enough, you will develop an accurate understanding of what



Everyone needs a 'Swiss Army Knife' rod. St. Croix's Avid spinning rods let you accomplish anything that can be handled by a spinning setup. If you're reluctant to fish with a baitcaster, or if you need a single rod to accomplish several daily strategies, it is a do-it-all smallmouth rod.

you will need and what you won't, season-by-season.

In spring, you should only need a suspending jerkbait and a fluke minnow. Maybe a paddletail for honorable mention. Summer: nothing but tube jigs and Neds, and a topwater. Fall: heavy jigs to crawl the bottom with, and a live bait rig. Wow, I wish I adhered to this guideline.

With lure styles, rigging methods, and baits abound, the problem with fishing today is that one single rod cannot suffice for them all. However, if you focus on identifying multi-purpose setups and prioritizing only those few, you'll be on your way to becoming an effective, efficient angler.

A problem I see in today's smallmouth world is the prioritization of technique-

specific rods marketed for exclusively those methods. If only anglers looked at a rod and all its functions and abilities beyond its label and specs, they'd quickly learn how applicable the rod could be for additional tactics that it isn't marketed for. If everyone did that, others wouldn't have the same extensive rod collection as me.

St. Croix Rods prides itself on its rod component and design innovations, and their extensive lineup of freshwater rods. They make a model for everything, and at almost every price-point. The historic brand's dedication and continued commitment to maintaining high standards with multi-purpose rods began with their Premier and Avid Series nearly 3 decades ago. Today, these two rod models, with the addition of the Victory and the Legend Elite, are heavily utilized in my boat. Look no further than any of these four models if searching for multi-purpose spinning or casting rods for smallmouths.

If you use only two or three rods, you need only a casting rod or two, and a spinning setup (or vice-versa). Every angler needs a Swiss-army rod or two, or three. Most smallmouth fisheries you'll visit will call for only medium, extra-fast to medium-heavy, fast actions.

Too many smallmouth anglers fish with equipment that is too light and whippy to handle large fish and diverse strategies. Light

story continued on next page

71°52'55.97" W

PRINCECRAFT®

46°09'46.19" N

FIND THAT SPOT WHERE ADRENALINE RUNS FREE

SOMETIMES THE BEST MEMORIES AREN'T
MADE, THEY'RE CAUGHT.





DECK BOATS



FISHING BOATS



PONTOON BOATS

THE SPIRIT OF BOATING™





Brunswick Corporation (NYSE: BC) is the global leader in marine recreation, delivering innovation that transforms experiences on the water and beyond. Our unique, technology-driven solutions are informed and inspired by deep consumer insights and powered by our belief that "Next Never Rests™". Brunswick is dedicated to industry leadership, to being the best and most trusted partner to our many customers, and to building synergies and ecosystems that enable us to challenge convention and define the future. Brunswick is home to more than 60 industry-leading brands. In the category of Marine Propulsion, these brands include Mercury Marine, Mercury Racing and MerCruiser. Brunswick's comprehensive collection of parts, accessories, distribution, and technology brands includes Mercury Parts & Accessories, Land 'N' Sea, Lowrance, Simrad, B&G, Mastervolt, RELION, Attwood and Whale. Our boat brands are some of the bests known in the world, including Boston Whaler, Lund, Sea Ray, Bayliner, Harris Pontoons, Princecraft® and Quicksilver. Our service, digital and shared-access businesses include Freedom Boat Club, Boateka and a range of financing, insurance, and extended warranty businesses. While focused primarily on the marine industry, Brunswick also successfully leverages its portfolio of advanced technologies to deliver an exceptional suite of solutions in mobile and industrial applications. Headquartered in Mettawa, IL, Brunswick has more than 18,500 employees operating in 29 countries. In 2022, Brunswick was named by Forbes as a World's Best Employer and as one of America's Most Responsible Companies by Newsweek, both for the third consecutive year. For more information, visit Brunswick.com.

Minimalist Smallmouth Fishing...

...continued from previous page

rods are unable to deliver powerful hooksets needed from afar and down deep. If you're a river angler, under-powered rods will prevent you from being able to work baits through, and fight hooked smallmouths through, current. One other issue: the rod's inability to handle heavier lures and hard baits.

For these reasons, most experienced anglers opt for casting gear, braided line, and medium to medium-heavy, fast-action rods up to 7-feet in length. For those who fish braided line, medium-fast power is the positive reaction of the rod when retrieving anything with a treble hook. It has just enough taper and flex yet is not too stiff to rip baits out from mouths.

My favorite cranking rod and all-purpose casting setup for all hard baits is a Mojo Bass Trigon Casting, All-In (JOC71MHF). New for 2024, this specific model has just the right ingredients to handle everything, providing an aggressive flex for shock absorption and hooksets, to backbone and strength. It handles beautifully for crankbaits and especially topwaters. It also does more, like launching swim jigs, paddletails and spinnerbaits to cover water. This rod will give every smallmouth angler a lot more, for less. I pair it with a SEVIIN Reels GF series in a 7.3:1 ratio spooled with 20-pound Cortland Masterbraid. This

complete all-purpose setup runs less than \$350.

In 2023, after a brief 3-year retirement, St. Croix re-released the Avid series casting due to angler demand. While it hasn't come back fully—Avid was previously available in several spinning and casting models—Avid stayed true to its multi-species mission while improving performance starting with lighter, stronger SCIII+ hybrid carbon fiber blank designs that combine premium SCIII carbon and exotic SCVI carbon materials. The current Avid is only available in two models, a 70MF and 70MHF, which I got to fish with and test throughout 2023 before being re-released. Both are awesome, all-around smallmouth rods with the same beautiful cork handles.

Something else unique about St. Croix Rods is their product diversity and price points. Some anglers like to spend lots of money, especially if it's going to be one of the few rods they own, or they intend on keeping it for a long time. The Legend Elite fits the criteria of a premium, high-end rod if you chose to fish one, and is a luxury in the hands of smallmouth anglers. The Legend Elite EC70MF rounds out the final consideration for a great all-around casting rod.

Out of the hundreds of St. Croix Rods I've tinkered with, the two rods I most frequently turn to are the St. Croix Victory Finesse VTS71MF and St. Croix Legend Elite ES70MHF.



Every big bass hunter, especially river anglers, should have at least one medium-heavy spinning rod as well. St. Croix's Legend Elite is the author's all-time favorite for all jigging and bottom fishing applications.

In my opinion, these two spinning rods, and any actions comparable to them, should be the two most prioritized setups for smallmouth anglers for their casting and jigging abilities.

First, let's discuss the Victory Finesse. It might be the best rod created for handling Ned rigs, tubes, wacky worms and jig worms. It can also handle a few casting applications with finesse swimbaits, fluke minnows and X-Raps (08).

I have been fishing the Victory Finesse since it was released in 2021, and it's one of the finest and most powerful spinning rods I've ever put in my hands. I've had the opportunity to try other rods for my Ned rig systems

and other finesse plastics, but they just don't compare to this beautiful, heavy-duty stick. It's lightweight, sensitive and well-balanced, and well-suited to casting and jigging applications. It can also handle a drop shot rig, Damiki rig, or live bait rig. The rod has plenty of backbone for handling 4- and 5-pound smallmouths.

Speaking of trophy smallmouths, every big bass hunter should have at least one MHF spinning rod, too. River anglers, especially! For all jigging and bottom fishing applications, my favorite rod of all time is the St. Croix Legend Elite (ES70MHF). This specific rod has hauled in several fish for me in recent seasons and is atop the boat's front deck each day I smallmouth fish. It's a beauty for fishing tubes and hula grubs.

Last, but not least, everyone needs a MacGyver rod—the Swiss Army Knife of a rod. The St. Croix Avid spinning (ASF70MHF) lets you get away with anything that can be handled by a spinning setup. If you're reluctant to fish with a baitcaster, or if I need a single rod to accomplish several potential daily strategies, this is my do-it-all smallmouth rod for most things casting. Whether I need to catch smallmouths with a topwater, crankbait, paddletail, swimming grub, fluke minnow, or inline spinner, the MacGyver rod gets the job done.

Many, if not most of my clients, use this same rod, too, for tubes, worms, topwaters, paddletails and jerkbaits. The Avid spinning is one of the best, all-around rods for anglers who cannot afford several rods, or simply don't want the same problems that I do, having specific rods for specific tactics.

Important to each setup, light lines provide stealth but they are too delicate and prone to break-offs. Most line failure is a result of a poorly tied leader knot. For multi-application main lines, I strongly advise using 15-pound Cortland Master Braid (black or moss green) for all jigging and casting applications. A lighter size 10-pound (high-vis yellow) is better suitable for finesse fishing.

Monofilament lines are still applicable in today's smallmouth game, especially if looking at low-stretch, 10- and 12-pound sizes that can handle the aforementioned baits. Unfortunately, fluorocarbon line is too highly specialized and does not adhere well to this simplified system.

For leader-to-knot attachments, I rely on the RP (Royal Polaris) knot. This is the quickest and cleanest knot to tie. Your rod's micro guides will thank you for tying it.

Simply smallmouths

One rod, two rods, maybe three at most. Each one mentioned qualifies.

Consolidate your few hardbaits and plastics together in a single stowaway. Remember to keep Z-Man ElaZtech products in their original packaging and separated from the rest. You'll be set for an entire year's worth of successful smallmouth fishing on lakes and rivers under simplified, minimalist (for me, anyways!) means.

To be an effective and efficient angler, you should go light and be willing to occasionally come up short, rather than be cluttered and overcomplicate things. There's also a learning aspect and a benefit from experiencing fishing shortfalls, like not having the hot bait needed, rather than complicating your strategies and overwhelming yourself by having dozens of rods onboard.

A reduction in rods, reels and lure choices will greatly develop your skills, and do so quickly. Work on technique, lure delivery, application and presentation, instead of being fixated on specific baits that won't cater to the fishery or that technique-specific rod you've been eager to buy.

Less is more. That's minimalist smallmouth fishing. **MWO**

Andrew Ragas splits time between Chicago and Wisconsin's Northwoods. Based in Minocqua, Wis., he specializes in trophy bass fishing and offers guided trips from May through October. While big bass are his passion, he dabbles in multispecies, as well. He may be visited online at northwoodsbase.com.

LOWRANCE

www.lowrance.com



TAKE CONTROL.

INTRODUCING THE NEW

RECON™

TROLLING MOTOR



Control begins with Recon – the new generation of electric steer trolling motors from Lowrance. A unique joystick remote, wireless foot pedal and display integration allow you to control your motor from anywhere onboard. While best in class GPS and thrust hold you in position, no matter the conditions. With all that taken care of, all that's left is for you to take control of your cast and reel in the fish.

"NEW"

**THERE'S MINNOWS,
THEN THERE'S
"MOOCH"
MINNOWS...**



CRUSHCITY

Rapala

Moch Minnow™

Bring a Big Net South this Year

by Larry Ladowski

March: the time when many Midwesterners begin getting very tired of the cold and ice season and start dreaming of open water. Winter is about over, but open-water fishing is still limited, and many seasons remain closed in the North.

To combat the remaining two months, you may want to look south and head where seasons never close and open-water fishing is great year-round.

Norfolk Lake in Arkansas is one of those year-round gems. Located just over Missouri's southern border and 8 hours from Chicago, Norfolk is home to some of the best striper and crappie fishing in the country. Located within the Ozark Mountains of North Central Arkansas,



The Norfolk area is fantastic for family fun, boating, scenery and fishing vacations. Visit: Norforklakefun.com.



Norfolk's tagline "Bring a Big Net" rings true for multiple species.

its high bluffs and secluded, forested hills make it a natural, hidden treasure. The lake encompasses 22,000 acres and 550 miles of uncommercialized shoreline.

But don't just think of it for crappies and huge stripers. Lake Norfolk is also popular for bass, walleyes, catfish and quality bluegills.

With a maximum depth of around 175 feet, the lake is known for clean, clear blue water and is rated one of the ten clearest lakes

in North America. As part of the White River system of flood control lakes, Norfolk Lake is an impoundment of the North Fork River. The city of Norfolk was originally home to the timber industry, which supplied wooden ties for railroads. The Norfolk Dam was completed in 1944, forming the reservoir which was built for both flood control and hydroelectricity. Today, the area is mostly known for its recreational activities of boating

and fishing, clean water, sandy beaches, and family-friendly atmosphere.

Fishing is a large recreational pastime on the lake. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission began introducing striped and hybrid bass into the lake in the late 1970s. Due to the stocking of other species like bass, walleyes, crappies and red-eared sunfish, the lake has become an extremely popular fishing destination.

Norfolk Lake

In the Arkansas Ozark Mountains

**Unspoiled, Uncrowded,
Unforgettable**

**Nationally Famous For
Big Stripers and Bass**

**Clear Water, Clean Water,
Deep Water**

**Undiscovered For
Slab Crappie and Walleye**



**And Bring
A Big Net!**

NorforkLakeFun.com

this ad paid for with a combination of private and state matching funds



Norfolk Lake is known for trophy stripers, some nearing 40 pounds. Photo: stroutfitters.com

Norfolk Lake is an outstanding fishery with mild winters that never lets the water freeze and a 365-day open season. Their tourism slogan "Bring a Big Net" applies to the fishery. Nationally famous for the striped and hybrid bass it yields, it also offers great fishing for both large and smallmouth bass. Not to be overlooked, the walleye population is also much sought after and has really come on strong. Along with walleyes, white bass, monster slab crappies, bluegill and catfish are also plentiful.

Due to the clean, clear water, spoons, stickbaits and more natural-looking lures are recommended along with live-looking, forage-imitating plastics and live bait. With extreme water clarity and the ability to see deep into the water column, lower-test, thinner and translucent lines are preferred. If you can see into the water almost 20 feet down, you'd better believe that the fish can see you more easily as well.

As mentioned earlier, strippers are the main attraction in Norfolk. "If you're on a trophy hunt with mounting potential, or you just want something to brag about, be here sometime between early March and the end of May. "The two weeks before and after April's full moon tend to be prime time," says Greg Weinmann, owner of Lake Norfolk's Hand Cove Resort. There are numerous resorts to choose from on the lake, and many resort owners are eager to share their fishing knowledge and experience. Most offer lakefront cabins and/or cottages with complete amenities and panoramic views. Some include RV sites, sandy beaches, mini golf, swimming pools, swim decks, boat and kayak rentals, fish cleaning stations, tackle shops and relaxing atmospheres.

According to the Norfolk website, the trophy strippers typically weigh in between 8 to 14 pounds. Twenty- and 30-pounders are relatively common, and every year, anglers net fish topping the 40-pound mark. The abundance of gizzard and threadfin shad, the striper's favorite forage, allows them to grow to enormous size and weights. Use medium and medium-heavy rods for these fighters.

Norfolk crappies are also fishing favorites. Crappies must be at least 10 inches to be considered a keeper. And with the right conditions of water temps and cloud cover, fish in the 12- to 14-inch category are more the norm. The daily crappie limit on Norfolk is 15 fish, and finding the right brush piles in the correct water depths is the name of the game. Once you find the magic depth, and then the right color that the fish are tuned in to on any given day, you can move from brush pile to brush pile and easily get your limit. And again, many of the resort owners will mark up lake maps with key brush locations to help ensure a successful day on the water.

Or bring your Lowrance live-image sonar and watch these slabs swim right up to and hit your bait. Active imaging is a blast and is ideal for catching crappies.

Jig fishing for crappies is the most popular technique with 1/8-ounce jigs the favorite. Jigs don't have to be big to catch monsters. Bring an assortment of colors, along with

plastics, and vary your technique. Small jigs tipped with minnows are also a favorite for anglers. As with other fish, productive jig color varies based on weather conditions. Lite or medium-light rods with fast tips like the Fenwick HMG or Elite series will work fine, or purchase an ultra-light crappie rod and reel combo for finicky bites.

So, when open water starts tugging at your heartstrings this spring, check out Norfolk Lake and head a little south for some early-season, open-water fun. For



Early- to mid-spring is your best shot at a trophy Norfolk striper. Quantity catches are common during the summer season.

more information on a Norfolk Lake fishing adventure, visit NorfolkLakeFun.com. **MWO**

Larry Ladowski is a regular host on MidWest Outdoors TV and has been writing for MidWest Outdoors magazine for more than 30 years. Ladowski enjoys any time on the water and in the field, no matter where it happens to be and no matter what species he is fishing or hunting.



Live-image sonar like Lowrance's ActiveTarget is ideal for catching crappies in brush piles. Watching a fish swim up to and eat your bait is tons of fun.

THE NEXT GENERATION
OF
NED

MICRO FINESSE

NEW
MICRO SHAD HEADZ™

MICRO FINESSE SHROOMZ™

ELAZTECH 10X TOUGH
MADE IN USA

HIGHEST FISH PER BAIT RATIO

1.75" TINY TICKLERZ™

1.75" LARVAZ™

1.75" SHAD FRYZ™

1.75" MICRO TRD™

2" STINGERZ™

1.75" MICRO GOAT™

2" BABY BALLERZ™

NEW 2" GUPPY GRUBZ™

NEW 2" MICRO WORMZ™

SEE OUR FULL PRODUCT LINE AT
WWW.ZMANFISHING.COM

Profile of a Gobbler

by Bob "Greenie" Grewell



A mate-ready spring gobbler.

You can't truly appreciate any gobbler until you've faced-off with a tom challenging you with its best instinctive reactions. It's the basis of every spring turkey hunt: confronting a wary, woods-wise gobbler on its own terms. To do so, you must first understand the fundamental lifestyle habits of spring gobblers, and then develop the skills to outwit them.

Each spring, hunters pursue these majestic, exciting gamebirds. Their expansion has allowed more hunters to experience less-pressured hunting.

Every hunter looks for prime population numbers where they can up their odds of success. But even when we locate resident toms, we must be vigilant at understanding their lifestyle. Not every gobbler is a clone of another, but they all display a few basic lifestyle habits. Here's a symbolic sample.

Get ready to experience a boisterous tom "gobbling" as he searches for receptive hens. Then, when a mating tom is at close range, it creates "spit & drum" hums with intensity. Watching a mature gobbler implode his body feathers into a full fan, strutting into gun range, pirouetting in tight circles with stop and go patterns, is the epitome of spring gobbler hunting. Witnessing their elusive actions makes us better hunters.

Humans call a male spring wild turkey a "gobbler," but I believe that the best description is "survivalist." Evolution has instilled an intense desire to stay alive into these ground-level-dwelling birds.

Hunters focus on the two main visual features of a gobbler's body: its beard and



Gobblers will breed every hen possible.




spurs. Jakes—aka young toms—haven't yet developed exceptional body features that excite hunters. And their prowess and wariness aren't as unpredictable as mature toms.

A turkey's body and wing feathers are waterproof and provide insulation. Dense feathers are a key feature that helps protect them. Ask any shotgun hunter who has tried to body-shoot a gobbler. A tom's overlapping feathers act like a cushion, even when pelted by a load of heavy shot. Therefore, the best shot placement is a turkey's head and neck.

A tom's acute sense of sight and hearing usually contribute to self-preservation. Hunters quickly learn the value of these two senses and are often amazed by a turkey's ability to judge their calling location, as well as detect their slightest movements.

WATCH PURSUITUP FOR FREE

SCAN HERE TO FIND OUT HOW



Toms aggressively pursue hens.

Fortunately, gobblers don't exhibit a keen sense of smell like most mammals, or they would be even more difficult to tag. Experienced wildlife biologists believe their sense of smell has little or no impact upon their daily habits.

Because turkeys are predominantly ground-dwelling birds, they require adequate escape methods. Like a wary whitetail buck, gobblers often stand motionless within dense habits until a potential predator has moved on. If an intruder remains close by, a tom often escapes the location on foot. Turkeys can run at ground speeds of 12 m.p.h. or greater. And when pushed to the limit, they will take wing and fly at speeds between 45 and 55 miles per hour.

During early spring, turkeys feed heavily before breeding escalates. Diverse turkey diets provide growth stimulus and energy. Their diets are omnivorous, especially after cruel winter months, and they usually pursue soft foods as spring breaks: grasses, seeds, new-growth leaves, legumes, as well as leftover mast hidden under leaf cover. Earthworms, grasshoppers, spiders and a variety of insects satisfy their diet, too. During hunting season, many tom hunters' tags will contain a mixture of green foliage and insect parts matter.

As spring sparks toms' mating instincts, they begin to separate from their winter flock numbers. Most toms seek privacy as they pursue receptive hens. While it's not unusual for two or more toms to hang together, their breeding status has already been determined by previous pecking order conflicts. Usually, only the most dominate toms will breed hens within their habitats. However, it's not unusual for an interloping tom to slip into a location and steal hens. Even jakes sometimes have opportunities to breed hens if a mature tom is busy breeding others.

Watching a spring gobbler breed a hen is a unique experience. The beautiful, full-strut gobbler displays arrogant confidence. He might have gobbled to attract a hen or two, but once he's joined with his hen(s) to engage in the mating process, he seldom gobbles. Hunters seldom hear toms gobble intensely after they leave their roosts during the prime mating weeks. Also, calling to a tom when he's courting a hen can be futile, because he already has what he needs.

A tom's mating actions are instinctively programmed. He often exposes himself on open landscapes, gobbling and strutting. This activity can last for an hour or two—sometimes longer if hens don't appear. But when a hen is ready to breed, she goes to him. She often teases him by yo-yoing back and forth. Occasionally, she will rub against his chest and sides to excite him. (I watched a hen taunt a tom in this manner. When she walked around behind him, he gobbled hard!)

As soon as she's ready to mate, she squats down to the ground into what is called the "sexual crouch." She slightly spreads her wings across the ground and often wriggles her body, inviting him to breed. The tom

will step up on her back and tread on her as he inseminates her. He might remain on her back for up to 8 to 10 minutes. When he dismounts, he often gobbles. She stands up, shakes her body and preens her feathers.

Then, they each go their separate ways.

As you pursue gobblers throughout spring season, focus on hen locations. Gobblers are breeding machines and direct their energies at breeding every hen they can mount. That's a tom's role in life: breeding. Every other segment of his life takes second fiddle. Even eating, which is not a major priority during mating intensity. Toms have already been feeding heavily before mating and developed their chest breast sponge. This layer of fatty tissue is normally about three to four pounds in weight and helps sustain them during the demanding physical rigors throughout breeding activities. That's why gobblers display very large breasts in early spring.

Knowledge is power. The more we know about spring turkey gobblers, the better our opportunities of scoring. Hunters soon learn that knowledge of their quarry makes them more successful, and that gobblers typically act and react differently during mating than at other times of the year. **MWO**

Bob "Greenie" Grewell has written about and photographed the outdoors for 40 years. He's travelled throughout the U.S., Canada, the Arctic Circle, as well as Germany and Denmark. He has written a book on hunting dogs and contributed articles and photography to others. He currently focuses on deer and turkey articles, and wildlife photography.

SKB TARGET SHOTGUNS

HTR
HIGH TRAP RIB

SKB



Going Light

The average age of today's American hunter is about 50 years old. As for the aging process taking over much past that time period, hang on, because the vast majority of hunters today fall into that later bracket. As such, there is a trend that started with high mountain big game hunters searching for super-light rifles when every single ounce counts; like when moving 600 yards on a steep, 20-degree slope.

Today, that seemingly tough job regarding a mountain hunter is being observed even when a deer hunter is traversing flat land. In most cases, the average big game rifle today, with scope and loaded magazine, is about 7 to 9 pounds. As a hunter with almost 84 years in my logbook, I can say that yes, distance gets longer, sighting gets harder, and the blessing of a lightweight rifle holds a whole lot of appeal in my playbook.

Enter the firearms manufacturer that goes by the handle Howa. Howa builds and imports long guns in almost every class. My first experience with this company came a decade ago when I bought a Weatherby Back Country chambered in 257 Weatherby magnum. The rifle had been built by—yes, you guessed it, Howa—and today, she is still a dead-on-the-mark shooter with a pile of trophy-class whitetail and mule deer imagery notches carved into her stock. The level of solid performance I associated with my Back



It's a great light game rifle as well. Downsize the load and go hunting.

Country moved me toward the Howa line of rifles and shotguns in general.

This year, with about seven years of 6.5 Creedmoor big game hunting behind me in up to eight different rifles, I elected to take a crack at Howa as a brand in a super-lightweight big game rifle. My choice in this adventure was the Howa Superlite short-action that comes in at a very workable 4 pounds, 3 ounces, mounting a 16 1/4-inch barrel. With the use of a shorter barrel, tacking on a suppressor, butt stock, eight round ammo slip cover, a loaded three-round magazine with a chambered round using 140 grain bullets, topped off with a tactical style red dot TruGlo or TRACT glass sight, makes for a total carry weight of a bit less than 7 pounds. That's my rifle—and I do mean mine, because I put down the hard cash for this rifle after running through the writer review period.

Covering the new entry into the big game firearms market, in the field at a weight almost two pounds less than several of my other options in personal big game rifles, the platform quickly got my personal attention. Taking away the scope sight and tactical



The Howa Superlite—a coyote hunter's dream.

heavy mounts for a compact HUD display red dot TV sight, and losing the eight-round extra bullet wrap, then reducing the box magazine (which is detachable) to three rounds, the rifle can just about be shot one-handed.

In terms of cost, this is a \$1,000 rifle. Based on a super-light, poly camo stock of which the hunter has up to six different options, the short-action system chambered in 6.5 Creedmoor, or 7MM-08, make for a rifle that can take critters up to and including elk.

This rifle should not be confused with the parent model mounting a fixed magazine and coming in at 4 pounds, 7 ounces carry weight. The mini model I tested is set up in overall lengths as short as possible. I would suggest staying with this rifle if you're shooting suppressed firearms and searching for the lowest weight possible in a field rifle.

Field work with my rifle was directed to big game, western coyotes, and some general removal work for a local rancher who was having some problems. Coyotes, however, were front and center targets in terms of wringing out the new rifle. As I have stated many times during some 70 years in the field, when all else fails or dries up in terms of possible targets, this researcher goes coyote hunting.

The rifle was zeroed shooting 120 grain bullet in ELDs, but I had used handloads during a one-mile-long range event in Wyoming some months previously. Running my loads on all electric RCBS equipment under the watchful eye of RCBS engineers at the event, I found the rifle used for the long-range work placed single-hold zero groups at 100 yards. Now turning to the Superlite, I figured that due to the lightweight barrel and very light stock system, there would be some major difference downrange on paper. Yes, my groups did indeed change, but only to single 3.4 m.o.a. holes in the paper. Needless to say, I was very impressed, being that the total package was so lightweight.

In the negative column, however, I found a couple of things that I would have liked to see changed in this offering by Howa. First of all, the stamped steel, right hand slide, two-position safety is rough in terms of function, and it did cost me a "song dog" point blank in my face when calling in tall grass. Also, the bluing used is bright and not in keeping with the nice camo stock and my camo dressed suppressor. I will fabric camo tap my rifle to lose this bright bluing application. I think the makeup of surface treatment is saying two things that are very contrary to each other. I do like the use of the full weaver style mounting rail. This makes for fast scope



A 100-yard zero. No adjustments required over a full season of hunting.



SOUTH SHORE FISHING
WITH GUIDE RYAN WHITACRE

Watch our latest episode:





MIDWEST OUTDOORS Podcast

Audio-only version available on several podcast platforms

• Up-to-date fishing reports • News & events • Interviews with top fishing pros • Product profiles



Black Hills Ammunition was the selected ammo for test and hunting. The rifle took to it like a duck to water.

changes, and in this case, I did take two different glass systems into the field. The first being the previously mentioned TruGlo system, and the second an additional glass sight best used when trying to keep the rifle in the low-rate category.

TRACT optics came through with a tactical model Toric Ultra HD. This 1.5X8 makes use of the larger 30mm tube, adjustable red dot illuminated reticle, and cries glass that allows some super performance even in very low light conditions.

While the scope is on the heavy side for a tactical-style, bobbed-off, forward bell system, it is very well made, carries great low light functional glass, and upon going into the field strapped to the Howa Superlite rifle, accounted for a pair of song dogs early during the first week of real-time varmint hunting.

Shooting the 6.5 Creedmoor chambered in the reference rifle made for a gunning system that allowed longer-range shooting cross the board. The area I was hunting on a high bluff about 100 feet above a 40-acre alfalfa field produced clean kills to a



Two rounds with an adjustment for full value wind. Range: 200 yards. Target: a full-size rock chuck.

maximum range of 327 yards. Shooting from sniper sticks in the sitting position, I found the ultra-light rifle easy to control and that it acquired my targets with ease. With some time over the rifle, I got to learn the "feel" of the action and controls, thereby committing them to muscle memory.

Need to pack into a long-haul hunt? Stripping the rifle of everything save for the glass sight and three rounds of ammunition takes the rifle down to a carry weight of 4

pounds, 11 ounces in weight. Because much of my hunting involves walking into calling locations, getting carry time with the rifle was an obvious result during field testing applications. Carry this rifle on one hunt and you're going to set aside one pile of other option if you do indeed own several centerfire rifles.

Shooting the rifle with a suppressor attached makes for a recoil-free event as applied to the 6.5mm Creedmoor cartridge I was shooting in my reference rifle. After three months of big game and varmint hunting with the new Howa lite weight, I understand why the stock alone is worth more than the price of the action. At no time did my rifle change zero based on the action bedding system employed by Howa. The rifle is offered in four different camo presentations, making it workable for just about any requirements save for painting or taping off the bright barrel and action.

I tend to think that this rifle and others like it are going to become favorites among seasoned hunters with some time behind them over a rifle sight. As I get into that category, I tend to like fast-handling, light-weight, smaller-bore shotguns, and now a rifle that also fits that same profile. **MWO**

Writing on outdoor subjects for over 40 years, L.P. Brezny has written four books on shotgun and rifle (ballistics and performance). He's an expert at smoothbore, and high-power, ultra-long-range shooting. He's a specialist, producing reviews covering general products used in the outdoors industry.

Under Pressure

by Doug Thalacker

Most hunters preserve their meat by freezing. It's quick and easy. There are two downsides of freezing, however. First, you have to unthaw it before cooking or else the meat is tough; and second, it's hard to take meat with you, especially if you are going someplace without electricity. Some coolers claim to keep food frozen for 72-plus hours, but they are ridiculously expensive (and I question their claims under real world conditions). And what if I'm going to be gone for a week or more? There is an alternative to freezing that alleviates all the problems with freezing: pressure canning.

Pressure canning (AKA canning) food has been around since 1809 when Emperor Bonaparte's government established an award for anyone who could develop a safe and portable method of preserving food for Napoleon's armies. Nicolas Appert won the money when he developed steam canning.

The gist of his method is that heating water under pressure raises the temperature above the 100 degrees C/212 F boiling point. This higher temperature kills all the pathogens. A problem with his method, however, was that the wire and wax used to seal the jars was less than perfect. Tin cans and lead sealer was an alternative, but with obvious and deadly results over the long term due to lead poisoning (John Franklin's 1845 lost Arctic expedition is a prime example).

In 1858, John Mason (hence the Mason jar) developed the still-used method of glass jars with screw-on lids that had rubber seals. My mom still had some of these one-piece lids in the '50s, but today they have been replaced by two-piece lids developed by Alexander Kerr in 1905. Pressure canning was the main alternative to salting, drying and pickling food until low-cost freezers came into use and pushed pressure canning to the side. The development of safer (non-exploding) pressure cookers has helped bring canning back as a viable and in some ways better method of preserving food than freezing.

My aim for this article is not to give you step-by-step instructions, but rather to give you some pros and cons about canning meat. And some hints about how to do it more efficiently and effectively, hopefully making

you want to try this method of preserving meat. When I refer to meat, I am mostly talking about venison, but this method can be used for any wild game.

My go-to guide about any canning is the *Ball Blue Book Guide to Home Canning, Freezing and Dehydration*. A second and maybe better source is the *USDA Guide to Home Canning*, which you can download from the National Center for Home Food Preservation Website as a PDF file. In fact, most of the books you might read about canning are just extensions of this guide.

The first step is the pressure canner. In general, meat must be processed at 10 pounds pressure for 90 minutes, which is about 240 to 250 degrees. A stove top canner with gauge or weight is the only current appliance that will do this. At the time of this writing, the popular electric "instant" pots are not recommended for canning as they have not been tested for maintaining the correct temperature/pressure for preserving meat.

You can purchase a large, 16-quart, canner-specific appliance which will let you do up to 7 quarts at a time. The problem is, it is a one-use item—canning. I prefer a smaller, 7- to 8-quart, stove-top pressure cooker/canner. I can only process four 1-quart jars at a time, but it has the advantage in that I can use as a pressure cooker (which is whole other article), and its smaller size is easier for aging hands to handle.

Today's pressure cooker/canner (unlike my mom's screw-down-lid canner) has many safety features that virtually eliminate the risk of explosion due to over-pressurizing—if all the safety procedures are followed. Go with a reputable brand such as Presto, Mirro or T-fal. \$70 will get you an excellent stainless-steel appliance. Aluminum cookers/canners are little cheaper and lighter in weight, but they are not as durable; and if you also use it as a cooker, they can give acidic foods a metallic taste. Also, make sure that you can easily get replacement sealers, as you should replace them every 3 to 4 years depending on the number of times you use the appliance.

The next step is to decide how you want to use your canned meat: how big you make the chunks, types of spices and whether you brown the meat first. For tacos and BBQ, I make thin, long strips, or even ground meat; and for osso bucos and stroganoffs, I make

larger pieces in quart jars. I make mostly pints, but quarts are good for large meals.

Personally, I do not add any salt, ground pepper or things like onion to add flavor. If you do add anything, I would start small, as you can always add more when you cook with it—but you can't take it away. Make sure that you label the lid with all the ingredients so that you get the right jar for the right meal. Onions and chili peppers will completely disappear, leaving only their flavor, so if you want the appearance of these in your meal you need to add them when you cook.

You also do not have to add any liquid, as the meat will produce its own juice during processing. Processing will change the color of venison to a brownish gray. This does not affect the flavor of the meat—merely the appearance. Browning helps keep a "better" color and might add a like flavor, but to me, it is an extra step that I would rather not have to do. You will also read about raw-pack vs. hot-pack. I just do the raw-pack since the hot-pack seems to me to be just an extra step and an extra pot to clean.

The end product of canning is ready-to-eat. In fact, I always make a few half-pints—this time with a few things added for flavoring, for an instant snack right out of the jar. You can find recipes for canning roasts and steaks, but I have found that they are less than appealing in that form. As stated earlier, canned meat is best used when mixed with other things as stews and soups.

When you are ready for canning, it helps to be organized and give yourself lots of working space, as you are dealing with boiling liquids. Make sure everything is clean. Check the rubber seal on the lid to make sure it is in good shape so that it seals. Make sure the petcock for the wobble gauge is clean. If you

are using used jars, check the rims to make sure there are no chips: I only use wide-mouth jars as they are easier to fill and empty. Throw away any screw tops that are rusted.

Get all your meat ready before you start to fill the jars. A canning funnel makes things go faster and cleaner. Follow the directions for each type of meat and size of jar. If you are doing more than one batch, you can quick-cool the canner by running water off the lid; make sure that your canner allows this. If you are only doing one batch, you can just let the canner cool on its own.

The loaded canner is pretty heavy. As the jars cool, you will hear a pop as the slightly curved lid is pulled down by the drop in inside pressure; this is how you know the lid has sealed. If it doesn't seal (it pops down when you press on it), you can reprocess it in a new jar/lid/screw top. Label each jar with the date canned and all the ingredients.

This article is not intended to give you all the steps for canning meat, but rather to get you thinking about it as an alternative to freezing. Once you learn the basic steps, you can expand your repertoire to all sorts of meals. I still freeze venison I will use as steaks and roasts, but pressure canning gives me ready-to-use meat that I can take with me. It might seem complicated at first, but once you get a batch or two under your belt (pun intended), it is a great way to use your hard-won wild fare. **MWO**

Doug Thalacker has a Masters of Environment Science from UW-SP and taught high school environmental science and earth science. He has outdoor/wilderness training through Outward Bound and American Red Cross. He has a lifetime of enjoying any activity that involves fields, woods or waters.



Stay informed of the latest happenings at



Facebook.com/MidWestOutdoorsUSA



Deer Hunting

Dr. Ken Nordberg

A Gentle Nudge

Making a Plan to Hunt a Big Buck—last of a series

Numerous deer signs in the woods can contribute to taking a big buck, but few contribute as quickly as the deer sign my sons named "railroad tracks." They are made by bucks currently under the influence of doe-in-heat pheromone, causing bucks to walk stiff-legged, dragging their hooves along two parallel lines from track to track in the snow, making tracks that resemble railroad tracks.

The pheromone causing this either originates from the doe that a buck is currently accompanying (for 24 to 26 hours of active breeding), or from an upwind doe less than 200 yards away. After accompanying one doe in heat for a while, bucks generally drag their hooves far less—or not at all.

My son Ken took five mature bucks in five years that had made railroad tracks, using our new Gentle Nudge hunting method.

So, after Ken discovered some newly-made railroad tracks on his way back to camp on the evening of opening day in 1997—he and I spent time later that evening, cooking up a new scheme for using this same method to take this buck the next morning.

For our system to work, one of us (Ken) had to approach and sit undetected within 100 yards downwind of where that buck was expected to be located 30 minutes before sunrise. In this case, it was in a certain feeding (browse) area. It would then be my task to approach and sit detected about 100 yards upwind of that buck's location without alarming it. According to our deer camp weather radio, a light wind would be blowing from the east in the morning, switching to the southwest in the afternoon.

"Great," Ken said. "I'll slip well away around the west side of that browse area (full of red osiers and mountain maples relished by our deer in winter), on the west side of the logging trail where that buck (with 4-inch hoofprints) and doe (with 3-inch

hoofprints), followed by a fawn, were heading when I found their tracks. I will then climb close to the top of that steep-sided hill on its southwest side, where I'll have a good view of the downwind end of that feeding area."

"Okay," I said. "With me being the upwind hunter, after giving you a 30-minute head start because you will have a longer and more difficult route to take in the dark to get there, I'll head southeast from camp to the top of that high, rocky outcropping 100 yards east of the logging trail. There, I will be directly upwind of that feeding area."

"Because the area below my stand site is so full of brush, I won't be able to see any part of that feeding area, but that doesn't matter. From that spot, my downwind airborne scents will spread wide enough to cover that entire feeding area and keep those deer from departing into the wind in my direction after they quit feeding, like whitetails usually do to avoid ambushes via their noses."

"Moreover, because they will already be feeding there while I am approaching my stand site, my airborne scents drifting downwind toward them won't be alarming, because they will be able to tell that I am not moving toward them (my scents not growing stronger because I'd be heading southeast). Then, upon halting at my stand site, I will thereafter remain stationary, obviously not moving toward the deer. As long as I stay where I am, where they can keep track of me via airborne scents (the intensity of my scents remaining unchanging), those two older deer will continue feeding without being very concerned about where I am located, as long as I remain there."

"Upon completing feeding sometime between 9 and 10 am, rather than head upwind as usual, in this case to avoid me, they will head directly away from me, in your direction. They are likely to put about



Anticipation and a gentle nudge pushed this deer right where the author wanted.

200 yards between themselves and me before turning in another direction, in which case you should see and get another big, dominant breeding buck this year."

At 8:30 a.m., however, the wind direction unexpectedly switched to the southwest. This put Ken on the upwind side of the feeding area. Likely because the buck and doe then realized hunters were waiting on two sides of them, they decided to abandon the feeding area early, with the buck and doe splitting up and departing in different directions. Tracks in the snow discovered later revealed that the buck headed north, then circled west, south and finally east toward the top of hill behind Ken's stand site. This was its spring/summer/fall bedding area (later made obvious by the discovery of its multiple beds in snow among multiple antler rubs on tree trunks up to six inches in diameter).

Upon arriving there, however, the buck soon spotted Ken sitting lower down on the hillside on its left, upon which it snorted once and bounded noisily away, unseen, down the steep slope on the opposite side of the hill. Soon after this happened (without me knowing it), I began hearing hoofbeats made by an unseen deer walking north on the frozen surface of the logging trail.

Meanwhile, I was watching a doe and fawn now slowly heading up the brushy slope on my left, often halting to feed on stems of red osiers. It then occurred to me that this could be the doe and fawn that was accompanied by the big buck the evening before, now heading toward me because of the change in wind direction. It then also occurred to me that the deer I heard walking on the logging trail below could be the big buck. The trouble now was that doe and fawn would soon walk into my triangular downwind scent vector, upon which the doe would probably begin snorting and noisily bounding away, thus alerting the deer on the logging trail.

I then decided to try luring the buck near enough for a shot without further delay, using my new buck grunt call. This call had already made it possible for me to take two dominant breeding bucks, so it certainly was worth a try at this moment. Rather than blow on it,

which then made a grunt that was too loud and imperfect, I inhaled once on the opposite end, like before, producing a more mellow, more natural sound.

Almost immediately, the hoofbeats of the unseen deer on the logging trail began to speed up. It then turned east up an ancient deer trail, coursing through the dense brush, passing about twenty yards away on my right. I then heard antlers clattering loudly against frozen trailside branches, making it seem as if this approaching buck was furious.

Very soon, there it was. The moment its chest appeared in a trailside opening, I fired at it, after which it passed quickly out of sight. After waiting a few minutes and then climbing carefully down to that trail from my perch on that slippery granite outcropping, I discovered that the buck had only traveled about 25 yards before falling. It was an awesomely large deer with dark, 8-point antlers, and would surely weigh more than 300 pounds before field dressing. Moments

later, my son Ken was standing by my side, breathlessly saying, "Wow, it's huge. It's a good thing it's only a hundred yards to the logging trail, and it's all downhill."

There's another good lesson to be learned from this tale. Though my sons and I learn a lot about the bucks we plan to hunt while scouting before hunting seasons, we quickly react upon discovering promising stand sites during hunting seasons. We have become very good at selecting promising, mature-buck stand sites with excellent concealment, most often never used before. Although we have a great knowledge of current habits and activities of whitetails and information provided by their deer signs, we nonetheless consider ourselves to be extremely fortunate to take big individual bucks exactly like we imagined we would, in one of two or three attempts. The reason is, some older bucks are easy to successfully hunt, while many more are very difficult to successfully hunt, and some are impossible to successfully hunt.

Sometimes, our successes have been wholly a matter of luck, subject to unexpected changes, like in the tale above. But even then, knowing that hard work makes good buck hunting happen, and knowing that the ability of older white-tailed bucks to avoid hunters is constantly improving (my grunt call never attracting another mature buck, for example), we willingly work harder to improve our hunting success than most hunters, because we absolutely know that it pays off.

This, then, is the last of my series of true tales written to illustrate why it is generally necessary to create hunting plans specific for each big buck that you plan to hunt, and not simply one plan for all bucks that you plan to hunt. **MWO**

Dr. Ken Nordberg has been an avid hunter and angler for over 70 years and an outdoor writer for nearly 40. He has written 800+ outdoor articles, made three decades of contributions to MidWest Outdoors and written 15 outstanding books on deer and bear hunting. In addition, he's a teacher, seminar speaker and blogger and you can find some of his work on YouTube and other social media.

TWO GREAT WALLEYE FISHING BOOKS

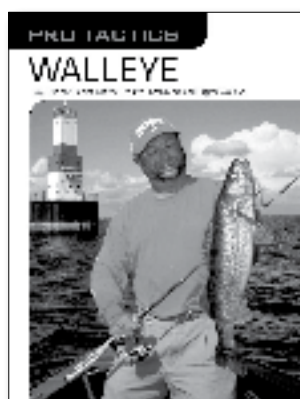
by Mark Martin

One of the finest all-around walleye tournament fishermen in the Midwest!

Mark won the prestigious inaugural Professional Walleye Tournament (PWT) in 1990, and has placed highly in many others while continuing to hone his legendary fishing skills.

Only \$19.95 ea.
+ shipping & handling

Get your copy at MarkMartins.net/store or Amazon.com





The Bait Color Debate Resolved!

Bait color certainly ranks as one of the most heated and disagreed upon debates in fishing. Yet I've possibly solved and put to rest the confusion when it comes to color choices for bass, including how, when, where, and why to use whatever color! Ah, well, probably not... but the title did get you to read this far! It may have been a better title for the upcoming April issue, rather than March; you know... *April Fool's Day* and all.

So, why the color topic? From my standpoint, the discussion of bait colors is the most asked-about question sent to me through emails. I always include my onthebank@att.net contact info with each article, and I truly appreciate the questions. And with so many questions directed toward color preferences, I thought this discussion might help other anglers as we kick-off a new open-water season.

Today's angler is inundated with colors and patterns never even dreamed about back in my early days of fishing hard baits, soft baits—it doesn't matter. Some larger tackle manufacturers have 50-plus color variations in just a single style of bait, such as crankbaits or plastic worms. The amount of color hues, and the realistic imagery, are impressive. But the million-dollar question comes down to: Do we need them all? I'm going to reply to this with my *opinions* based on my angling experiences. I have no test tanks and labs to back up my opinions—just on-the-water fishing results.

First off, I've seen articles and social media pieces slamming the tackle industry for excessive amounts of colors. I admit that I like and am impressed with all the color choices available today; but out of 60 color variations of crankbaits, or 70 color hues of plastic stick baits, which and how many of the available colors are necessary for success? That is the focus for this month's column.

My leading question when asked by anglers is: How do you choose a particular color, either for purchase or for any given outing?

Purchasing baits by color comes down to knowing the waters where you are going to be using them, as does which baits to take along on particular outings. This article just talks about colors—not bait types or retrieve characteristics—but just color selections.

There are two very important circumstances to consider when choosing baits for an outing: 1) available forage within those waters and 2) water clarity.

Bait forage colors/patterns

I've often talked about the "matching the hatch" theory when it comes to mimicking the colors of natural baits within your local waters. There seems to be a split camp on this subject, with one side saying that you need to match the color of local forage as closely as possible; and the other group saying to go completely the opposite, using bold and often obnoxious colors that stand out. I lean toward more natural color choices in most situations.

Determining forage colors on certain waters, such as small ponds and lakes, can be tricky, as not much information is offered about them on DNR/DOC web sites. Local tackle shops are among your best sources to find out natural forage options; stop in for some info, grab a few tackle items and

always support your local tackle shops. Larger lakes and bodies of water usually have forage species descriptions on DOC or DNR sites; base your color selections on these. Tip: If you want to be safe, most waters have bluegills, so relying on bluegill patterns and colors is usually a safe bet.

When it comes to hard bait presentations, I'm not discounting bright or not-so-natural colors, either; many bass have fallen to bright chartreuse/yellow or what I like to call "parrot" (yellow-orange-blue-green), multi-colored, bright crankbaits. I'm not sure why they produce, but then again, I'm not a bass!

While certainly not as easy to detail in rich colors and patterns as hard baits, soft baits come in a wide array of colors and hues flooding the fishing market. Here again, I lean toward the side of mimicking natural forage in these colors. It's Kind of like using the "safe" bluegill patterns. If you're not certain with soft baits, green pumpkin seems to be the number one, go-to bait color, according to most anglers and fishing manufacturers' sales numbers. You can't argue with the results!

There's a second piece to the puzzle in trying to solve the color debate: water clarity.

Water clarity

Water clarity, I believe, is a major factor when choosing the most effective colors for your angling circumstances. Water clarity has a multi-faceted effect when it comes to attracting bass and getting them to strike. My opinions here might not always agree with fishing "authorities" or paid fishing "pros," but I always write according to my findings from my outings.

Here's one important aspect of color regarding the bait you have dangling from the end of your rod: The color seen above the water is rarely what bass see once that bait

heads down into the depths. Whole articles are written concerning light penetration and their effects on subsurface bait colors. I do not have enough space to get into all the details, but depending on light penetration due to water clarity, bass probably do not see what you think.

I don't feel like this is as big a deal with fast-moving or vibrating-type baits like crankbaits, chatter baits or any bait that emits loud sounds and heavy vibration. But it certainly can be an issue for fish trying to locate slow-sinking soft baits or baits crawling along the bottom.

At this point, you're probably thinking that I haven't answered the question regarding the color selection debate. I'm getting there!

I'm trying to bring the issue of color choice into a very basic concept: I think that anglers are way more obsessed with color than are the bass we are pursuing. Bass are simple opportunistic feeders; they're predators that don't waste a whole lot of time trying to determine whether they should engulf a tequila-sunrise-colored worm over a green pumpkin, red-flaked worm once they've spotted it on the bottom. Whether your presentation is a soft plastic or a hard bait, once that bass has physically locked in on your offering, I truly don't believe that they will turn and reject a bait based simply on color. Many so-called "pros" will disagree with me! But we all have our opinions!

You're never going to keep up with all the must-have color schemes offered by the fishing industry. Why try? Bass don't care! Buy baits based on basic ideas concerning the bass/forage/clarity connection. Determine what forage you will be encountering in your target waters. Clarity-wise, the lower the light penetration, the darker your bait colors become, and they all just appear as some type of dark forage. Those 12 colors you started with up top, above the surface, now look kind of, well, just dark! Bait color is a little more critical in the shallows and in clear waters with more light penetration.

Summing up this horribly brief article on the color debate, over my many years of buying every color available in all my baits, the bass have spoken. Contrary to what I've always believed, bass are not quite as picky, color-wise, as we and the tackle manufacturers would like us to believe! Pick colors to match your water's clarity and forage options, and don't overwhelm yourself in the tackle aisles!

Before we wrap...



Bait of the Month

I know you might be thinking that this choice might be better suited for the warmer months, but great success has come my way on this style of bait during this cold-water period. This month's bait is the medium-depth, diving crankbait. Baits running in the 6-foot range have been my most successful on the waters I fish. These lakes' and ponds' maximum depths are normally around 10 to 12 feet, and it just seems that mid-depth, 6-foot range diving lures keep producing during early cold water.

At this time of year, bass are still schooled up and often in a suspending mode. I believe this "depth" bait puts an offering in close proximity to fish. Whether it's a hunger or reaction bite, bass seem very responsive, even when much slower bait options haven't produced much interest.

My retrieve is rather simple: Crank quickly to get the bait to depth, then back off to a slow, steady retrieve in the 6-foot range. These are great search baits. While bass may be in decent-sized schools, finding them becomes an issue, since they're not all moving throughout the depths as in warmer waters.

Pick your bait brand for that 6-foot range. I use two exclusively: the Rapala DT-6 and the Rapala Shad Rap in the SR-05 and SR-06 sizes. Both have produced well.

March in the Midwest can be a rough time of the year; hopefully the weather will offer a few decent days as we await the early signs of spring. If so, get out and wet a line!

MWO

Passion for angling drives Dan Brozowski to the water's edge virtually any chance he gets. Although passion cannot be measured, weighed, or recorded, it can be shared. He does this through his writing and while on the water. If you have any questions or comments for Dan, you may contact him at: onthebank@att.net.

Come along with Ted Takasaki as he shares his top fishing tips with you!

Must see DVD!!

Ted Takasaki is a Hall of Fame professional angler who has excelled during a 30+ year career as a top, tournament walleye angler, outdoor writer, and television personality.

SPINBAIT HOOKS Free with each DVD!

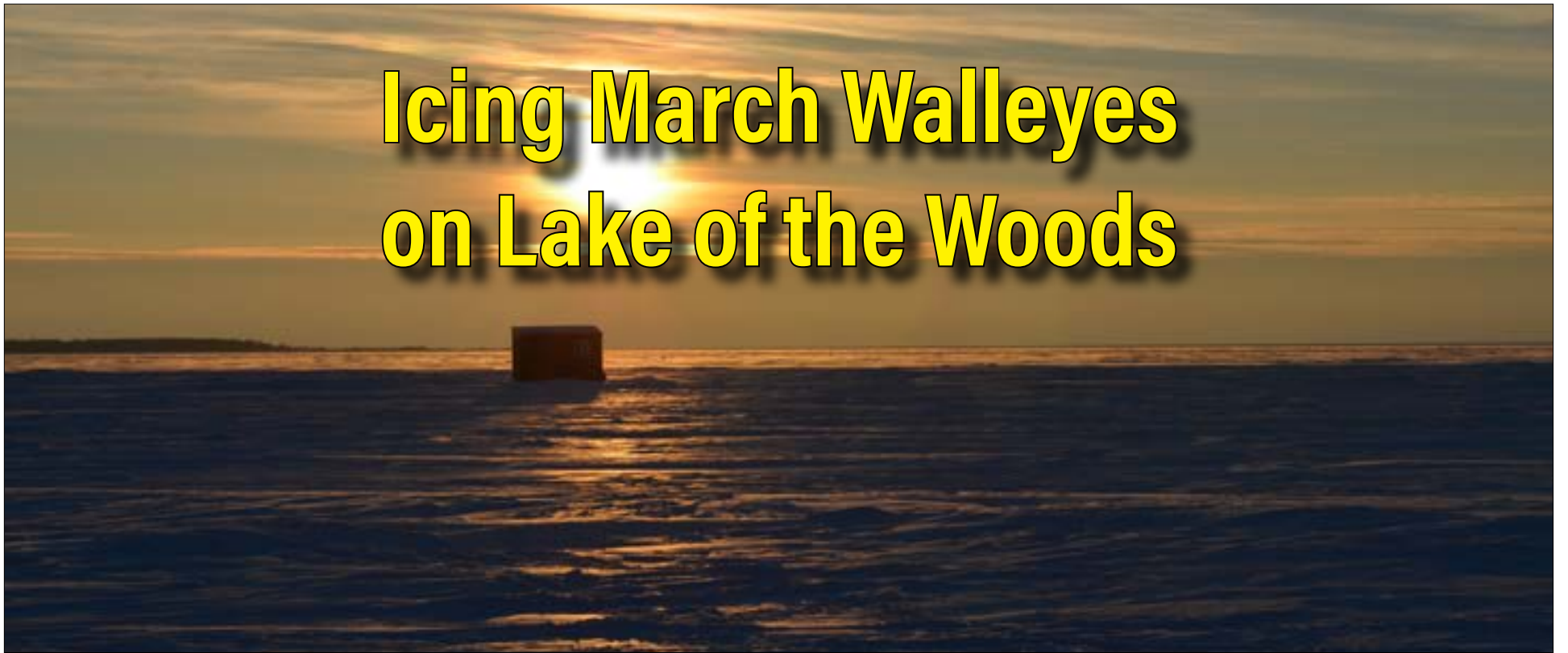
Ted's Greatest Fishing Tips

Multi-Species • Open-Water • Ice-Fishing

ORDER YOUR OWN TODAY!

Send \$20.00 along with \$2.00 S&H to:

Ted Takasaki
2501 S. Camden Ave.
Sioux Falls, SD 57106



Icing March Walleyes on Lake of the Woods

Fish houses are allowed on the ice through March 31 on Lake of the Woods, and the walleye/sauger season extends through April 14. Combined with a warming sun and longer days, this can lead to some of the most enjoyable ice fishing of the year. Fish houses are allowed on the ice through March 31 on Lake of the Woods, and the walleye/sauger season extends through April 14. Combined with a warming sun and longer days, this can lead to some of the most enjoyable ice fishing of the year.

by Joe Henry

The scenario plays out every year: The days get longer, the air begins to warm, the water begins to flow and oxygenate the water, and the walleye's instincts tell them to bulk up for the upcoming spawn. It's March on The Walleye Capital of the World, and the walleyes are on the move. March is prime time for icing Lake of the Woods' walleyes.

The majority of Minnesota and much of the Ice Belt has ice fishing seasons close at the end of February. On Lake of the Woods, however, because it is so far north and is a border water with Canada, different rules apply. Fish houses are allowed overnight on the ice through March 31, the walleye and sauger seasons are open through April 14, and the pike season never closes. This opens a window of ice fishing that many anglers wait for all year long.

Mother Nature nudges fish to put on the feedbag

In March, the walleyes' instincts begins to kick in, reminding them the spawning season is approaching, and that it is time to build energy; ultimately, it is time to feed. Fishing can be very good!

Several spots are absolute magnets for March 'eyes. With Big Traverse Bay primarily made up of mud bottom, the scattered reefs that pop up can be go-to areas for walleyes. In addition, areas adjacent to known spawning areas can be hot. Here are a few spots March hot spots on Lake of the Woods.

The south shore

With the increased flow of water from the melting snow entering the Rainy River—a major spawning area for walleyes—the area of the lake adjacent to Pine Island can yield excellent March fishing. Some walleyes in the system are beginning to stage for their upcoming spawning run up the Rainy River.

These walleyes set up in the mud just outside the Lighthouse Gap (on the east side of Pine Island) and Morris Point Gap (on the west side of Pine Island), and on the south end of the lake adjacent to Pine Island. With increased water flows coming from the Rainy River and Bostic Creek, walleyes start to home in on their spawning areas and these areas can get stacked with fish.

Knight and Bridges islands

This area hugs the eastern side of Big Traverse and is located about 20 miles north of Wheeler's Point, which is the mouth of the Rainy River. This area is loaded with a variety of reefs, gravel and mud transitions. Set up on deep transitions from rock to mud in 27 to 32 feet of water. This is a good bet to start.

What You Need This Winter
Lake of The Woods, MN



River Bend RESORT
Lake of the Woods, MN
800-292-3084
www.riverbendresort.com

Comfortable Heated Accomodations
Cabins
Sleepers
Hotel

Day Houses
Full Service
Bar & Resturant
Meal Plan Packages

Everything In 1 Call

MIDWEEK DISCOUNTS (Sun-Thu) 15% OFF




Slim's RESORT
on Minnesota's Lake of the Woods
1-800-243-2412
slimsresort@yahoo.com

Affordable Fisherman & Family Packages

Full-service Guided Charter Fishing

- American Plan
- Short order menu & liquor bar

www.slimsresort.com



Nice walleyes like this attract anglers to Lake of the Woods in March. It is a last opportunity for about eight months to rip some lips and make some memories through the ice.

During low-light periods, walleyes will go up shallower to feed, but deep transitions are good bets.

Long Point to Rocky Point

This section of the lake is loaded with reefs that pop out of miles and miles of mud. Not only do walleyes and sauger hang on these reefs; this time of year, jumbo perch show up as well. When the jumbos, or humpbacks, show up, they often exceed 13 inches and are *huge*.

The Northwest Angle

This area is north of Garden Island on the very north end of the Minnesota portion of the lake and is where the 14,552 islands of the lake begin. Islands, reefs, and underwater points decorate the mud as the lake transitions to more of a rocky landscape. There are literally hundreds of spots to fish.

It is not uncommon to hear of an evening bite on the top of a reef or in areas adjacent to moving water yielding walleyes as quickly as you can pull them up as aggressive feeders take advantage of low-light periods.

How to access go-to March hotspots

Both south-end and Northwest Angle resorts position fish houses on many of the mentioned spots. Some resorts have ice roads and you can drive to a rental fish house. Others will transport you to the fish house via their ice transportation. That's not a bad option for many, as the holes are drilled and fish house all heated up and ready to fish.

If you have the right equipment, being mobile is certainly an option at this time of year. Some years, March resembles the middle of winter. Other years, all the snow melts, the lake has standing water, and if you fish outside a fish house or shelter, you need to use sunscreen. Depending upon the conditions, an ATV, side-by-side or snowmobile with a collapsible fish house can allow you to move around and be versatile.

Snowmobile trails run from the mouth of the Rainy River, up the east side of Big Traverse Bay, all the way up to the Northwest Angle, and on the west side of Big Traverse Bay up the Angle. These trails are marked and groomed and make it easy to get around. They allow anglers to access a good part of the lake, including many of the areas discussed.

Methods

Catching March walleyes is not rocket science. Typically, with the two lines per angler allowed when ice fishing in Minnesota, anglers jig with one line and fish a deadstick

in a second hole. Jig with your favorite spoon tipped with a frozen shiner head or body. Vary your jigging motion until you get the fish dialed in that specific day. Electronics are helpful, as they not only tell you when and where the fish are coming through, but they help educate you on how the fish want the presentation that day.

On the deadstick line, set a live minnow on a hook or your favorite ice jig, 6 inches to a foot off the bottom. Most anglers use a bobber; however, many guides do not; rather, they set their rod on a bucket so the rod is sideways to them, which allows them to see the slightest movement on the tip of the rod.



The secret to catching monster walleyes is to fish a body of water that has a lot of monster walleyes! Many anglers target Lake of the Woods in March to make their big walleye dreams come true.

If that rod tip goes down at all, it's time to set the hook. This method will pick up some fish that the bobber line would not have indicated.

With the walleyes bulking up, this is a good time to try your favorite swimming

minnow bait, such as a Rapala Rippin' Rap, Chubby Darter or Lindy Darter. All can be effective as larger-profile baits that get the fish's attention as they search for larger forage.

story continued on next page

LIVE BAIT ~ TACKLE ~ GAS ~ GROCERIES

THE ONLY ONE-STOP SHOP ON LAKE OF THE WOODS!

FISHING LICENSES ~ LIQUOR STORE ~ SO MUCH MORE

Log Cabin Bait
BAUDETTE, MINNESOTA
LAKE OF THE WOODS FISHING HEADQUARTERS

www.logcabinbait.com
218-634-1339

3263 Fishery Road NW
Baudette, MN
(10 miles north of Baudette on Hwy 172)

Like Us On facebook

VISA
DISCOVER

ARNESEN'S
Rocky Point Resort
ESTABLISHED 1897

Minnesota's ultimate
FISHING DESTINATION
Lake of the Woods

- ICE FISHING
- CHARTER FISHING
- SMALL BOAT FISHING
- BEACHES
- CABIN RENTAL
- BAR & RESTAURANT

800-535-7585 WWW.ARNESENS.COM

Cool Tips for Big-Time Spring Panfish

by Ted Takasaki

Chill out and catch some big-time panfish! When the warm spring sun is cranking up the heat, don't sweat it; grab your ice fishing jigs/tackle and chill out! Yup, you read that right: Ice fishing tactics aren't just for the winter months. Bluegills and crappies are still ready to party under the surface, even when you're rocking flip-flops and sunscreen in June, July and August. In fact, the same jigs and techniques you use in December (minus the snow) can be the ticket to an epic summer panfish haul. Talk about keeping it cool!

Search for secret weed beds

Want to catch the big 'uns? It's time to track down the VIP spots: healthy, green weeds like coontail and cabbage. These aquatic jungles are the perfect hangouts for hungry bluegills and monster crappies, which are basically all about that oxygen-rich, shady life.

Look for these lush weed beds in places like backwaters of rivers or near deep-water, inside turns in lakes. By midsummer, the weeds have grown tall enough to top out just below the surface, and the fish are hanging out just below them. This is where they can dine on zooplankton (tiny critters that

crappies and bluegill like to eat) without anyone noticing. It's like the perfect buffet with built-in shade!

If you're near a lake or reservoir, keep an eye out for standing timber, too. These shady spots are gold mines, especially when everyone else is too busy dodging jet skis and water skiers, way far away from the weeds. But you can't blame them; they don't want to flip off their skis just to come up with weeds for a beard!

What to fish with?

Getting ready to slay some springtime panfish? Here's the lowdown: Simplicity is key. You don't need anything fancy. Go for longer, medium-light rods to crank up the fun factor. I believe that a longer, 8-foot, medium-action JT Outdoors rod provides that extra action when a bluegill goes wild on the other end. It's also easier to pull them out of the weeds with a rod heavier than an ultra-light.

Medium-pound test line is your friend here, so stick with 4-pound test for that super-sensitive touch. If you're fishing around rocks or sunken trees (basically fish hideouts), you might want to bump it up to 6-pound. But let's be real: Finesse is the name of the game.

Speaking of finesse... ice jigs are still the secret weapon in the summer heat! They may have been born for winter fishing, but



Big crappies are easiest to catch in spring. Keep looking... and be cool.

when you dress them up with some live bait like waxworms or "spikes" (aka, maggots or Euro larvae), they're absolutely irresistible to panfish. If the water's clear, start with dark, natural colors like black. Once the algae blooms kick in, go bright: Chartreuse, orange and other high-visibility colors are great go-tos.

Here's the cool part: Unlike regular hooks, ice jigs with the tiny hooks usually hook fish in the lip, which means you can easily catch-and-release the ones that don't make the cut.

The approach: Stealthy moves for summer panfish

Once you're all geared up and have located a promising weed bed (or a secret timber lay-down), it's time to take the stealth

approach. Forget casting; just gently place your float into the water, letting the bait drop straight down into those secret fish hideaways. Be stealthy! Avoid making big splashes or you might scare off the panfish.

Control your depth with a bobber stop, so the bait gets to the right spot and stays there. Let it rest for a second or give it a little jiggle. No bites? No problem. Keep moving and don't wait around for the fish to come to him. Keep moving along the weed line, finding where the fish are hungry and ready to bite. Panfish aren't shy; when you find them, they typically eat.

If the action slows, adjust your depth. Fish follow the zooplankton around, so you might need to go up or down a little to match their vertical snack attack. Fresh bait is essential, so don't let those waxworms get too stale. Keep changing it up and fresh!

The bottom line?

Hot outside? Bring the ice fishing vibes to your summer panfishing game. With just a few simple tweaks (longer rods) to your usual ice fishing setup, you'll be hauling in bluegills and crappies like it's still winter, but with way better weather. And crispy fried fillets at the Fourth of July picnic? That's what summer fishing dreams are made of! **MWO**

Ted Takasaki is a National Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame professional angler who has been featured in many national outdoor magazines and television shows. Takasaki has appeared in front of thousands of angling enthusiasts.

Ice Fish Through March

THE WALLEYE CAPITAL OF THE WORLD™
LAKE OF THE WOODS MINNESOTA

LakeoftheWoodsMN.com

Icing March Walleyes on Lake of the Woods

...continued from previous page

Colors and rattles

Every year can be different, just as every day can be different. Some known "go-to" colors that seem to stand the test of time. Gold is a staple on Lake of the Woods due to "stained" water which comes from bogs releasing tannins into the water. This stained water enables the walleyes to eat during the day rather than the middle of the night, which is to the liking to most anglers. Glow colors (my favorite is glow red), pink and orange are additional options.

In the stained water, jiggling spoons with rattles or lipless crankbaits can not only catch more fish, but also draw more fish in to your other lines. If you are fishing with someone else, work together, each trying something different, until you get the walleyes dialed in.

There is a lot of excitement in March as Midwesterners are looking for a reprieve from the grasp of winter. Basketball and hockey tournaments are in full gear, days are longer, and 40 degrees feels like a heat wave. If you are a walleye angler, don't put away your ice fishing equipment just yet. Extend your ice fishing season, grab some sunscreen and enjoy icing some nice March walleyes. **MWO**

Tournament angler and licensed charter captain Joe Henry fishes and hunts the Midwest. Henry is a media member of AGLOW and writes for numerous publications, creates videos, appears on a variety of outdoor TV and radio shows and is a frequent seminar speaker. Henry is the Executive Director of Lake of the Woods Tourism.

Great Fishing & Family Fun!

ADRIAN'S RESORT

FISH LAKE OF THE WOODS

We Offer:

- Charter Boat Fishing
- Boat Rentals (or Bring Your Own Boat!)
- Docking Facilities
- Small Beach for Kids
- RV Park
- Clean & Spacious Cabins For Rent
- Full-service Restaurant & Bar

BOOK TODAY!

For more information & reservations
218-634-1985

adriansresort.com

Ice Fish

MINNESOTA'S LAKE OF THE WOODS
at **ZIPPEL BAY RESORT**

Home of the Zippel Bay Igloo!

Standard & Log cabins plus day & Sleeper Fish Houses available!

Plowed Ice Roads!

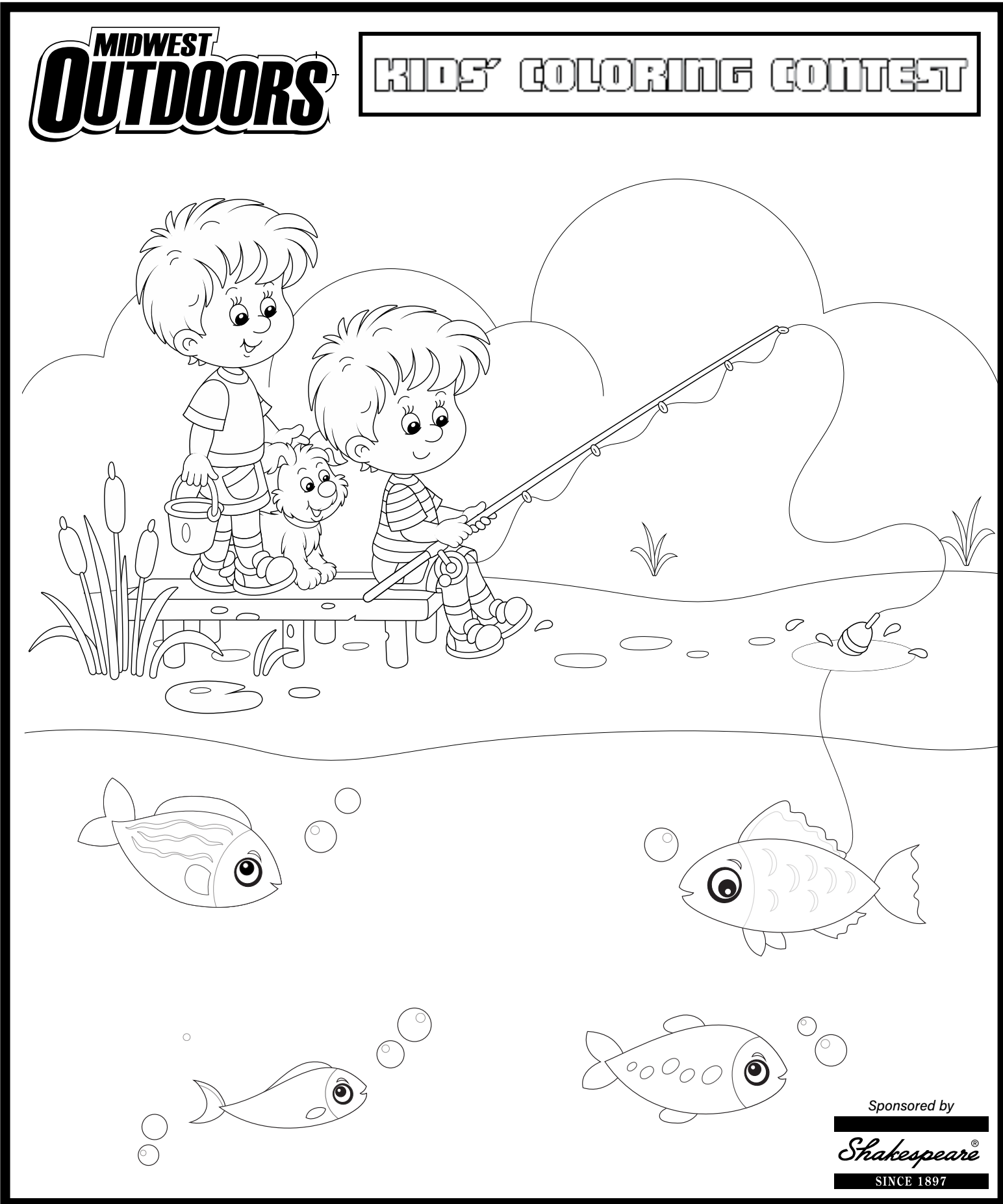
ZIPPEL BAY

www.zippelbay.com

Open Year Round
1-800-222-2537

Call for Brochure Full Service Resort

6080 39th St. NW
Williams, MN 56686
(218) 783-6235



Enter Today and YOU COULD WIN a Shakespeare EZ-Grow Combo!

Shakespeare, the leader in kids' fishing kits and combos and a brand that young adults and others have grown up with, and MidWest Outdoors invite your child to participate in the Kids' Coloring Contest! Kids ages 3-8 can color in the picture above, and mail the entire page (please do not cut down the page) to MidWest Outdoors by March 31, 2025, for a chance to win a valuable Shakespeare kids' combo. Shakespeare offers a full line of kids' combos including the EZ Grow combo.



Kids' coloring contest

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Day Phone (____) _____ Age _____ Girl Boy


 Mail to: **MIDWEST OUTDOORS**
Shakespeare Coloring Contest
 111 Shore Drive, Burr Ridge, IL 60527
 



The Bait Debate

A long-standing argument that takes place in every catfish circle: the great bait debate. The actual bait being debated might change based on the region of the country where the conversation is held.

Here in the north, the conversation typically includes white suckers, goldeyes or leopard frogs. I have joked at seminars that it is one of two topics that anglers will fight about. (The other being mono vs. braided line.) Ask the crowd what the best bait is and you get ten different answers; and there are always a few people who dig in that *their* bait of choice is the only one that works. Some answers are concoctions that are really out there, and people will go to the edge of fighting to convince you that it is best.

Everyone has comfort bait(s) that they believe in. Mine is white suckers, while some local tournament anglers I know will go to the ends of the earth for frogs, and others still believe that goldeyes are king. There is no wrong answer, but there is one thing that, through years of trial and error, has taught me: With the exception of leopard frogs, *fresh bait may not be the best bait!*

What does that mean? Catfish anglers spend a lot of time and money in search of bait, assuming that fresh bait is best. There is an entire industry to keep bait alive and fresh. I remember seeing anglers standing on the shore trying to catch goldeyes to throw on ice, as fresh as they could get them.

This is not a new topic for me. I have written many times that fresh, dead bait may be better in some situations. Over the past two years (2023 and 2024), I have been actively researching and taking notes on the topic. Some of the outcomes have been very intriguing.

Remembering back to a previous article and how this debate got started, it was a total accident. I buy white suckers in bulk to ensure that I have supplies for my guide trips. When you keep live bait, there is always a dead one or two each day. I would always take the few dead ones, put them on ice, take them on my trips and just use them first, as they were still fresh and going to be cutbait anyway.



Long-time guide client Kris holds a catfish that was caught on eight-day-dead sucker. It was discovered that the fish wanted week-old dead sucker at the end of July.

For years, I would use the first few dead suckers up before starting into the fresh live ones. We would start our days good, and the day would slow down during late morning or whenever the *dead bait ran out*. I just thought it was a midday slow down.

One time, I was out of bait and the bait shop received a shipment late, after hours. I went to pick my bait up first thing in the morning, right before a trip, to find out there was a malfunction in the aeration system and the entire shipment was dead. In desperation, I bought ten days' worth of dead suckers and 100 pounds of ice to try to salvage enough bait to get to the next shipment, because a guide with no bait isn't a successful guide. What happened was ten days of amazing fishing that never did slow down for that midday lull. At the time, I just thought it was a spectacular, spring catfish bite.

In the years since, through various bait tank kills and just experimentation, I now use virtually *no* live fish for cut bait. Rather, I kill the bait before the trip and pack it in a cooler. Over the past couple of years, I have determined that *24 to 48 hours dead* seems to be the best overall dead bait. Some days, the fish will prefer even longer dead. The key is to package it properly and keep it on ice, as fresh as you can, until use.

What happens with fresh-killed bait is, when you cut it, the vessels are still open and filled with blood right at the cut. This causes the blood to run out quickly. If the fish is dead and on ice for a day or two, the blood will soak



A grandfather and granddaughter double caught using three-day-dead bait. It was about this time that fresh was discovered not to be best.



The author's son. This fishing day was unexpected, so bait was not killed in preparation, other than leftovers from the day before. This was one of the last fish caught before running out of dead bait. Fourteen fish were caught on three-day-dead bait in three hours—versus only one fish caught on fresh dead bait in the next three hours. A stark contrast!



A hot, dog days of summer giant. The fish kept biting once the author and clients put dead baits out.

up into the meat. This will not make a blood trail as quickly when it hits the water, but it will hold the scent and last longer when in the water, allowing fish more time to find the bait. It also makes more of a difference when the water is warmer because warm water pulls and disperses the scent faster.

After this realization—and new aquatic nuisance laws for transporting bait water—I started killing my bait and packing it on ice the night before my trips. Within a year, I noticed that my catch rate went up by .3 fish per hour, which is a significant amount if you do that math over time.

Once I started paying attention to the age of the bait that fish preferred and killing it two to three days before intended use, I managed to get the catch rate to go up an entire one fish per hour. In trophy catfishing, a one-fish-per-hour increase is substantial.

Preserving your fresh, dead bait

Just grabbing some bait and throwing it in a bag is not how this works; nor is freezing it. Bait

still must be cared for during the short term. The bait must be somewhat dry and packed in bags. I like some sort of zipper freezer bag for this. Pack them so they can be stored flat for more of the fish to be in contact with the ice.

Put a layer of ice on the bottom of a cooler, then a layer of bait, cover that layer with ice, and repeat until you have what you need. As ice melts, drain off the water and add more ice if needed. If water gets to the bait, it can degrade it. I find the best result is achieved using a high-quality, rotomolded cooler such as a Big Frig or Yeti to maintain the cold and keep melting to a minimum.

The great bait debate will go on as long as people are catfishing, and so will my research on this topic. As I am convinced that it makes a huge difference in catfishing success. **MWO**

Captain Brad Durick is a nationally recognized catfish guide, seminar speaker, and author of the books Cracking the Channel Catfish Code and Advanced Catfishing Made Easy. For more information: redrivercatfish.com or facebook.com/braddurickoutdoors.

If you do one thing today, watch the short videos of the Drotto Catch-N-Release Boat Latch online at www.DrottoProducts.com



- Auto boat launch makes boat loading quick and easy
- Replaces bow roller, bunk or roller trailers, works on most v-hull boats
- Lever releases bow hook, latches automatically when loading
- Hard, smooth plastic liner cradles boat, protecting your boat bow
- Fast and easy to install

MADE IN USA Patented. Dealers welcome.



605-366-0542
23810 467th Ave.
Colman, SD 57017

www.drottoproducts.com

OPEN HOUSE

Sat, March 29 • Opens at 6am

- 6am Kickoff with Chauncey's ESPN Radio show LIVE at Water Werks
- Free Seminars Meet Factory Reps
- 1% of All Sales Donated to NO LIMITS FISHING!

See Water Werks website, Facebook and Instagram pages for additional event updates and schedule!

WATER WERKS

18660 S. Cicero, Country Club Hills, IL 60478
(708) 798-9700
waterwerks.com

THE LAKEMASTER® DOWNLOAD



Coralville Lake

by Don Gasaway

Don Gasaway is a veteran freelance outdoor writer from Marion, Ill. He may also be found at: facebook.com/#1/DonGasawayWriter and facebook.com/WanderingAngler. Comments are welcome.

LOCATION: Johnson County in east-central Iowa, 4 miles north of Iowa City, on the Iowa River.

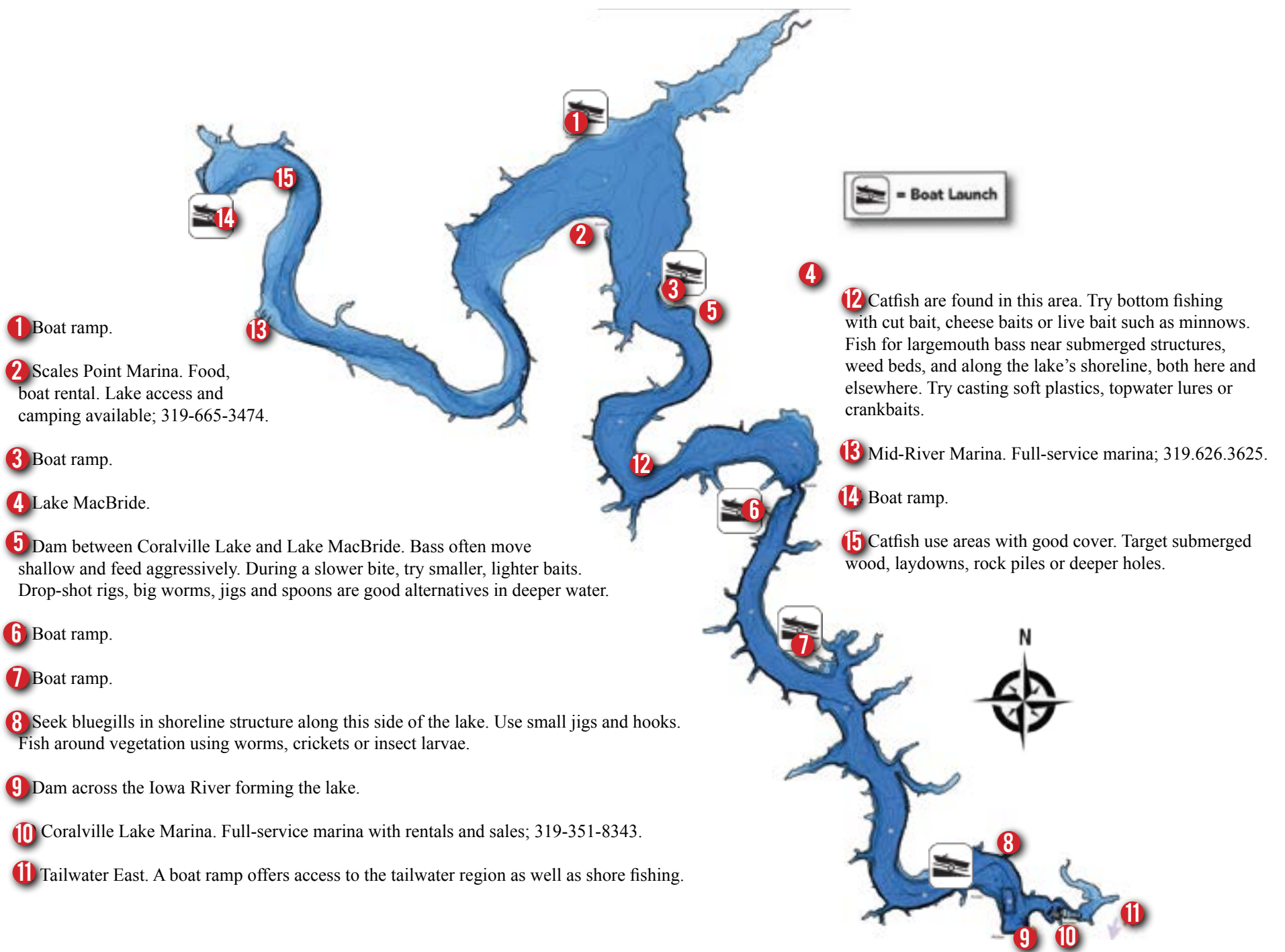
SIZE/DEPTH: 5,280 surface acres, 50-plus miles of shoreline, maximum depth approximately 30 feet.

Coralville Lake and the surrounding shoreline is excellent for recreational use. It provides excellent fishing opportunities for a range of popular fish species. Marinas, boat rentals, launch ramps, a restaurant and a bait & tackle store are available on the lake. Lodging and a convenience store are located nearby.



Lake MacBride, just to the northeast, was originally formed by another dam. It became part of Coralville Lake as the result of flooding in 2008.

DOMINANT SPECIES: Coralville provides an excellent bass fishery thanks to long-term fisheries management by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Most largemouth bass are 10 to 17 inches long (average 13.75) with reports of fish in the 4- to 6-pound range. Despite a winterkill last year, channel catfish numbers remain good; fish run 1 to 8 pounds and average 15 inches in length. Most bluegills are 4 to 7 inches in length and average 5.5 inches.



▶▶ GET THE MAP ON YOUR HUMMINBIRD® FISH FINDER

▶▶ GET THE MAP ON YOUR PHONE WITH A ONE-BOAT NETWORK® APP SUBSCRIPTION

Spring is in the Air in the Devils Lake Region

While we are still enjoying a great ice season here in Devils Lake, it is never too early to start planning those first open-water trips of the year!

North Dakota—and more specifically, Devils Lake—is a unique place come spring: Because walleye season is open-round! The only caveat is that anglers need to purchase a new fishing license on April 1. With no closed season for walleyes, expect to get on some of the earliest walleye action right here in the Lake Region.

Spring bites are generally dictated by water flows in the coulees that feed the 160,000-acre body of water. The best bites can come right from shore the first few weeks of open water, and anglers may not even need



Catch plenty of fish from shore.



to haul a boat to the lake. The key to finding a consistent walleye bite in early spring is to find moving water, and southern-facing bays that are exposed to the warm sun that we have been eagerly awaiting all winter.

The spring walleye bite is a very straightforward presentation that doesn't require an expansive tackle pack. Grab a variety of 1/4-ounce jigs, a few packages of



your favorite plastics, a couple shallow-diving crankbaits, and you are set! You'll also want slip bobber and Lindy Rig setups along once leeches become readily available.

For those looking to keep it even simpler and hire a guide, most local guides start their open-water season around the second to third week of May, depending on spring weather and ice-out conditions. Most guides take groups up to three in a boat for the day, while some may even accommodate four.

Devils Lake can be quite intimidating to anglers new to the area, but hiring a guide for a day can be an excellent resource; especially for those who plan to stay a few days and tackle the lake on their own. Local guides provide excellent insight on the lake, structure and what to look for when it comes to landing a few walleyes.

Access around the lake has never been better; with numerous public boat launches, a handful of resorts and a huge state park, there are plenty of options for launching boats in particular areas, rather than having to cover miles upon miles of water in your boat.

For those unfamiliar with the lake and the flooding that has ensued since the early 1990s, take a few minutes and explore Google Earth and its historical imagery tool. This will give you a bird's eye view of

the old lake shorelines and hidden structure that can hold walleyes come spring. This is a fantastic way to start breaking down water and eliminating areas before you even get to the lake.

Visit DevilsLakeND.com to stay up-to-date with the latest fishing reports, view guides, see accommodations and plan your next trip to this amazing fishery in the middle of the prairie!

Discover Your Next Adventure **DEVILS LAKE**



COME SEE WHAT EVERYONE IS TALKING ABOUT.
DEVILSLAKEND.COM | 800.233.8048

devils lake
North Dakota

    /devilslakend

created with Devils Lake Tourism by the
MidWest Outdoors
media
WORKSHOP

Fine-Tuning Jig Colors for Crappies

by Tim Huffman

Fishermen love using a "secret" color. It's a color not popular with most fishermen, yet one that fish quickly jump on. There are situations when one color, or more likely a color combination, triggers bites when fish snub their noses at other colors.

Experts say that there are times when a big crappie wants a different color than small and average-size fish. Trying different colors is the only way to learn if such a situation is happening. Forward-facing sonar makes this learning much easier.

Colors can make a difference in the number of fish caught, too. The color looks like food or is one they can see. However, sometimes the fish are just extremely hungry and would hit any color. Therefore, the most important key is that you put a bait where a fish is located, then have the right color to trigger a bite.

The basics

The rule-of-thumb is to use dark colors in dark conditions and bright colors in bright conditions. Dark conditions include dark or stained water, dawn, dusk, cloudy skies, and night. A dark color is easier for a fish to see because, when it looks up, a darker jig creates a better outline than a light-colored jig. It's probably more about a crappie seeing the jig than the actual jig color.

Colors can be complicated. It's like us holding a jig up and looking at it in the moonlight. If the bait is too clear, we can't see it. If it is too dark, it doesn't look real. It's important to find the right color for the clarity of the water and the light penetration, so the bait looks real to the fish.

Light colors are usually best in clear water, or in stained waters during bright sunlight. A crappie can see a jig in clear water, so shape and



A clear jig with sparkles is a great choice for clear water. Subtle colors look realistic, so they get more bites than bold or dark colors.

color are critical. Whites, shad, pinks, light blue and other soft colors are good.

Slight- to moderately stained waters have enough light penetration that bright and mid-range colors work well. Bright conditions mean bright sunlight.

Summary: Use dark colors in dark conditions. Use light colors in light conditions.

More than black and white

Ron Stallings has been associated with baits all his life. He grew up working at his father's bait shop. He has decades working with foreign markets, designing, and marketing with TTI-Blakemore—the RoadRunner company—and colors are a critical part of his business.

"Catching fish is about colors, but it's also about passing or blocking light. In dark waters, it's best to use a dark color like Junebug or black. Use opaque colors that block light and create a bait shadow fish can see in dark water. Dark conditions are usually stained water, overcast sky, and before sunrise and after sunset."



An assortment of jig colors can save a day of fishing. The first column of jigs are natural and light colors; the middle, medium shades; and the last column, darker colors.

"It's the opposite in clear water. A semi-transparent bait color, like Monkey Milk, will work in most clearer waters and often in stained waters. It's a more natural-looking bait because of the color and having some light going through it."

Summary: Use opaque colors in dark water; and semi-transparent in clear.

Which color?

Chartreuse is on everyone's list. Since nothing in the lake is chartreuse in color, it proves that getting a bite is more about seeing a bait than looking natural. Chartreuse is the number one color, and it can be opaque, glow or transparent. Black-chartreuse is a popular color anywhere in the country and will catch fish in most waters.

Monkey milk is a milky, sparkly bait that's a proven fish-catcher. It works in most lakes and is especially important in clear to lightly stained waters. A shad body in Monkey Milk accounts for lots of crappies every year. Other good light colors include light blue/white, white/chartreuse and pink/white.

Natural colors include pumpkinseed-colored baits. They are good around vegetation including grass, weeds and lily pads. Using a bright or an extremely dark color can spook crappies, but a natural color fits into the surroundings.

Experts agree that very dingy or muddy water requires glow colors in orange, black, yellow, and chartreuse. These colors help draw attention to a bait in low-visibility waters. A black/chartreuse body with an orange head is a good color combination to try.

A good all-around bait for many waters is green/chartreuse glow. The color is an attention-getter without spooking the fish if the water isn't too clear.

Summary: Having a good variety of colors is important. Use the proper color for conditions but switch as necessary.

Final tips

Every lake has a best color: something that seems to catch more fish than anything else.

For example, crappies in Truman Lake, Missouri, like Junebug-chartreuse. Other colors may work better on a particular day, but Junebug-chartreuse is a good go-to color. Fishermen use an orange-chartreuse at Kentucky Lake while Florida fishermen use greens. Try the lake favorite but adjust colors as necessary.

Color options are endless, with every color having a situation when it will work. Classic Champ Travis Bunting, owner of Muddy Water Baits, says, "Different colors are important. However, a fisherman needs to have confidence in the color he is using, especially when fishing gets tough. He must believe the color will work. If not, he will be changing colors and worrying about baits more than getting a jig into the right spots with a good presentation." **MWO**

Tim Huffman has written over 36 years for MidWest Outdoors. His new 2024 book, *Papermouth, Modern Crappie Techniques*, is available in Kindle or paperback from Amazon.

TD EYE WALLEYE RODS

KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE PRIZE

TD EYE RODS FEATURE

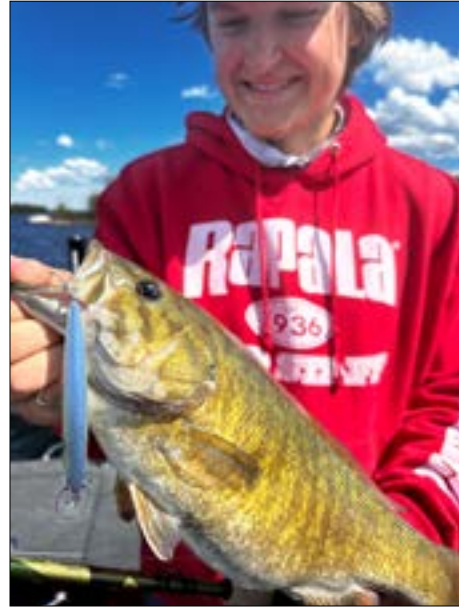
- » HVF WITH X45® BIAS CONSTRUCTION
- » TOP QUALITY FUJI® FAZLITE GUIDES
- » MEGATOP TIP SECTIONS (-MT MODELS)
- » TRIANGULAR POWERLIFT GRIP (TROLLING MODELS)

For more info visit: Daiwa.us

Dialing in Early-Season Walleyes and Smallmouths



A true Rainy Lake bronzeback! The dark colors of this fish usually indicate an older specimen. Photo: Nicholas Cormier



Note the weight from chin to tail of this healthy, spring smallmouth. Photo: Roger Cormier



One of the healthier 'eyes caught. Photo: Nicholas Cormier

by Roger Cormier

Last Memorial Day weekend, my son Nicholas and I rolled north out of the Twin Cities to one of our favorite summertime fisheries up on the border with Ontario. A historically early ice-out and decent weather

forecast for the end of May in northern Minnesota had us optimistic we'd enjoy great fishing, as Rainy Lake always delivers.

Our primary targets were walleyes and smallmouth bass. When targeting these two species in springtime, pay attention to the variables Mother Nature throws at you.

For walleyes, it's how far past the spawn they are (especially for the bigger females) and whether they've recuperated enough to start feeding. Smaller male walleyes typically hold around spawning areas (shallow shorelines and points with gravel, sand and rock) and are aggressive enough—even in cold water—to reward anglers casting to these areas.

For smallies, water temperature and weather conditions are critical. Water temps below about 53 degrees, especially when combined with overcast skies and generally gloomy conditions, will stall the bite, compared to 55-plus-degree water and bright, spring sunshine.

Our weekend fishing forecast was for sunshine, light winds and decent weather overall, and our first morning greeted us with brilliant sunshine despite crisp temps. We

launched the Skeeter and headed across the picturesque lake into a bit more wind than we would have liked. Our optimism dampened a bit more when we idled into a large bay to try the first fishing spot. Expecting mid 50-degree water temps, we saw just 51 degrees. In May, this usually equates to a sluggish morning bite from both walleyes and bass, and this held true for us.

We pushed deeper into the bay, looking for a spike in water temps to help us. As long as the bottom structure remained rock/gravel/sand and not the mud bottom that's typical for far back bays on Rainy, we hoped to contact fish. However, we were rewarded by only a few smaller bass and pike after an hour of fishing. So we U-turned and idled back out to the outer perimeter of the vast bay—shoreline structure

Rainy Lake - Minnesota's Vacation Paradise
 HEADQUARTERS TO VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK

Rainy Lake has 5X the Catch Rate of the Average Minnesota Lake!

RAINY LAKE - RAINY RIVER - RANIER INTERNATIONAL FALLS, MN

Get a Free Travel Kit at www.rainylake.org or call 218-283-9401

RAINY LAKE
 EXPLORE MINNESOTA



Father and son fun! Doubles of walleyes and bass (or one of each) are a common occurrence in spring on Rainy Lake.

much closer to the deeper, main basin of the lake.

When looking to gather info about fish location, try to eliminate water—or confirm locations are holding good numbers of fish—by exploring different locations and structure. Our first foray into the shallows—areas that should hold both walleyes and bass throughout the spring period—didn't produce much success. But out in front of a small island close to the mouth of the bay, Nicholas caught multiple big smallmouths, plus a 5-pound walleye on his Rapala Deep Mavrik jerkbait.

For both species, locking a jerkbait in your hand in springtime is almost always your best bet. Second choice is a small swimbait. Despite Nicholas catching fish after fish with the Mavrik, I diligently kept pitching my swimbait, just to keep the fish honest.

Tip: If one presentation is performing well and catching most of the fish, other anglers in the boat should rotate through *different* presentations to find alternatives to the hot lure. Resist the urge to immediately tie on the same thing; instead, build your arsenal by finding other lures/colors that trigger fish.

Our exploration continued to other bays in Rainy Lake. This is a vast fishery—over 225,000 acres. While it's easy to navigate with current mapping technology, and channels are well-marked, there's more water here than a person could fish in 100 lifetimes. Literally every time I drop the Minn Kota on a new stretch of shoreline, I'm amazed by the quality of the structure beneath: endless miles of gravel, rock, and boulder structure, areas with lush cabbage weedbeds, deep underwater points and rock reefs for summer and fall walleye structure. Rainy Lake is one of the best smallmouth bass lakes in the nation; tremendous numbers are caught here. It also boasts one of the highest catch rates for walleyes of any Minnesota lake.

My kiddo and I enjoy putting in long days on this fishery. Our first day was full of fun, exploring favorite fishing spots from past trips, exploring some new areas, catching fish in big flurries; and then going dry for periods when we tried spots that didn't hold fish, despite featuring the characteristics (location relative to main basins, bottom structure, wind exposure, etc.) of other similar locations that produced lots of fish for us. In spring, every bit of intel the fish provide is another puzzle piece to figuring out how to stay on fish and keep catching them!

A cloudy, cool morning and some blustery breezes greeted us as we launched early the second morning. Changing weather conditions threw us a curveball. But armed with the knowledge of how fish were staging given the water temps, we felt optimistic that we would build on the success of our first day. On day one, we had "clicked" 52 nice fish on the counter—"nice" being all walleyes, pike over 36 inches, and all smallies 15 inches or bigger. We release all fish. We'd been delighted to see nine smallmouths over 18 inches (trophy status) along with a good mix of healthy walleyes. The goal on day two: Do even better!

The walleye bite was stellar for us under cloudy skies on day two. Bombing a Deep Mavrik out on a long cast over a sloping breakline (especially wind-exposed) and aggressively snapping the lure back to the boat

produced some dandy specimens. A 3-inch swimbait (Crush City Mayor rigged on a VMC Sleek Jig) performed well, too. While Nicholas fished the Mavrik almost exclusively (and continued to catch the most fish), I cycled through what I consider to be the traditional mix of early season lure choices for Rainy Lake (besides jerkbait and swimbait): VMC Moontail Jig (variety of color patterns, casted and snapped back to the boat aggressively),



Perhaps not a true giant, but any northern over 36 inches is a dandy fish. Photo: Roger Cormier



The Deep Mavrik strikes again. A 28.5-inch walleye from the shallows in springtime. Photo: Roger Cormier

Rapala DT-6 (various crayfish colors), black marabou hair jig, and alternate jerkbaits such as #10 X-Rap or Deep Shadow Rap. When water temps start to brush 60 degrees, a topwater popper like an X-Rap Pop joins the lineup.

Nicholas and I enjoyed yet another stellar fishing day, despite overcast conditions making the smallies moody. We enjoyed more trophy-quality bass, a 36-inch pike, and a strong walleye bite the entire day. And when the sun came out later in the afternoon the bass really turned on. We clicked 85 fish, including a fat 28.5-inch walleye that Nicholas saw inhale his perch-colored Mavrik at boatside.

Rainy Lake is one of Minnesota's top multi-species lakes. The resorts and lodges (and

two houseboat operations) are some of the state's most popular destinations. The towns of International Falls and Ranier offer great shopping and dining, hotels and motels, tackle shops, and complete community infrastructure. The community welcomes fishermen and their families in all seasons. I know we'll be there fishing this year; the question is, will you?

MWO

MidWest Outdoors staffer Roger Cormier is an avid photographer and writer and has been contributing content to MWO magazine and television since 1992. He calls Minnesota home, but ventures far and wide to enjoy the outdoors and share his experiences.

okuma
INSPIRED FISHING

FEEL THE POWER, NOT THE WEIGHT

DEAD EYE Pro

TECHNIQUE-SPECIFIC WALLEYE RODS

Built with maximum power and ultra-responsive sensitivity, the **Dead Eye Pro "A" Series** lets you focus on what matters most: your next move

UFR
okumafishingusa.com

Canada Fever

March 2025



**Your Canada
Adventure Awaits!**



"Helping you enjoy the outdoors!"

Become an *MWO INSIDER!*

Each week you'll receive timely info from MWO
on where to go, what to use, and how to use it!

FREE sign-up at MidWestOutdoors.com/Insider

(We never give your email address to third-party companies)

TEMPT 'EM.

Shop Dardevle Online for Our Complete Selection!
More Lures! More Colors! More Sizes!

DARDEVLE
BY
EPPINGER



DARDEVLE.COM



GREEN LAKE, SK

IT'S YOU AND A WHOLE LOTTA NATURE.

You don't hunt because it's easy. You do it for the challenge. The thrill. The chance to put your mettle to the test and see who comes out stronger. And you won't find a better challenge than Saskatchewan.

Ready to take it on?

FishHuntSask.com

Saskatchewan
Canada 

In Search of Lake Superior's Monster Pike



Doug Wheelock from Iowa lifts a giant northern pike he caught and released on Lake Superior. Photos: Tom Berg

by Tom Berg

When some friends and I made the trip to the northern shores of Lake Superior in Ontario last July, we had lake trout on our minds. The deep, cold, clear waters of this inland sea produce legendary numbers (and size) of lake trout, and we were not disappointed. We were fishing with Capt. Darrell Splett from North Superior Charters, and the lake trout fishing was excellent.

But one morning, we decided to start the day by spending a couple of hours fishing the back bays of Lake Superior for big, bruiser northern pike. Capt. Darrell knew of some protected bays where shallow water with enough timber and good weed growth attracted big pike. Even though the pike fishing in these back bays is better in springtime, we still wanted to give it a try. Darrell said the chances were pretty good that a few stragglers would still be around.

We motored away from our home base on Moss Island and out into the open waters of Lake Superior. Darrell headed west and kept the boat within about a half-mile of the rocky, pine tree-lined shoreline. The lake was fairly calm, and although the calendar said it was July, there was a definite nip in the air. Lake Superior's cold water is a wonderful, natural air conditioner.

Once we settled in at the back of the first cove, all our jackets came off as the sun beat down on us and warmed us right up. The first areas we tried were nice and shallow, but the only structure was timber and dead trees that had fallen in the water along the shoreline. No weeds here. Even so, up ahead



Barry Wheelock prepares to release his father's big pike.

we suddenly saw a large cloud of mud in the shallows that had been stirred up by a big fish that saw us and bolted before we saw it. Most likely, it was a big pike.

We kept moving, farther and farther toward the back of the bay. Sticks and decaying tree branches provided likely targets for our inline spinners and casting spoons. Suddenly, Barry Wheelock, in the front of the boat, yelled that he had a fish on! A loud splash confirmed it, and a good-sized northern pike sped off to one side of the boat as Barry held on.

The battle was relatively short, and Barry guided the pike to the net. The fish sent a spray of water in all directions as it entered the net, and Barry swung it aboard. Success! It was not a giant, but at about 30 inches, it was a good start. Barry unhooked his Dardevle spoon from the pike's mouth, and after a quick photo or two, gently released the pike. The rest of us continued casting as Darrell guided the boat slowly along the shoreline.



Capt. Darrell Splett navigates shallow back bays in search of monster pike.



The northern shores of Lake Superior provided a beautiful backdrop for our Canadian fishing adventure.

There was no more action in this area, so we reeled in our lures and motored to an adjacent bay that was actually a larger part of the one we were already fishing. There were thick stands of emergent weeds tight to the shore in this area, and as the bottom sloped down to about 8 feet deep, the weeds thinned out and were fairly sparse. It looked very fishy!

Barry and I were fishing the center and inside edge of the sparse weed bed with Dardevle spoons, while Barry's father Doug was casting a large, red/white, #5 Mepps Aglia spinner along the deeper outside edge. We had almost reached the end of this long, sparse weed bed when Doug set the hook and grunted, "Big fish!" Sure enough, we all turned and saw the flash of a very large pike a few feet off the deep edge of the weeds as it lunged away into the depths.

Doug kept the pressure on, and Barry grabbed the landing net. But the big pike was still stripping line off Doug's reel at a good clip. Darrell yelled, "Fish on!" very loudly as an exclamation point to Doug's initial grunt. I reeled my lure in as I watched the fight, to make sure there was nothing else in the water to tangle with Doug's fish.

After what probably seemed like an eternity to Doug, but was actually only a few minutes, Doug guided the enormous pike to the side of the boat and led it into the waiting landing net. He let out a loud, "Whoop!" as Barry lifted the net into the boat. It was a trophy-sized pike, and everyone quickly pulled out their cameras and cellphones to record the event.

Doug stretched a tape measure from nose to tail of the fish, and it measured 44 inches. Excellent! We limited the photos to just a few so Doug could get the big pike back in the water. Barry held the fish at the side of the boat just long enough to make sure it was fully revived. It took less than a minute, and with a strong flip of its tail, it was gone.

We decided to go back to the start of that sparse weed bed and fish it again, since it was a few hundred yards long and might hold more big pike. Sure enough, when we were only halfway through the area again, Doug hooked another big pike! This one was not quite as large as his first one, but at 36 inches, it was still a big fish.

After more photos and another quick release, we decided to head back out onto Lake Superior's deep-water reefs and chase lake trout.

Although we were successful at catching big pike in July, the months of May and early June are prime time to target Lake Superior's trophy-sized northern pike. By the month of May, the big pike have finished spawning, and they are hanging out in the warm bays, regaining their strength and feeding aggressively. "The same bays that we briefly fished in July will load up with fish, and I start to target them in May," said Darrell. "There are more bays west of there, too, and they will be loaded this spring."

If you are interested in chasing monster-sized northern pike in the remote waters of Lake Superior, this is the trip for you. **MWO**

A lifelong outdoorsman and award-winning outdoor writer and photographer, Tom Berg has been the Executive Director/Treasurer of the Hoosier Outdoor Writers group in Indiana since 2004. When he is not writing, he would rather be outside fishing, hunting, trapping or birding than doing just about anything else.

FLY-IN AMERICAN PLAN LODGE AND 12 REMOTE FLY-IN OUTPOST CABINS.

Jackson's
LODGE & OUTPOSTS

YOUR OUTDOOR ADVENTURE PROFESSIONALS

If it's "A Hunt of a Lifetime" you desire, then consider one of our Fully Guided Black Bear or Moose Hunts.

1-800-GOFISHING
1-800-463-4744

www.jacksonslodge.com
LAC DU BONNET, MANITOBA, CANADA

"FIRST CLASS" Service and Accommodations together with Fantastic Angling for Walleye, Northern Pike and Smallmouth Bass.

For more information...

North Superior Charters
northsuperiorcharters.ca
Darrell Splett, dsplett@outlook.com
888-204-3257

Goldilocks Spoons for Canadian Pike

by Dave Csanda

My first few, far-North flurries for Canadian pike kind of spoiled me. I came away with the false notion that all you needed to catch big pike in Canada were a handful of spoons, stout leaders and line, and a flippin' stick teamed with a good casting reel. I was spoiled.

Then I witnessed fly fishing ace Larry Dahlberg tempt huge pike by slithering large flies in knee-deep shallows—and everything changed. This was fun—and effective! And it proved an ideal method for catching fish that were pressured, laying low due to bad weather, or just about anytime you wanted to get your blood pumping.

On subsequent trips, I noticed that every fishing camp tended to promote its own favorite selection of lures that were productive on their waters during different times of the year. These ranged from small, straight-shaft spinners to large, shallow-running crankbaits, on up to muskie-sized softbaits including mega-sized Bull Dawgs that my brother nicknamed "Alien," after their resemblance to the bulbous-headed creatures in the Alien movies.

The upshot was, I carried a few of this, that, these, those and them lures on future trips, and when the usual suspects weren't producing as well as expected, began experimenting with options. In all cases, it helped improve the catch, even on wilderness waters where you wouldn't expect to need to vary your techniques.

So much so, that I nearly always started fishing with something else and left spoons in the tackle box until needed, which in the long run, was likely a mistake. The fact is, wobbling spoons and Canadian pike go hand-in-fin, and if you only had to fish one style of lure, most of the time, spoons would be hard to beat.

Spoondoggle

So, there are lots of spoons out there, and it would be hard to find one that doesn't catch pike some of the time. But I have a few, let's call them, prejudices, rather than preferences, because they're ingrained by experience.

I'm a big believer in using mid-sized spoons in the 3 1/2- to 4 1/2-inch range. I think they have just the right combination of size, lazy wobble, flash and action to consistently fascinate pike into striking. Lures like the Dardevle, Dardevle Huskie Jr., and #2 and #4 Thompson Spoons are my first picks. Note that there are lots of sizes and shapes of Dardevles, but the size that's actually called Dardevele is my go-to. I'm partial to the yellow five-of-diamonds pattern, especially in stained waters, but good old red-and-white ain't bad.

In my estimation, smaller spoons can work sometimes, especially if the fish are acting finicky. But they tend to produce hammer handles rather than axe handles—or shovel handles. If you're looking to keep smaller pike off your line so you don't have to waste time unhooking them, then don't go small. Go bigger.

How big? Surprisingly, I think BIG can be too much of a good thing. I'll toss a Dardevle Huskie Jr., which is kind of top-end for me. But I don't use the magnum Huskie size for pike. Don't get me wrong—it's a fabulous lake trout spoon. But it has such a wide, exaggerated, side-to-side wobble that I think it becomes overkill for pike in cool water. I feel like they have to turn their heads (and bodies) left-right-left just to follow it. It's more about the action than overall spoon size. I'm way more comfortable with a mid-sized wobbling spoon. You may disagree—and that's fine. We all have our own opinions.

The Johnson Silver Minnow is a great weedless spoon for fishing through flooded grass without fouling. Add a plastic tail to the back for more size and action, and you're good to go in those conditions.

Some folks like Red Eyes, which are really broad, round-bodied spoons. Or Apex, Acme,



In-between-size spoons tend to produce best for Canadian pike. Spoons shown on the left are usually a bit too small to consistently tempt big fish; those on the right perhaps a bit too large, chiefly due to too much wide wobble/action. But those in the middle are "just about right" in most conditions.

Doctor, Blue Fox Aqua or Bass Pro Shops XPS spoons. Others like skinnier spoons, but they're just not my deal. I like what I like, because experience tells me that that's what pike like.

Whichever spoon you choose and use, don't just reel it in straight, cast after cast. You'll get lots of follows but fewer hookups.

But if you pop your rod tip upward and momentarily pause your retrieve about 3 to 5 times per cast to make the lure shoot forward and rise, then pause and flutter like a wounded critter, you will trigger way more strikes from following fish. That's the real key to catching Canadian pike on heavy metal. Even up on the tundra, fish sometimes need to be tricked or convinced to open their mouths and inhale

what you're trying to feed them. You can take that to the bank when you cast to the bank.


MWO


Dave Csanda has enjoyed 45-plus years in the fishing communications industry at In-Fisherman, Angling Edge and now, as editor of MidWest Outdoors. He is an inductee of both the Minnesota and National Fresh Water Fishing Halls of Fame.

If you haven't fished Knobby's – you haven't fished!


KNOBBY'S


FLY-IN LODGE AND OUTPOSTS






U.S. Toll Free
1-800-668-3886
 PO Box 382 • Sioux Lookout • Ontario
www.knobbys.on.ca
Fishing at its Best!





6 Outposts to choose from!



Trusted for over 40 years!

Ontario's Albany River: A Brook Trout Treasure



Father and son take the canoe for some quiet time in a back bay.

by the late Dan Gapen, Sr., from his unpublished book *Trout and its Kissing Cousins*

This wonderfully wild Albany River twists, turns and drops its way through the central region of northern Ontario, Canada. I'd fished it numerous times, but the trip I remember most was in the late 1970s when I took my father, Don, creator of the Muddler Fly.

It was mid-July, with the weather ideal. There'd already been several hatches of shad flies, and the rapids of this river were producing huge numbers of brookies—so we were told.

We began our trip in Nakina, Ontario where we flew north on Leuenberger Air's Otter float plane. We landed at Fort Hope, a decent-size native village on the upper Albany. Here, we were met by two of the Ray boys, Albert and Ben. Albert, known for his skills and knowledge of the Albany, would be our head guide. We would enter the river at Fort Hope and travel downstream to reach trout waters.

It took us most of the day to reach what Albert claimed was good trout water. Much of the Albany River at this point contains wild white rapids. We'd do our first fishing here, with Albert as Father's guide.

As Father and I descended along the shoreline, our other guides would pitch tents and set up camp for the night. Whether we stayed there for more than a night would depend on fishing results. Ahead lie 45 miles of trout water that we would eventually work.

Albert instructed us to walk down to where the river turned white with roaring currents. He claimed that here we'd find the biggest trout. All fly fishing would be done from shore. Wearing waders would be useless, even dangerous, in this torrent of water. That was OK by both of us.

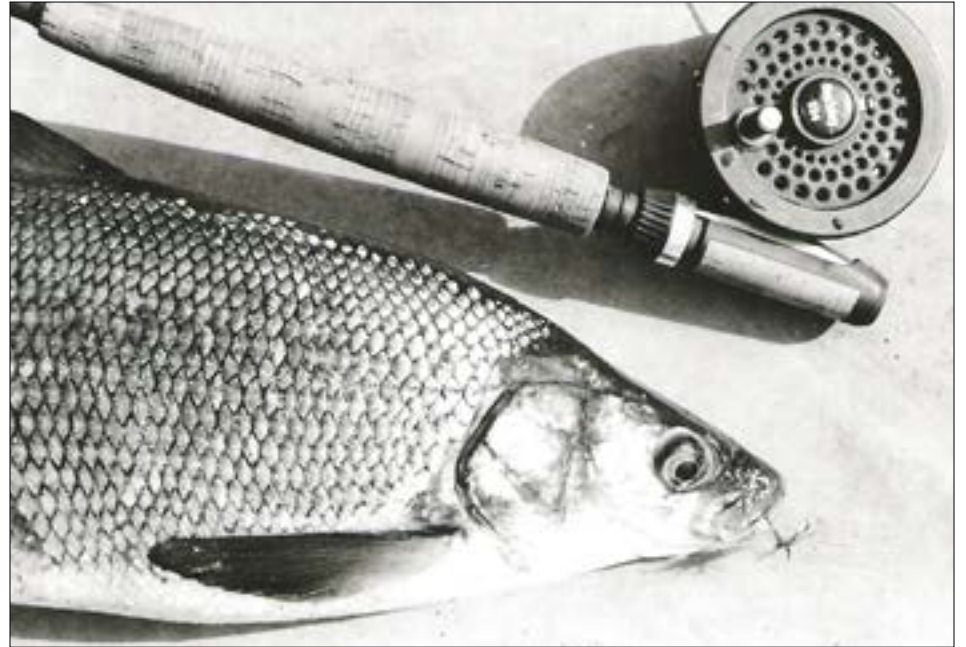
Father would be first to ready his gear, of course choosing an original Muddler Fly. Stepping aside, I finished setting up my rod and reel, then readied the camera to see if Father would produce. On his third cast with the weighted Muddler, he set the hook into our first trout, a 3-pounder.

Father and I would go on to land seven more trout during the next hour. Two of these would be kept for our evening meal.

Water in the Albany is fed mainly by Ontario's western runoff. Like so many cold-water rivers in this region, the Albany contains many cedar black water swamps along its route. These swamps host thousands of icy springs. Such structures are the key to its brook trout population. These black loam cedar swamps have a 4- to 6-foot layer of foam on top of a clay foundation. Intermittently, all of this feeds into the Albany.

Where the Albany is given birth, a series of small lakes are extremely cold with black loam bottoms have become spawning structure for the Albany. Were anglers able to fish these lakes in spring, they'd be rewarded with dozens of 6- to 12-inch brookies—proof that reproduction occurs here. Thus, the question: Do brook trout migrate to spawn? Like their cousin, the sea run brook trout of the Sutton to their north, the answer would have to be yes.

We broke camp the next morning. Fishing in this first spot had died. Between Father, myself and Ernie Leuenberger, we'd taken ten trout and three whitefish. We kept all three whites and two trout for shore lunches, which we'd prepare after traveling through the small river lakes. We did catch and keep several walleyes by trolling Muddlers on our fly rods as we traveled. The whitefish were caught in a shad fly hatch in one of the smooth slicks above a small rapids.



"The fish of my youth, the whitefish, gave Father and I all the fight we could handle."

Our next series of fast water wasn't near as fast as the previous night's stopover. However, the granite shield of rock was more evident with its presence lining the riverbanks. I'd fished this stretch five years previous on another trip into an old outpost camp that Leuenbergers were contemplating using. This was at the mouth of a small stream coming out of a lake where Anne and I had once shot waterfowl.

This stretch of the Albany holds a great deal of granite ledges from which to work. It also allows by anglers to work from a native canoe. These waters are generally shallow and have gravel and sand patches carved out of the bottom granite in which trophy brook trout hold.

During our 6-day trip, we encountered an evening when the shad flies began hatching off those small river lakes. This occurred just above the spot where the river departed the lake. Within twenty minutes of the hatch's beginning, dead flies were floating downriver, which brought dozens of trout and whitefish to surface in the smooth water where departures were happening.

Anchoring midstream, we began to work the hatch. For bait, I used a no. 12 Muddler™ fished in a dry condition. In my fly box, I always carry several Muddlers which have been sprayed with silicone boot spray, making Father's deadly fly into a dry fly. Just now Dad switched to a gray Grizzly King. The shad hatch variety of Hexagenia were grayer than the dull, natural tan often seen in such



Caribou moss is peeled off a trout being kept cold for the evening meal.

hatches. Like you would do while fishing dry flies in any stream, our presentation was upstream above our anchoring position. This allowed our flies to drift with the current in a natural, floating presentation.

Did it work? Darn right it did! We caught about a dozen brookies and an equal number of river whitefish. The whitefish were a bonus I wasn't expecting. Like always, they performed their surface-feeding acts which caused us to lose about fifty percent of our whitefish strikes.

Once we had exhausted the first anchor position, we dropped downstream to a second anchoring and continued to catch fish. At this time, the hatching shad flies were emerging at the first area we had chosen to target the rising fish. The number two position saw mostly brook trout caught. It seems that the whitefish were holding at a spot where the first emerging shad flies had surfaced. This made sense, because most river whitefish are found in the wider sections of river.

ONE VISIT AND YOU'LL BE HOOKED!

You'll love the quaintness of Misaw Lake Lodge. Located almost directly on the 60th parallel in northern Saskatchewan this secluded fly-in fishing lodge has a massive area of 16 lakes and rivers that we have exclusive rights to fish; making the perfect spot to catch your trophy pike or trout! Accommodations include private cabins, spectacular lodge and wireless internet.

We're confident you will find your forever fishing place!



Check out more at:
MISAWLAKELODGE.COM
FISHING@MISAWLAKELODGE.COM
 1-833-466-4729



MOVING?



Please let us know.
 Call 630-887-7722

to report your change of address so you don't miss an issue of





Cooking over a wood fire is challenging but gratifying.



This wrecked canoe is evidence that the wild rapids of northern Ontario can be dangerous.

The guides insisted that we keep all the whitefish we caught. If we didn't use them to eat on this trip, they'd wrap them in Caribou moss and take them home to Fort Hope. Our day of departure was tomorrow. Whitefish, a fatter fish than trout, keep better in open air conditions.

I mention Caribou moss to keep fish fresh—especially trout. This is done throughout brook trout country in the North. It's not that moss has any special preservative in it. It's that, when you wet it by submerging it in cold water, it holds the cold much longer than any other material. We used it at our resort when guests wanted to preserve a trout for taking home for eating or mounting. It was always added when boxing our guests' fish in ice, helping to preserve the ice. Some guests reported back to us that

their boxed fish were always ice-cold after a two-day trip home. Many claimed that most of the ice was still as large as when we packed it up at the lodge and wrapped the ice with Caribou moss. When we insulated the ice with sawdust, the ice would be all gone on their trip home. Our native guides were the ones who suggested we use the moss.

There were no plastic coolers at that time. So, if a guest requested to take fish home, we'd box his fish in commercial boxes, the type netters used on the Great Lakes to store lake trout, ciscoes and whitefish in. These boxes were made of 1/4-inch, rough-cut pine or cedar, in 1/4- by 8-inch slats. They were 2 by 4 feet, with 2- or 3-inch-deep material. We'd place ice chunks inside on the bottom, with the fish wrapped in sawdust at first, and later, Caribou moss. We had tons of sawdust

available to be used, created when winter firewood was made by the circular, 4-foot diameter saw. This round blade with its huge teeth was run by a long belt we hooked up to the rear tire of an old British gun carrier we had at the lodge. I spent hundreds of hours running the firewood creator. Much of the sawdust was used to protect the block ice in our icehouse. But for the guests' take-home fish, using Caribou moss was best.

The final icing in one of those guests take home fish boxes was to dump large chunks of ice on the top of the fish and the caribou moss protectant surrounding the fish. Next, a wood slat top would be nailed to fish box. Thus, moss would be surrounding the fish between two layers of chunked lake ice.

Gathering lake ice had to be done in December. Waiting any longer saw the thickness increase so much that cutting it was near impossible. There were no chainsaws in those days. Everything had to be done with a one-handed, 6-foot crosscut saw and was back-breaking-hard work. If we waited till January, the ice may have thickened to four feet or more. A perfect depth in the ice was 20 to 24 inches. We'd cut chunks four or five feet long and two feet wide. This huge chunk of ice was then ice-tonged and roped out by hooking the rope to our old gun carrier and pulling the chunks out on a wood ramp we'd dropped into the first saw-cut hole. How did we make the first hole in the 20-inch lake ice? We used a 6-foot-long spud (chisel) our town's blacksmith had made for us.

Ice would deepen to as much as 6 feet on our lakes. We just didn't have the "gumption" to cut through it to attempt ice fishing. Oh, a buddy and I tried it once, cutting through such a layer thought



Not intimidated by the wicked rapids, but nevertheless careful, Don Gapen tries to coax up a brookie.

to be surface ice. Instead, we missed the open water and hit the lake's mud bottom. Pike would have been our goal—surely not brown mud! So, there were no more attempts at fishing through the ice. We'd cut, by an iron spud, through 6 1/2 feet of ice.

Do you know how wide the hole has to be where you begin an ice hole with a spud? Then how big the opening is when you finally hit water? Try it sometime. The work it takes to cut through that amount of ice with an iron chisel is astounding!

Back to trout fishing on the Albany

On our last day, we really hit a bonanza on brookies. Father figured that the three of us landed and released 75 trout, most of them over three pounds.

Trips like this live long in one's memory and do much to strengthen the bonds between people. Catching beautiful fish is a bonus! **MWO**

Considered one of the world's leading river anglers, Dan Gapen, Sr. shared his knowledge with MidWest Outdoors readers and viewers for more than 40 years. A member of three Fishing Halls of Fame—IGFA, National Fresh Water, and Minnesota—he had an immense grasp of the world's fisheries.

Pickle Lake
Fly-in Fishing
Ontario, Canada

- Fly-in to exclusive lakes
- Only one cabin per lake for seclusion and great fishing!

807-928-2547
www.picklelakeoutposts.com

Let Us Guide You North on HWY 105

Our FREE Adventure Guide and Map is filled with info on area fishing, hunting, camping, canoeing, resorts, festivals and much more!

It's guaranteed to help you plan the Northwest Ontario Adventure you have been dreaming of.

Visit Hwy105.ca
HIGHWAY 105 TOURISM AND MARKETING BOARD
info@hwy105.ca

GET YOUR FREE ADVENTURE GUIDE AT
www.hwy105.ca

Exercising Discretion without Sacrificing Results

by Dave Schwartz

I am probably writing this as much for myself and my posse as for those who find themselves, or will eventually find themselves, in the same circumstances.

For those of us who have been fishing for decades, there comes a time when we need to evaluate our abilities regarding handling the rigors of an outdoor adventure. The rigors had been well worth it: Solitude, being in touch with nature, and having more exclusive access to great fishing areas. But what about now?

I will explore some of the new variables that come into our trip planning as we come to terms with our own mortality and offer solutions to how to deal with it.

Although I have always found the prospect of outpost camp experiences enticing, I now must consider issues that did not exist in the past. Can I physically handle it? Do I now need to allow for contingencies that I did not have to worry about in the past? For instance, twenty years ago, having run out of gas a short way from our gas supply, I simply got out of the boat and pulled it through the shallows; today, my vintage physique could not repeat that feat.

Has terrain now become a factor?



Finding peace in the moment. Beautiful sunsets do not discriminate between outposts and base camp. Photo: Paul Bicek

Distance, change in elevation, and path conditions between the dock and the cabin can now be a challenge. Add to that moving gear and provisions to and from a boat. Add to that your past indiscretions on athletic fields, surgeries, normal wear & tear, age, weight, etc. You must lose the thought, "This is the way I have always done it," in favor of, "This is the way I can do it now and keep it doable and fun."

Many outdoors folks partake in multi-generational group trips. Any heavy lifting should be transferred to the youthfully fit. Having nephews along certainly came in handy when we experienced a flat on a



Dave Bicek enjoys early-morning smallmouth success on a welcome, sunny day. Photo: Paul Bicek

logging road to a remote lake.

Is it wise to put significant distance between health care and your recreational destination? Every year, I reflect on this as I leave behind a plethora of medical facilities including something like five teaching hospitals. Discuss this topic with your health care professional on a periodic basis. Or do what I do and *bring them with!*

Remember your prescriptions! Many of us take multiple pills of all shapes, sizes and colors. Getting to a pharmacy at Kenora, Dryden or Red Lake, Ont. may not be an option. Putting the pills in one of those daily pill dispensers comes in handy, as this also helps to determine what day it is when you are on a fishing trip. (Although the sense of timelessness resulting from the trip is a beautiful thing.) I need the dispenser to reinforce short-term memory. I can show you a map of the Woman River system and point to every area where I caught hundreds (probably now thousands) of fish over the last twenty years, but I might not recollect taking my vitamin C tablet five minutes ago.

So, the spirit is still willing, but the body... is still willing, but needs time to catch up to the spirit. It all has morphed into a marathon as opposed to a sprint. Leisure now becomes more important than competition. The Best Western in Spooner, Wis. or the Falls Motel in International Falls simply driven past long ago might now be a destination sought to break up the drive.

As far as I am concerned regarding the venue, it requires selecting a base camp that provides some semblance of civilization.



A good memory and keen sense of direction come in handy when navigating unfamiliar waters. When that fails, just pull out the easy-to-read map and you are good to go. Photo: Paul Bicek



Paul Bicek displays an end-of-trip northern caught between cold rain showers. Photo: Dave Schwartz

Woman River Camp, which is northeast of Ear Falls, provides this for us. The physical demands are not eliminated but are significantly reduced. There will be fewer transfers of gear, with boat refueling and bait replenishment provided by staff. Even fish cleaning can be delegated to staff.

Years back, we initially chose Woman River because of its versatility; we would push the exploration envelope as desired. Now, we go back to Woman River because it is also easy to fish. On days when everyone is feeling good and up to it, we can still explore its miles of river and additional lakes. Other days, we might want to throttle back and amble just a few minutes from the dock, where we can easily come back in as we want/need, and still have successful fishing. The social interaction with the interesting personalities in camp is an added bonus.

Woman River is the place for us, where we can obtain ultimate satisfaction without biting off more than we can chew. **MWO**

Available Sizes

- 1/64 OZ.
- 1/32 OZ.
- 1/16 OZ.
- 1/8 OZ.
- 1/4 OZ.
- 1 OZ.

Available Colors

- Shad
- Sucker
- Mud Minnow
- Perch
- Purple Darter
- Chartreuse (glow)
- Blue/White (glow)
- Pink/White (glow)
- Gold
- Chrome
- Red/White (glow)
- Fire Tiger
- Neon Trout

FLICKER™

ALL SPECIES DEADLY THROUGH THE ICE OR UNDER YOUR BOAT

If it swims with fins Gapen lures catch it®

use for a summer/winter lure

CHECK YOUR LOCAL SPORTING GOODS DEALER

or

The Gapen Company
17910 87th Street, Becker, MN 55308
Toll Free: 1-877-623-2099 www.gapen.com

~ \$10.00 FIELD TESTER COUPON ~

Get 3 Test Flickers in the colors and sizes you select.
Shipping and Taxes included

Packing Rods for Canada



These days, two-piece rods are much stronger with more sensitivity and allow for a more compact packing experience. Instead of extending the Plano rod tube to its 8-foot length, it can compress down to 6 feet and be carried on to any commercial airline or float plane. This is key when traveling to places with limited baggage and weight restrictions.



The new Fenwick Predator series breaks apart at the handle, creating a two-piece rod that is easier to pack but also leaving the rod blank intact, creating a much stronger and sensitive rod. The blank screws into the handle right above the reel seat, also lending to the strength but also providing the necessary sensitive touch where needed.

Airlines has the same allowance of 115 linear inches, but only 80 total inches are allowed if flying United Express. When flying, check baggage restrictions with your airline in advance of packing.

One way to combat these regulations is by packing two-piece rods. Two-piece rods have also come a long way within the industry. Manufacturers are making them much more sensitive, stronger and lighter, with the best feature being portability. Whether packing a surf rod for your Gulf trip, or your muskie rods for your next Canada trip, two-piece rods offer flexibility and portability.

Even when traveling by land, longer rods can be a concern. It's hard to throw a one-piece, 7-foot rod into the backseat of a car. Whether traveling by car, truck or even trailering (Most boats won't take anything longer than a 7-foot rod in a rod locker.), two-piece rods can have transport advantages.

I enjoy fishing for pike and muskies. Carrying heavy and medium-heavy muskie and pike rods into Canada has been a hassle in the past.

Recently, I discovered the Fenwick Predator Series. These predator-specific rods are two-piece engineered rods where the handle comes apart from the one-

piece blank. This advantageous separation point makes the entire rod much more sensitive and responsive. These rods have an interlocking blank line that connects the blank to the handle and screws the blank into the handle for maximum strength and support. By taking off the handle, the rod is shortened by a little over 2 feet, making an 8-foot rod packable to under 6 feet. This not only makes it easier to pack, but also provides the quality and dependability which I'm looking for in a rod.

Fenwick also make two-piece walleye rods, so I can pack my 7-foot, medium-light walleye rods, along with my 8-foot, medium-heavy pike rods, into my Plano adjustable rod tube and bring the overall length down near 6 feet. This allows me to travel on any airline, to virtually any resort or destination.

So, when taking your next fishing vacation, make sure to look at two-piece rods for convenience and portability. It may make your trip much more enjoyable and traveling that much easier. **MWO**

Larry Ladowski is a regular host on MidWest Outdoors TV and has been writing for MidWest Outdoors magazine for more than 30 years. Ladowski enjoys any time on the water and in the field, no matter where it happens to be and no matter what species he is fishing or hunting.

by Larry Ladowski

Over the past few years, the fishing industry has been moving to longer rods: 7-, 8-, even 9- and 10-foot rods are en vogue for their fish handling proficiency and ability to make longer casts. However, when traveling to Canada, especially to a fly-in lodge, only

float plane space and weight restrictions are a concern. These longer rods can be a problem.

Many commercial planes have maximum baggage allowances. For instance, Delta Airlines' maximum outside baggage allowance is 115 linear inches. Most rod tubes need to be much longer to compensate for these one-piece, longer rods. United

RE MOTENESS WITHOUT FLYING
GHOST RIVER
 LODGES
 Est. 1967

Best in Service
Northwestern Ontario

REMOTE
15
 LAKES

ghostriv@tbaytel.net
ghostriverlodges.com
1-888-446-7874

For Sale

Northwestern Ontario Hunting & Fishing Lodge

Interested in living the dream?
Contact ResortsCanada@gmail.com
or call 705-816-0787

Hideaway Lodge is a drive-in fishing and hunting lodge located on the Clearwater/Pipestone Chain of Lakes. Situated waterfront on just over 6 acres 1 hour N.W. of International Falls, MN. This hunting and fishing resort hosts 5 cabins on site and 2 remote outpost cabins that are boat access only—total of 54 beds. Owners' residence on site. This turnkey business offers meal plans, housekeeping plans, boat rentals during both fishing and hunting season. Operates from May to November. See complete listing for all inclusions:
<http://resortscanada.net/property/1/hunting-fishing-lodge>

The Problem with Pike

by Jack Hirt

Dreaming of a Canadian fishing adventure with walleyes on the mind? Ontario has you covered like no place else.

Generations of traveling sportsmen have, and continue to, ply its waters, large and small, making memories that last a lifetime. Thanks to progressive management, Ontario continues to produce walleye fishing that continues to get better every year.

While we regulars know this well, anyone new to Ontario's fishing should know that walleyes and northern pike go hand in hand. Where there are walleyes, there's sure to be pike. That may be good or bad, depending on your perspective. Be prepared to deal with them.

The worst-case scenario for an Ontario walleye angler occurs when you find yourself catching nothing but small pike. A newbie might find this amusing—at first. But dealing with an attack of hammer handles gets old fast. Faced with this predicament, move on in search of greener pastures.

Commonly, you find a decent walleye bite with small-to-lower-slot-size northerns as the supporting cast. As long as the walleyes keep going, putting up with a pesky pike here and there makes for action-packed angling.

When we're talking fat, super-healthy, big-to-bigger pike in the 27- to 36-inch slot and over, things really get interesting for walleye anglers. Because just like 'eyes, these toothy, top-end predators are becoming—again through sound management—more available every year. So much so that, even though you might catch walleyes in the triple digits during a good trip, the photo of that lunker "gator" gets everyone's attention.



A light, wire leader allowed the author to land this 'gator' on a 1/8-ounce walleye jig.

Given that pike are part of the Ontario walleye fisherman's equation, bear a few particulars in mind, with the first of these being *bite-offs*.

Pike of any size don't mess around. When they hit, it's in an all-out attack. Any presentation—jig, spinner, spoon, or plug—will wind up inside the toothiest of freshwater jaws that can and will slice any line in an instant.

So, don't hesitate to use a leader! A fine-

wire, 20- to 30-pound-test leader in dark, tannic water deters Ontario's walleyes not at all while saving lots of jigs and plugs. And a 15- to 20-pound-test fluorocarbon leader in clear water is nearly as effective.

It's only natural to handle a strong, solid pike carefully. But those super-wiggly, little slimers will get ya. Let them shake, rattle, and roll as they will. Then, get a firm grip on them when they settle down, or they'll hang a hook in your hand.


As for better pike, play them out before you try to land them. Pike aren't long-distance runners; even the big gals come to the boat fairly quickly. But when they do, you can bet they're still pretty green, and that they have another explosion or two in them. If you try to scoop that big pike into your walleye-sized net too soon, it'll go ballistic Trashing your net and needlessly injuring itself in the process.

Using a cradle on big pike is optimal. But few of us carry one. Same thing with an extra-wide-hooped and deep net, from which a played-out pike can be safely grabbed—or better yet, unhooked—while still in the water. Hand landing, if you're totally confident in it, or have no other choice, is always an option.

Knowing that tangling with that pike-of-a-lifetime is a possibility, walleye anglers must be prepared with not only the right tools—long, needle-nosed pliers and a jaw spreader—but the right mindset to handle the fish properly.



Be prepared to snap a picture or two, then get the fish back in the water ASAP. Holding onto it until it fires up and swims out of your grasp, and watching it disappear back into the depths, is something even the most dyed-in-the-wool walleye enthusiast will never forget. In fact, it's a nice problem to have! **MWO**

Jack Hirt describes himself as, "Your typically avid, season-by-season, weekend warrior-type sportsman." In addition to MidWest Outdoors, he has written two books ("S No Geese Like Snow Geese, and So You Wanna Puppy?"), and contributed features to more than 20 national and regional publications since 1976.



Amik Outposts

The trip of a lifetime, everytime

WORLD CLASS FISHING

FIRST CLASS SERVICE

THE BEST EXPERIENCE OF YOUR LIFE

RED LAKE, ONTARIO, CANADA

amikoutposts@gmail.com

807-735-9968

canadianflyinfishing.com

THE PERFECT STOP/STAY!

Heading to northern Minnesota, Rainy Lake, or Ontario this year?



- Boat/Trailer Parking
- Restaurants Nearby
- Many More Amenities!



Fuel up every morning with a free homestyle breakfast.

INT'L FALLS, MN

BRAND NEW HOTEL 2022!



Americinn by Wyndham
2500 Keenan Dr.
I-Falls, MN 56649
218-209-2487

VIRGINIA, MN



Americinn by Wyndham
5480 Mountain Iron Dr.
Virginia, MN 55792
218-208-0230



Americinn.com | 800.634.3444

Comfortable, quieter rooms | Free, hot, home-style breakfast
Hotel-wide, high-speed internet | Indoor pool

The St. Mary's River: The Rocky Torrent from Hell

by the late Dan Gapen, Sr.,
from his unpublished book
Trout and its Kissing Cousins

Rocks, rocks, rocks everywhere—underfoot and underwater! And above—rocks sheltering fantastic steelhead and Atlantic salmon fishing.

For this Ol' Man, the St. Mary's River on the southeastern corner of Lake Superior brought me back to reality. I was no longer capable of hopping from rock to rock like I was 25, and no longer could I sprint upstream after a racing fish like I was 35. No longer could I rapidly follow a downstream-fleeing salmon like I was 45. No longer was I able to hold my balance on the slippery stones like I was 55. And no longer could I cast a fly to a current-held prize fish like I was 65.

I was 83, and needed help crossing the rocky, fast areas of this humbling river. It took someone's arm or a walking stick for me to traverse either the rapids or the boulder-infested shoreline. It was humbling and humiliating, to say the least—and cold as heck! Even wearing hip boots or chest waders, the cold water soon got to our feet. Add frozen hands to the list. It was an experience that taught me, "Gapen, you ain't what you used to be."

Why do I still do it? I guess that I just don't know any better and am too stubborn to admit that I should slow down. However, as exasperating as the experience was, it was great to know that I was still able to give it a go! Trevor, one of our guides, complimented me by saying, "You ought to be proud that you can still get out here and do it. Younger men than you fall two or three times more than you, and some quit after the first morning out." Such a compliment didn't soften the blow when I fell twice, filling my hip boots to their tops!

The other humbling experience was the 20-pound Atlantic salmon I fought to a stand-still, only to have the fish charge in behind a huge rock, snag the leader and tear off. This all happened after a pretty good battle, with my following her downstream, stumbling and fumbling, all the while leaning on John's shoulder (our host) during the painful experience. Yes, I said painful! Like so many other body parts, my knees are gone as well.

Despite it all, the day-and-a-half we spent with John and Trevor were great, creating memorable experiences to reflect upon down the road.

Our friend Bob had come along to work second camera, filming for our TV show Fishing the World with the Ol' Man and 'Bobber' Anne to be aired on The Sportsman Channel that winter.

Bob loves to fish any trout species and ended up losing 17 steelhead and Atlantic salmon before he beached the 21st fish, an 8-pound, silver-sided steelhead. We all cheered as the prize came to hand. Bob managed three others. Anne battled her way through to subdue a total of three fish during the 1 1/2 days: one a 3-pound Atlantic salmon, a 7-pound steelie, and a fresh lake-run female steelhead about 8 pounds. All were released. They both lost fish much heavier in weight.

How did I do? I lost about thirteen fish, two of which were huge Atlantic salmon. I caught just one steelhead, a 9-pounder.

Yes, I said I had a great trip. Knowing I could still do it and have the memories as time slips by made it worthwhile. Would I do it again? You bet—in a heartbeat! However, there would be two conditions: One, I'd need John or Trevor as a guide, and the other would be a stout walking stick about 5 feet long.

I've fished steelhead from the shores of Lake Superior to the rivers of New York State.



Anne and Bob display two of the guide's catches.

Nowhere else did I find the number of fish, nor the numbers of each species available, as we did on the St. Mary's. Nor was the challenge as great elsewhere! If doing it all is a prerequisite to the saying, "You haven't lived until you've done it all," then I insist you enthusiastic steelheaders go north to the Canadian side at Sault St. Marie, Ontario and fish the St. Mary's River with John Guiliani.

For more information: contact him: John Guiliani, Sault St. Marie, Ontario, (705) 942-5473.

If you haven't yet fished for steelhead, take a couple of lessons to prepare yourself; John is the fellow to teach you. I watched him hook and land three steelhead on three drifts with a bead-headed, #8 wooly bugger tied four feet below a chartreuse strike indicator. He has it figured out! There were lessons to learn for this Ol' Man, but it took until the last morning for them to prove out. That was obvious by the number of fish I landed and the strikes I missed!

"Anne beat me in numbers of fish caught. The morning of day two, I had Anne cut a walking stick for me about 4 1/2 feet long. On top, I tied an old boot shoelace for a lanyard. This would help, and did, but I continued to slip yet fell only once more. Anne and I were successful in landing three fish each. We lost oh so many! The beaded wooly bugger seemed to be our best fly. I again lost three fish before being successful on landing an 8-pound steelhead trout. The

others broke me off by racing downstream around a willow-infected bend. Once I moved out to a more open spot and found a patch of gravel, my boots didn't slip and slide across them as I chased that racing fish downstream across it.

"As my hand net slipped under the 8-pounder, I heard Anne shriek, "Fish on," as she raced after what had to be a 15- to 20-pound Atlantic salmon. We'd both

donned waders on the second day and that fish nearly downed my faithful companion. She was within five inches of water going over the top when I heard her line snap. She did, however, land the next two—a pair of steelhead—one a 6-pounder, and the other a small male about 4.

"Meanwhile our guide had landed several fish. They released all of them. One time, John came racing by me in hot pursuit of a huge Atlantic Salmon. He landed it four blocks downstream and it was released before any photo or movie film could be made.

"Anne and I did much better that second morning, but I lost my walking stick and that put me out of business. That was the morning I admitted I'd need an artificial knee replacement. Maybe soon.

"Those dang rocks got me once more when I fell while attempting to follow one of those down-racing Atlantic Salmon. During that follow, I lost my walking stick and put a gallon of water into my waders. How? I don't know! My left knee was so sore that I needed Anne to come and help.

"Damn, it's tough to get old!" **MWO**

Considered one of the world's leading river anglers, Dan Gapen, Sr. shared his knowledge with MidWest Outdoors readers and viewers for more than 40 years. A member of three Fishing Halls of Fame—IGFA, National Fresh Water, and Minnesota—he had an immense grasp of the world's fisheries.



Release Fish, Not Lures



Commit to Stopping Litter

We know that sportsmen and women are the watchdogs of our waterways. Still, our ponds, lakes, and rivers are being littered with worn-out soft plastic lures. Commit to stopping litter – including used tackle. When a soft plastic lure is worn or damaged, dispose of it properly. Recycle it or pitch it in a trash can.

Get involved - sign the Pledge to Pitch It on our website, www.pledgetopitchit.org

By signing the Pledge, you help demonstrate the conviction of the entire American fishing community against littering our waterways.

PledgeToPitchIt.org

RUSTY MYERS

FLY IN OUTPOSTS

&

GREEN ISLAND LODGE

LEGENDARY CANADIAN FLY-IN FISHING

AT

ELEVEN FANTASTIC ONTARIO DESTINATIONS

1-866-707-7637

walleye • northern • lake trout • smallmouth bass • musky

www.rustymyers.com www.greenislandlodge.com

An Ideal Day in Ontario



Sunsets are always special no matter where you are, but especially in the Canadian Wild. An Ontario fiery orange and red sunset from the pier make for relaxing evenings.

by L.K. Myers

Pulling into Doug and Kathy's Hideaway Lodge property is like coming home, no matter how often you visit. The feeling that I get driving down the hill is almost magical; a proverbial weight lifts from my shoulders... every time! I have been a fisherman there with them, off and on for over 20 years, and feel like I have become a part of the family. At a 6-hour drive (from the Minneapolis area), I've found that even a long weekend is worth the drive to get away from my city reality.

It was mid-August. A morning mist rose slowly over the Clearwater/Pipestone chain of lakes, revealing the tranquil beauty of Hideaway Lodge. Nestled among the pines, the main camp offers five fully modern cabins. A safe, sandy beach stretches along shore, perfect for families. But my focus this trip was on fishing. Muskies were my goal, but with the chain teeming with lake trout, walleyes, largemouth and smallmouth bass, crappies, northern pike, and perch, the possibilities seemed endless.

I was up early, sipping coffee on the

deck of Cabin 4, watching the sun rise over the treeline across the lake from camp. Last night, Doug, the lodge owner (and a walking encyclopedia of fishing knowledge) had marked my map with his favorite spots. He suggested trying the north bay by the portage for muskies, and to hit the rocky points on the east shore for walleyes or smallmouths, adding, "There's always something biting out there."

By mid-morning, I was in my rented, 17 1/2-foot Lund boat, the 50 hp Yamaha humming softly as I navigated through the maze of islands and bays. The water was like glass, reflecting the towering pines, rugged shoreline and wide-open sky. It was the kind of morning that reminded me why I loved fishing: peaceful, quiet and full of promise.

My first stop was the north bay, where Doug had said the weed beds held plenty of baitfish. I cast my double-bladed bucktail spinner and worked it through the water. On my third cast, I spotted it: a flash of green and gold. A muskie emerged, stalking the lure with predatory precision. The strike was explosive! The muskie thrashed, its powerful

body breaking the surface in a shower of water.

My rod bent nearly in half as I fought to keep control. The fish ran hard, pulling line in short, furious bursts. After what seemed like forever, but probably only minutes of back-and-forth, I managed to guide it into the net. At 48 inches, it was a beast. I measured it, snapped a quick photo, and released it back into the lake, watching as it swam back into the depths.

Feeling the rush of success, I decided to try a nearby rocky point that Doug had suggested. Swapping my muskie gear for a jig tipped with a leech, I cast toward the rocks. Within minutes, I was reeling in a chunky walleye, its golden scales catching the sunlight. This area was very productive, so we sat for a while and brought back our share to camp to contribute to the fish fry.

Later in the afternoon, I explored a quiet bay and switched to a smaller crankbait. It wasn't long before I hooked into a northern pike, and then another. They are so fun and aggressive! I even caught a few perch at the same spot.

As the day wound down, I returned to the lodge, just in time for Doug and Kathy's famous Tuesday fish fry. The air was filled with the mouthwatering aroma of sizzling



Trophy walleyes and muskies are strong possibilities on Hideaway's Pipestone/Clearwater chain.

MIDWEST
OUTDOORS

The best fishing and hunting magazine
in the Midwest!

Subscribe at MWOMag.com



A healthy variety of species, from walleyes and muskie to bass, pike and panfish make Hideaway a terrific fishery.



Owners of Hideaway, Doug and Kathy Johnson, go over a map and mark key fishing spots for their guests.

walleye and Kathy's baked beans. Guests gathered around picnic tables on the lodge deck, sharing stories of the day's adventures. Kathy's cooking was as much a part of the lodge experience as the fishing; the fresh bread, homemade fries and fresh walleye were pure perfection, and her homemade desserts were the best.

Doug made his rounds, checking in with everyone and sharing tips for the next day. When I told him about the muskie and the mixed bag of other species I'd caught, he grinned. "That's why we love this lake," he said. "You never know what's coming next."

As the sun set, painting the sky in hues of pink and orange, I sat by the bonfire with other guests, listening to the soft lap of waves against the shore. The Clearwater/Pipestone chain of lakes had lived up to its reputation as a fisherman's paradise. I couldn't wait to see what tomorrow would bring. **MWO**

For more information...

Hideaway Lodge, hideawaylodge.com



on the beautiful
Pipestone/Clearwater Chain of Lakes

1 (807) 482-3474
hideawaylodge.com

Come Sample the BEST of Ontario

Check off the boxes...we have it all!


- **Remoteness** - Fish 11 lakes, over 70 miles of water
- **Multi Species & Trophies** - Pike, small & largemouth bass, crappie, muskie, perch, lake trout, walleye
- **Best Rates** - American plan, light housekeeping & fisherman pkgs
- **Boat Rentals** - 17 1/2 ft. Lund boats, with 50hp 4-stroke Yamaha motors
- **Easy to Get To** - only 1 hour from Int'l Falls
- **Clean & Comfy** - 5 modern cabins on Clearwater Lake
- **Outposts** - 2 solar powered
- **Family Friendly** - safe, sandy beach






HIDEAWAY LODGE
Doug and Kathy Johnson
RR#2, Box 9
Emo, ON, Canada
POW 1E0
1-807-482-3474


Follow




on our Socials




youtube.com/MidWestOutdoorsTV



facebook.com/MidWestOutdoorsUSA



instagram.com/MidWestOutdoorsUSA



twitter.com/MWOOutdoorsUSA



Slippery Winds Wilderness Lodge

Six Lakes ~ Six Species

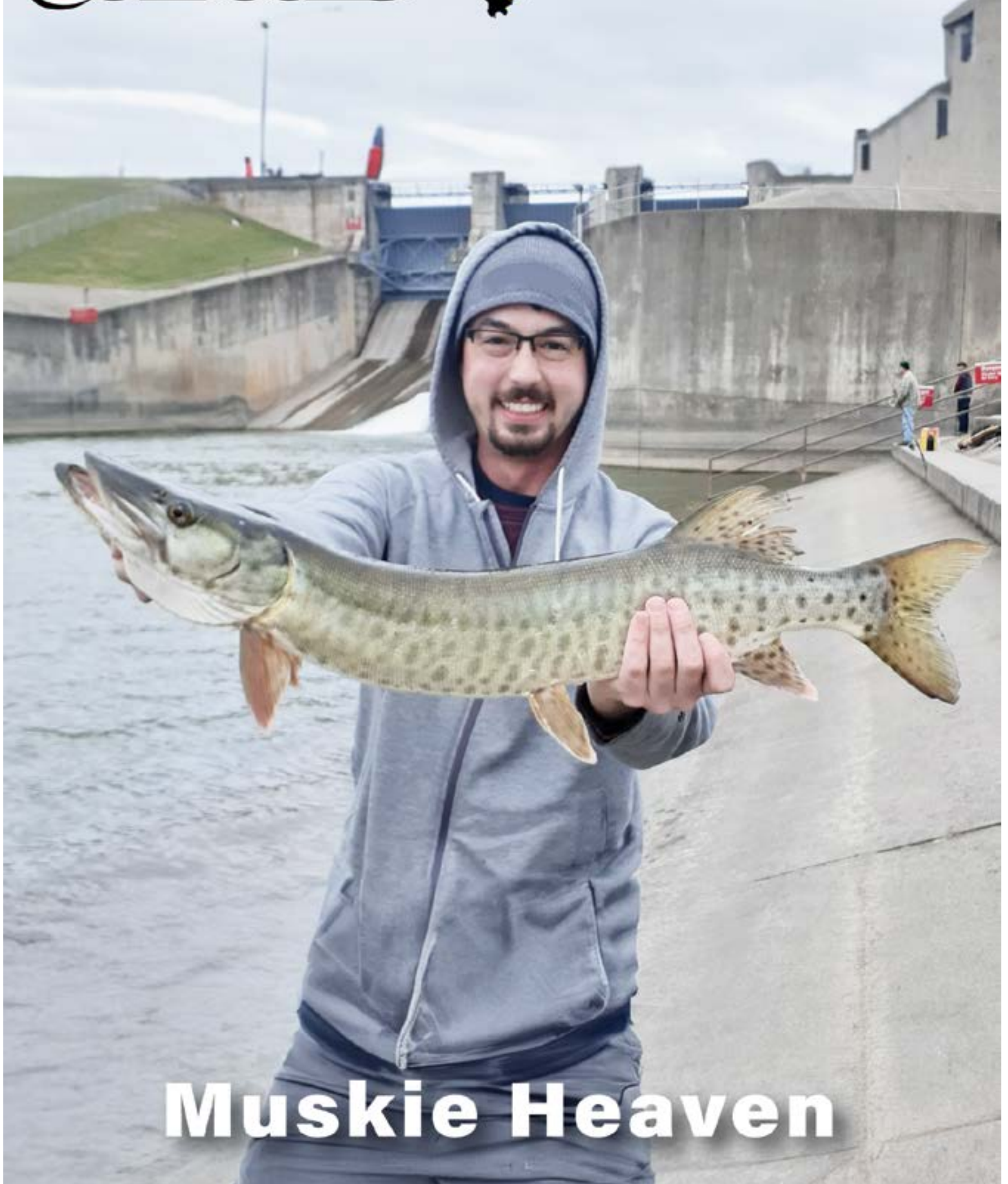


- ~ American-Plan, fly-in lodge
- ~ A short flight from Ft. Frances
- ~ Only lodge on the lake
- ~ Maximum of 18 guests per trip
- ~ Catch & release angling for walleye, muskie, LM & SM bass, northern pike & lake trout
- ~ Fully-modern guest cabins
- ~ Friendly, helpful staff
- ~ Professional chef on staff
- ~ Canoe & kayaks available
- ~ WiFi & satellite television
- ~ Guides optional

sliperywinds.com



1-888-244-7453



Muskie Heaven



"Helping you enjoy the outdoors!"

Become an **MWO INSIDER!**

Each week you'll receive timely info from MWO on where to go, what to use, and how to use it!

FREE sign-up at MidWestOutdoors.com/Insider

(We never give your email address to third-party companies)

OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, March 29th • Opens at 6am
(see full-page ad on page 59 for details)

**IT'S REBATE
SEASON!**

Call for details—
too many to list



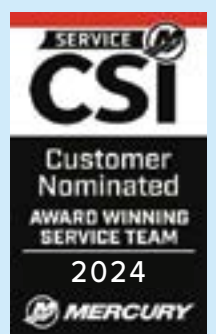
Service your
boat with our
award-winning
service
department!

WATER WERKS 

18660 S. Cicero, Country Club Hills, IL 60478
(708) 798-9700

waterwerks.com

For more than
ten years running,
Water Werks
has received this
prestigious award
for customer
satisfaction!



LOWE
BOATS

 **MERCURY**

LUND



WORK HARD PLAY HARDER

**DESIGNED FOR SNOW AND ICE, TOW AND HAUL
OR OFF-ROAD TO MATCH ANY CONDITION**

CHEVY SILVERADO

**CARS.COM NAMED
SILVERADO BEST PICKUP FOR TOWING**

- AVAILABLE MAX TRAILER PACKAGE PROVIDES UP TO 13,300 LBS. OF TOWING CAPABILITY
- 6.2L ECO TEC V8 WITH 420 HORSEPOWER AND 460LB.-FT. OF TORQUE
- STANDARD CHEVY SAFETY ASSIST; SIX ADVANCED SAFETY AND DRIVER ASSISTANCE FEATURES



Silverado LT Trail Boss



ChevyDrivesChicago.com

Towing capability requires Silverado Double Cab Standard 2WD with available Duramax 3.0L Turbo-Diesel engine, Max Trailering Package and 20-inch wheels or Silverado Double Cab Standard Bed RST 4x4 with available 6.2L V8 engine, Max Trailering Package and 20-inch wheels. Maximum trailering ratings are intended for comparison purposes only. Before you buy a vehicle or use it for trailering, carefully review Trailering section of the Owner's Manual. The trailering capacity of your specific vehicle may vary. The weight of passengers, cargo and options or accessories may reduce amount you can trailer. Wi-Fi service varies with conditions and location. Requires active service plan and paid AT&T data plan. See onstar.com for details and limitations. See dealer for details.

BOAT SHOW PRICING STILL IN EFFECT!

FISHING BOATS IN STOCK NOW!

Basa's Marine

Basa's Marine has the
Best Selection of Boats in Chicagoland!

Visit our store or see us at the boat shows



2024 CRESTLINER SPORTFISH 2050



2025 CRESTLINER 1850 FISH HAWK WT JS



2025 CRESTLINER 1650 HAWK



2025 CRESTLINER 1650 PRO TILLER



2023 CRESTLINER 1950 SUPER HAWK

**CALL FOR
DETAILS ON
FACTORY
REBATES!**

(Too many to list)



2024 SKEETER WXR 2060 F



2024 SKEETER SOLERA 205



2023 CRESTLINER 1750 SUPER HAWK



REGAL 43 SAV



2023 CRESTLINER 1850 FISH HAWK SC

MAIN LOCATION

Basa's Marine, 512 E. North Frontage Road, Bolingbrook, IL

MICHIGAN LOCATION

Basa's at Oselka Marina, 514 W. Water Street, New Buffalo, MI

630-739-2272 • BASASMARINE.COM



Tackle Trends and Techniques for a New Season

by Don Banning

The cold winter months have given me ample time to reflect on the past season and to start planning and preparing for the open-water season ahead. Most of my fishing is on farm ponds and small lakes, and mainly from shore on docks. I try to keep whatever tackle I'm using to a minimum, using a shoulder bag containing: a few small boxes, some with smaller lures for panfish, others with soft plastic baits for bass, and another with a small selection of crankbaits and spinnerbaits.

Most of the time, I use spinning combos with the B'n'M label; even though most of their rods are listed as panfish rods, I use some of them for bass angling. Several are Uncle Bucks models, mainly in light or medium-light action, in lengths of 6 feet or 6'6".

For panfish, I opt for Leland's TCB ultralight model which is made to order for panfishing fun. The TCB stands for trout, crappie and bluegill. Teamed with an ultralight reel spooled with 4-pound Gamma line, you have a great outfit.

With a good share of my fishing done on smaller waters, I never fail to have tackle in the light and ultra-light range. When bass fishing is slow, fishing for bluegills and crappies can save the day, provide great sport, and furnish some good eating if you decide to keep a few for the skillet.

Let's focus on some time-tested, proven-productive, versatile lures under the Blakemore label. I never go on any angling outing without a selection of Road Runners in both the 1/16- and 1/8-ounce sizes. There have been many times over the years when

Road Runners and other smaller lures have saved the day when larger offerings failed to produce.

The traditional-stye Crappie Tamer with a ringed body puts out vibrations. A new Road Runner coming out this coming season is the Slab Spanker. This great addition has new, oversized Sickle Hooks which should provide better hooking capability, especially when bass fishing.

I'm not partial to any particular brand of spinning reel; I have several, most in the 7- to 8-ounce range. The Mitchell 308, Pflueger Trion and Abu Garcia Ora would probably be classified as mid-range and of modest price. Most of the time, I use 6-pound-test mono. such as Gamma or Trilene XL, except on an ultra-light reel, when I'll go with 4-pound.

I'll sometimes go with a 7-foot, B'n'M Sam's Super Sensitive rod. I'll tie on a Custom Jigs & Spins 1/16-ounce Flu Flu Jig tipped with a Berkley Panfish Nibble, fished under a Betts Mr. Crappie Rattlin' Bobber or one of their Billy Boat Floats. Small rattles inside the Betts Mr. Crappie Bobber often help to draw strikes and add casting distance.

The Cubby Mini Mite is another great little panfish lure that I've used for about 30 years. These are tiny jig heads with a small plastic body that comes in many colors. Tipping a Mini Mite with a Crappie Nibble creates another great panfish lure. I like using red/white or black/white for Flu Flus, and solid black, white or chartreuse for Mini Mites.

The Betts Spin and the Pogy Spin are great little single-spin lures that are very effective to cover more water in quest of panfish. I go with either 1/16- or 1/8-ounce

sizes; they come in a wide range of attractive colors sure to tempt panfish. Also, don't overlook the Little Betts Magnum Single Spin lure. It's a "heavy," 1/16-ounce head with a tiny 1-inch grub body. In any of its various colors it's a dandy panfish producer.

Moving into the bass category, most of my fishing is done with soft plastic baits. I rely on those under the Natural Forage label, particularly the 5-inch Stick Bait, 4-inch Finesse Worm and the Q-Worm. The Q-Worm is designed for wacky rigging: Slide a small O-ring onto the middle of the worm and then slip your 2/0 or 3/0 hook under the O-ring. Even after catching several bass, you have a worm with no tears that remains good for another day.

Another great soft plastic bait by Natural Forage is their stick bait. It is about 5 inches long, on the order of a Senko lure. I like to fish this bait weightless, rigged with a 3/0 TTI offset worm hook. Good colors include bubble gum (pink) or a natural shade such as brown or green.

Besides fishing stick baits with a standard retrieve, I also like "dead sticking" where the lure is cast to a likely-looking spot and left inactive on the bottom for a short spell before resuming the retrieve. Be "on guard," as sometimes a bass will pick up the lure as it lays dead still. I darned near lost an unattended rod off a dock a few years ago with a stick bait on the bottom. Luckily, I grabbed the rod just in time to be rewarded with a nice 2-pound bass. Since that time, I've come to use an Okuma ABF series spinning reel for this tactic; the ABF stands for automatic bait feeding system, which involves a switch set to let the fish take out bait without feeling resistance until the ABF

is disengaged by turning the reel handle, placing it in normal retrieve.

The Z-Man line of soft lures has added a lot of fun to my fishing in recent years. They offer a wide range of soft baits starting with the Mini TRDs and other small baits, up through larger softbaits. Recently, I acquired a Z-Man Rattle Snaker—a device made to insert small rattles in the tail ends of various soft baits to add the attraction of sound.

For fishing stick baits and other larger softbaits, a little stiffer rod is beneficial. For years, I've used a 6'4" Berkley Lightning rod in medium-action teamed, with a mid-sized reel spooled with either 6- or 8-pound mono such as Gamma Line. Another rod that I like for this type of fishing is the 6-foot Sharp Shooter Deluxe by B'n'M. This rod is designed for "dock shooting" but works really well when fishing soft plastics for bass. It's rated as light action but is more like ML with some "backbone" and just the right tip action.

Soft baits play a big part in my angling activities, but not exclusively, as I still use crankbaits and spinnerbaits when conditions dictate. Whatever tactics or techniques you go with, be sure to enjoy every opportunity to get out and make the most out of each outing. And whenever you get a chance, please introduce a youngster—or a person of any age—to the great sport of fishing.

MWO

Don Banning has been an outdoor writer since 1972, and with MidWest Outdoors and several other publications since 1974. He has been a fishing educator, seminar speaker and is also an award-winning conservationist and life member of the Izaak Walton League of America. He is on the pro staff of the Jiffy Ice Drill Co.



Our Story...

Founded in 1969, Walleyes Unlimited USA is now recognized as one of the top multi-species fishing clubs in the country and has been educating anglers for over 50 years. In May of 2007 Walleyes Unlimited USA was honored to be inducted into "The Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame."

Although our main interest is on walleyes, our membership includes some of the top local anglers for smallmouth, largemouth, northern pike, muskie, panfish, salmon and other great lakes fish.

Learn more at walleyesunlimitedusa.org or our Facebook page.

Wisconsin Meeting

Tuesday, March 25th @ 6:00 PM

Speaker: Chris Groh –

Bass Tournament Angler

Topic: *BLACK BASS Strategies*

Chris Groh hails from Lake County Illinois where he grew up fishing the Chain O'Lakes. Chris fished bass tournaments while working at Triangle Sports as a young angler and describes himself when he was younger as a "Chainrat. Groh always dreamed of becoming a big-time professional bass angler. He made a momentous step toward that reality by finishing fifth in the 2017 Bassmaster Northern Open AOY standings that earned him a spot on the Bassmaster Elite Series. The past few years he has fished the Major League Fishing Tackle Warehouse Invitationals.



Chris will share some of those national tournament experiences with us while telling us how he dissects new bodies of water to locate and catch both largemouth and smallmouth bass. This will certainly be a great opportunity to learn how the pros approach new water and what they do to catch fish effectively. Bring your questions to this meeting as Chris will be prepared to talk about boat rigging, mapping, and about other electronics issues. You can learn more about Chris on Facebook at [grohschmehl.fishing](https://www.facebook.com/grohschmehl.fishing) or on Instagram at [chrisgrohfishing](https://www.instagram.com/chrisgrohfishing).

Saturday April 12th

40th Annual Kids Open Water Fishing Clinic

9:00 AM – 3:00 PM | Scout Lake Park

5902 W. Loomis Rd., Greendale, WI 53129

This is another of our events encouraging children to participate in the great outdoors and the sport of fishing. The 40th annual event is sponsored in cooperation with the Wisconsin Council of Sport Fishing Organizations; Milwaukee, Racine, Washington and Waukesha County Parks; Milwaukee County House of Correction Fish Hatchery; and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

The Scout Lake Clinic is located at 5902 W. Loomis Rd. in Greendale, WI. We conduct clinics on open water fishing and safety around the water. Members also help the youngsters fish. Fishing instruction is free for children 15 years old and younger. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Clinics begin every hour from 9:00 a.m., with the last clinic starting at 3:00 p.m. Fishing equipment will be available for the kids. No pre-registration is necessary. Instructions include Fishing Techniques, Equipment Use, Knot Tying, Safety and Fish ID. We need club member volunteers for this event.

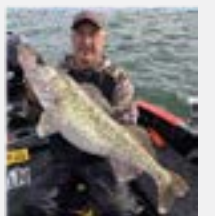
Illinois Meeting

Wednesday, April 30th @ 6:00 PM

Dale Helgeson – Multi-Species

Guide & Walleye Tournament Angler

SPRING TACTICS FOR RIVER WALLEYES



Join us at [Wisconsin](#) meetings on the last **Tuesday** of the following months –

Jan. | Mar. | May | July (Alt. Location) | Sept. | Nov.

Hideaway Pub & Eatery | 9643 S 76th St. | Franklin, WI 53132

Join us at [Illinois](#) meetings on the last **Wednesday** of the following months –

Feb. | April | June | Aug. (Alt. Location) | Oct. | Dec.

American Legion | 749 Milwaukee Ave. | Gurnee, IL 60031

Real Reel Maintenance: Baitcaster Oil & Grease



Keeping your reel oiled and greased will help you avoid malfunctions when it matters most.

by AJ Hauser

Spring has sprung! Right? I hope! Well, if it's not here yet... it will be soon. Truth be told, it's actually a blisteringly cold minus-5-degree January morning here in Illinois as I write this. But I know that will change in a few more weeks. If you're like me, slightly warmer weather, slightly longer days, and slightly bluer skies get those creative juices flowing.

Where will I start? What will I throw? Will I be able to find a few active bass?

A few warm days in March and I'll be out fishing from shore. Afternoons, probably. No need to freeze in the dark, wicked-cold, early morning. That window is preferred on 100° days, but not yet. Early in the year, I have better luck working an afternoon bite. Jerkbait? Absolutely. Ned Rigs? You bet. Tubes? Occasionally. Stickbaits? For sure!

I'll fine-tune this plan a bit in the coming weeks, but before we change gears, we'd better grease gears. Let's go over a simple oil and grease procedure that I follow before my baitcasters get put to work again. Remember, if you take care of your gear, it will take care of you.

Apply reel oil on a regular basis

Consider running the following steps if you plan to let your reel sit for an extended period, or if it's already been sitting and you're ready to use it again. Oil it after trips where it falls in the water, gets rained on, or is laid

on the gritty shoreline while you land (and take a sweet picture with) a nice fish! Keeping your reel lubed will help keep moving parts moving.

1. Prepare a nice, clean work area. And I mean *clean*. Remember when Mama used to say, "Clean 'yer room!" and you'd throw everything in the closet and under the bed? Wrong. Cleaner than that! Take a second to make sure your work area is not only clean, but free from holes, gouges and cracks. Tiny screws, caps and washers are like magnets to these crevices. You will lose things, and you will swear.

Trust me.

Grab your reel oil and grease, a small and a medium Phillips screwdriver, a small and a medium flathead screwdriver, and some tweezers (just in case). Paper towels are a great idea.

Warning #1: before you move ahead, it is really important to find (or download) the schematic for your reel. Even though we are not doing anything close to a full disassembly, you never know when a washer, screw or spring will fall off from. Lord only knows.

This schematic will also help to prevent swearing. (I have five kids, so I work on that not-swearing thing a lot.)

If you need to remove a few pieces to gain access, place everything that comes off in a straight line, in order, on your workbench. Again, this will prevent... you know.

2. Apply one drop (if you're responsible) or three drops (if you're a madman) of reel oil to the *handle bearings* (or collars) right next to



Place a few drops of oil along the line guide rail.



The side plate bearing is an important place to oil; so is the brake ring—if one is present on your reel.



A flashlight helps show the old grimy oil deposit in the tension knob. Wipe it out and start fresh with just a single drop of oil.

the handle knobs. Spin the knobs to work in the oil.

3. Next, place a drop or two of oil on either side of the *spool release button*. You may also hear this referred to as the clutch bar, or thumb bar; whatever you call it, it releases the spool and allows it to spin. Apply the oil. Press the button. Push the handle slightly to click it back in place. Repeat a few times.

4. Next, place a few drops of oil on the *line guide rail*. You may have heard this called the slide rail or the line guide bar. It's what the line guide moves back and forth on, from left to right, during your retrieve so that line is spaced evenly back on the spool.

5. Near the line guide rail, you will also see the worm gear. This is important.

Warning #2: the most common advice you will see is that grease, not oil, goes on the worm gear. This makes sense; I mean, it is literally called a "gear," and gears get grease. But... grease can collect dirt, and the worm gear is usually partially exposed (unlike the internal gears), so some anglers intentionally opt for oil instead. At the end of the day, either works; just select one and don't mix them. (Oil mixed with grease can cause faster breakdown or undesirable consistency changes). If want to try using oil on your worm gear, plan to reapply that oil on a regular basis—just to be safe.

6. Next, open the side plate opposite the tension knob and look for a *side plate bearing*. One side of the spindle (or spool shaft), which runs through the center of your spool, will rest within this bearing. Hit it with a drop or two of oil and place a single drop on the exposed portion of the spool shaft.

If you have centrifugal brakes, which look like little tabs on the end of the spool, you'll also want to place a drop or two of oil along the inside edge of the brake ring that these tabs rub against on the cast.

7. Close the side plate back up unless you want to intentionally (or unintentionally) remove your spool. Then look to the other side of your baitcaster and remove the *tension knob*. Underneath you should find another bearing, along with the opposite side of the spool shaft. Place a drop of oil on the bearing, and a drop of oil on this side of the spool shaft.

Before you put the tension knob back on,



Removing the 'trap door' covering the underside grease port allows easy access to the main drive gear. Apply grease here if possible.

look inside. Is it (relatively) clean? If so, then go ahead and reassemble. Is it disgustingly filthy (like your old room)? No problem; simply wipe it out and place a single drop of oil inside.

8. Since this is a light maintenance session, we could be done. But hold up, bucko! Look on the underside of your baitcaster. Do you see a small trap-door-looking thingy? That's actually a *grease port* that allows you to easily access the *main drive gear*. Remove the screw, open it up, place a small amount of grease—not oil—on the main drive gear, and rotate the handle to work the grease all throughout the internals.

Just a dab'll do ya.

If you don't have anything like this on the underside of your reel, the only way to get into the internals is with a much more involved disassembly. It's not as scary as it sounds, but it is beyond the scope of this article.

Keep your reels oiled up in between deep-cleaning sessions. When it comes time to crack 'er open, be careful, make slow deliberate movements, and get 'er done.

I promise that if you do, that reel is going to work better than ever before.

Now... it's time to go back to prepping for spring. **MWO**

AJ Hauser is a fisherman, angling educator, and website designer/consultant from Ottawa, Illinois. To watch project videos, bait reviews, rigging tips and in-the-field escapades, visit TheMinimalistFisher.com or contact A.J. at aj@theminimalistfisherman.com.



A Multi-Species Fishing Club for Men and Women

Meetings are held at 7:00 PM
on the first Monday of each month

For more information visit our website at:
www.fishinfools.org

• Speakers • Fishing Trips • Club Outings • Kids Fishing

Lake Michigan's Salmon Fishery Assured

by Jerry Pabst

With the big lake's open-water fishing season just around the corner, trollers and shore anglers can take a break from readying their fishing gear for another action-packed summer; instead, they should hoist a cool refreshment to celebrate the news that last year's Coho and Chinook salmon fully cooperated with DNR biologists in Michigan and Wisconsin to provide all the fish eggs needed to fill the newly emptied hatcheries.

Both Michigan and Wisconsin, with their extensive lakefronts, experience substantial salmon spawning runs in several of their rivers, providing the necessary eggs for next year's stocking—not only for themselves, but for Indiana and Illinois as well. If a spawning run falls short, as occasionally happens, stocking schedules for the following year could suffer.

In the days of yore, when alewives were abundantly plentiful, as many as 16 million salmon and trout were poured into Lake Michigan every spring. But when zebra—and now quagga—mussels showed up, they outcompeted alewives for the lower portion of the forage base, and baitfish population (invasive alewives) crashed.

Without the massive alewife schools to support them, hungry salmon and trout fell on hard times, and their stocking numbers had to be decreased accordingly, falling by more than 50 percent.

The future of this huge sport fishery looked dim indeed. But Mother Nature had a few tricks in her bag, and she came to the



Every troller (including the author!) dreams of catching a big Chinook like this, but not everyone is lucky enough to get one. Still, the chances of hooking into a Lake Michigan trophy salmon are getting better each year. Photo: Jerry Pabst

rescue. After virtually taking over the lake, the zebra mussels were overwhelmed by the arrival of the larger quagga, and were soon starved into obscurity. While the new arrivals are firmly established, they apparently aren't gobbling as much forage as the zebras did, and the alewife population has staged a small, but noticeable, comeback.

For the past several years, it has been possible to increase Chinook salmon stocking numbers. Also, the lake trout replaced the missing alewives by switching back to native prey, which not only took some pressure off the alewives, but supplied missing nutrients that were preventing their

eggs from surviving for well over fifty years. Suddenly, there were big, fat lakers all over the place, and it won't be long before they become self-sustaining.

Getting back to the DNR egg-taking, the Manistee River weir, in Michigan, collected enough Chinook eggs to fill their own needs, but also fully supply Illinois and Indiana. The weir at the Platte River garnered 6.5 million Coho eggs, enough for all four Lake Michigan state's hatcheries.

But wait; there's more! Michigan also keeps adult fish at hatcheries for egg-taking purposes, and they produced 378,000 brook

trout, 448,000 lake trout, 2.5 million brown trout, and 1.5 million rainbow trout eggs. As a bonus, the captive trout also provided 422,000 splake eggs.

So, what not very long ago what looked like a doomed fishery has become a *huge resource on the rise*. I guess the old adage holds true: You just can't fool Mother Nature!

MWO

Jerry Pabst has been writing about the outdoors for over 40 years. He captained a Lake Michigan charter boat for 25 years and was inducted into the Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame. He has hunted waterfowl in all North American flyways, pursued upland game extensively, and trains his own dogs,



Like us on facebook

Stay informed of the latest happenings at



Facebook.com/
MidWestOutdoorsUSA

RIVERSIDE FISHING CLUB

Chicago's Local Fishing Club! Since 1968



2025 MEETING SCHEDULE

Jan 9	Feb 13	Mar 22	Apr 10
May 8	Jun 12	July 10	Aug 14
Sep 11	Oct 9	Nov 13	Dec 11

We Meet 2nd Thurs. of the month 6:30 pm, Guests \$5.
Note Saturday, March 22nd is our annual tackle sale!



RFC Tackle Sale 65 Tables of Deals March 22nd

Berwyn, IL - Moose Lodge #424 the site of the biggest fishing tackle sale. Wide aisles, great savings featuring new, used and antique fishing tackle 8 am - 12pm.

Biggest Fishing Tackle Sale

Every March, Saturday, March 22nd this year, Riverside Fishing Club features a big tackle sale. This a huge fishing tackle rod, reel and lure sale just outside Chicago. 65 tables of new, custom and used gear in Berwyn, the near West suburb with easy access from I-55. Tackle tables selling fishing tackle, new, used and antique fishing gear. There will be fishing tackle, camping, outdoors equipment and hunting gear (no guns or ammo). For more information on the sale (visit: RiversideFishingClub.com or find us on Facebook for the latest tackle sale updates. This is the best event to stock up on outdoors gear.

Gift an RFC Membership

Get your spouse, out of the house with the gift of an RFC Fishing Club Membership – 2025 Memberships available. Membership entitles one or a family to our 12 gatherings, access to our fishing outings, socials and our monthly raffle along with multi-species speakers, guides and fishing experts speaking at meetings. Memberships available: contact Johnny Wilkins 630.235.2162 or club president -Tony Novak 708.447.8087, to get a membership gift for someone you know. Meet new fishing friends and learn to fish from our expert speakers and RFC club members. Free Midwest Outdoors Magazine subscription to full members who join the Riverside Fishing Club. See you in Berwyn at the MOOSE LODGE #424 on Harlem ave.

HUGE Fishing Tackle Sale 3/22

Mark your fishing calendars for Saturday, March 22nd. The address of this year's tackle sale is the Berwyn Moose Lodge #424, 3625 S. Harlem Avenue, Berwyn, IL 60402. Doors open at 8 am and we go until 12 noon. Admission is \$5. We have lunch available as well as drinks and snacks served by our local Boy Scout Troop 301 -support the scouts. The Tackle Sale has been running for over 20 years and features the area's best deals on fishing tackle. Find new fishing tackle, fly fishing gear, salmon fishing gear, boat equipment, fishing rods, reels and landing nets. Stock up your tackle box and meet with local fishing guides. We have guides and fishing celebrities: You might see Dale Bowman, (Sun-Times) Johnny Wilkins (Float Fishing) and Chauncey (ESPN Radio) to name a few. Our Huge Fishing Sale is an opportunity to pick up gear not available at stores. Many of our vendors are experts at tackle and can give you fishing advice. One of the area's busiest fishing tackle sales so get in on the action. Riverside Fishing Club hosts the annual Fishing Tackle Sale and has the best location to create a larger sale with a much roomier venue (unlike some cramped events). Moose Lodge in Berwyn features easy loading for vendors, large restrooms and free parking. Fishing tackle & outdoors sellers, get in on the area's largest fishing tackle sales - we have a waiting list for tables. **Huge Tackle Sale - Reserve a table now. Email johnny@ChicagoFishingSchool.com about a table reservation for the 2025 RFC Huge Tackle Sale or fill out the form on our RFC Website.**

Meet Friends Learn the Region's Fishing

We Update Our Speakers & Topics to cover multi-species fishing and the local scene. Here are some seminars recently covered

- Will County Forest Preserves
- Heidecke Lake
- Fox Lake Chain
- Smallmouth & Largemouth Bass
- Forest Preserves Bluegill & Crappie
- Salmon & Trout Fishing
- Lake Michigan Charters & Boat Upkeep
- Fox River & Illinois River Fishing
- Ice Fishing for New & Casual Anglers
- Live Bait Fishing - Shore Fishing
- Walleyes, Pike & Muskie Fishing Tips
- Braidwood, Shabbona, Heidecke, LaSalle

Guests can just join us at our next meeting you do not need a reservation. \$5 guest fee covers your seminar and admission we will let you join the club for discount. You can participate in club raffles, cash bar and other fun. Riverside Fishing Club prides itself in getting the area's top guides and expert fishing speaking talent for club meetings. We feature the most informative presenters. Contact anyone listed below and get in on this great fishing club. Contact Adam Bielawski to join our club (photobra@gmail.com). You can always get in touch with our club president, Tony Novak 708.447.8087 or call Johnny Wilkins 630.235.2162 for information text or leave a message. **See you in Berwyn -our new location!**

RiversideFishingClub.com

The Board meets in person at Papa Passero's in Westmont- all are welcome at board meetings. PRES: Tony Novak, 708-447-8087 tnovak2416@aol.com JOIN: Adam Bielawski - photobra@gmail.com. COMMUNICATIONS: Johnny Wilkins, 630-235-2162 or Johnny@chicagofishingschool.com



Lake Michigan Corner

Mike Ratter

Just when everyone thought they were out of the woods on the south end of Lake Michigan, Mother Nature threw us a curveball in mid-January, the likes of which we haven't seen in years.

What does it mean to our fishing? Only time will tell. With all the global "experts" predicting global warming, then climate change, I can think of other scams down through the years.

I still remember back when I was in high school during the early 1960s that we had a series of cold, frigid winters. The global "experts" of that time predicted the upcoming Ice Age. We also had a reappearance of frequent spells of record-breaking cold snaps in the early 1980s. Global warming? Climate change? Watch *The Twilight Zone*.

With accurate weather records being kept for only around 160 years, how can the "experts" predict our weather in the far-distant future? After being around for quite a while and having always studied the weather through all my years, I believe that we are simply going through a weather cycle, one of which we have experienced through an eternity.

Back to fishing: Prior to the mid-January cold blast, the fishing has been normal all along the "Big Lake's" southern shores.

Wisconsin, due to the weather, has seen most of its fishing on inland lakes, ponds and backwaters.

Racine has seen some action in the harbor on steelhead through the ice, using spawn sacs and tube jigs (White) dressed with waxworms, but that's about all I've heard from our neighbors to the north.

On a sad note, we recently lost a legend of major league baseball and Lake Michigan salmon fishing. Former major league catcher and the voice of the Milwaukee Brewers, Bob Uecker, passed away at the age of 90.

Growing up in the late 1950s and early 1960s, I still remember a second-string catcher come into a game for the old Milwaukee Braves to give regular catcher Del Crandall a rest.

Ueck, as he was known, never made any headlines with his bat, having finished his well-traveled career with a lifetime batting average of only around .200. He was, nevertheless, fun to watch. He played for several major league teams including St. Louis, Atlanta and Philadelphia.

He was probably best known, though, for his broadcasting career spanning 54 seasons with the Milwaukee Brewers. He was known as "Mr. Baseball" in "Brew-Town."

When I think of Ueck, I also remember him in terms of salmon fishing on Lake Michigan. Each year, being heavily involved with the long-running invitational salmon tournament, which was run each June out of Milwaukee and bore his name.

The Uecker Tournament, as it was known around the Lake, raised thousands of dollars for the Make-A-Wish Wisconsin charity. He commonly wore an ALS Association cap in honor of his daughter, Llean, who had ALS. She lost her battle with the disease in 2022.

A tip of the MidWest Outdoors cap goes out to Ueck and his family. He will be greatly missed. God Bless and RIP, Ueck.

Back to fishing. Chicago has seen some pretty good fishing for both perch and lake trout prior to the Arctic weather blasts. Boats were getting out and taking limits of perch and lakers, but the frigid air masses froze up many areas of the lake, harbors and launch ramps, making boat fishing all but impossible.

Despite the construction, the north side of Navy Pier was giving up some limits of perch when an offshore wind blows out the ice. Fishermen can get discounted parking between 5 and 10 am for \$9.



The author with a limit of winter trout.

The Chicago harbors have pretty much loaded up with ice, but fish are being taken by die-hards who have been busting holes in the ice so they can get their baits down to the fish. The top producers have been Burnham and DuSable. Perch have been hitting minnows or Bait Rigs Tackle 1/64-ounce Slo-Poke jigs dressed with spikes or waxworms.

Lake trout have been decent on heavy, slab jigging spoons like Acme Kastmaster or Hopkins Spoons. Gold or Silver plate have been the top colors, either in the hammered or plain finishes.

If fishing Montrose, Diversey, Belmont, DuSable, Burnham or Jackson Park Harbors, you will need a \$10 pier pass. They are available at Park Bait, Bridgeport Bait & Tackle and Fishtec.

The best bet for perch in Chicago has been on the far south side. Although it will take some sorting, good catches have been taken from the old U.S. Steel slips and from the Calumet River all the way up to 106th Street.

It pays to move around. If the fish aren't hitting in one spot, move to another. Keep moving and try different areas. They can change overnight, so it pays to stay on top of them. Once you find them, you can usually fill a limit in a very short time.

If past catches are any indication of the Illinois Lake Michigan salmonid fishery, we should look forward to another good season this year.

The total harvest of salmon and trout in Illinois waters increased 50 percent with an 8 percent increase of angler hours for sport fishermen and a 4 percent increase for charter anglers.

Changes in the makeup of the catch also occurred. The most notable change was the increase in Chinook, coho and steelhead (rainbow trout) harvested by sport and charter fishermen.

The sport fishing harvest of coho more than doubled, while numbers increased 19 percent for sport fishermen. Chinook increased 39 percent for sport anglers and 43 percent for charters.

Lake trout catches also increased for both sport and charter anglers with brown trout showing only a small portion of the Illinois harvest.

Illinois fishing on the "Big Lake" seems to be headed in the right direction. Let's hope the trend continues.

Indiana, prior to the cold snap, was doing pretty good for perch and a few lake trout in East Chicago with jumbos in 60 feet off the Gary Light, but ice on the lake prohibited boats from getting out for them.

Steelhead have been decent in Trail Creek, Salt Creek and the East Branch of the Little Calumet River on spawn sacs or Voodoo jigs tipped with waxworms.

Steelhead and a few walleyes have been hitting in Michigan's St. Joseph River but be careful with the ice floes.

Hopefully the weather will break this month and we will be able to get the boats out and go after the spring coho that will be stacked up along the Indiana shoreline.

MWO

With his "Lake Michigan Corner" and various other articles in MidWest Outdoors, Mike Ratter has been writing for MWO for nearly 35 years. His writing has also been published in various other publications throughout the Midwest. He is a consultant and field tester for various manufacturers, seminar speaker and current (and long-time) member of OWAA and AGLOW.



Lake Shelbyville

Mary Satterfield

Fishing Picks Up

The lake froze in January, but as I'm writing this, the main lake has reopened. There is still ice in the coves and we're going to have some colder weather next week, so it may try to refreeze some. But by the time this issue comes out, we'll likely have open water lake-wide.

In March, most anglers are looking for crappies, but some could be trying for bass or walleyes.

March is a popular time to go up the Kaskaskia River above the lake to fish for walleyes, whites and crappies. The Corps of Engineers dropped the lake level more than four feet below summer pool, trying to get it down to winter pool, which is another couple of feet. At that level, the river above the lake is pretty shallow; I wouldn't recommend going up there in anything but an aluminum boat. There are a few places you can fish from the bank. It depends on how much rain we get between now and then.

March can be a really good time to fish, but a lot depends on the weather. We can

have rain or snow. Some days, it's too cold to go; other days, it's warm enough, but there may be leftover snow or ice on the ramps. Some days are great! I just hope for a warm March!

We'll be fishing for crappies up until their spawn is over, usually sometime in May.

The water will still be pretty cold, so you have to work your bait slowly to give the fish time to react. Sometimes, a bobber helps.

We usually fish some type of wood first, using a tube jig body on a 1/16-ounce lead head. If we're fishing a fallen tree or brush pile, we cast around it without a bobber and just work the jig through the limbs.

If we're fishing around stumps or standing timber, we usually use a bobber to keep the bait close to the wood longer. A stationary bobber controls the depth better than a slip bobber. If the fish are deep enough to make it difficult to cast, we take the bobber off and just vertical jig.

If the wood cover isn't working, we try rocks around the bridges. There are more



A Lake Shelbyville cold-weather crappie.

areas of rock around the lake; the Corps has been putting rock on some banks to stabilize the shorelines from wave action. There are also new rockpiles in the lake in deeper water that the Corps, Dept. of Natural Resources and the Lake Shelbyville Fish Habitat Alliance have been working on.

Of course, the Lake Shelbyville Cubes hold fish most of the time, so they've become popular. The cubes, rockpiles and artificial stumps are all put in by the above groups and volunteers and appear on maps. You can purchase individual pages or a book of maps

that has all the pages. There's also a chip to put in your depth finder that shows all the locations. Both the maps and chips give GPS waypoints. They can be purchased at Chip's Marine at the entrance of Forrest 'Bo' Woods Access, off Rt. 32, south of Sullivan. **MWO**

Lifelong angler Mary Satterfield is a retired professional bass angler. She has held titles of National and World Champion and Angler of the Year. She's run the multispecies Eagle Creek Guide Service on Lake Shelbyville since 1989. She may be contacted at: 217-827-0179.



Are the Good Ol' Days of Fishing Gone?

Many of today's anglers simply haven't been around long enough to have experienced fishing days gone by. At times, I wished I fell into the latter category; I'm constantly reminded of a major milestone birthday ahead: The one in which you're swamped with Medicare pamphlets in your mailbox. I'll admit, I'm one of those anglers who have experienced some of the "good ol' days of angling," right on up until the present time.

I had planned another topic for the month of March. But as we wound down the last few days of 2024, I received the news that my Uncle Bob had passed away suddenly. Over the years, I mentioned him several times in this column, along with my father, brother and a few angling friends who were the most influential anglers and sportsmen in my life. I will always have the utmost in admiration for their abilities, along with my gratitude and thankfulness that they shared their knowledge and expertise with me—especially during those annoying childhood angling years!

As part of my grieving process, I hope you don't mind me sharing a few memories of Uncle Bob and how they tie into the idea for this month's column.

My uncle Bob was a brother to my father, and fishing together was just a part of most of my early days spent on the water or bank. Back then, the "boys"—we had no girls in our immediate family—would load up the car trunks and head out in some direction for a weekend fishing adventure. Forest preserve lakes, local rivers, farm ponds, the Lake Michigan lakefront—you name it. If we could get Dad's Ford or my uncle's Chevy anywhere close, we were all over those waters.

Those were my beginning days of angling with my uncle. Later, as I grew older, he and his family moved from our location just south of Chicago, down to the very tip of southern Illinois—Marion, to be exact—as he started a new career. My uncle's love for fishing drew him to Lake of Egypt, to which he ended up building several homes directly on Egypt's shoreline where he and his wife remained up until their last few years. Even after moving to a smaller property, he insisted on his own private pond—a dream life for me if I had those options, and probably a dream life for most avid anglers. My uncle would visit some of the other well-known lakes in the area: Devil's Kitchen and Little Grassy were his favorites, because at the time, they had horsepower limits and kept the waters quiet—a refuge for the purist angler, which he was.

Of course, I made trips down to fish with him, especially during the crappie season; heck, with free lodging and a nephew as one of the best "unofficial" guides on the lake, how could I not? These times spent with my uncle were primarily during my teenage and early twenties angling years, and the knowledge and expertise he showed formed me into the angler I am today—though nowhere near his caliber of a "natural" angler.

I know that tackle and gear have advanced immensely since those days I spent with my uncle; our electronic capability alone is more than any of us back then could have ever dreamed of. Over his later years, my uncle and I often discussed these new technologies, to which I can honestly say, he was very unimpressed.

Uncle Bob was an "old school" angler till the very end. When he used his boat, it was very minimal—usually a simple aluminum jon boat with added seats, front and rear anchors, maybe a removable trolling motor, and some type of small kicker engine. The most frightening aspect of all his boats, especially for today's advanced anglers, was... zero electronics! You heard me, none—not even a flasher! Add to that boat, a couple of rods depending on species, a small tackle box... and that was his boat and gear, no matter which of the waters that boat found itself floating on.

Even with having access to water and a boat by simply walking out his back door, he still liked to wander the banks, be it at his home lake, local farm ponds and nearby creeks. Similar to his boat simplicity, his bank fishing gear was very much on track with his boating choices: one rod and one small tackle box packed with a handful of baits that dangled from his belt in a little, two-sided, mini, gold-colored Plano tackle box. You couldn't be any more minimal with your tackle. Yet his angling expertise and his ability to catch fish, whether by land or boat, still amazes me to this day!

With this brief glimpse introducing you to my Uncle Bob, you might be thinking, "How does his story and angling prowess tie into my topic of this month's article, 'Are the Good Ol' Days of Fishing Gone?'" Well, his story not only fits, but is pretty much the foundation of the title. The topic can become complicated, and voices from all sides stand

behind their own views.

Can we even break this conversation down for discussion or is it simply one of those topics where we must agree to disagree? Here's my take on the title of this article:

Being part of the fishing industry for many years, on pro-staffs, and writing for a bit of competition, I have had the good fortune to meet anglers from all sides, professionals to novice, from beginners making their first casts to veterans using tackle older than those putting out their knowledge on social media outlets. I'll admit that I've struggled to figure out where in the fishing world I find myself today. In my uncle's passing, I've seen found considerable contentment in where I'm at, fishing-wise, and my direction moving forward into the future.

One point of view that my Uncle tried to instill, which I should of embraced years ago rather than finally grasping now, is to choose or blaze your own trail when it comes to what you want your direction or path to be as an angler; not what other anglers want you to be, or not what the fishing industry tries to convince you of who you need to be. My uncle knew that to be successful, which he truly was, he wasn't swayed by newfangled gear. He knew through years of experience and time on the water the tackle, techniques and gear that made him the angler he was, and he refused to waiver just to keep up or go along with the latest trends.

To me, since I've fished in what some would call the "good old days of angling" up through current times, I've come to feel like somewhat of a "hybrid" angler. I like new advancements in baits, rods and reels and so forth, but I do feel like we're too focused on just the catching of fish by whatever means, rather than the pursuit necessary to find fish, and then getting those fish to bite.

So, are the "Good Ol' Days Gone?" I believe that if you look back retrospectively, comparing fishing back some 50 or more

years ago, I'd have to say yes; but most everything else in life has as well. Technology in all forms certainly has, but the beauty in fishing, as compared to other aspects of our lives, is that you can make angling as advanced or as untouched by progress as you choose. You find your happiness and contentment in your style of angling. Don't let outside influences control your mindset on what you consider how you want to spend your time with rod and reel in hand. You can't control where the fishing industry is headed, but you certainly can control how it affects your angling experiences. Hold fast to those things you consider most meaningful in your angling pursuits, and you will find your contentment and passion for your style of angling!

And before we go...

Tip of the Month

One quick tip, and a successful way to remove all the guessing when it comes to deciding on a good approach for catching early-spring fish of all species, is a split shot and nightcrawler offering. This simple rig will ring the dinner bell for just about anything with a set of gills on your early-season outings!

It's basically just a split-shotting approach. Use lighter lines (4- to 8-pound test), a small split shot attached 12 to 18 inches above the hook, and a size #8 to #4 hook. Hook the 'crawler through the nose or wacky-rigged, simply cast out, and let it settle all the way to the bottom before making a repeat cast. This system takes a bit of patience, but the payoffs can be amazing! **MWO**

Passion for angling drives Dan Brozowski to the water's edge virtually any chance he gets. Although passion cannot be measured, weighed, or recorded, it can be shared. He does this through his writing and while on the water. If you have any questions or comments for Dan, you may contact him at: onthebank@att.net.

THE LAKE GENEVA FISHING CLUB IS DEDICATED TO PROMOTING SPORT FISHING FOR ALL SPECIES ON GENEVA LAKE. WE ALSO ENCOURAGE KIDS AND FAMILIES TO FISH TOGETHER. THE CLUB HAS OUTINGS THROUGHOUT THE OPEN WATER SEASON, INCLUDING A "LEARN THE LAKE OUTING" FOR THOSE NOT FAMILIAR WITH GENEVA. WE FEATURE SPEAKERS THAT INCLUDE VETERAN MEMBERS, POPULAR FISHING GUIDES, ELECTRONICS EXPERTS, OR OTHER INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS.

Wednesday, March 12th | 6:00 PM William Heim – Nightprowler Guide Service PRE-SPAWN BASS STRATEGIES

William "Billy" Heim started Nightprowler Guide Service in 1992 as a part time service that taught people the joys of night fishing on Geneva Lake. He also guides ice fishing clients. Recently, he has begun to guide from a pontoon boat which accommodates additional anglers each trip as well as offering clients protection in cold or inclement weather conditions.

Heim began a professional tournament career several years ago. He experienced success on the Angler's Choice Tournament Trail finishing in the top three overall multiple times and most recently, a first-place finish in the 2021 Anglers Choice - Team of the Year.

William specializes in unique ways of teaching others how to adapt to the toughest conditions on Geneva Lake. William's presentation for this meeting will focus on how to target and catch pre-spawn largemouth and smallmouth bass on Geneva. To learn more about Heim, check him out on Facebook. William typically draws the largest attendance at our monthly meetings, you should arrive early to find a seat.



Wednesday, April 9th | 6:00 PM Bob Biedrzycki – The Hook Up Guide Service FISHING THE OPENER ON GENEVA LAKE

Illinois Club Meetings are on the 2nd Wednesdays
Learn more at lakegenevafishingclub.com or Facebook

Poplar Creek Bowl Banquet Entrance **Guests Are Always Welcomed, Guest Fee \$5.00**
2354 W Higgins Rd **Food & Beverage Available For**
Hoffman Estates, IL 60192 **Purchase @ 5:00 PM**

MOVING?

Please let us know.
Call 630-887-7722
to report your change of address so you don't miss an issue of

MIDWEST OUTDOORS

MARINE ELECTRONICS RIGGING & TROLLING MOTOR REPAIR

ADVANCED ANGLING

Marine Electronics Installation
HUMMINBIRD LOWRANCE GARMIN

MENTION THIS AD FOR
\$100 OFF
YOUR NEXT INSTALLATION!
EXPIRES 12/31/24

AUTHORIZED SERVICE DEALER
MINNIXTA CORONA HUMMINBIRD LOWRANCE

779-200-4503
Email us: info@advancedangling.com
www.advancedangling.com

Muskie Heaven at the Kaskaskia River

by Mark Plese

You're a dedicated angler. A warm front is moving in. Word travels fast, and you've just caught wind that a prized freshwater predator is on a feeding frenzy a few hours away.

Do you:

A) Add the spot to your list of future trips, hoping the bite is still on when you get there?
Or

B) Grab your gear, pack up the car and get there as soon as possible?

If you answered B, you may suffer from Restless Fishing Syndrome. Symptoms include intrusive thoughts about fishing, dreaming about fishing, fishing for more than 8 hours a week, having a blog/YouTube channel about fishing, and an innate urge to frequently visit new bodies of water.

As a sufferer of RFS, I chose option B. I'd been cooped up for a while and got word on a Chicago fishing forum that the Muskie bite was on at the Shelbyville spillway in southern Illinois. I grabbed a few packs of steel leaders and headed down for the weekend with my dad.

We arrived Saturday afternoon and headed right to the spillway. It was quite the scene: The concrete banks were lined with anglers every 15 feet or so. We quickly witnessed that this section of the Kaskaskia River holds muskies like most rivers hold bass. We saw close to 20 pulled from the water that day alone. It was a spectacle, to say the least.

We didn't have any luck this first session, but we chatted with fellow anglers and got some pointers. "I've caught 42 muskies here, not one of them on a muskie lure," one fisherman told us.

"They've all come on bass lures: crankbaits, rooster tails, stuff like that." This was good news for us, since we didn't have time to order muskie lures before our mad dash down south.

After a night of drinking, shooting pool and eating some good bar food at the Iron Keg (this became our nightly ritual), we got up early to try again on Sunday. There weren't as many people fishing as the day before, which gave us more freedom to



Shelbyville Dam and Spillway. Photo: <https://ilickr.com/photos/yodudedan/>

move around. We threw everything in our tackleboxes, hoping for a lucky bite, working each with different retrieves over dozens of casts. We decided to take a break after a few hours, retiring to eat and rest at the Shelby

Inn for a bit.

Before long, we were revived with the energy to try again, and headed back. Making the short walk from the parking lot to the shoreline, I realized that I'd forgotten my GoPro in the car. I'd recorded (and deleted) hours of footage up to that point without hooking into a muskie. I figured,

"Well, I probably won't catch one this trip anyway," and I was ready to be perfectly happy with getting nothing more than a relaxing weekend on the water.

The previous day, I had focused on using bigger baits, so I decided to work inline spinners during this session. I let them drop nearly to the bottom of the river before giving them a quick burst of energy. Then I slowed down and settled into different retrieves. I noticed other anglers using a "pumping"

We quickly witnessed that this section of the Kaskaskia River holds muskies like most rivers hold bass.



A 30-inch beauty caught on a size 2 Mepp's Aglia, 6' 6" medium Ugly Stik, Shimano Catana reel, and 15-pound-test braid attached to a 30-pound steel leader.

action while retrieving their lures, so I gave that a shot. Every few seconds, I would pause and let the lure flutter down, before lifting my rod a bit and beginning the retrieve again.

About 15 feet out from shore, I paused my retrieve, waited a second and pulled up on my rod... before getting jammed into a log. "Damn," I thought. "I must be in one of the snags out there."

Then, my line started slowly moving sideways. I reeled in and my drag began to sing. This was it! After about 12 hours of fishing that weekend, I was fighting my first muskie! I loosened my drag a bit further; I really didn't want to risk putting too much tension on the line and breaking off. I called for my dad to man the net as I played the fish, unleashed more than a few expletives as I watched the thrashing fish, its head breaching the surface as it tried to shake my lure.

My mind was blown; I had never fought a big fish with a mouth full of teeth before. I was lucky to hook it close to shore, or the fight may have been prolonged and put more stress on the fish. After a solid minute or two of contending with the beast, it was close enough to net.

We should have gotten a bigger net, because there were a few touchy moments where we almost lost the fish. At one point,

it powered its way completely out of the net and back into the swim. Thankfully, round two didn't last long, and I got the fish back to shore. Eventually, the catch was secured, and I was feeling electric.

"We did it! I can't believe we did it," I said to my dad as he handed me the pliers. The tiny lure was barely hanging on by one hook, planted in the underside of the muskie's jaw. I figure he was following it in, and when I pulled up on the rod, I hooked him. Either way, I was glad the unhooking process only took a couple seconds. I reached into the net, carefully grabbed under the gill plates and lifted my muskie for a few victorious pictures. I was in awe of the beautiful animal I had somehow pulled from the water, and grateful for the experience it gave me.

The fish stayed calm as I held it; at the rate muskies are caught here, there's a good chance this one already knew the routine. I then lowered it down into the water and it swam off instantly with a powerful flip of its tail, like the force of nature it was. **MWO**

Mark Plese is a conservationist and addicted angler based in Chicagoland. With fond memories of learning to fish from his grandfather, he now channels that passion into storytelling, capturing his fishing adventures through writing and on his YouTube channel, The Restless Fisherman.

www.arlingtonanglers.com



Multi-Species Fishing Club

Where Anglers of All Skill Levels are Welcome

- Monthly Meetings With:
 - Expert speakers
 - Member fishing reports
 - Door prizes & raffles
- Club Fishing Outings
- Community Outreach Events
- Family Picnic & Holiday Banquet
- Big Fish Contest

Meetings are Held the 3rd Tuesday each Month
6:30 p.m. at Poplar Creek Banquets
2354 W. Higgins Rd. • Hoffman Estates
For more info, contact Chris Popp 630-337-4520



NO PAYMENTS UNTIL JULY!

\$90,795



**LEAVE THE COMPETITION
IN YOUR WAKE**

Powered by the
Yamaha VF250XB,
F300XA

SKEETER'S **NEW** WXR2060F



LIMITED
LIFETIME
WARRANTY

- Limited Lifetime Standard Warranty
- 10-Year Limited Transferable Structural Warranty
- 3-Year Limited Compound Warranty



*Buy, **\$ave**, Fish.*

UP TO
\$4,000
INSTANT REBATE*

OR

5.49%
APR**
for 72 months

OR

6.49%
APR**
for 180 months

plus up to
\$1,000

eGift Card
(total of up to \$5,000 in value)

Show Specials!



YAMAHA

N.A.P.
\$99,995



**EVERYTHING YOU DEMAND
IN A BASS BOAT**

Powered by the
Yamaha
VF250LB

SKEETER'S **FXR21 LIMITED**



LIMITED
LIFETIME
WARRANTY

- Limited Lifetime Standard Warranty
- 10-Year Limited Transferable Structural Warranty
- 3-Year Limited Compound Warranty



530 S. Rand Road
Wauconda, IL 60084
847-526-2211

www.lakecountywatersports.com



CHICAGO

SPORTS NETWORK

Home of the Blackhawks, Bulls & White Sox



PREMIUM TV SERVICES

CHSN will be available across satellite, cable, and premium streaming platforms. We are working aggressively to secure deals with all platforms and will provide updates as they are available. Check back often for the latest list of distribution partners.

DIRECTV

Channel 665

WATCH ON DIRECTV

DIRECTV Stream

Channel 665

WATCH ON DIRECTV Stream

U-Verse

Channels 1741 (HD) and 741(SD)

WATCH ON U-Verse

Astound (formerly RCN)

Channels 685 and 576 (HD), Channels 370 and 371 (SD)

WATCH ON Astound

OVER-THE-AIR

CHSN is currently available on the following over-the-air channels. Simply install your digital antenna, scan for channels, and tune in to the channel closest to your home.

Chicago, IL: WJYS, 62.2 and 62.3

Rockford, IL: WSLN, 19.3 and 19.4

South Bend, IN: WNDU, 16.2 and 16.4

Coming Soon

Milwaukee, WI

Grand Rapids, MI

Des Moines, IA

Champaign/Springfield, IL

Paducah, KY

Cedar Rapids/Davenport, IA

Peoria, IL

Sioux City, IA

Quincy, IL

Indianapolis, IN

chsn.com

WATER WERKS

OPEN HOUSE

Sat, March 29 • Opens at 6 am

HOURS

6am - 5pm

**6am Kickoff
with
Chauncey's
ESPN Radio Show
LIVE
at Water Werks!**

**1% of All Sales
Donated to
No Limits Fishing**

See Water Werks website, Facebook and Instagram pages for additional event updates and schedule!

SEMINARS

- Humminbird & Minn Kota
- High School Fishing Team Programs
- U.S. Coast Guard: Safety Demo & Boat Inspections
- Lake Michigan Fishing & More!

MEET FACTORY REPS

- Johnson Outdoors
Lowe • Lund • Mercury**
- ADDITIONAL REPS FROM:**
- MidWest Outdoors
 - Chicago Adaptive Sports: No Limits Fishing
 - Shimano Sport • STIX Cigars
 - Tight Rope Fishing
 - Wild Dog Guide Service

18660 S. Cicero
Country Club Hills, IL 60478

(708) 798-9700

WATERWERKS.com



WHAT IS THE ISRA AND WHY SHOULD YOU BE PART OF IT?

The ISRA is affiliated with the NRA but we are formed as a state association long before our affiliation with the NRA. We were originally formed as an association to train civilian marksmen prior to the entry in the United States Army. The ISRA was actually formed in 1903 under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Army. It was known as the Department of Civilian Marksmanship.

The Illinois State Rifle Association is here to stop the anti-gunners BUT WE NEED YOUR HELP!



FOUNDED 1903

Our Second Amendment rights in the State of Illinois are under attack by the Governor and the State Legislature – and so long

as anti-gun Democrats control the levers of power both in Chicago and Springfield, law-abiding citizens like you and me will continue to be targeted and harassed.

The stakes couldn't be higher, and our opponents will not rest until they have taken away our rights and our firearms. And that's why we need you to join the Illinois State Rifle Association because there's strength in numbers.

As a member of one of the oldest and most respected gun organizations in the country, you'll receive amazing and unique benefits, including:

- Opportunities to attend engaging and well-attended town hall meetings in your area.
- Receive a digital copy of a widely read quarterly publication, the Illinois Shooter.
- Receive up-to-date notifications about ISRA events, including a weekly bulletin.
- Receive notifications on political activities in Springfield, including legislative updates and action alerts on issues that affect gun owners.
- Assistance with your CCL and FOID application or renewal.
- Discounts on ISRA Academy classes and training.

Rest assured, the ISRA will not back down until our right to bear arms is restored in Illinois. And we will continue our fight in the media and oppose any legislation that targets legal gun owners. But, that's not all. We're also leading the charge as a named plaintiff on two cases and playing a supporting role in an additional five more – totaling 7 cases dealing with constitutional issues and on behalf of law-abiding gun owners in Illinois.

Again, the stakes couldn't be higher and it's why we need your support. Please join the ISRA! Visit us at: isra.org.

ISRA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Date: _____ New Renewal #: _____

Name: Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ County _____

Date of Birth: _____ Email: _____ Occupation: _____

Want ISRA emails? Yes No Are you a registered voter? Yes No Are you an NRA member? Yes No

MEMBER TYPE:

AMERICAN HERO*:

- 1 year \$30
- 2 years \$55
- 3 years \$80
- American Hero Lifetime \$550

INDIVIDUAL:

- 1 year \$35
- 2 years \$65
- 3 years \$90
- Lifetime \$700

EXPAND TO FAMILY:

- per year \$20

OTHER OPTIONS:

- Junior (<19) \$20/year
- Senior Lifetime \$400

Name: _____

Spouse's Name: _____ D.O.B. _____ / _____ / _____

Child 1: _____ D.O.B. _____ / _____ / _____

Child 2: _____ D.O.B. _____ / _____ / _____

Child 3: _____ D.O.B. _____ / _____ / _____

DONATIONS \$ _____

*AMERICAN HERO refers to any active or retired military, Law Enforcement, and any "First Responders."

• For lifetime memberships ISRA offers an "Easy Pay" option, which is \$100 down, then monthly payments of \$50 until paid in full. This is available for Lifetime, Senior Lifetime, Endowment, Patron, or Benefactor membership

• Other donor/membership levels are available. Contact office for more details.

PAYMENT INFORMATION

(check one)
 Cash _____ Check/MO _____ MC _____ Visa _____ Amex _____ Disc _____

Card #: _____ CVV: _____ Exp. Date _____

Name on Card (please print) _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Mail completed application to:
 ISRA Range, PO Box 637, Chatsworth, IL 60921
Or fax completed application to:
 815-635-3723 (credit card orders only)
 Join online at: isra.org/join-us/
 Questions? Email: member@isra.org or call us at 815-635-3198

Illinois State Rifle Association/ISRA Range Membership Application
 This form is for NEW Range Memberships only. Contact the ISRA office for ISRA Membership renewals.



Late ice

It's been a long winter, but that's nothing new. I still hope to squeeze in a day or two ice fishing. I usually make it to early March, and then wait for a bit warmer weather. The ice can be iffy now, so if you venture out on the hard water, test it by drilling a few holes on the way to your honey hole.

The best day I ever had ice fishing was one day in February 2024. It was a warm day, and I fished from shore in a patch of open water. I had no hopes of catching anything, but the crappies went crazy over my minnows. A buddy and I caught 48 nice ones. Not slab crappies, but in the 10- to 11-inch range. I always consider a crappie of 12 inches or more, a slab.

A reminder that the Illinois spring trout season will open in April. We always look forward to that. We like the lake in the park at Rock Falls, Ill.

Run, son, run

Our son, Lance, loves to run. He lives in St. Louis and there are lots of bike and running trails. Unless there is really bad weather, he's out there getting plenty of exercise. He is never surprised at the different animals he sees while running. They are mostly armadillos, frogs and various species of snakes. He also encounters spiders and snakes at his job as manager of a plant nursery. Sometimes he helps the semi driver and/or his employees empty the truck of plants. It happens a fair amount of time, so they are always on guard for something to slither out of a potted plant. He has a pet corn

snake. They are beautiful in color and design, and they're not venomous.

Animal groups

People have come up with some interesting ways of referring to groups of various animals. Here are some that you may not have heard before:

A streak of tigers; a gaze of raccoons; a hover of trout; a bevy of quails; and a romp of otters.

Danger from bugs

Not all insects or pesky little crawlers are dangerous to us humans. However, some insect stings kill from 50 to 100 Americans every year. The black widow spider's venom is more powerful than that of a cobra. Hard to believe, but mosquitoes cause more deaths than any other creature. They can carry deadly diseases like malaria and kill more than a million people every year.

Do fish sleep?

We think fish sleep, but since they have no eyelids, it's hard to know if they are dozing off, or ready to take your bait.

Body language tells all

The next time you're in Chile don't pound your left palm with your right fist. It is considered vulgar. Gee, and I do that all the time!

When you are in Quebec and you're talking with someone in person, keep your hands where they can be seen. Talking with

your hands in your pockets is considered rude.

Lastly, the next time you're feeling sleepy in Ecuador, do not yawn in public. It's tacky to do so.

Nice spiders

Our daughter would disagree on those two words. She and most others have little love for spiders and jumpers. But spiders and jumpers are among the best creatures at getting rid of harmful bugs. Back in 2017, The Science of Nature published a paper that states that European biologists estimated the worldwide spider population consumes 400 to 800 million metric tons of prey a year. A huge number of disease-carrying insects and agricultural pests are removed from the environment by our eight-legged little friends. Think about it the next time you're outdoors and want to step on a spider. Leave it alone. It's the balance of nature at work.

March

What to look for this month! While some robins stayed around during the winter months, in early March they and bluebirds start to return.

I'm not a big fan of daylight saving time, but it's here on Sunday, March 9, 2025.

Mark your calendar or smart phone for Friday, March 14, 2025. That is when there will be a total lunar eclipse.

Lastly, on Thursday, March 20, 2025, you can put away your winter clothes, as that is the date of the vernal equinox, which signals the first day of spring.

Humor

Our good son, Lance, sent me these humorous anecdotes:

- I'm reading a horror story in braille. Something bad is going to happen; I can feel it.
- Why do they say, "Amen" instead of "A-women" at the end of songs at church? Because they are "hymns."

• There are three rings in a marriage: The engagement ring, the wedding ring, and the suffer-ring.

* How do you know Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz was a good actress? Because she brought the house down!

• Lorna: "Would you care to join me in a cup of tea?" Dan: "I don't think there is enough room for both of us."

Quote of the month

"Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate."

—John F. Kennedy
MWO

Dan Dauw writes outdoor columns for two local newspapers and MidWest Outdoors. He first became a writer while in the U.S. Navy, writing articles for his ship newspaper. He has been an avid hunter and angler for most of his 76 years. Dauw retired from the U.S. Postal Service in 2000.

Share your bright idea!

Have you got a favorite fishing, hunting, camping or outdoors tip?
SHARE IT WITH US.
If we decide to use it in our column, we'll send you a useful thank you gift.

Email your tips to:
info@midwestoutdoors.com

Please be sure to include your name and mailing address where we can send your prize. Prizes will not be sent until/unless your tip is chosen for publication.

WATCH PURSUITUP FOR FREE

SCAN HERE TO FIND OUT HOW

Trees Make Great Additions to Your Food Plots

by Don Gasaway

Planting trees is not new, but it is an underutilized tool for attracting and possibly changing whitetail movement patterns on hunting properties.

Fruit orchards are forms of habitat management. Tree orchards require a level of skill and stewardship. By knowing when fruit trees drop their fruit, we can know the time when deer will use those areas. But they are subject to crop failures and may not produce fruit every year.

Spring is the best time to plant trees in your food plot. Summer is often too hot, and the dried ground holds off the water needed by young tree roots. In fall, the roots may dry up or freeze up before they have a chance to get enough moisture to live.

Moisture is vital to the health of planted tree roots. Once in the ground, it is important to water it well until the roots take hold.

In addition, the selection is better at nurseries in spring. You can select the healthiest trees, and you have a wider variety of species available. As a rule, plants come with roots in either a container, ball, or bale. Usually, the latter two.

You cannot hunt deer over bait in many states, but you can hunt them in tree orchards.

Once deer become attracted to permanent food sources like an orchard, they return to it repeatedly over time. Young deer learn the location from their mothers and remember the location. This behavior is passed from one generation to another.

Deer sometimes move seasonally from one home range to another. It usually happens because there is something missing in the habitat. It can also be because of intensive hunting pressure. The more diverse the habitat, the less likely the deer will move seasonally. A deer's home range can vary from 100 to 3,000 acres.

Home range size can be determined by sex and age of the deer, seasons of the year, and the location of the property. As a rule, the better the quality of the habitat, the smaller the range. With higher deer density, the size of the home range is smaller.



In addition to providing great family outings in spring, it is a great time for planting food plots. They do not provide immediate forage but are good for the future of the plants. Deer love soft mast trees and the fruit that falls from them.
Photo: Pixels

A food plot that has thermal cover and a variety of food sources for year-round living might minimize seasonal movement of deer. They need both lower and upper story cover.

Habitat development does not have any effect on young bucks' dispersal, such as moving away as they mature. Herd social structure drives their behavior.

If a food source is located just outside the deer's core area, they will shift their core area to use that food resource. If the food source is located within their core area, it does not affect the core area. It might get smaller around something like a feeder.

If multiple sources of high-quality complex food sources are present in their home range, deer will either expand the size of the core area or set up core areas around each of those sources and use them at different times.

Tree orchards are perfectly suited for small acreage. If you have a small, attractive food plot, deer are going to devour it. Productivity of that plot is going to go down as it gets more use. When you need it most, it may not be very productive for you.

Browsing deer will damage young trees, but it is not that costly to protect them with wire fence cages or tree tubes. Eventually, they will grow out of the reach of deer and

their browsing will no longer damage them.

Once these trees mature and start producing, it does not matter how much deer use them. Deer eating fruit does not have any effect on future productivity.

Having established the need for soft mast as part of deer management on your land, it becomes time to start planting.

How can you enfold tree plantings with your food plot program?

Deer orchards are cheaper to install and maintain over the long haul compared to other food plots. They do not require maintaining. There is a lot of work up front, but you do not have to plow the ground year after year. Once you put them in, that is your major investment in time.

The first couple of years, you need to release them from grass complications. Grass competes for water and soil nutrition. Later, you may need to provide some fertilization. But maintenance is low.

Some people plant an orchard and walk away from it. Those orchards are seldom successful. It is a commitment once you put in an orchard. This is especially so for the first 2 to 3 years. You still must water some during drought periods.

The amount of food that is available on the ground at any given time determines

when deer come and use it. Particularly mature bucks. They are more likely to come and eat from a small bait pile during the day than from a large one, according to a Michigan State study." The probable reason is that a large bait pile, where there is plenty of food, teaches them there is plenty of food and they can come back after dark. With a small bait pile, if they wait, does and other wildlife will come and eat the food. When the bucks get there at night, it is all gone.

The same applies to orchards. If you have trees that drop a lot of fruit over a short period, deer are going to feed nocturnally. If you have something that drops a little bit of fruit over a long time, then they are going to check it more frequently.

Large orchards put too much fruit on the ground at one time and are harder to hunt. With small orchards, you know where to look for deer to appear. It is easier to get a feel for their travel patterns from bedding cover to the food source. With a larger orchard, they have too many options.

By isolating trees, you cut down on the possibility of tree diseases transferring from tree to tree.

How does a tree orchard affect deer nutrition? Most people think that dietary protein is the most important element in a deer's diet. It is important, but the truth is that they use more dietary energy than anything else except water. Dietary energy is particularly important in summer and fall. They need enough reserves to get them through the winter. By planting a fibrous food source, you help them get dietary energy to get through those times of the year.

Bourse (roughage) takes 14 to 19 hours to digest in a deer and does not provide dietary energy. But if they have access to high-energy food sources like acorns or fruits to help buffer the effect of the roughage, it speeds up digestion so they can eat more food. They can eat more of these high-energy foods and better meet their energy needs over time.

Natural oak stands are typically not consistent producers of acorns. You can improve production by having multiple species of oak. Still, during poor acorn years, the deer still have a difficult time getting enough quality food to overcome the effects of low-quality browse.

The acorn production can vary from one pound per acre to 800 pounds per acre. You need from 90 to 108 pounds of acorns per acre per deer. Deer will continually search for acorns even after all the viable ones are gone.

The time to have supplemental fruit forage is when they are searching for acorns. The most valued use of a tree orchard is to complement other food management practices.

Take an inventory of high-energy food sources on your property. With places like oat fields and clear cuts, consider sources like food trees, berries and high-quality fruits. Consider all this food and identify times of the year when there is a nutritional gap. Consider using tree orchards to fill the nutritional gaps. Even if you do not find obvious gaps, it still may be just what will lure that big buck out of the brush and give you a shot at him.

Your local nursery can supply some of the domestic varieties available. Select ones to fit the time requirement gaps in your nutritional needs. There are varieties that produce fruit, early, middle, or late. Select trees that spread out food availability.

Do your homework and make sure these varieties will do well in your climate and area.

MWO

Don Gasaway is a freelance outdoor writer from Marion, Ill. who has written more than 1,000 magazine articles. Find him on Facebook at: [facebook.com/donsjournal](https://www.facebook.com/donsjournal). Comments and reviews are welcome.



Our Readers Write

This is my first season trapping, so my boys and I are learning a lot about it together. My grandfather trapped along the Fox river in Yorkville, Ill., and though I never trapped with him. I saved some of his old traps when he died; those are the ones we are using. We got this beaver with a 330 conibear set through the ice. My boys came with me when we set the trap, and my oldest son, Amos, was the first to notice the support stick was moved when we all went to check the traps. So far, I've gotten two muskrats, but this was our first beaver. My goal, if I can get enough pelts, is to self-tan them all and make a hat for myself and each of the kids. It's been great fun for us to run the traps together.

Victor Epperson
Waterman, Illinois



Pre-spawn Walleye and Sauger Action on the Illinois River

by Phil Trager

Biologists have a way of coordinating moon phase with latitude and longitude of a location to determine the time of the most active, pre-spawn bite. When water temps between 35 and 45 degrees coincide with the right moon phases in north-central Illinois, there's a long history (approximately 40 years) of good spring angling on the Illinois River. In 2025, the projection is for March 21 and 22. While anticipating a really good sauger bite, the Master's Walleye Circuit is scheduling its opening event at Spring Valley, Ill. It is the first of six qualifier events, rounding out the season with two Championship Events.

Current in the river has long been a guiding feature in locating biting fish for this event. Channel edges are fished, expecting those edges to be road map/paths for sauger swimming upstream in search of current to wash their eggs and place them in position for fertilization. When nature signals, fish move from channel edges into the shallow, sand/rock areas near shore. Depths may be less than 4 feet and on the shallow side of the first drop from shore.

Locating fish

Locating fish is a large part of all fishing, be it tournament or recreational fishing. The use of sonar, especially forward facing, may indicate specific pods of fish along the general path. The idea is to fish an area only if fish are located.

Another option to help locate sauger is to set out numerous lines and troll areas that may have fish traveling through them. The number of trolling presentations is unlimited. Fishermen create all sorts of combinations for trolling lures or baits near bottom. Saugers are often within 2 to 8 inches of bottom. Targeting this depth is a likely beginning point to catch them.

Trolling combinations

One way to fish lures near bottom is with the use of leadcore line. The internally weighted line serves as a "sinker." Let out enough line while trolling so a crankbait such as a Shad Rap or Flicker Shad sporadically ticks bottom. Trolling 85 feet of line at a speed of 1 mph is a starting point in 12 feet of water. While moving through the water, up and down slopes, adjust the amount of the line out to barely touch bottom with trolled crankbaits. Once bottom contact is established, you can cover large amounts of water with this approach. Sauger in the Illinois River respond well to this presentation, especially when water is at

normal pool in depth and clarity.

If the water happens to be slightly dirty due to rains and/or swollen from melting snow, fishing with live bait or "meat" may work best to entice bites. The use of walleye scent often helps during spring fishing. Berkley has led the way in providing walleye scent applied to all presentations—live or artificial.

Live bait is presented near bottom by using a bell sinker, pencil sinker, surgical tubing with a sinker plugged in, and even a lead head jig at times. These are tied on to a 6-inch dropper tied to a 3-way swivel. Another 24-inch leader has a Phelps, VMC or other type of floating jig tied on. A hook and a bead are another option, as is a plain #4 walleye hook. Inline floaters are also available with the hook separate from the float to produce a slightly different profile. Add a large flathead, golden roach, shiner or creek chub minnow on the hook to inspire bites. Once again, consider adding scent to all offerings.

You can also use two barrel swivels to create a 3-way effect. Simply slide one on your line, thread on a couple small beads for spacing, and tie on a second barrel swivel. To this second swivel, tie on an approximately 24-inch bait leader. To the first (sliding) swivel, tie a leader and weight to get the offering to bottom. The advantage to this rig is that the sinker/weight is not as obvious to fish. When they hit, the live bait moves more freely than if attached to a fixed line to the sinker. It may give sauger a longer hold time, or even encourage them to swim off with the bait. The bait may be sucked in with more authority, which can better penetrate the jaw on the hookset.

In the case of substituting a heavy jig for the sinker—aka a Dubuque rig—add minnows and/or plastics to the hook. Shad work very well, too.

Both trolling crankbaits using lead core as a sinker, as well as pulling floaters or various hook/dressing combination, can be productive and fun. Use of planer boards allow spacing of trolling presentations to help target various, accentuated changes in depth. One board may target the first drop offshore, say at 3 feet; the next may target the 9-foot depth range; and the next 12 to 15 feet. Covering lots of water and catching scattered fish is all part of the adventure and fun of chasing very active, spring fish on the river.

Jigging while slipping

Another fun and popular method of chasing sauger in the spring involves use of lead head jigs. You want to use a jig light enough to reach bottom and that, when lifted, "swims" along at the speed of the boat.

The lift is usually just 4 inches or less once bottom is found. The jig is lifted and allowed to swim a lateral foot and set back down. Hits may occur as the jig is swimming or when set back down to ensure it being close to bottom. Sauger may try to trap the offering on bottom from time to time.

A 3/8-ounce jig in a bullet shape head, or an Odd'ball jig with a short shank hook, may garner hits. Jig fishing is dependent upon the boat slipping downstream at the speed of the current, setting the jig down and lifting it back up as it touches bottom. The faster the current, the faster the process. Jigs must be heavy enough to control; as the current gets faster, the jig needs to be heavy enough to produce results. Speed of current pretty much equals the speed of presentation. Fish see the bait coming at them naturally, with the current, and hit.

Jigs must be heavy enough to remain near bottom and handled with the rod to produce

a smooth, life-like swimming motion, at or near bottom. Attach a stinger hook to hook short strikers. Boat can be anchored in, hovered above, or moved through key areas.

Brood fish

March is when sauger eggs are collected for the hatchery. There is an infinite demand for gamefish in the waters of Illinois. Sauger do very well in the Illinois River, and the DNR does championship work throughout. Tax dollars are wisely spent, and good things come to the fisheries of Illinois. DNR is often present on the shore during tournament weigh-ins. Fishermen have time to talk and, possibly, help them. **MWO**

Phil Trager is an avid Illinois River angler who enjoys as many as 300 days on the water. Along with the help of local experts, Trager has created maps of the Illinois River from Marseilles to Henry.

We Sell & Buy Vintage Lures & Tackle

FREE APPRAISALS



Check Out The Vault!

This is where we keep the rarest and more antique fishing lures you will find on our site. You can expect to see old Heddon, Creek Chub, Pflueger, Shakespeare, Paw Paw, South Bend and more baits and lures.

SAVE 10%
on your first order
Use Code MWO



25 Vintage Fishing Lures Worth A Fortune



Scan Code to read now or visit our website



Fox Valley Anglers All Species Fishing Club



Club meeting is March 25th with guest speaker William Heim, William is an avid fisherman who fishes Lake Geneva and many other lakes in the area. He will be specifically talking about Crappie fishing. Garmin Livescope Raffle on our website

Guest entry is \$5 at the door. Door Prizes and raffles will be available.

Tournaments, Week Day Outings, weekend outings and more. Monthly Meetings on 4th Tuesday of the month at Tap House Grill 3341 W Main St., St. Charles, IL 60175 Come listen to our speaker and drill for questions.



For more info visit foxvalleyanglers.com

Follow



on our Socials



youtube.com/MidWestOutdoorsTV



MidWestOutdoorsUSA



twitter.com/MWOOutdoorsUSA



facebook.com/MidWestOutdoorsUSA



The Outdoor Connection

Chauncey Niziol

Wow, what was that in February? From 50 degrees to 11 degrees, and solid ice to open water on the same lake. People in Wisconsin driving their ATVs, trucks, cars and side-by-sides and going through the ice, and people in Illinois dropping their ATVs, side-by-sides and themselves going through the ice with safe ice a few feet away!

I don't know about you, but I want open water and lots of fishing going on. So, let's talk about what we can do in March to catch more fish and get rid of *cabin fever*! Spring is coming in less than 20 days, and so goes the ice. We will all feel better, I hope.

Lake Michigan (Chicago/Indiana)

The ice is usually gone in mid- to late March. Anglers will start fishing off the piers

in the harbors for perch, and casting for trout outside of Montrose, Belmont Harbor and 87th Street. At Belmont Harbor, trout are a few feet under the surface, while perch are on the bottom.

If you're looking to catch a perch dinner the 87th Street Slip early in the morning, your best bet is using minnows on the bottom or a strip of squid. But that will change later in the month.

Wolf Lake

The Maizo Corn Channel should be yielding walleyes at night on slip floats dressed with roaches, and a few on nightcrawlers. Let the bait do the work; just watch the bobber or the rod tip. Crappies should still be found close to shore as far

NATIVE AMERICAN PROVERB

I leave you with this Native American Proverb from my friend, Apensuie Majawatt

*A father is important to be in the life of a child,
You teach them to be strong, and wise,
But a smart father lets his children teach him
strength, wisdom and understanding.*

Remember we don't own the woods, the rain, the forest or the fish we catch. We are only borrowing them from our children's children. Take care of the great outdoors. It's the only one we have, and the only one they will have.

up the channel as you can go. The water is warmer here and will draw all fish. Just like you during winter, you like being warmer in your house, so fish will look for the warmest water they can fins for warmth and food.

Lake Michigan (Waukegan/Winthrop Harbor)

Anglers fishing off the South Rocks and Johnson Pier will start finding brown trout numbers increasing as the weather improves and the ice clears. Coho action will start to improve as soon as water opens up. Boaters will be picking them up very close to shore, near the beach. Power liners fishing off the rocks in Waukegan will take a few now, but more later in the month. Lake shiners fished from 2 to 6 feet off the bottom with a stinger hook take the most brown trout. Some charter boats are already in the water in mid-March and looking for early-season coho.

Cook County Forest Preserves

Tampier Lake: When the ice melts and the water opens up, anglers will find good crappie fishing on the west end of the lake and off 131st Street, using small minnows.

Saganashkee Slough: Open-water anglers find bluegills and yellow bass near the dam. Early-season catfish can be taken from the creek mouth in the northeast corner of the lake after a rain later in the month.

Busse: Anglers are finding the most active fish using minnows, fishing below the main dam near the warm-water discharge.

Skokie lagoons: Could be a hot spot this year. Cats, bass, 'gills, and walleye will all be taken later in the month.

Chain O' Lakes

Crappies will start to become active in the

protected bays, backwaters and creek mouths. Creek mouths will be the best later in the month as the water warms up a little. Small jigs and minnows under a slip float can entice a few strikes until more fish move into these areas, looking for warmer water. Walleyes have been slow but could improve with better weather. Muskie anglers are already looking for big, toothy fish but the action is spotty. Look to the north sides of creeks, bays and coves, and on lakes with dark bottoms. Action will be better later in the month.

Kankakee River

I'm expecting the river to be still low and clear until we start getting more rain; then it will turn muddy. Walleye anglers in Illinois are trying east of Momence and below the Kankakee and Wilmington Dams. Go with a minnow, Mister Twister Keeper Hook, and a twister tail. Northern pike seem to hang around the state line, Aroma Park and in backwaters on the north side of the river. A large minnow or spinner are still your better choices. Crappie are normally found at the mouths of ditches and bayous, using pinkie jigs or minnows, even in the cold.

Fox River

The secret in fishing the Fox in the winter is to fish the warmwater outflows from pipes that are dumping water from storm drains or water treatment plants. The water below the pipes is warmer and draws fish like a magnet. Small walleyes are hitting minnows on a single hook with a split shot set 18 inches above the hook, just outside of these current areas. The longer you keep your bait close to the edge of the current below the dams, the more action you should see. Very light fishing pressure has been noted, again due to the poor weather. Feeder creeks flowing into the river could be good locations to try.

Shabbona

With only minimal fishing pressure in early March and the weather improving, we may find later in the month a better time to fish the north shoreline and northeast cove.

Illinois River

Sauger are active in mid-month, with most being taken by vertically jugging a minnow and making bottom contact. Below Starved Rock Dam, shore anglers and boaters took a few white bass and stripers.

Rock River

Water levels are fair to good, and many walleyes are being drawn to and taken below the Oregon Dam on minnows and minnow imitators. But if we get a lot of warm weather, we might see the river rise quickly due to runoff into the river. This will slow all action until it starts to drop again. **MWO**

Chauncey Niziol has been part of the outdoor world since he was four. For more than 30 years, he has communicated his love of the outdoors through MidWest Outdoors magazine and television shows, appearances on other programs, and his own radio program on ESPN Radio AM 1000. He is also a member of the Illinois Outdoor Hall of Fame. Check out his website, Chaunceysgreatoutdoors.com, or Facebook/chaunceysgreatoutdoors to watch his weekly video fishing reports.

Become a

MIDWEST OUTDOORS Insider




Each week you'll receive timely info from MWO on where to go, what to use, and how to use it!

FREE sign-up at
MidWestOutdoors.com/Insider

(We never give your email address to third-party companies)

Chauncey's Great Outdoors




Listen In
Every Saturday Morning
From 6 AM to 7 AM


Be part of the **Chauncey's Great Outdoors** family and follow Chauncey into the Great Outdoors every week.

This is the Midwest's most listened to Broadcast and Podcast Outdoor Radio Show covering fishing, camping, hunting, boating, hiking, napping in a hammock and more!
Go to Chaunceysgreatoutdoors.com and click on the Podcast Button

Like us on Facebook at "Facebook/chaunceysgreatoutdoors" and receive a weekly video fishing report and more.



LIKE US ON
facebook





Fox Chain Report

Phil Piscitello

March is transition time on the Fox Chain, coming out of ice fishing and into open water. The weather is slowing getting warmer and anglers are champing at the bit to get back on the water again.

March is walleye time. Walleyes start moving out of their wintering holes and head up on shallow flats to feed, and later to spawn. The Fox River below the McHenry dam is a great area to target in March. Right below the dam, vertically jig the holes with jig and minnow combinations. As walleyes start to move out of the holes, cast jig-and-minnow or jig-and-soft-plastic combinations.

The McHenry dam is a great spring spot on the river, but it is not the only spot. As you head downriver, river bends have deeper holes which hold walleyes. Move from hole to hole in the early season. As the water warms, target the shallow flats adjacent to deeper holes. Bridge abutments are great current breaks that hold resting and feeding walleyes as well.

Use several presentations to fish the flats effectively and efficiently. Vertical jigging while drifting with the current is popular and deadly. You can also pull live bait or three-way rigs against the current, showing the fish a totally different presentation coming from a different direction. Trolling crankbaits across flats is another way to cover water and find active fish.

If you like to troll, several crankbait brands are highly effective on the Fox Chain; #4 and 5 Rapala Shad Raps, #4 and 5 Berkley Flicker Shads, and #4 Salmo Hornets are some of the best choices. Carry a variety of colors as color preference can change on a day-to-day basis, or even hour-to-hour.

The upper Fox River North of Grass Lake is also good for early-season walleyes. Initially, fish river bends and holes, and then flats as the water warms. Troll crankbaits upriver; when you locate fish, switch up presentations and vertical jig or cast jigs and crankbaits. The 173 bridge is another great area on the upper Fox River. Vertical jig or cast around the bridge abutments and surrounding area.

The lakes on the Fox Chain are also good for early-season walleyes. Lake Marie has great walleye habitat, with several main-lake points and bars with gravel flats, weeds, and plenty of deep water. Petite, Fox and Pistakee are also good.

You will find walleyes a little deeper, early

in the month; 10 to 15 feet off main-lake points and bars is a good starting point. As the water warms, they move up on gravel flats to feed and then to spawn.

Jig or pull live bait rigs along the breaks and up on the flats. When the fish move up on the flats, long-line live bait rigs, or cast jigs and or crankbaits. The fish can move extremely shallow at this time of year. Casting light jigs can be very effective on a 7-foot or longer, medium-light spinning rod.

You can also cast crankbaits into very shallow water. #4 Rapala Shad Raps and Berkley Flicker Shads, small Rapala Husky Jerks, and Shallow Shad Raps are great choices.

On Fox Lake, Mineola Bay and Fairmont Shores are good areas. On Pistakee, Pistakee Bay, Coon Island Flats, and the Route 12 Bridge/Nippersink Creek area hold early-season walleyes. Petite Lake has several gravel bars and points that hold walleye, too.

This is a great time of year for catching a bunch of males for the dinner table. Plus, you have an excellent shot at catching a big fish; 11-pound-plus giants are caught at this time every year.

March is also an excellent time for crappie fishing. Crappies provide great action and taste great on the table. The Fox Chain has an excellent population of both black and white crappies; 8- to 12-inch crappies are the perfect size for eating. Crappies up to 18 inches are present in the Fox Chain. I highly recommend releasing the larger crappies because they are a special fish, and catching a trophy-class crappie would be a thrill for anyone. Releasing larger fish also helps maintain a trophy-class population.

If we have a cool spring, a lot of the crappies can still be in a little deeper water. Deep weed lines or the first drop-offs outside flats can be productive. As the water warms and the sun heats the shallows, a lot of fish move into shallow weeds in bays, or into some of the channels around the Chain. North-side bays and channels with southern exposure to the sun heat up first. Wooden docks, fallen timber, and wooden seawalls provide warmth and attract crappies.

Most of the lakes on the Chain have channels that attract crappies in spring. Finding good cover in the channels is key to finding fish. Float or bobber fishing is a productive and fun way to catch crappies. Pitch your bobber to different cover options



An early-season, slab black crappie caught by Steve Haig with a jig and soft plastic suspended below a slip bobber.

and work your way through the channel. Keep moving until you locate active fish. Then anchor up and catch a bunch.

A 4- to 9-foot, light-action rod is ideal for crappie fishing. Pair it with a small spinning reel loaded with 4-pound monofilament line. You rarely need to go heavier than 4-pound-test unless you get into heavy cover situations. Then step up to 6-pound. You get a lot more bites with lighter line. Crappies can be very line shy at times.

There are a variety of good baits to use on the Fox Chain below your bobber. Day-in and day-out, a fathead minnow baited on a gold hook is tough to beat. Crappies love minnows—especially the bigger fish.

Jigs are always good, and there are a lot of options. The Original Pinky Jig is a classic that catches lots of nice-sized crappies. Bait your jig with a fathead minnow. Also try a Cubby Mini Mite, a classic crappie tube jig, a jig with a 1-inch Berkley Gulp Alive Minnow, or jigs with different-shaped soft plastics. Add a waxworm on your jig for added attraction, scent and flavor. Jigs used for ice fishing, baited with a waxworm, also work great.

Some local baits are also good and are carried in bait shops around the Chain. Bluegill Chuck makes a huge selection of soft plastics and small jigheads. Used with or without live bait, Chuck's baits are deadly on crappies and all other panfish.

If you like to cast, Road Runner jigs, Beetle Spins, or a generic jig spinner clipped on to any favorite jig can be effective. Once you find a bunch of fish by casting, switch to a bobber presentation to catch a bunch more fish.

For a great selection of live bait and tackle, check out Triangle Bait Shop in Antioch. Greg has everything you need to fish the Fox Chain and usually has good, up-to-date fishing reports.

So, this month, get out on the Fox Chain and welcome in the start of the open-water season. Catch a bunch of crappies and walleyes, and bring a kid or introduce someone new to fishing. **MWO**

Phil Piscitello has 45 years of experience as a multispecies angler on ice and open water. He is a fishing guide, master charter captain and seminar speaker guiding in northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin. Piscitello is also a regular guest on Chauncey's Great Outdoors radio show and MidWest Outdoors TV show. He has fished all five Great Lakes and many major rivers, lakes, and reservoirs throughout the Midwest.

Leaders in Bait & Tackle Since 1948

TRIANGLE

Sports & Marine

**23480 W. Grass Lake Rd.
Antioch, IL 60002
www.trianglesports.biz**

847-395-0813

*Chain O' Lakes' Largest and
Best-Equipped Bait & Tackle Store!*

**Muskie Suckers • Fatheads
• Large & Small Shiners
Roaches • Crawlers • Spikes
Mousies • Leeches • Chubs
Crawfish • Wax Worms**

Bulk Quantities Available!

**Chain O' Lakes – Loon – Deep
Southern Wisconsin Fishing Info**



An early-spring walleye caught using a three-way rig with a minnow.

THEY PROTECT US.

**Every day. Every night.
And they need your support.**

Inspire leadership, learning and a legacy of service by supporting the brave men and women of the United States Coast Guard through the Coast Guard Foundation.

To learn how you can help, call (860) 535-0786 or visit our website at www.coastguardfoundation.org

ASK ABOUT OUR BOAT DONATION PROGRAM

Illinois Sportsman's Calendar

Sponsored by:



ChevyDrivesChicago.com

CHICAGOLAND & NORTHWEST INDIANA CHEVY DEALERS

FISHING CLUB INFORMATION

• **The Arlington Anglers** is a multi-species fishing club focused on education, fun, and camaraderie. All skill levels are welcome. We meet at Poplar Creek Banquets 2354 W. Higgins Rd. in Hoffman Estates the third Tuesday of the month at 6:30. Meetings feature expert speakers, fishing reports, door prizes, and raffles. Non-member fee \$8. Club activities include a variety of fishing outings, community outreach events, a picnic, and year end banquet. Family membership is \$40. For more info: visit arlingtonanglers.com or call President Chris Popp at 630-337-4520.

• **Anglers Unlimited of Lake County, Ill.** meets the first Wednesday of every month at the American Legion Hall, 111 E. Main St., Round Lake, Ill. at 7:30 p.m. We are a bass fishing club. Annual dues are only \$35. For more info: contact Club President Patrick Burke, 224-805-1578, or visit anglers-unlimited.com and check out our tournament schedule.

• **Bent Rods Bass Club Tournaments** are for guys or gals that love bass fishing and want to have fun in laid back, low-pressure tournaments. We allow any size boat, canoe, kayak or float tube, but we limit the propulsion to electric trolling motors, rowing or flippers. We also use a catch photo release system, so no livewell needed. For more info: bentrods.org.

• **Blackhawk Bassmasters:** We are an Illinois BASS Nation club based out of Northbrook, Ill. We fish Illinois and Wisconsin waters. Each year we send a club team to the IL BASS Nation State Team Qualifier as the first step towards a chance at the Bassmaster Classic. For info: contact us at blackhawkbassmasters@gmail.com.

• **The Chicagoland Muskie Hunters** meet the second Tuesday of each month at North Branch Pizza & Burger Company located at 4520 W. Lake Street in Glenview, IL. Meetings begin at 7:30 p.m., and feature seminars by top guides, member fishing reports, conservation/stocking reports, and much more. Admission is free, and all are welcome. For more info: contact Jim Cejna at (630) 370-5509, or email membership@chicagolandmuskiehunters.org, or visit chicagolandmuskiehunters.org, facebook.com/chicagolandmuskiehunters.

• **The DesPlaines Lunkebusters Fishing Club** meets the second Tuesday most months at the Des Plaines Public Library, 1501 Ellinwood St., Des Plaines, Illinois at 7 p.m. The club features monthly speakers and numerous local outings. Guests are free, so come check us out. Annual dues are \$25. For more info: Jeff Berg (630) 629-5681 or John Flannery (630) 690-0382.

• **The DuPage Rivers Fly Tyers (DRIFT)** meets almost every Tuesday night, September through May, at 7 p.m. at the College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn. Guests are always welcome. For more info: visit drift.org.

• **Fish Tales Fishing Club** meetings are held on the 3rd Thursday of the month at the Worth Township Offices, 11601 S. Pulaski Rd., Alsip, Ill., at 7 p.m. Guest fee is \$5, which is applicable to the annual membership fee of \$50. We are a non-competitive multi-species fishing club. For more info: visit fishtalesfishingclub.com.

• **Fox River Valley Hunting Retriever Club (FRVHRC)**, located in the N.W. Chicagoland area. FRVHRC is a family oriented organization founded by hunting enthusiasts. Meetings are the 2nd Wednesday of the month and regular training sessions are scheduled. For more info: Joe Scarpio 708-341-2576 or Joe@HuntEmUp.com.

• **Fox Valley Anglers** is a multi-species social fishing club where all skills levels are welcome. Our monthly club meetings starts at 7 p.m. on the 4th Tuesday of every month at Tap House Grill, 3341 W. Main St., St. Charles, IL. Anglers can come at 6 p.m. to have dinner, drinks and social before the meeting starts. Our meetings will have a premium speaker for an hour to discuss about the upcoming fishing season. Afterwards we do door prizes, discuss fishing reports, raffles, tournaments, fishing outings, volunteer community events, annual banquet and much more. Non-member meeting fee is \$5 which can be applied to your annual membership of \$46 or family membership of \$81. For more info visit foxvalleyanglers.com call/text President Patrick Combs at 630-865-6213.

• **The Fox River Valley Chapter of Muskies Inc.**, meet at 7 p.m., the 3rd Wednesday of the month (except June - August) at Chandlers Chophouse, Schaumburg CC, 401 N. Roselle Rd, Schaumburg, IL. For more info: Pres. Dan Koniewicz, 847/682-9238, dskdlk@comcast.net.

• **Greater Chicago Bassmasters of the Chicagoland Area** is a teaching and learning

club that focuses on having fun bass fishing. We are a B.A.S.S. affiliated club. For more info: greaterchicagobass.com.

• **The Lake Geneva Fishing Club** — holds regular meetings the second Wednesday of February - June and September - November at Poplar Creek Bowl in the Barrington Square Shopping Center, 2534 W Higgins Rd., Hoffman Estates, IL 60169, (847) 310-3227. Meetings begin at 6 p.m. with food and beverage available for purchase at 5:15 p.m. July and August meetings are held in conjunction with weekday fishing outings which will be announced on our website. **The February 12** meeting speaker is to be determined. Please check our website lakegenevafishingclub.com for any updates. The cost for the 2023 membership is \$50, Family membership (member, spouse & children under 16) is available for \$70. Either membership option also includes a 1 year subscription to *MidWest Outdoors Magazine*. For more info: contact Bob Clark at 847-274-8247, email info@lakegenevafishingclub.com. or visit lakegenevafishingclub.com.

• **The Lake Shelbyville Muskie Club** meets periodically at 5:30 p.m., on various dates and locations, followed by a short break and the general session, which starts at 7 p.m. Food and beverages can be purchased. LSMC will be all-muskie with all of its speakers, activities. For more info: Bob Kerans 217-414-0093.

• **The Liberty Fishing Club** meets at 7:30 p.m. on the third Tuesday of the month at the Libertyville Township Center, 359 Merrill Ct., Libertyville, Ill. Guests are always welcome at no charge. Our dues are \$50 annual. We fish all species. For more info: libertyvillefishclub.com.

• **Maple Bass Masters of the Chicagoland Area**—We are an Illinois/National bass Federation club. Club meetings are held on the last Tuesday of every month at Papa Passero's Pizza at 6326 S. Cass Ave., Westmont, Ill. For more info: call Joe Browning at 773-531-6841, maplebassmasters.com

• **Midwest Musky Club (MMC)**—monthly meetings are held on the 1st Thursday of the month at 7:30 p.m. Admission is free to the public. Meet at Village Sportsman's Club, 5201 W. 115th Street, Alsip IL 60803. For more info: facebook.com/MidwestMuskyClub, or midwestmuskyclub.com.

• **The Naperville Rod & Reel Club**—a multi-species fishing club which concentrates on local fishing for day trips and weekends, meets on the third Tuesday of each month, at 7 p.m., in the Naperville Municipal Center, 400 S. Eagle Street, Naperville, Ill. For more info: call Cindy Bickle at 630-205 6554.

• **Northwest Towns Sportsmen's Club**—meets the first Tuesday of every month from September through May in the American Legion Hall, 515 Main St., Wauconda, IL. NWTSC is a social organization, formed and participated in by sportsmen with common interests in hunting, shooting, fishing, and boat related activities. For more info: contact Don Haug at doca42@ameritech.net or 847-494-5132.

• **The Oak Brook Trout Unlimited Chapter** meetings are at 7 p.m. on the third Wednesday of every month at the Oak Brook Park District Recreation Center near 31st Street and Jorie Blvd. Guest are always welcome to attend. For more info: visit obtu.org or contact Stan at 708- 606-4148.

• **"Oswegoland Fishin' Fools"** a multi-species club for anglers with or without boats. Frequent outings, topical seminars and Family Memberships available. We meet the 1st Monday of each month at the Oswego Police Department, 3355 Woolley Road, Oswego, IL. For more info: visit fishinfolks.org or call Danny Cossich at 815-735-0425.

• **Prairie State Bassmasters** — We are a B.A.S.S. affiliated club that holds our meetings at Bass Pro Shops in Bolingbrook, Ill., the first Monday of each month. Come experience tournament bass fishing and learn. We offer boater, non-boater competition and have sent a Bass Nation national contender from Illinois to the National Championship three years in a row, as well as had the 2014 Individual State Champion and the 2015 IBN Team Champion hail from our club. Tournaments are held in Illinois and Wisconsin (within 250 miles of Bolingbrook). For more info: see us on Facebook, or prairiestatebassmasters.com.

• **Quad County Hawg Hunters Chapter of Muskies Inc.**—We meet the second Thursday of every month 7 p.m. at the Plano American Legion 510 E. Dearborn St. Plano, Ill. We occasionally have a speaker with raffle prize and door prize. Anyone is welcome. For more info: Duane 815-286-7170, illinoismuskieclub.com.

• **Riverside Fishing Club**—multi-species and family club, meets on the second Thursday of the month at the Berwyn Moose Lodge #424, 3625 S. Harlem Avenue, Berwyn, IL 60402, at 6:45 p.m. Guests are welcome for a \$5 fee, which can be applied to a membership. Annual membership is \$60 for single, or \$85 for family. For more info: contact Leonard Catalano, Membership Director, email: lcatx310@yahoo.com or contact Tony Novak, President, email: tnovak2416@aol.com or call: 708-447-8087 or visit riversidefishingclub.com.

• **Rock Island Conservation Club** meets on the 3rd Tuesday of each month at the RICC Clubhouse in Milan, Ill. Our dues are \$50 a year for seniors 65 and over, and \$65 for family membership under 65 years old. The club has over 100 acres for camping and fishing. There are 110 acres and 80 acres of water for fishing, kayaking, and canoeing. RICC is one of the managing clubs of the Quad City Conservation Alliance. For more info: visit riccnews.com or Facebook.

• **Rock Valley Anglers of Illinois**—multi-species fishing club, meets the second Wednesday of the month at the Hoffman House, 7550 E. State St. in Rockford, Ill. Meetings start at 6:30 p.m. Membership is \$40. For more info: contact Joe Caruana, jac3311@gmail.com, rockvalleyanglers.com.

• **Salmon Unlimited** meets at the TWood Bar & Grill, 1051 N Wood Dale Rd., Wood Dale, IL 60191, the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. Guests are always welcome to attend. Membership is \$35 per year. For more info: call the S.U. office at 773-736-5757, salmonunlimitedinc.com.

• **Sandwich Sportsman's Club.** Fishing, trap shooting, camping, pistol and archery ranges. Open trap shoots Thursdays 6-9 p.m., \$4 for members and \$5 for nonmembers and open archery shoots Mondays 7-8 p.m., \$4 with your equipment, \$5 to use theirs. Meetings at the club, 4th Sunday of the month at 4 p.m., 1104 Hartman Trail, Sandwich, Ill. For more info: sandwichsportsmansclub.com.

• **Senior Rods Fishing/Outdoor Club**—A multi-species 50+ club for men and women, through the Woodridge Park District. Meetings held monthly. No membership/guest fees. The club calendar includes:

activities, educational speakers, fishing outings and discussion topics. For more info: contact Al at 630-968-7748, or email alg14895@sbcglobal.net.

• **South Side Muskie Hawks** meet the third Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. at The Village Sportsman's Club, 5201 W. 115th St., Alsip, IL 60803. Guests welcome. \$8 door charge, \$10 for non-members. For more info: call John Daley, President, 773-704-3401 or Jack Frost at 815-483-6081, southsidemuskiehawks.org.

• **South of the Border Chapter No. 14 Muskies, Inc.** meets the 3rd Wednesday of the month 4 times per year. Meetings are held at the Antioch Moose Lodge at 7:30 p.m. Meetings are in January, April, and September with guest speakers to be determined and a December meeting that is our annual Christmas Party and lure exchange. SOB has fishing outings the 3rd Wednesday during the months of May, June, July, and August. We launch at Musky Tales, Antioch at 4:45 and fish until dark. For more info: contact Frank Walter at 847-689-2133 or fawalter@gmail.com.

• **The Villa Park Fishing Club** meets on the first Wednesday of each month (except July and August) at 7:30 p.m. at the North Terrace Pond Clubhouse on Westmont and Terrace. Guests are welcome to attend for \$3 per meeting. Annual membership dues are \$30 per family. Membership is now open to all interested individuals. For more info: call Marty at 630-932-1923.

• **Walleyes Unlimited USA**—One of the top multi-species fishing clubs in the country. We fish for pike, muskie, large and smallmouth bass and of course walleye. We have one meeting per month alternating between Wisconsin and Illinois at 6 p.m. In Wisconsin we meet on the last Tuesday of the month at Hideaway Pub & Eatery, 9643 S. 76th St., Franklin, WI 53132. In Illinois we meet the last Wednesday of the month at Gurnee American Legion Post 771, 749 Milwaukee Ave., Gurnee, IL 60031. The **Illinois, February 26** meeting speaker will be Isaac Lakich, a Walleye Tournament Angler & Guide. Topic: Perfecting Your Walleye Techniques. For info: call Bob Clark at 847-274-8247. Please check our website walleyesunlimitedusa.org for updates.

SPORTS SHOWS

March 1

Fish & Hook Sport Show, Lockport VFW Post 5788, 1029 East 9th Street, Lockport, IL.

Show hours: 8 a.m. - 2 p.m. Admission: adults \$8, seniors \$5, family M/D/c \$10, children (10 years or less) free For info: Clyde Sana, (708) 717-1215, fishandhook.net, cmsdev@aol.com.

March 1-2

Kankakee Gun & Sportsman's Show at Kankakee County Fairgrounds, 213 W 4000S Rd., Kankakee, IL 60901. Hours: Saturday 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., Sunday 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Admission \$5, children 12 and under free with paying adult. Vendor tables \$35 ea. For info: M & J Sportsman's Group, Mike, (630) 254-0221, info@mjsportsmansgrouppllc.com, or Julia (630) 363-3131, mjsportsmansgrouppllc.com.

March 1-2 & April 5-6

Crown Point Gun Show at Lake County Fairgrounds, 889 S Court Street., Crown Point, IN 46307. Hours: Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission \$12, children 12 and under free. Vendor tables \$50 ea. For info: Central Indiana Gun Shows, Dan Hedger, (765) 993-8942, cigshows@gmail.com, Brandy Sifford, (765) 969-2536, centralindianagunshows.com.

March 9 and April 13

Kane County Sportsman's Show at Kane County Fairgrounds, 525 S Randall Rd., St. Charles, IL 60174, Hours: 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Admission \$7. Vendor tables \$40 ea. For info: Constellation Inc., Mick Stout, (815) 217-2266, kcass@mickstout.com, kanecountysportsmansshow.com

March 21-23
Illinois Deer Classic, at the Peoria Civic Center, 201 SW Jefferson Ave., Peoria, IL

61602. Show Hours: Friday 2 to 7 p.m. Saturday 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., Sunday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission: adult \$10, youth 10-15 \$5, Age 9 and under free, Friday: Ladies \$5 all day, Sunday—Military Day \$5, for all active and retired military, with I.D. For info: Iowa Show Productions, Inc., (319) 232-0218, info@iowashows.com, illinoisdeerclassic.com.

March 29-30

Sauk Trail Gun Show at Bureau County Fairgrounds, 811 W Peru Street, Princeton, IL 61356. Hours: Saturday 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sunday 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission: \$5, children 15 and under free. Vendor tables \$30 ea. For info: Sauk Trail Gun Collectors, Dan Fritz, (309) 689-1934, princetongunshow@yahoo.com, danzel_1@yahoo.com, bureaucountyfair.com/calendar.

March 29-30

Boot City Gun, Knife, and Archery Show at Boot City Opry, 11904 S US Hwy 41, Terre Haute, IN 47802. Hours: Saturday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission \$6, under age 18 must be accompanied by an adult. Vendor tables \$40 ea. For info: Burch Shows, Mike Burch, (812) 249-6332.

April 5-6

Chillicothe Sportsmen's Club Gun & Knife Show at Chillicothe Sportsmen's Club House, 21228 N Yankee Ln, Chillicothe, IL 61523. Hours: Saturday 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sunday 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission \$3. Vendor tables \$10 ea. For info: Chillicothe Sportsmen's Club, Al Sansom, (309) 231-3196, or Steve Risinger, (309) 208-1010, or Dan and Pamm Monaghan, (779) 239-9665, chillisportsmen.org.

EDUCATION

• For DNR Hunter Safety Education courses call (800) 832-2599 (The TDD is (800) 526-0844).

For the most up-to-date info go to:

MidWestOutdoors.com/events

FREE LISTING

To list your event in the MWO Sportsman's Calendar, email info to: info@midwestoutdoors.com, Subject line: "Illinois Calendar Listing." Please allow 6 to 8 weeks for publication.

THE LAKEMASTER® DOWNLOAD

Harrisburg Lake

by Don Gasaway

Don Gasaway is a veteran freelance outdoor writer from Marion, Ill. He may also be found at: facebook.com/#1/DonGasawayWriter and facebook.com/WanderingAngler. Comments are welcome.

LOCATION: Located 1 mile east of Galatia in Saline County. There is one boat ramp on the lake.

SIZE/DEPTH: 209 surface acres, 6 miles of shoreline, maximum depth of 30 feet.

The lake lies amidst the rolling hill country of Saline County and is the main water source for the city of Harrisburg. The arms of the lake contain vegetation in the form of lotus and spatterdock. The shoreline areas are shallow. The deepest part of the lake is in the main channel near the earthen dam. The dam is 1,000 feet in length and 38 feet high, with a rocky shoreline. The lake supports a balanced fishery.

There are no marine facilities other than a boat ramp. Food, lodging, and fuel are available in Harrisburg and Galatia, Ill.

DOMINANT SPECIES: Harrisburg is a popular destination for channel catfish. Anglers regularly catch 20-inch-plus fish. Stocking 4-to-7-inch fingerlings supplements natural recruitment. Fishing is good to excellent with a daily creel limit of 6 fish per day. Anglers fishing for catfish with chicken livers are sometimes surprised with wipers (white/striped bass hybrids.)

The main year-class of largemouth bass contains fish in the 2-to-3-pound range. Fishing rates good to excellent. The daily creel limit is 6 fish per day with no size restriction.

Bluegills are present in good numbers with fish between 6 to 6.5 inches in length. They are high in number but run small. There are no limits on creel or size.

The main forage is gizzard shad with crayfish second. Catfish anglers use cut shad, chicken liver, nightcrawlers, crayfish, crayfish tails, stink bait and some homemade concoctions.



- 1 This end of the lake is shallow and muddy. Fishing here is poor.
- 2 Work the shallow shoreline for largemouth bass and bluegills, downstream to the dam and then back up the west side of the lake. Largemouth bass cruise the weed beds and are suckers for a live minnow on a minnow harness or a number 8 hook. Spinnerbaits with white/yellow skirts are effective when the topwater bite is on.
- 3 The deepest part of the lake lies in the old creek channel. Catfish and bass prefer deeper water of 20 to 30 feet in summer.
- 4 Catfish prowl the old creek channel to the middle of the lake. In the evening, on cloudy days and at night, they feed along the shorelines on both the sides of the lake.
- 5 Due to siltation, the bottom here is slightly shallower than further north. It is about 20 feet deep near the dam.
- 6 Steep slopes in this part of the lake have rocky shorelines that attract largemouth bass.
- 7 The spillway aids in maintaining lake level.
- 8 The 1,000-foot-long, earthen dam has a rocky shoreline. Catfish like the rocky riprap where they feed on crayfish during evenings, overcast days and at night.
- 9 Highway 34 leads west to Galatia where fuel and food are available.
- 10 Catfish like the backs of these coves where they find food in the vegetation, around wood, and in brush piles. Nightcrawlers are good in cover; minnows are better in more open areas.



11 More coves with vegetation and wooden structure are present in this area. Bluegills are present throughout the lake, especially around any wood structure or shaded areas. They take small black or brown/black flies on or near the surface. A tiny, number 10 trout hook with a piece of worm or nightcrawler is effective in shaded areas. Good live baits include worms, weevils, maggots, grubs, or the soft tail of a grasshopper.

12 The only boat ramp on the lake. Entry is only from the north.

Harrisburg Lake provides a good opportunity to create your own lake map using Humminbird electronics with LakeMaster's AutoChart Live feature and save it to a LakeMaster AutoChart Zeroline map card.



» GET THE MAP ON YOUR HUMMINBIRD® FISH FINDER



» GET THE MAP ON YOUR PHONE WITH A ONE-BOAT NETWORK® APP SUBSCRIPTION



March 2025

**MIDWEST
OUTDOORS**



MINNESOTA
NORTH DAKOTA AND SOUTH DAKOTA

Section Three



**'Summerize' Your
Ice Fishing Gear**

**MIDWEST
OUTDOORS**

"Helping you enjoy the outdoors!"

Become an *MWO INSIDER!*

Each week you'll receive timely info from MWO
on where to go, what to use, and how to use it!

FREE sign-up at MidWestOutdoors.com/Insider

(We never give your email address to third-party companies)

Minnesota's *ultimate* FISHING DESTINATION *Lake of the Woods*

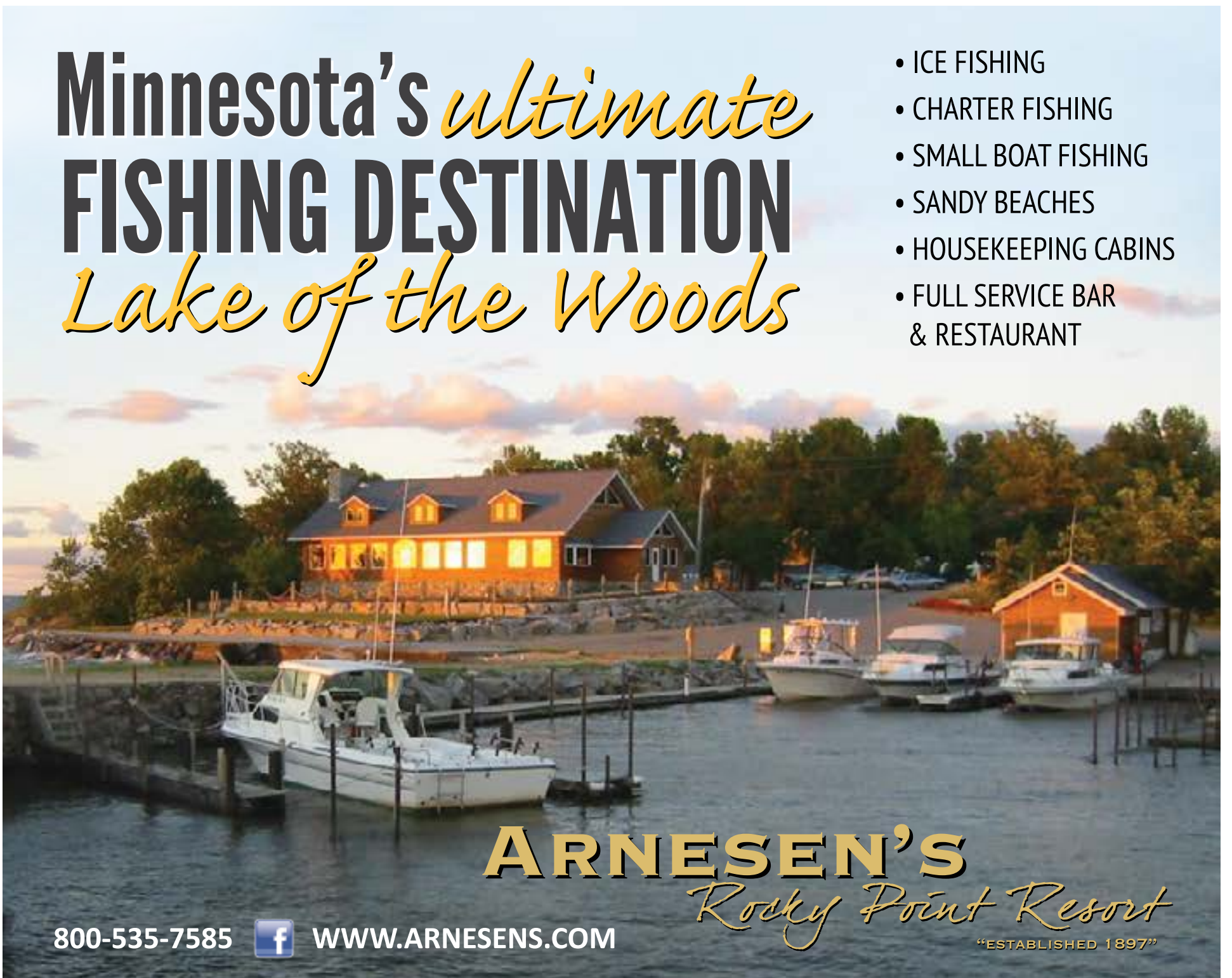
- ICE FISHING
- CHARTER FISHING
- SMALL BOAT FISHING
- SANDY BEACHES
- HOUSEKEEPING CABINS
- FULL SERVICE BAR & RESTAURANT

ARNESEN'S
Rocky Point Resort
"ESTABLISHED 1897"

800-535-7585




WWW.ARNESENS.COM



Buy. Save. Fish.

UP TO
\$4,000
INSTANT REBATE*
plus up to
\$1,000

 eGift Card
(total of up to \$5,000 in value)

OR

5.49%
APR**
for 72 months

OR

6.49%
APR***
for 180 months



SCAN QR CODE®
FOR COMPLETE DETAILS*

LIMITED TIME OFFER
January 1 - March 31, 2025

WXR 2060



SKEETERBOATS.COM

LIMITED LIFETIME WARRANTY
Limited Lifetime Structural Warranty†
10 Year Limited Transferable Structural Warranty
3 Year Limited Component Warranty

†For the original purchaser; complete details in written Limited Warranty.

ENGINEERED LIKE NO OTHER



Visit Us On    

*The instant rebate option is available to customers who reside in the U.S.A. or Canada only on select new (unused, not previously warranty registered) eligible 2024 & 2025 Skeeter boat models. The instant rebate of up to \$4,000 USD, applied at the time of final sale by dealer, plus a Tackle Warehouse® eGift Card of up to \$1,000 USD (exact amounts dependent on the model purchased) are provided at no extra cost. See dealer for model eligibility. Go to tacklewarehouse.com for gift card terms and conditions.

**Available for qualified tier 1 credit customers who reside in the U.S.A. only (not available in all states) and finance through Yamaha Motor Finance Corporation, U.S.A. Offer valid 1/1/2025 – 3/31/2025. 5.49% APR financing for 72 months at \$16.33 per month per \$1,000 financed based on pricing of 90% LTV or less, sales at MSRP will require 10% cash down plus payment of all taxes and fees to qualify. Must take delivery from retail stock by 3/31/2025 on purchase of new and eligible 2023 – 2025 Skeeter boats. Not all buyers will qualify. Higher financing rates apply for buyers with lower credit scores.

***Available for qualified tier 2 credit customers who reside in the U.S.A. only (not available in all states) and finance through Yamaha Motor Finance Corporation, U.S.A. Offer valid 1/1/2025 – 3/31/2025. 6.49% APR financing for 180 months at \$8.71 per month per \$1,000 financed based on pricing of 90% LTV or less, sales at MSRP will require 10% cash down plus payment of all taxes and fees to qualify. Must take delivery from retail stock by 3/31/2025 on purchase of new and eligible 2023 – 2025 Skeeter boats. Not all buyers will qualify. Higher financing rates apply for buyers with lower credit scores.

Yamaha Motor Finance Corporation, U.S.A., dba Yamaha Financial Services, is an affiliate of Yamaha Motor Corporation, U.S.A. offering financing solutions to support Yamaha Dealers and loyal Yamaha Customers nationwide.

©2024 Skeeter Products, Inc. All rights reserved. This document contains many of Skeeter's valuable trademarks. It may also contain trademarks belonging to other companies. Any references to other companies or their products are for identification purposes only, and are not intended to be an endorsement. Remember to observe all applicable boating laws. Never drink and ride. Dress properly with a USCG-approved flotation device (PFD) and protective gear. Boats may be shown with optional equipment. See your local Skeeter dealer for complete details. +Messaging and data rates may apply.



DAIWA SHOW SPECIALS

at the Northwest Sportshow, March 13 - 16, 2025

PURCHASE \$400 OR MORE OF DAIWA PRODUCTS

\$400
OR MORE PURCHASE

→ RECEIVE A **FREE** DTTB-PYR TACKLE BAG (\$69 VALUE)

FREE



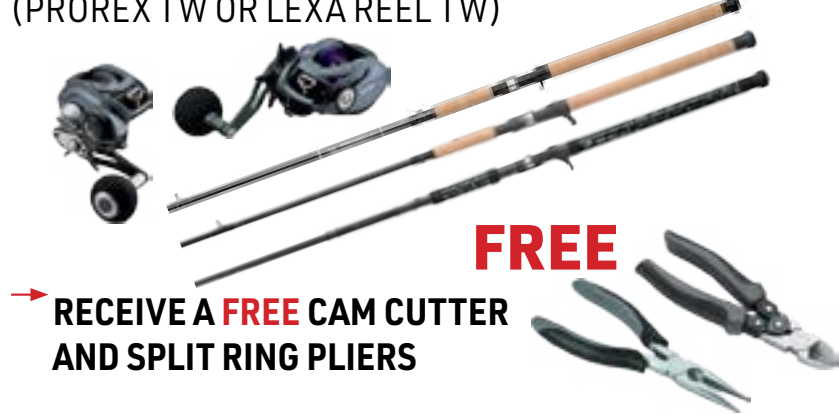
PURCHASE AN ARDITO TRAVEL ROD

FREE

→ RECEIVE A **FREE** DVEC TACKLE BINDER



PURCHASE A PROREX ROD AND MATCHING REEL (PROREX TW OR LEXA REEL TW)



FREE

→ RECEIVE A **FREE** CAM CUTTER AND SPLIT RING PLIERS

PURCHASE A PROREX TW OR LEXA REEL TW



→ RECEIVE A **FREE** CAM CUTTER

PURCHASE A PROREX STEIN MUSKIE ROD

→ RECEIVE (2) **FREE** BESSIE BAITS



PURCHASE ANY TATULA ROD, REEL OR COMBO

FREE



→ RECEIVE A **FREE** DAIWA/AFTCO HOODED PERFORMANCE SHIRT (\$55 VALUE)

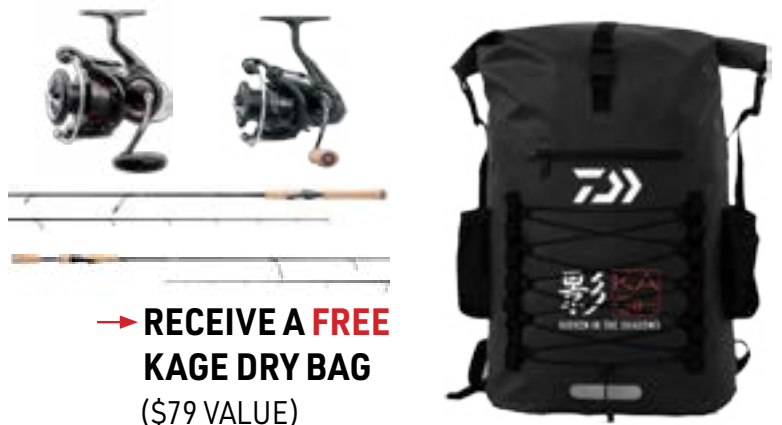
PURCHASE A TD EYE ROD

→ RECEIVE A **FREE** DAIWA D-BOX M/R (\$15 VALUE)



PURCHASE ANY KAGE PRODUCT—ROD OR REEL

FREE



→ RECEIVE A **FREE** KAGE DRY BAG (\$79 VALUE)

SPEND \$100 OR MORE ON ANY DAIWA PRODUCT

\$100
PURCHASE

→ RECEIVE A **FREE** DAIWA CAP
Style varies based on supply

FREE



BUY J-FLUORO SAMURAI OR J-BRAID LINE

→ RECEIVE A **FREE** PAIR OF SCISSORS



PURCHASE (1) SPOOL OF XBRAID

→ RECEIVE A **FREE** SPOOL OF XBRAID (\$25 VALUE)



These offers may be redeemed ONLY with a Daiwa representative on hand.

Limit 1 promotion per customer. All giveaways are limited to quantity on hand with no rain checks.

Joe's Sporting Goods
BOOTH 937
33 E County Rd B
St. Paul, MN 55117
651-209-7800

Reed's Family Outdoor Outfitters
BOOTH 1135
Locations in Walker, MN
& Onamia, MN
reedssports.com

Thorne Bros.
BOOTH 1354
10091 Central Ave NE
Blaine, MN 55434
763-572-3782

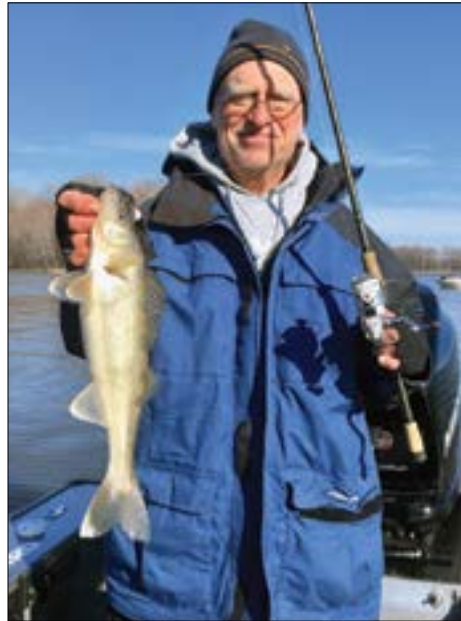
Spring-Run River Fishing for Walleyes

by Troy Smutka

"That's a quick start," my friend Bill said right after hearing his drag slip. Thirty seconds later, my son Parker dipped an 18-inch walleye with the Frabill Conservation Series net. We were recording an episode of my YouTube show Fishing and Hunting the North Country. After recording this fish was finished, it found his way into the livewell.

We were fishing a half-mile downstream of a dam on the Mississippi River in late March. It was a cold morning, and we went a while without another fish. But the forecast was for warming temps as the sun got higher, so we waited it out, expecting the bite to improve. While it never got as fast as we hoped, the bite did improve after the air and water warmed some, and we found the right location. We were able to record a good episode with several walleyes and some bonus sauger.

We were on the Mighty Miss, targeting spring-run walleyes moving upstream from a big lake, as well as resident walleyes and sauger that spend the whole year in this stretch of the river. As spring arrives and the water warms, walleyes migrate up rivers from lakes to spawn, traveling until they find



Nate Smutka caught this spring river 'eye on a jig and minnow.

the right spot to spawn; or they run into a dam or rapids area and have no choice but to spread out and look for spawning areas. You can catch resident walleyes and sauger in these stretches of river all year long, but the spring run can lead to incredible numbers of



Parker and Nate Smutka with an early-spring, Mississippi River walleye.

WAVEPRO
Patent Pending
HI-PERFORMANCE BOAT PEDESTALS

Available in 10", 12", 14" & 16" models

- Air cushion comfort
- Easy to install
- Tournament tested

Minnesota Tournament Tail
WAVEPRO, LLC.
Phone: 612.834.4959
Email: sales@waveproshock.com
www.waveproshock.com

The Best Ride on the Water!

Moveable Hubs for Attwood, Springfield & Ranger bases

walleyes in relatively small areas, along with the chance for a fat, trophy female walleye.

Areas upstream from a lake or reservoir are more likely to have a good run of both numbers and size of walleyes. However, if you are heading to a good area, you likely aren't the only one to know about it. Get to the ramp early, or you may have a long wait to launch, along with a parking problem. Fish on a weekday, if possible, to avoid crowds.

Finally, fish on a day that is supposed to be warm and sunny if you can. Sun and warmer air temps warm the water some, making the fish more active. Days like this will make you and your fishing partners more comfortable as well.

I usually start out with a very simple approach: vertical jigging using a jig tipped with a live minnow or soft plastic. I will also vertical jig a Rapala Jigging Rap or Ripplin' Rap. I typically use a 6-foot to 6' 6", medium-power, fast-action spinning rod for this approach. St. Croix's 6' 3" Eyecon paired with a Pflueger President 30 spinning reel is my weapon of choice. I spool the reel with 8-pound-test Berkley Fireline, using a barrel swivel to splice 18 inches of Berkley Vanish 14-pound-test fluorocarbon to the jig. The fluorocarbon is mainly for added abrasion



The author landed this nice Mississippi River sauger in mid-March.

resistance as you are fishing at or near the bottom likely containing rocks and wood.

I like using a lead head jig with a built-in rattle or added rattle chamber for additional noise and vibration to help fish track down your offering in dirty, spring river water. Use a heavy enough jig to keep it as vertical as possible in the current. I always have 3/8- and 1/2-ounce jigs in bright colors like glow, chartreuse, orange, and pink. I also carry a selection of Northland Whistler Jigs; the spinning prop on this jig gives off great fish-attracting vibrations ideal for fishing in dark water.

I start off tipping the jig with a live minnow, like a fathead or small sucker minnow. For vertical fishing, I like to run the hook of the jig into the mouth of the minnow, back through the throat and up out of the minnow behind the head (between the "shoulders"). This method doesn't kill the minnow, holds the minnow in line with the jig, and resists it coming off when bumping snags. It also places the hook point far enough back to hook fish without needing a stinger hook much of the time.

Fish this offering slowly and vertically. Use the electric trolling motor to slow the drift of the boat enough to keep the jig almost vertical, just a bit downstream of the rod tip. This allows you to feel your bait bump something it could potentially snag on and preemptively snap it up and out before the boat is downstream of the snag, driving the jig into the snag.

TIMBUKTU MARINE
LAKE VERMILION
2175 Vermilion Dr. Cook, MN 55723 218-666-2276

Ranger BOATS
rangerboats.com

MERCURY

Serving Lake Vermilion and all of Northern Minnesota
www.TIMBUKTUMARINE.com



The author and Cory Reece with a fat, early-spring, river eye.

I try to keep the jig and minnow about 6 inches above the bottom by watching the sonar and dropping the rod tip once-in-a-while to check for bottom. I gently move the rod up and down a few inches to "flutter" the bait along just above bottom. Subtle bites feel like a little too much weight on your line, while more aggressive strikes provide a good "thunk" before the rod loads up.

If I am getting bites that result in me missing the fish and bringing in a jig with just a minnow head remaining, I add a stinger hook system with the hook inserted in the back of the minnow, just behind the dorsal. You will pick up more leaves and other debris with a stinger, so you need to bring it in whenever something feels "off" and clean your bait.

If I am getting consistent aggressive strikes that almost take the rod out of my hand, I switch to a soft plastic minnow, paddletail or curly tail on the jig. I may also get more aggressive with my jigging motion in this situation as well. Don't be afraid to switch to a Jigging Rap or Rippin' Rap with aggressive fish, snapping it up and down to pull in fish with sound and vibration.

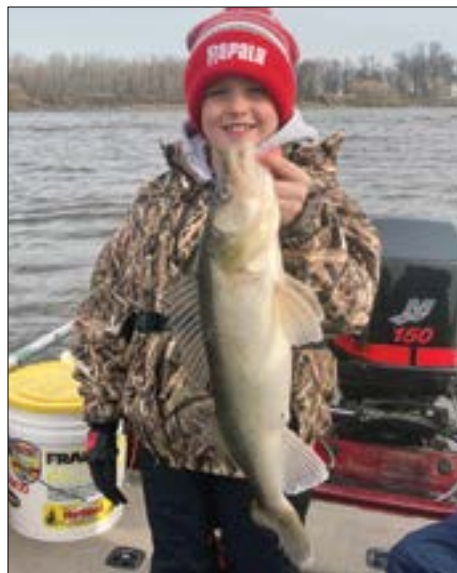
I look for some very specific spots on rivers during early spring. Slack-water holes below a lock, the tips of wing dams, or current seams in the tailrace below a dam are obvious spots to collect walleyes and sauger. Deeper holes in these areas can really stack up sauger. These are also some of the busiest spots, filled with anglers, on rivers at this time of year. You can still catch fish in these spots; just be courteous and respectful to all, especially people who were there before you.

You can get away from the crowds somewhat by looking for other, high-percentage spots. Confluences where another river or a stream enters the main river are great spots. Warmer water entering the main river through the tributary can attract fish, and you can often find current breaks and even slack water just upstream of the confluence that also collects fish. Deeper holes in the main river channel can provide slacker water beneath the surface current and can pile up fish taking a rest from swimming upstream. Finally, any kind of current seam or break caused by a bend in the river, a wingdam, or even a laydown tree can collect fish. Mark and remember spots where you catch fish, as they can be good spots to check out in future seasons.

Last, but not unimportant, read your regulations before you head out onto a river in springtime. You may find open and closed seasons, special limits, and slot restrictions depending on the stretch of water. Some rivers are catch-and-release only during the spring run. Border water rivers may have special regs and licensing requirements. Know what your regs are before you head out. Also, check fish consumption guidelines for the river, provided by your natural resources department, to see if you can keep

any fish for eating.

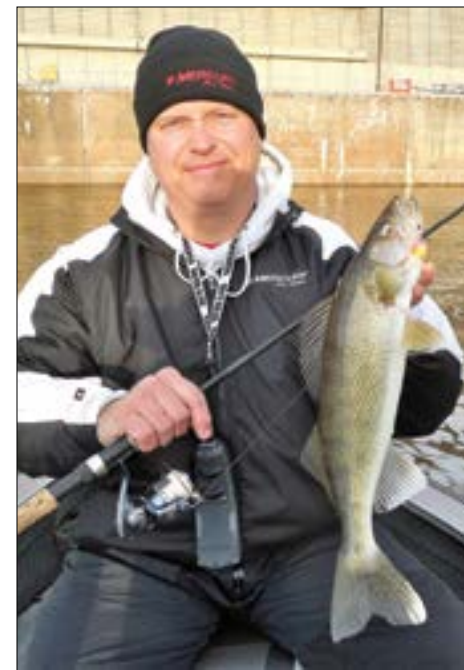
Scratch the itch to fish open water before the ice leaves the lakes in the upper Midwest. Get your boat out on an area river and chase some walleyes and sauger with a long pole.



Parker Smutka with a big, spring river walleye.

Bonus fish could include catfish, sturgeon, pike and smallmouth bass. Dress for changing weather conditions; in March, it is typically colder on a river than it is on shore. And have a blast catching fish along with a shot at a true trophy. **MWO**

Troy Smutka is a central Minnesota fishing guide (Great Day on the Water Guide Service) and a walleye tournament angler. Troy is also a member



This river walleye was hanging out in a deep pool below a lock, and grabbed a jig and minnow.

of the Lund Boats and Mercury Outboards Pro Teams, as well as the Clam Outdoors, St. Croix Rods, Pure Fishing, Rapala, Amped Outdoors, and Dakota Decoys Guide Teams. Troy also posts fishing and hunting reports at FishingMN.com and hosts and produces "Fishing and Hunting the North Country" on YouTube.

MAY 30 - JUNE 1
NEW EVARTS RESORT
 GLENHAM, SOUTH DAKOTA

CALCUTTA

PURCHASE YOUR TEAM FOR \$300

PAYOUTS TO THE TOP 10 TEAMS

ALL UNSOLD TEAMS WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC PURCHASE AFTER 6 PM AT THE FRIDAY, MAY 30 BANQUET

REGISTER HERE

NORTHERN STATE **2025** UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS

WOLVES ON THE WATER

IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE ROYAL ORDER OF THE GYPS

\$5,000 TOP PRIZE

Presented by **HELM MARINE**

\$360 REGISTRATION FEE UNTIL MAY 9, 2025 (2-3 PERSON TEAM)
 PRICE INCREASES TO \$390 PER TEAM AFTER MAY 9, 2025

FRIDAY MAY 30	SATURDAY JUNE 1
PRE-FISHING CONCLUDES 3:00 PM	4 FISHING FLIGHTS 7 HOURS OF FISHING PAYOUTS TO THE TOP-25 TEAMS
REGISTRATION/SOCIAL HOUR 4:00 PM	
BANQUET DINNER 5:30 PM	
RULES MEETING* 6:00 PM	
LIVE AUCTION & RAFFLES TO FOLLOW	

**TEAM ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED*

REGISTRATION INCLUDES STEAK DINNER AND ENTRY IN THE BIG FISH AND ROUGH FISH CONTESTS

\$50,000+ IN PRIZES

FLIGHTS DETERMINED IN THE ORDER PAID REGISTRATIONS ARE RECEIVED

WOLVES ON THE WATER FISHING TOURNAMENT

Tournament Limited to First 140 Teams

Presented by **HELM MARINE**

A TOURNAMENT TO SUPPORT NSU ATHLETIC PROGRAMS AND SCHOLARSHIPS
 CONTACT Marlin Heitmann at 605-380-8069 or marlinheitmann@yahoo.com
 MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THE 36TH ANNUAL WOLVES ON THE WATER WALLEYE TOURNAMENT TODAY

OVER \$50,000 IN PRIZES AT FRIDAY BANQUET



Change Lure Size for More Strikes

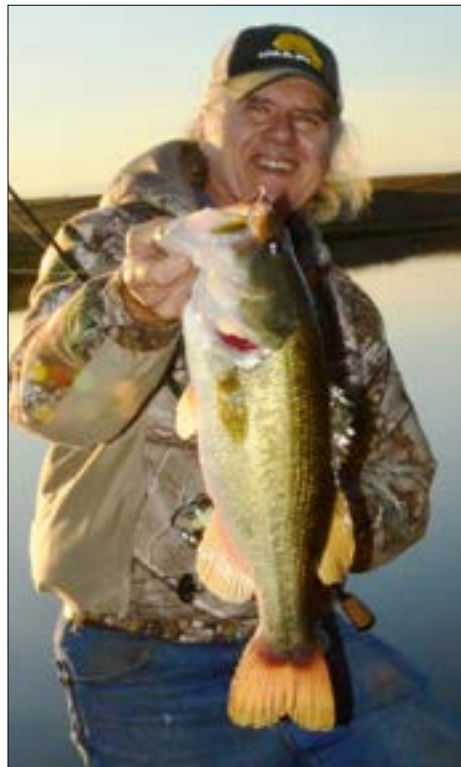
In many cases when fish are "off their feed," a change needs to be made—and not necessarily a drastic change. It can often be nothing more than keeping the same lure and color but going to a different lure size. This is especially true when there are light strikes, or a few fish being caught, but the action sort of slow.

All species of fish can be affected by the size change, up and down, but some are more prone to be affected in a certain direction than others. However, other than ice jigs, some of the lures commonly being used are not available in various sizes; with those, you might have to change to something similar in action, color and design, which can throw a bit of a difference other than strictly the size making a difference.

The following is what I've found on the different species with which I have had experience using lure size change.

Improved productivity of sunfish/bluegill and ring perch results are nearly always due to the downsize side of things. Rarely does the production improve when increasing the size.

Crappies are somewhat the same way, but catching larger crappies often improves



During a calm, early-December day, the catch-of-the-day was made by downsizing from a 4-inch Natural Forage Baits green shad SwimBait to the same color in a similar 2-inch T-Shad.



A good selection of lure sizes, such as this box of Blitz Blades, in the same or similar colors, makes it easy to up- and downsize while keeping the same style lure and action.



Upsizing is normally not the trick for bluegills, but on this summer day, switching to the larger Ratso with a Crappie Nibble produced larger fish after having a few smaller ones strike a smaller lure.

with an increase in lure size. I've found this occurrence when finger jigging a T-Shad or Phat Shad; and then moving to a Lil Killer, which is a different design, but still having the straight tail to offer about the same, but larger, profile and tail action provided by the finger jigging method.

The black bass and white bass families can definitely go both ways, with the white bass leaning more to hitting on whatever is being served up for them to attack. One of

the best examples for size change is a Rat-L-Trap, where you can drop to a Tiny Trap or go all the way up to a Magnum Trap. In most of my experience, the change between using a 1/4-ounce Mini Trap or a 1/2-ounce Original Trap in either direction has been significant. I've seen days when, in either direction, I'll start with catching a few fish, and once I switch to the other size in the same color, the fishing will improve to the point where it is the "lure of the day."

TWO GREAT SHOWS!

MARCH 7-8-9, 2025

WARNER COLISEUM at the

Minnesota State Fairgrounds

Daily Admission - \$10 • 3-Day Pass - \$17 • 12 & Under FREE!

CASH ONLY AT THE DOOR



GEORGE'S TACKLE SHOP
where kids make \$25 worth of muskie tackle and take it home **FREE!**

Retailers • Resorts • Guides
Tackle Manufacturers
Replicas • Factory Reps
Muskie, Inc. • Seminars & More!

KIDS MIDWAY
with Games for Kids
Sponsored by
Fishing for Life & Adventure

MINNESOTA ANGLERS

BOAT SHOW

Sponsored by:



Boats for Every Angler!

www.mn-muskieexpo.com

We Sell & Buy Vintage Lures & Tackle

FREE APPRAISALS



Check Out The Vault!

This is where we keep the rarest and more antique fishing lures you will find on our site. You can expect to see old Heddon, Creek Chub, Pflueger, Shakespeare, Paw Paw, South Bend and more baits and lures.

25 Vintage Fishing Lures Worth A Fortune

SAVE 10%
on your first order
Use Code
MWO



Scan Code to read now or visit our website



By upsizing from a 1/4- to a 1/2-ounce Rat-L-Trap, a slow September day of bass fishing went to a 'hot' one.

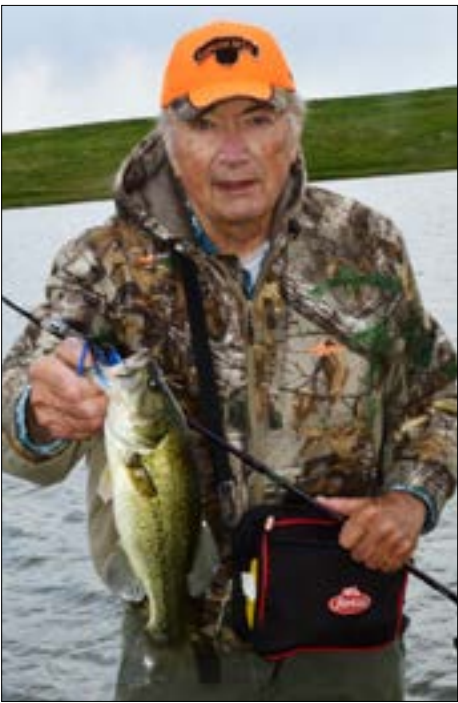
but as it gets later towards winter, after their initial fall feeding, start looking at downsizing. Just remember, this has been the general rule, and on any given day, because of water or weather conditions, a switch one way or the other can make the difference between a productive day and a less productive one.

If you have a day when you know the fish should be hitting, or they are hitting slow but you are getting aggressive strikes, then change the size of the lure, and see if the strikes don't start picking up. **MWO**

Dan Galusha has fished all his life, worked more than 45 years in the outdoor/media industry, and was inducted into the Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame as a Legendary Communicator. Direct questions through dansfishntales.com, facebook.com/



dansfishntales.com and facebook.com/shootnplink. Normally, downsizing works for catching crappies, but this time, it went from a 2- to a 4-inch swimbait to start catching some 12- and 13-inch crappies on a mid-October day.



Fellow outdoor writer and master of shoreline fishing, Don Banning is known for being a proponent of downsizing. However, on this cold mid-October day, he had to change from his finesse lures to a larger 'chatter style' lure in the same black/blue color to start producing some bass.

There have been very similar results with billed crankbaits, Blitz Blades, spinnerbaits, plastic worms and jig combos, where the same lure and color are found in various sizes. But in most cases, you don't need to switch to the extreme sizes up or down to see a difference. For example, if you're fishing something in the 3/8-ounce range, which is a good "in-between" size, you shouldn't have to go more than to the 1/2-ounce size above or 1/8-ounce size below.

While muskies can always be finicky, I have experienced several times when they hit a downsized lure of the same design, and again going to a spinnerbait or crankbait of some sort. A good example was when I was filming a show for my old television series on PBS. We were trying to show that muskies would take bass-type baits, and when passing through one area using a larger Norman N crankbait, I had a follow that would not bite, which happened with some others on the same day. I switched to a slightly smaller N size, returned to the same area of the first muskie follow, and it was "fish on" without any hesitation. This same sort of thing has happened with inline or overhead spinnerbaits where I was using a 1-ounce size and dropped to a 1/2-ounce with same color and blade configuration.

The time of year is another factor. In winter, it is normally downsizing, other than when pursuing larger crappies or bass; yet many times, I'll upsize two to three sizes, such as with a Custom Jigs and Spins Tutso, where I'll go from a size 10 to 6, or with a Ratfinkee, from a 10 to a 4.

As spring hits, it is normally a case of downsizing, because what prey is available is smaller. Summer is a time where it goes both ways, depending on the day. As fall rolls around, larger sizes can be the trick;

DUMPER DAN'S CHARTER FISHING FLEET

NEW CONDOMINIUMS • RIVERFRONT STORE
SHEBOYGAN, WISCONSIN

PROVEN #1 LEADER IN THE INDUSTRY!

DECADES OF OVER 1,000 TRIPS PER SEASON!

AS SEEN ON TV

30 POUNDER

20 POUND STEELHEAD

LUXURY RIVERVIEW CONDOS

COOLER BUSTING CATCH

28 POUNDER

25 POUND CHINOOK SALMON

FULLY STOCKED STORE

BIG KING SHEBOYGAN STYLE

MIDWEST OUTDOORS TELEVISION

BIG FISH FOR SHEBOYGAN'S MAYOR

FISHING PACKAGES WITHOUT LODGING (RATES ON OUR WEBSITE)

- SIX ANGLER PACKAGE - TWO 6 HOUR CHARTERS
Only **\$369** Each
LODGING INCLUDED!
- ADDITIONAL PACKAGES AVAILABLE -
1-6 PEOPLE PER BOAT (NOW BOOKING)
Luxurious Riverfront Condo Upgrades Available!

IN HOUSE TAXIDERMIST

DUMPER DAN DAILY DOUBLE

- SIX ANGLER PACKAGE - 5 HOUR & 8 HOUR CHARTERS
Only **\$399** Each
LODGING INCLUDED!
- ADDITIONAL PACKAGES AVAILABLE -
1-6 PEOPLE PER BOAT (NOW BOOKING)
Luxurious Riverfront Condo Upgrades Available!

SINCE 1985
Catching the Most Fish ★ Running The Most Trips ★ Wisconsin's #1 PROVEN Charter Fishing Leader!
(A Proven Fact Indicated by Wisconsin DNR Records!)

CLEAN, MODERN BOATS, AN EXPERIENCED PROFESSIONAL CREW AND A ONE OWNER BUSINESS MAKES THE DIFFERENCE!

YOU CAN'T BEAT THE FLEET 6 BIG BOATS!

Reservations, Information, Fishing Reports and Videos at:
www.dumperdan.com or call **920-377-1147**

THE MOST POPULAR NAME IN THE INDUSTRY!

Versatile Vibrating Jigs



Targeting shallow cover with a vibrating jig resulted in this fat largemouth.

by Glenn Walker

From time-to-time, a lure has such a buzz in the bass fishing community that anglers go to great lengths to keep it quiet—while simultaneously looking high and low, along with spending good amounts of money, to acquire that lure.

The ChatterBait was this lure back in the early 2000s; it won three straight tournaments in Florida, and just like that, *the vibrating jig* was given a jolt of life. Just like any fishing lure, a vibrating jig has its place and time to shine. But what makes vibrating jigs attractive to bass fishermen is that they are very versatile lures.

Bass fishermen can tie on, and rely on, a vibrating jig all season long. But there are times of the year when they seem extremely effective. One of those times occurs during early fall.

Vibrating jigs were primarily designed to fish up shallow, around cover, and this is where they really shine. A 1/4- or 3/8-ounce bait gets the nod from me when I'm targeting bass around shallow cover. Depending on the lake or river and time of year, that could consist of lily pads, weed lines, laydowns, in between boat docks—or it can be used to effectively cover and fish open-water flats.

What makes the vibrating jig so versatile for bass fishermen? You can keep your vibrating jig rod in your hand and keep

moving the whole time. You can fish it around vegetation or wood without getting it hung up; and then, if some boat docks are next up on the shoreline, you make accurate casts in, and around the boat dock and have success. And you can keep fishing a vibrating jig when the visible cover goes away, and you're faced with a barren shoreline with the bass roaming a flat.

I feel that a constant, steady retrieve is, many times, all that is needed to trigger a strike. The vibration and action of the bait, and the plastic trailer on it, is all that bass need. Yet sometimes, varying your retrieve to impart an erratic action is what bass need to get them to strike.

Other retrieves could be as simple as a reel-and-pause, where the vibrating jig freefalls when paused. Or a slight twitch of the rod tip that has your vibrating jig quickly dart off to one side, mimicking a fleeing baitfish.

As more anglers target offshore structure, bass become accustomed to the traditional crankbaits and jigs they see over and over. This is why manufacturers began producing vibrating jigs in larger sizes. I'll use a 1/2-ounce size when fishing mid-depth structure such as weed lines, or flats where bass are roaming the 6- to 8-foot depths. When bass are holding on deeper structure, or off the edge of a main river ledge, you can use a vibrating jig in 3/4-, 1- or even a 1 1/4-ounce to target these bass in deeper water with a presentation they likely haven't seen.

Several ways to fish a vibrating jig in deep water include: casting the bait out, letting it sink to bottom and slowly rolling it back in; another method includes reeling it in, then letting it freefall down the face of the vegetation or off the drop of a ledge.

One thing that I think is great about fishing a vibrating jig: You can dig into your tackle compartment, grab nearly any plastic bait, and it will work as a trailer. However, you do not want the plastic trailer's action to *overpower or counteract* the already powerful action of the vibrating jig's blade.

Certain soft plastic baits rigged on the back end of a vibrating jig have their own unique action and affect the performance of the vibrating jig, forcing you to alter your retrieve to achieve the best possible presentation.

Depending on the depth of water, and the type and density of cover I'm fishing, along with the forage I'm trying to mimic, I select different types of soft plastic trailer to use on the back of my vibrating jig.

Swimbait: The combined flash of the blade and action of a swimbait tail excel when used to target bass feeding on shad. The key thing is to find a swimbait that doesn't overpower the vibration of the blade on the jig, as the vibration is key to getting bites.

Vibrating Jig Gear

Z-Man JackHammer: The originator of the vibrating jig teamed up with pro angler Brett Hite and Evergreen to design and build what many feel is the industry standard for vibrating jigs. Its unique action, strong vibration, and having the blade connected directly to the eye of jighead makes the JackHammer a top choice for many bass fishermen.



Z-Man JackHammer



Z-Man Tungsten ChatterBait ELITE EVO.

Z-Man Tungsten ChatterBait ELITE EVO: The newest addition to the ChatterBait family has a unique hunting action, which allows the bait to be crawled and bounced off fish-holding cover. Couple this with unmatched vibration and unique, durable blade finishes, and the EVO is a vibrating jig you'll want in your tackle box this fall. And with its 96%

tungsten head, this ChatterBait sinks quickly; your bait gets down to that fish-holding depth right away.

Northland Fishing Tackle Eye-Candy Paddle Shad: Constructed out of Super TPE material, the Paddle Shad is 3 1/2 inches long and features a boot tail that has a subtle swimming action—perfect for threading onto your favorite vibrating jig. And with the Super TPE material, you'll be able to spend less time re-rigging your vibrating jig during the day.



Northland Fishing Tackle Eye-Candy Paddle Shad.



Gary Yamamoto Zako Swimbait.

Gary Yamamoto Zako Swimbait: Designed to be paired with the JackHammer, the Zako is extremely soft; when a bass bites down, they won't want to let go after being enticed into biting by the bait's segmented bod, and forked tail. The larger belly of this bait perfectly mimics larger shad or bluegills.

3rd Annual
KINGS OF PANFISH TOURNAMENT
Sun., March 9th

Create your family memories... anytime of the year!

Big Turtle Lake • Boat Rentals • Onsite Food & Beer • Sandy Beach • Kids Activities • Indoor Pool

218.243.2131 | kohlsresort.com | relax@kohlsresort.com



Many successful tournament catches are attributed to a vibrating jig.

Select any size swimbait you want to match the weight of your vibrating jig and the size of the baitfish that bass are feeding on. Anytime you are rigging a soft plastic as a trailer, make sure it is rigged on straight, as this will ensure that the bait runs true in the water column. This is paramount in this scenario, as nothing will curb a fish eating your bait more than a vibrating jig running wonky!

Grub: I like to use either a split-tail spinnerbait trailer or a single-tail grub when bass want a compact lure offering, or I'm throwing the bait around thick cover, as it will be less likely to get fouled up.

Craw: There is no hiding the fact that a vibrating jig with a craw-imitating soft plastic bait will attract craw-hungry bass. Many craws have a compact profile that, when used in the correct color, can mimic the action of baitfish. Slow-rolling a heavier vibrating jig with a soft plastic craw along riprap bank or a mud cutbank is a great way to match the craws' scurrying along the bottom.

If you are looking to increase the effectiveness and ability to use a vibrating jig, start looking at your soft-plastic bait arsenal and formulate an idea of when and where to use each a trailer on your vibrating jig.

Using the right rod, reel, and line setup is important when fishing a vibrating jig; you want a rod that you can make long casts with, while still being sensitive enough to feel the bait's vibration and accept feel strikes from bass. Many rods are designed for this

technique and are constructed from a blend of materials to accomplish all the above needs.

When fishing a vibrating jig, I want a rod that loads up when the bass tracks down and inhales my bait. I also like a rod that I can make pinpoint casts with if needed, and which also helps me launch the bait if I'm fishing a flat. This is why I go with a 7' 4"—either a Witch Doctor Tackle Kahuna 7' 4" H or a Phenix Rods M1 Series 7' 4" MH. I'll pair either rod with a 7.2:1 gear ratio casting reel spooled with 15- or 17-pound-test Seaguar Inviz X Fluorocarbon.

When you hit the water this fall and want to cover water in a quick, yet effective manner, tie a vibrating jig on your line, look for the baitfish and keep casting; eventually, you are going to run into a hungry school of bass. Be ready to have that vibrating jig get hammered! **MWO**

Glenn Walker has been fishing Minnesota and Mississippi River tournaments for more than 15 years, spreading his passion and knowledge of the sport via articles and videos. For more information, check out glennwalkerfishing.com or on Facebook @GlennWalkerFishing.

Ice Fish

MINNESOTA'S LAKE OF THE WOODS
at ZIPPEL BAY RESORT

Home of the Zippel Bay Igloo!

Standard & Log cabins plus day & Sleeper Fish Houses available!

Plowed Ice Roads!

www.zippelbay.com

Open Year Round
1-800-222-2537

Call for Brochure
Full Service Resort

6080 39th St. NW
Williams, MN 56686
(218) 783-6235

59th Annual **SIoux EMPIRE** SPORTSMEN'S SHOW

March 13-16, 2025

5

GREAT SHOWS IN ONE!

Boat Show • Camping Show

- Outdoor Equipment
- Travel Show
- Family Fun Show!

BRING THE WHOLE FAMILY TO OUR Special Show Event. . .

KIDS FISHING WORKSHOP
With the pros from Scheels

TOM HUYNH

TED TAKASAKI

LIVE TROUT POND

FREE DAILY FISHING SEMINARS

Sioux Falls Arena & Convention Center

SHOW HOURS:
Thursday 5-9 PM
Friday 12-9 PM
Saturday 10-8, Sunday 10-5

*A Cenaiiko production
Proudly sponsored by*

Sioux Falls Sport Show.com

Share your bright idea!

Have you got a favorite fishing, hunting, camping or outdoors tip?
SHARE IT WITH US.
If we decide to use it in our column, we'll send you a useful thank you gift.

Email your tips to:
info@midwestoutdoors.com

Please be sure to include your name and mailing address where we can send your prize.
Prizes will not be sent until/unless your tip is chosen for publication.

Dakota Corner

North Dakota Game and Fish Updates

Hunter education classes

If you were born after 1961, are 12 years or older, you must take a home study or traditional classroom certified hunter education course before you can get a firearm or bowhunting license in North Dakota.

The home study, or hybrid course, requires 7-10 hours of online and six hours of in-person classroom time. The six hours of classroom time consists of an in-person session prior to starting the online class and at the end of the class to complete testing.

Traditional classroom courses require at least 14 hours of in-person class time, and most classes are held from January through May.

Individuals interested in taking a hunter education class in 2025 must click on the GNF Education Course link at the North Dakota Game and Fish Department website, gf.nd.gov. To register for a class, click on "enroll" next to the specific class, and follow the simple instructions. Personal information is required. Classes are listed by city and can also be sorted by start date. Classes will be added throughout the year as they become finalized.

Individuals interested in receiving a notice by email or SMS text message when each hunter education class is added, can click on the "subscribe to news and alerts" link below the news section on the Game and Fish home page. Check the box labeled "hunter education" under the education program updates.

Participants must turn 12 during the calendar year to take the home study course, and age 11 during the calendar year to take the traditional class.

Low waterfowl survey numbers

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department's annual midwinter waterfowl survey in early January indicated about 88,000 Canada geese and 3,225 mallards in the state.

John Palarski, department migratory game bird biologist, said the below-average count was expected this year for wintering waterfowl due to cold temperatures in late

November and early January leading up to the survey.

"The majority of waterfowl that winter in North Dakota can be found along the Missouri River System. Following a record-setting count in 2024, we counted fewer geese and mallards than normal this year, which was directly due to the amount of ice cover across the state," he said. "Although we don't currently have much snow cover, cold temperatures in November and early January pushed many birds south and froze a considerable portion of the open water."

Lake Sakakawea, which in some years harbors thousands of wintering waterfowl, froze over on January 4, just two days before the survey. In four of the last 10 years, the lower portion of Sakakawea still had substantial open water in early January and needed to be completely surveyed by air.

During the 2025 survey, an estimated 68,788 Canada geese were observed on the Missouri River, another 13,400 on Nelson Lake in Oliver County, and an additional 5,000-plus geese in other parts of the state.

The 10-year average (2016-25) for the midwinter survey in North Dakota is 124,700 Canada geese and 14,000 mallards. All states in the Central Flyway participate in the survey during the same time frame to reduce the possibility of counting birds more than once.

Youth summer camps

The 1st Battalion of North Dakota Waterfowl Brigade will be held July 8-12 at the 4-H Center in Washburn.

NDWTFL is a five-day hands-on immersive learning experience for youth ages 13-17. The camp is designed to educate participants about the importance of wetland ecosystems, waterfowl biology, flock dynamics, shooting skills and safety, stewardship, public speaking, leadership development and more.

The deadline to apply is March 15.

NDWTFL is a program of Texas Brigades, a Texas-based 501(c)(3) focused on educating and empowering adolescents to become conservation ambassadors.

Additional information, including applications, can be found at www.texasbrigades.org/waterfowl-brigade-nd.

Game and Fish seeks contractors

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department encourages businesses to add their names to a list of available contractors to perform habitat work on Private Land Open To Sportsmen program lands across the state.

PLOTS is an agreement between the department and private landowners to open their lands to walk-in hunting. The department also encourages private landowners to establish or enhance habitat on PLOTS land with grass plantings, food plots, and so on. However, if a landowner does not have the necessary equipment for the work, a contractor is usually needed.

There is a shortage of contractors, or equipment, to perform habitat work in some parts of the state. The bulk of the habitat work is planting native and introduced grasses, which requires a tractor, operator and a grass drill. Other work may include spraying, food plots, tree removal, prescribed burning, and construction of grazing infrastructure (fence/water).

Contractors or businesses interested in being added to the list can go to gf.nd.gov/pli/contact/contractor-list or call 701-328-6265. This is not a guarantee for work, but

story continued on next page

2016 - 2022

Award-Winning Choice Hotel

- Heated/AC Fish Cleaning Facility with freezer space
- Climate-controlled Dog Kennels available

- Cook your catch in comfort at Fins & Feathers Lodge gas grill or deep fryer. Plenty of cooking space inside, too.

Outdoor enthusiasts check us out!



Plus much more...

- FREE high-speed Internet
- FREE hot breakfast buffet
- Plush beds & bedding
- Guest laundry
- Pool & exercise room



701-544-1111
1413 Highway 2 East
Devils Lake, ND 58301

We Partner With Perch Patrol Guides!

www.sleepinndevilslake.com

60th Annual RED RIVER VALLEY

SPORTSMEN'S

SHOW

March 6-9, 2025

5

GREAT SHOWS IN ONE!

Boat Show • Camping Show

- Outdoor Equipment
- Travel Show
- Family Fun Show!

BRING THE WHOLE FAMILY TO OUR **Special Show Event...**





KIDS FISHING WORKSHOP

With the pros from Scheels
Sat. 11 am, Sun 12 noon



TOM HUYNH



TED TAKASAKI



LIVE TROUT POND

SHOW HOURS:

Thursday 5-9 PM

Friday 12-9 PM

Saturday 10-8, Sunday 10-5




www.FargoSportShow.com

Dakota Corner

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Updates



Habitat restoration in action

Two state-threatened fish species—the Northern Redbelly Dace and the Blackside Darter—are getting a habitat makeover at the Gary Gulch Game Production Area in Deuel County!

In partnership with @RESPEC and the @South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks, they contributed to this vital project by:

- Conducting a baseline stream assessment of Gary Creek.
- Performing wetland delineation services to identify and map wetland and stream boundaries.
- Securing Section 404 permitting for placement of habitat structures in the creek.

This project addresses critical issues like poor winter habitat conditions,

sedimentation, bank erosion, and the loss of riparian vegetation. Construction is well underway, and we're looking forward to seeing the completed habitat enhancement project.



Make a Splash in 2025!

Order your South Dakota State Park Entrance License online by March 15 to

receive a free limited-edition Make a Splash sticker.

The sticker will be included with every Park Entrance License order placed online at Go Outdoors South Dakota by March 15, 2025. South Dakota residents, be sure to log in with your account to see Resident Park Entrance Licenses!

Purchase yours now: <https://reservations.gooutdoorsouthdakota.com/Licensing/Catalog.aspx> **MWO**



Fishing Tip:

Increase your Minnow Fish-Catching Power

by Gosh Hagemeister

Get the most out of your minnow! Have you ever noticed how some minnows swim around much longer than others while suspended on your hook beneath the ice, or under your slip bobber alongside the boat? Like people, all minnows are not created equal. Some minnows are simply stronger than their counterparts.

To extend the activity period and swimming range of your minnow, place the hook *slightly in front* of the dorsal fin instead of what 99 percent of what most anglers do: slightly behind the dorsal fin. No matter what you choose to do, check the minnow every 5 to 10 minutes to see if it is getting tired or sluggish. If so, immediately replace it with a fresh minnow! **MWO**



The author with a nice walleye caught with a fresh, lively minnow hooked in front of the dorsal fin.

Captain Josh Hagemeister owns and operates Minnesota Fishing Guide Service. He has been in the fishing industry as a professional fishing guide going on 32 years, starting back in the days when he worked for In-Fisherman's Camp Fish. He contributes to several outdoor

publications, fishing reports and social media sites. Minnesota Fishing Guide Service, 320-291-0708; email josh@minnesotaguideservice.com; www.minnesotaguideservice.com, www.minnesotaicefishhouse.com.

North Dakota Game and Fish...

...continued from previous page

as projects come about the department will refer landowners to the list of available contractors.

Watchable Wildlife checkoff

North Dakotans interested in supporting wildlife conservation programs should look for the Watchable Wildlife checkoff on the state tax form.

The state income tax form gives wildlife enthusiasts an opportunity to support nongame wildlife like songbirds and birds of prey, while at the same time contributing to programs that help everyone enjoy all wildlife.

The checkoff—whether you are receiving a refund or having to pay in—is an easy way to voluntarily contribute to sustain this long-standing program. In addition, direct donations to the program are accepted any time of year.

To learn more about Watchable Wildlife program activities and to view the winning entries in the 2024 photo contest, featured in the January issue of North Dakota OUTDOORS, visit the North Dakota Game and Fish Department website at gf.nd.gov. **MWO**

Devils Lake's LARGEST Fishing & Tackle Selection

NEWBY'S We sell live bait!

ACE Hardware

Logos for: Rapala, Lindy, COSTA, Northland Fishing Tackle, CLAM, ICEARMOR, Salmo, YETI COOLERS, Otter, LIVE TARGET, MarCum, ION, Eskimo, StrikeMaster, JIFFY, and Vexilar.

701.662.9818

Located in the City Plaza • 210 Highway 2 W • Devils Lake, ND

HOURS: MONDAY-FRIDAY 7:30AM-7:00PM, SATURDAY 8AM-6PM, SUNDAY 12PM-5PM

Tips to 'Summerize' Your Ice Fishing Gear

by John Hagemeister

As the ice fishing season nears its end, start thinking about what to do with your ice fishing gear. With the transition from winter gear to summer gear in full swing, here are some "summerizing" tips for ice gear storage. These are not organized—kinda like most of us!

Disclaimer: I am not a mechanic, just a fishing guide on a budget who needs to maintain a ton of stuff. I've learned a few things over the years that have worked for me. On that note... use these tips at your own risk!

Portable fish houses

Clean thoroughly to get any debris and smells out of the house that may attract mice throughout the summer months. Place dryer sheets or moth balls to keep rodents away; refresh these items in July.

Wheel houses/skid houses

Clean thoroughly to remove any food crumbs, smells or anything that will attract rodents. Store in a dry, hard-floored shed.



Clean and lubricate your ice reels so they'll be ready to go next winter.

Storing them outside, somewhere in the back grove, equals mice—and they have all summer to get in and eat wires, cushions, etc.

Grease the heck out of the wheel/axle pivot systems (or they may seize up from

rust), power wash the frame bottom (10 trips down the highway means a ton of road salt on a frame), and charge and disconnect all batteries—unless you have a security system. Plug all vents to keep mice out. Do not



Disconnect the batteries from your winter electronics and recharge them every few months until next ice season.

Let anything dangle from the house to the ground; it's a ladder for rodents! Stuff the place with dryer sheets or moth balls. Crack the roof vent or windows to prevent mold behind that nice pine interior.

Spray all exterior or interior wire connectors with a corrosion protectant. Lube the door locks and hitch lock. Fill propane tanks. Cover regulator (gas line) vents so spiders or moisture can't get into regulators. Double check your insurance coverage.

Finally, hang some Rosary beads from the doorknob and cross your fingers.

Electronics batteries

Disconnect from the unit and charge full using a 2-amp charger (a fast charge will cook batteries). Spray battery connections with a protectant along with the connectors on the unit itself. Recharge every couple of months until next ice season. The same holds true for four-wheeler or snowmobile batteries. It's not uncommon to get 4 to 5 years out of a battery if maintained. Purchase a high-speed transducer and mount the Vexilar or Humminbird to the boat to use it all summer long.

Ice rods/reels

Clean the handles of the rods/reels; rodents and pets love to chew on foam and cork handles that smell tasty! Pop open the reels and lightly oil. Loosen the drags to minimal tension to save tension washers, etc. Store in a dry place, out of the reach of pets. Avoid hot storage places like the garage attic; summer heat will destroy line, rod varnishes, glues, etc.

If you have young kids or grandkids (2 to 4 years old), keep a couple of ice rods ready to go for them to use in the boat or off the dock. Five-year-olds are ready for the big show: a 4- to 5-foot setup.

Ice tackle

Put it in the boat or tackle box and use it all summer! Who says that tungsten ice jigs aren't a deadly summer option for huge "pannies?"

Gas augers/equipment

You still have one? Never use ethanol gas in small gas tools/equipment; but even if you do, or don't, add Sea Foam (I'm a big fan) to the gas, and run the auger for 5 minutes to get it through the system. Empty the gas into your car or boat tank, then run auger empty until it quits. Remove the gas tank lid and let the tank dry. Feel free to spray a lube into spark plug hole and pull a few times to "coat" the piston area to prevent corrosion. These simple steps will also keep your wheelers and "sleds" happy; at least all of mine like it!

story continued on next page



FISHING 101: Cast for big fish at LUNDker Lake and test your casting with Lund Boat Fishing Pros.



Stop by the **TROUT POND** with free catch & release fishing for kids.



Explore the new **RV AREA** with 60,000 sq. ft. of the latest makes and models of RVs, presented by Metro RV Dealers Association.



Get tips and tricks for Muskie, Walleye and Crappie fishing at **DAILY SEMINARS** from local experts.

SAVE \$5 TODAY!

USE PROMO CODE: **MIDWEST**

NorthwestSportshow.com | MARKETPLACE EVENTS

@NorthwestSportshow | **@NWSportshow**

Fishing from Shore this Spring

by Don Gasaway

To the casual observer, anglers fishing from shore seek whatever comes along. They do not have a fancy boat with electronics and a big motor. In fact, most do not own a boat. They do not enter and win tournaments. They just catch fish.

Fishing from a lake or riverbank is an uncomplicated and inexpensive approach to life that carries over into fishing.

There is no need to purchase a lot of gear or. Often, all you need is a collection of closed-face reels and accompanying rods purchased at flea markets and garage sales. Beginners do not look for a particular brand; they just buy what is there. More advanced shore anglers sometimes invest in longer rods to cast further, and more advanced terminal tackle.

Often, the shore fishing angler's approach to the lake differs from his high-tech competitors, as does his tackle. He fishes from shore or by wading. Often, he/she likes to find and actively fish vegetation. If, available, look for holes in the milfoil in about one or two feet of water.

Casting just beyond the hole, slowly begin a retrieve. Allow the lure to settle

down into the hole. Leave it still for a while before subtly twitching it. Look carefully for line movement before continuing the retrieve. Poking plastic worms through vegetation during low-light conditions can be particularly effective as fish move from daytime shelter from the sunlight to feeding patterns.

If the fish are not in holes, moves to and fish the edges of cover. These shallow areas often produce fish.

Small spinnerbaits consistently take larger fish. I like using a brass blade and darker tail spinnerbait. They are a snack for fish, even if they are not hungry.

Many unsung anglers subscribe to this "more primitive" type of bass fishing. It is a philosophy of uncomplicated fishing. Smaller waters are ideal for this pattern and are part of our fishing heritage. **MWO**

Don Gasaway is a freelance outdoor writer from Marion, Ill. who has written more than 1,000 magazine articles. Find him on Facebook at: facebook.com/donsjournal. Comments and reviews are welcome.



Shore fishing in spring provides an opportunity for parent-child field trips in the warming temperatures. Many a duo catches panfish with basic worm-and bobber-techniques that have warmed anglers' hearts for generations. Photo: Don Gasaway

Ten Tips to 'Summerize'...

...continued from previous page

Sharpen all auger blades (beat the fall rush) and spray with a lube to prevent potential rust. Check the lube levels in the auger crankcase.

Electric augers

Hmmm, not much for maintenance here. Simply charge batteries and maintain the battery charge throughout summer. Do not store in a hot place; heat kills more batteries than cold. Spray blades with a lube to prevent rust, etc.

Bait stuff

Use your bait pucks all spring and summer for waxies and spikes. When bait shops run out of waxies or spikes for summer, go to speedyworm.com to get spikes and waxies delivered to your door. Why wait for ice! I like to use larger bait pucks for leeches. Drill a couple of holes in them and let them float in the livewell; forget the Styrofoam disaster cups from the bait shop! I also let the kids (myself as well, just in case the plastics bite is off) use the bait pucks for taking small amounts of crawlers/leeches wherever—like walking to the local pond or riverbank. Any unused bait pucks? Run them through the dishwasher *when nobody is home*. Portable aerators: Remove all batteries and spray the electric pump motor shaft with lube.

Coordinates

Don't forget to save all of those "honey holes" onto another unit or "chip." Some spots may be great summer haunts as well. And ya' never know when the unit might fail in storage, causing you to lose your coordinates.

Well, I hope that helps. I'm sure I've forgotten something that I normally take for granted and do myself. Happy equipment equals happy fishing! **MWO**

Captain Josh Hagemeister owns and operates Minnesota Fishing Guide Service. He has been in the fishing industry as a professional fishing guide going on 32 years, starting back in the days when he worked for In-Fisherman's Camp Fish. He contributes to several outdoor publications, fishing reports and social media sites. Minnesota Fishing Guide Service, 320-291-0708; email josh@minnesotaguideservice.com; www.minnesotaguideservice.com, www.minnesotacefishhouse.com.

okuma
INSPIRED FISHING

FEEL THE POWER, NOT THE WEIGHT

DEAD EYE
Pro

TECHNIQUE-SPECIFIC WALLEYE RODS

Built with maximum power and ultra-responsive sensitivity, the **Dead Eye Pro "A" Series** lets you focus on what matters most: your next move

UFR OXX
okumafishingusa.com



Dangers in Whitetail Hunting—PART TWO

Keeping my kids, grandkids, other hunting partners and myself from becoming lost while hunting deer in a mostly roadless wilderness area has long been a time-consuming part of our pre-hunt preparations. This has included selecting deer trails to use (making our own trails being illegal on public lands), clearing them of dead branches and marking them with fluorescent tacks. This is also done to ensure that help could be more easily provided for any of us if help was needed, day or night.

Providing one another with information about where we plan to stand hunt each day is something we still also always do. This ensures that help can be quickly provided for a hunting partner unable to return to camp for some reason, from midday until soon

after it becomes dark in the evening.

This happened to me one evening a few years ago because I decided to swing widely through an area I hadn't scouted for years while on my way back to camp. Too soon, it became dark. Realizing this might prompt my sons and grandsons to begin an unneeded search for me where I had planned to stand hunt that day, now far behind me, I decided to let them know I'm alive and headed back to camp by using a signal I hadn't used for a long time: Firing a single shot into the air after dark. Back in the 1970s, when my kids were young teenagers, if any of them had not used this message in such a circumstance, I would have been plenty worried and upset until they showed up.

To speed up my return that night, I



A line of fluorescent tacks reflecting the beam of a flashlight, leading the way in darkness.

headed cross-country, northwest, compass in hand, toward a long trail I had marked with fluorescent tacks years earlier. Before

long, there they were, my tacks lighting up as brightly as ever in the beam of my flashlight, enabling me to hike rapidly the rest of the

WHY MINNESOTA for your Snowmobiling Adventure?

With 100% of respondents reporting...

- ✓ **22,000 Miles of White Ribbon Trails**
Maintained, installed & groomed by volunteers
- ✓ **1,000s of Hotels, Resorts & B&Bs**
Discounts available with your membership card
- ✓ **11,632 Lakes** (the real number) **to Explore**
Make sure ice conditions are safe for snowmobiling
- ✓ **Some of the Nicest Norwegians you'll ever meet!**

Brought to you by:

www.MnSnowmobiler.org

To purchase a Non-Resident Snowmobile Trail Permit go to www.dnr.state.mn.us & search "Snowmobile Trail Permit"

Photo: Wayne Davis

Follow

on our Socials

youtube.com/MidWestOutdoorsTV

facebook.com/MidWestOutdoorsUSA

instagram.com/MidWestOutdoorsUSA

twitter.com/MWOutdoorsUSA

way. Upon arriving in camp and finding no one there, then realizing my gang had nonetheless begun searching for me, I used another the old signal we also used when my kids were young to form a crew to drag a deer to camp: three long blasts on a car horn. A series of three well-spaced gunshots was an often-used alternative when help was needed upon taking a deer.

After my family returned to camp that evening, I decided that we needed a review of our audible long-range emergency signals, especially the single shot after dark, plus one other important reminder: Upon hearing such a signal at night, always determine the compass direction from which it came—your first and most important information if a search or help is needed.

Quickly answering a single shot at night with a single shot in camp or a single honk of a car horn is a good idea too. It comforts the person working his or her way back to camp in darkness and helps that person zero in on the proper compass direction to stick to if needed. Today, we reserve the use the three-shot signal, repeated if necessary, for when help is definitely needed.

Such communications are still needed where we hunt because cell phone service is not yet available in much of our enormous wilderness area. Yes, walkie-talkies could be a useful alternative for communicating with one another, but like in many states, they are illegal to use while hunting deer in our state.

In our past, a single shot at night could have another meaning, such as, "I'm okay, but I'm planning to stay where I am for the night," perhaps because I'm worn out; too far away to make it back to camp this evening; or I'm unable to spot familiar landmarks leading back to camp in darkness or because of heavy snow is falling. A second single shot later makes this decision obvious. This happened to me once, in 1967.

To survive a night in the woods in frigid winter weather, you need a good flashlight with fresh batteries; a shelter—a rolled-up tarp with attached ropes or a lean-to made with make-shift poles covered well with evergreen boughs; a 6-inch-thick layer of evergreen boughs on the ground underneath your shelter (never sleep on the frozen, uninsulated ground in winter); and a camp fire in front to provide warmth and light. A fire is easily made from thin, very flammable bark peeled from a standing birch tree (lit with matches carried in a waterproof container) covered with a small pile of thin dead sticks broken from the lowest dead branches of a standing evergreen tree.

For a long-lasting fire, you need to add thicker pieces wood. Rather than use wood lying on the ground, likely to be damp, rotten, smoky, and not easy to burn, I prefer chunks of wood made from small-diameter trunks of standing dead trees (I prefer dead, hot-burning evergreens). I break them into 2-foot lengths by placing one end of a dead tree

trunk between two standing live tree trunks close together and pushing or pulling the long end to break off short lengths for my fire (breaking enough to keep warm all night).

You also need bottled water, snacks, extra ammo (for gunshot communications), a pruner (for cutting off boughs), a compass (only useful when often referred to when hiking) and a GPS if you know how to use one. I routinely carry all these with my extra hunting gear and spare clothing, such as gloves and a muff for my hands in a packsack (except my compass, which is always on lanyard on my neck), permanently attached to my 34-year-old, homemade, wood-framed, folding, backpacked, ground-level stand hunting stool (see photo).

While firearm hunting, you should always wear blaze-orange clothing for safety, and always be very sure of your target before firing at anything. Though fatal accidents involving firearms are uncommon during deer hunting seasons, they are especially heart-breaking and should be prevented at all costs. The father of a friend of mine while in college was shot and killed by a deer hunter who immediately departed (revealed by tracks in snow) without reporting this tragic accident. Never be that kind of a deer hunter.

Wildlife of various sizes can also be dangerous. In my 79 years of big game hunting, I've been attacked by three black

bears (slightly injured by one), a rabid skunk, a weasel (ermine) that thought one of my boots was edible, and a cow moose that didn't like me getting between her and her calf to get her picture. My wife, Jene, was challenged by a 10-point buck by pressing the tips of its antlers against her chest—soon ending without injury because Jene knew she shouldn't touch or push away those antlers. My daughter, Katie, was repeatedly attacked in a treestand by a crazed barred owl. Two of my grandsons and I were closely stalked by wolves. I was once rushed by three wolves (turned away by gunshots) likely intending to pirate the buck I was dragging alone.

My greatest danger came from a seemingly dead white-tailed doe that I had fired at a short time earlier. While kneeling on the ground behind its tail end to begin field dressing it, it suddenly kicked me on my chest with both of its hind hooves, knocking me backwards about ten feet. Imagine being kicked by a deer that can hurl its own 150- to 170-pound body 8 feet into the air and up to 25 feet away while bounding. Fortunately, it was a very cold that day and I was heavily clothed, therefore only bruised.

This was why I learned to always touch the eye of a downed deer, bear, moose or any other potentially dangerous animal with the tip of a long stick before handling the animal, then watching for the eye to blink—the last

reflex to fade away after an animal has been fatally hit by a bullet or arrow. If that eye blinks, back off and wait a bit, and then either check for a blink again or provide a finishing shot. If the eye doesn't blink, check for a blink a second time. If a blink is still not seen, it's safe to take photos while holding on to a buck's antlers, and it is safe to field dress the deer.

Having learned all this, sometimes the hard way, including what I wrote in last month's first part of this article in MidWest Outdoors, I can't help but shudder a bit whenever someone says to me, "I'd like to try deer hunting." There is so much to teach, and so much to learn, before whitetail hunting can truly become free of numerous serious dangers. If you have not been concerned about avoiding these dangers yourself, for your sake, those who care a lot for you and those you teach, such as a son or daughter, get concerned now. **MWO**

Dr. Ken Nordberg has been an avid hunter and angler for over 70 years and an outdoor writer for nearly 40. He has written 800+ outdoor articles, made three decades of contributions to MidWest Outdoors and written 15 outstanding books on deer and bear hunting. In addition, he's a teacher, seminar speaker and blogger and you can find some of his work on YouTube and other social media.

The Best Built Safes On The Planet!





LIBERTY
SAFE

Proudly Made
in the U.S.A.

LIFETIME WARRANTY

UL RATED SECURITY SAFES
GUARANTEED FOR LIFE

On Fire Or Attempted Break-in

FREE opening of damaged safe

FREE safe replacement

FREE delivery of replacement safe

FREE warranty transfer to new owner

Visit our
showroom!
40 - 60 safes
on display!

IT'S
NEVER
BEEN EASIER
TO OWN A
LIBERTY
SAFE!!!









WE'VE
MOVED!

www.libertysafemaplegrrove.com

6901 E. Fish Lake Road Suite #106 | Maple Grove

763-494-9075

Open Monday-Friday 8am-5pm | Call for Saturday hours

NEW
LOCATION!

MOVING?



Please let us know.
Call 630-887-7722

to report your change of
address so you don't miss
an issue of



Minnesota DNR Updates



Record muskie.

Mille Lacs muskie qualifies as new IGFA all-tackle length record

Last October 29, Art Weston, fishing with guide Nolan Sprengeler, caught, measured and released a mammoth 57.5-inch muskie while casting large a large Bondy Royal Orba lure at night. IGFA recognizes the fish's fork length (from nose to fork of the tail) of 54.33

inches to be the new IGFA world record by length.

Ice can be a powerful natural force!

The cycle of freezing, thawing, and re-freezing of lake waters leads to what is called ice heaving, the slow push of ice sheets against a shoreline due to fluctuations in



The Lake Tetonka and Lake Elysian boating ramps.

the ice. Cracks in ice can form because of different contraction rates at the top and bottom of the ice sheet. When warmer temperatures thaw the ice, water fills in those cracks—and when temperatures plummet, that water freezes and expands, pushing the sheet of ice against the shoreline. Without the usual insulating snow cover and the recent rising and falling of temperatures, you may be noticing the creation of more ice ridges (soil mounds formed along the shoreline) from this natural phenomenon. Over time, repeated ice heaving can move and damage even the heaviest of materials, like concrete boat ramps!

There have been more and more reports of public water access boat ramps heaved out of place. While the PWAs are not maintained during the winter, repairs will be made when warmer weather arrives. In the meantime, it is recommended that ice anglers use alternate access points—this can be through other public lands, public roads that end at the lake, or even private lands and resorts (which may charge a fee). Ice anglers can also drive around the boat ramp if the shoreline is not too steep, or simply walk out from the shore. No matter which alternate route you choose, remember that no ice is 100% safe! You are responsible for your own safety, so use your best judgment when it comes to ice strength and stability.

Learn more about ice heaving: http://mndnr.gov/.../watergmt.../pwpermits/ice_ridges.html

Shelter removal deadlines

Dark houses, fish houses and portables must be off the ice no later than 11:59 p.m. (end of the day) for each of the dates given in the categories below. County sheriffs may



It's 'skelter shelter' come deadline time! It's 'skelter shelter' come deadline time!

prohibit or restrict the use of motorized vehicles if dangerous ice conditions are present. If shelters are not removed, owners may be cited. A conservation officer also may confiscate, remove or destroy any ice structure and its contents if not removed by the deadline.

Inland waters

- South of line - March 3, 2025
- North of line - March 17, 2025

Border waters

- Minnesota-Iowa - Feb. 20
- Minnesota-Wisconsin - March 1
- Minnesota-North and South Dakota - March 5
- Minnesota-Canada - March 31

Dates of removal are determined by an east-west line formed by U.S. Hwy. 10, east along Hwy. 34 to Minnesota Hwy. 200, east along Hwy. 200 to U.S. Hwy. 2, and east along Hwy. 2 to the Minnesota-Wisconsin border. After removal dates, shelters may remain on the ice between midnight and one hour before sunrise only when occupied or attended. Storing or leaving shelters on a public access is prohibited.



If you do one thing today, watch the short videos of the Drotto Catch-N-Release Boat Latch online at www.DrottoProducts.com



Auto boat launch makes boat loading quick and easy

Replaces bow roller, bunk or roller trailers, works on most v-hull boats

Lever releases bow hook, latches automatically when loading

Hard, smooth plastic liner cradles boat, protecting your boat bow

Fast and easy to install

MADE IN USA Patented. Dealers welcome.

DROTTO
Catch-N-Release Boat Latch

605-366-0542
23810 467th Ave.
Colman, SD 57017

www.drottoproducts.com

What You Need This Winter
Lake of The Woods, MN



River Bend RESORT
Lake of the Woods, MN
800-292-3084
www.riverbendresort.com

Comfortable Heated Accomodations
Cabins
Sleepers
Hotel

Day Houses
Full Service
Bar & Resturant
Meal Plan Packages

Everything In 1 Call

MIDWEEK DISCOUNTS (Sun-Thu) 15% OFF

CWD confirmed in two DPAs

Two adult male deer tested positive for chronic wasting disease in two deer permit areas without previous confirmed cases of the disease.

One deer was harvested in DPA 266 near Hawley in Clay County and the other deer was harvested in DPA 701 near Greenfield in Hennepin County. Both deer were harvested during the firearms deer season. The hunters submitted tissue samples via the DNR's partner sampling program which consists mostly of taxidermists.

"This finding is concerning because it indicates possible new areas of CWD prevalence in wild deer where it hasn't previously been detected," said Erik Hildebrand, wildlife health supervisor with the Minnesota Department of Natural

Resources. "This also highlights how important our disease surveillance efforts are and how critical it is that hunters are able to test deer harvested anywhere in the state if they would like to."

The closest CWD positive wild deer to the one detected in DPA 701 is 31 miles from a positive in DPA 605. The CWD positive wild deer in DPA 266 is roughly 54 miles from the confirmed positive near Climax, Minnesota.

Following the detections in DPAs 266 and 701, the Minnesota DNR will implement measures outlined in its CWD response plan, which calls for three consecutive years of testing to help determine the potential prevalence of the disease near the detections.

Within DPAs where CWD has been detected and confirmed, the Minnesota DNR uses multiple management actions designed to help mitigate disease spread, including carcass movement restrictions, a deer feeding and attractant ban and, sometimes, increased hunting opportunities with increased bag limits.

Additional management actions will be taken per DNR's CWD response plan, likely this fall, and might include the establishment of a new CWD management zone and surrounding surveillance area to better understand the distribution and prevalence of this disease in the area, as well as considerations of late season hunting, landowner shooting permits and targeted culling.

A preliminary 2024 season report shows higher deer harvest

2023-2024 mild winter conditions helped deer populations begin to recover.

Hunters harvested more than 170,000 deer during the 2024 hunting season, up 7% statewide from the 2023 hunting season. The statewide harvest was 3% lower than the five-year average.

"We still have a way to go in parts of northern Minnesota," said Todd Froberg, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources big game program coordinator. "But it seems like we're moving in the right direction."

Weather during peak hunting times such as weekends played a significant factor in hunter success and provided optimal conditions for hunting during firearms season in much of the state. Anecdotal reports to wildlife managers also suggested that opening weekend of 2024 firearms opener lined up well with deer activity during the peak of their mating season.

- Breakdown by region

One of the areas that saw the most increase in deer harvest was the northeast, where harvest was up 9% compared to 2023.

Due to the ecology of the region, deer populations are significantly impacted by winter conditions, particularly deep snow. The mild winter in 2023-24 helped bolster local populations. However, wildlife managers are maintaining conservative bag limits and caution it will take more than one mild winter to help deer recover.

Northwest Minnesota also saw a jump in harvest with an 8% increase from 2023. The past mild winter was exactly what deer needed in this region. Many wildlife managers received reports of twins and triplets in spring and summer 2024.

The central and southeast regions of the state also saw great success, with a 9% increase from 2023 and a 2% increase compared to the five-year average. Hunting opportunities remain robust in these regions of the state, with bag limits as high as three- to five-deer limits.

The southwest saw a 4% increase in harvest compared to 2023 and a 1% increase from the five-year average. This area of the state has had very consistent harvest the last few years.

- High archery season success

This year was an incredibly successful year for archery hunters, with archery harvest up 16%. Preliminary harvest results suggest this might be the second highest archery harvest ever in Minnesota, only surpassed by the 2020 season.

In 2023, Minnesota legalized crossbows for all archery hunters regardless of age. Crossbow harvest saw a 28% increase compared to 2023 and 48% of total archery harvest was by crossbow. Vertical bow harvest was also up 7% compared to 2023.

Both crossbow and vertical bowhunters took similar proportions of deer in terms of sex and age at harvest. A little less than half of the deer harvested with archery equipment were adult bucks (48% crossbow, 47% vertical bow). Adult does harvested during archery season made up about 40% of the deer harvested during archery season (40% crossbow, 42% vertical bow).

If drier winter conditions persist into spring 2025, hunters might look forward to increasing deer numbers in the upcoming hunting season.

People who are interested in deer harvest data can find current harvest data and past harvest reports on the Minnesota DNR's deer reports and statistics webpage. The page features an interactive map and graph that visualize the data.

Resident lifetime license fees

Age Group	Fishing	Small Game	Sports	Firearms deer	Archery deer	Spearing only	Spearing Angling	Sports Spearing
3 and under	\$344	\$223	\$522	\$458	\$458	\$90	\$432	\$612
4 to 15	\$469	\$301	\$710	\$607	\$607	\$124	\$579	\$833
16 to 50	\$574	\$430	\$927	\$741	\$741	\$117	\$678	\$1,046
51 and over	\$379	\$274	\$603	\$528	\$528	\$61	\$439	\$666

Lifetime license options

Purchase a lifetime license for yourself or as a gift to someone else. Lifetime licenses are available for certain hunting and fishing activities and must initially be applied for through the DNR License Center. The initial purchase of lifetime license cannot be purchased online. Go to https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/rlp/licenses/lifetime/res_lifetime.pdf to examine the many options.

How long do resident lifetime licenses take to pay for themselves? We did the math, so you don't have to:

- A lifetime fishing license purchased for a Minnesotan age 3 or younger will pay for itself in about 15 years. That means from age 31 on, they'll enjoy the benefits of your gift.
- A lifetime small game license purchased for a Minnesotan age 51 or older will pay for itself in about 12 years. Small game, big memories! Perfect for the hunter in your life.
- A lifetime sports license (fishing + small game) purchased for a Minnesotan age

4-15 will pay for itself in about 19 years. Set your little one up for a lifetime of outdoors adventures!

• A lifetime fishing license purchased for a Minnesotan age 16-50 will pay for itself in about 24 years, and for those 51+, only about 15 years. Give the gift that keeps on giving.

Nonresident lifetime license fees

Lifetime licenses are available for certain hunting and fishing activities and must initially be applied for through the DNR License Center. You may purchase a lifetime license yourself or as a gift for someone else.

Age Group	Fishing	Small Game
3 and under	\$821	\$947
4 to 15	\$1,046	\$1,280
16 to 50	\$1,191	\$1,633
51 and over	\$794	\$1,083

MWO



Your trusted source for everything on the water.

Outboards | Sterndrives | Inboards | Sport Jet

WE SUPPORT YOU!

Fishing • Sailing • Cruising • Performance • Racing
Government Entities • DNR • Schools/Universities
Fire Departments • Search & Rescue • First Responders

Visit our showroom and service center
or stop by our booth #819 for the Northwest Sportshow!
(March 13 -16, 2025 at the Minneapolis Convention Center)

Special Limited Time Promotion!
Get 7! 5 Years of Total Coverage on Select Engines – with 2 Year Bonus!
Offer valid January 2, 2025 through March 31, 2025. Some restrictions apply. Call for details.



Be ready for Spring!

Have us service your needs throughout the winter months.

LARGEST INVENTORY!!

NEW motors and engines in stock!



Contact us for a full list of inventory
Rebuilt/used motors also available!

❄️ Winter sales going on now! ❄️

3456 Washington Ave N • Minneapolis, MN 55412
(612) 588-3456 | www.suprememarinemn.com

Don't Spook Shallow-Water Panfish



Shallow-water panfish are very spooky in spring.

by Jerry Carlson

Several years ago, I purchased a forward-facing sonar. With the amount of fishing that I do in both winter and summer, it made sense to have a tool that would help locate fish. As it turned out, this unit taught me a great deal about fish behavior.

The most important thing I have learned from the forward-facing sonar is how spooky fish are and how much they move around.

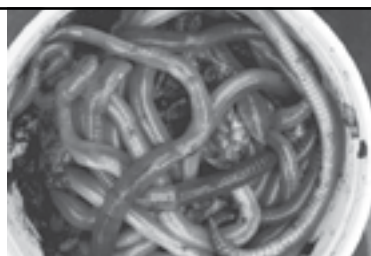
In winter, any noise on top of the ice makes fish nervous and often causes them to change locations. When fishing shallow in the open-water season, the presence of a nearby boat does the same.

There are other factors to consider when referring to spooky fish, such as water depth. Deep water tends to give fish a sense of security in both winter and summer. In shallow water, weeds or some type of cover will make spooky fish feel more secure. Fish



Chasing spring panfish is a favorite pastime.

BAIT SHOP DIRECTORY



LAKE MINNETONKA

DH Custom Rods & Tackle
952-471-7637
dhcustomrods.com

MILLE LACS LAKE

Prince Bait & Marine
320-983-6344

princebaitandmarine.com
Guide Service: No

RAINY LAKE

The Outdoorsman's HQ
218-283-9337

facebook.com/outdoorsmanshq
Guide Service: No

LAKE OSAKIS

Head of the Lakes
800-662-4253
headofthelakesresort.com
Guide Service: Yes

DEVILS LAKE

Ed's Bait Shop
701-662-8321
edsbarandbait.com
Guide Service: Yes

Thank you for supporting these bait shops!

feel more secure in stained water than they do in gin-clear water.

With open-water panfish opportunities approaching, it's a good time to think about early-season strategies and ways to combat the spookiness of shallow fish.

I have written articles before about the need to fish far from the boat in the spring. The use of bobbers or floats that are somewhat heavy for their size help with long casts. Seven- or 8-foot fishing rods also assist with making long casts.

I always use an electric motor to approach shallow areas I plan on fishing. I recall numerous times that other boats came to join in on the panfish we had located, only to spook them away by running their outboards too close to the fish.

If you use an anchor to hold your fishing location, slide it into the water gently. A big splash does not help your stealthy approach.

Many times, I have had to fish right next to docks in spring to catch panfish. Docks

offer a sense of security that shallow fish appreciate. When fishing close to docks, making accurate casts is extremely important. Targeting docks is especially helpful in lakes with exceptionally clear water.

Shallow weeds or shoreline cover also helps spooky fish feel more secure. If something offers security, they hold in one spot longer. Several times, we have managed to catch limits of crappies next to a fallen tree. Wind can make a difference. Fish spook easier in flat water than they do in waves.

Chasing spring panfish is a favorite pastime of many anglers, me included. Understanding the spookiness of shallow-water panfish can help with the process of locating and catching fish. **MWO**

Jerry Carlson began his writing career in 1987 and covers both hunting and fishing topics. He currently writes for numerous media outlets and does radio work with WJON AM in St. Cloud, Minn. He has authored a book called Details for Locating and Catching Fish.

Water Fun Starts Here!



5-Star
Certified
YAMAHA
Service
Department



SunCatcher

**Dan's
ALL SEASON
SERVICE**
PARK RAPIDS, MN
218-237-3267



PORTA-DOCK

www.dansall.com

Serving Central & Northern Minnesota!



Fully guided Walleye,
Perch and Panfish trips on
Lake Winnibigoshish and
area lakes.
Book today!



We operate on northern Minnesota lakes:
Lake Winnibigoshish • Leech Lake • Red Lake • Lake of the Woods

Guided fishing trips with our licensed captain include all fishing equipment, bait, tackle, fish cleaning & packaging

Exclusive personalized open water packages available. Includes cabins, restaurant, full bar, transportation.

Call for details!

www.zupsguideservice.com

507-720-4401

MINNESOTA Sportsman's Calendar

For the most up-to-date info: MidWestOutdoors.com/events

To list your event in the MWO Sportsman's Calendar, email info to: info@midwestoutdoors.com – Subject line: "Minnesota Calendar Listing." Please allow 6 to 8 weeks for publication.

MONTHLY ACTIVITIES/CLUBS

>Fishers of Men Fishing Club meets the first Thursday of each month at the Lutheran Church of the Master, 1200 69th Ave. N., Brooklyn Center at 7:00pm. For more info: John @ 612-670-0707 or fishersofmenclub.org.
 >FM Walleyes Unlimited meets the third Thursday of each month at the Double Wood, Fargo, ND @ 7:00pm. For more info: 701-271-0577 or CMaloy8739@aol.com.
 >GEM Fishing Club meets the third Tuesday of the month at Emmanuel Christian Center, 7777 University Ave. (Rm. 220) in Fridley, MN. For more info: 952-882-1711.
 >The Minnesota Valley In-Fisherman Club meets the fourth Tuesday of each month at the Apple Valley American Legion at 7:00pm. For more info: Gary @ 952-423-3662 or 763-268-3621.
 >Muskie Inc., North Metro Chapter, meets the third Tuesday of every month at Jack's Restaurant, 201 Lowry Ave. NE, Minneapolis.
 >Muskie Inc., Twin Cities Chapter, meets the second Tuesday of every month at the Knights of Columbus Hall, 1114 W. 79th St. in Bloomington at 7:00pm. Public welcome.

>Muskie Inc, Lake Superior Chapter, meets the second Tuesday of each month at the Incline Station in Duluth. For more info: Tom @ 218-525-7500.
 >Red River Riders ATV Club meets the 3rd Wednesday of each month at the Wild Rice Bar & Grill at 7:00pm. For more info: redriverridersatv.org
 >Trout Unlimited, Twin Cities Chapter meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at the Woodlake Nature Center, 735 Lakeshore Dr., in Richfield at 7:00pm. For more info: 952-474-1694.
 >Women Anglers of Minnesota (WAM) meet the second Monday of each month at Elks 44 Club, 2975 Brookdale Dr, Brooklyn Park, MN, at 7:30pm. Public is welcome. For more info: 612-339-1322 or WomanAnglers@aol.com.
 >Women for Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife (WFHW) meet the second Monday of each month at the Sawmill Inn in Brainerd, MN at 7:00pm. For more info: Peggy @ 218-764-3372 or Kim @ 218-963-7539.
 >Walleye Searchers of MN meet the 1st Monday of each month at Elks Lodge in Rochester, MN. For more info: walleyesearchers.org.

TOURNAMENTS

BASS TOURNAMENTS

Champions Tour
classicbass.com
 \$1000 entry
Jun 3: Lake Vermilion
Jul 1: Mississippi River, La Crosse, WI (Pool 8)
Jul 15: Lake Minnetonka
Aug 5: L'Homme Dieu Chain
Aug 26: Championship, Location TBD

Frankie's Pro Team Tournament
 Contact: Frankie Dusenka 651-257-6334
 \$1000 per team
frankies.net
 North/South Center and Green Lakes

International Falls Bass Championship
 Contact: 1-800-FALLS-MN
 \$500 per team
ifallsbass.com
Aug 21-23: Rainy Lake/Rainy River, MN

WALLEYE TOURNAMENTS

2025 Cabela's Masters Walleye Circuit (MWC)
 Contact: 1-877-893-7947
masterswalleyecircuit.com
 Team Format--\$650 (plus memberships)
Mar 21-22: Illinois River, Spring Valley, IL
Apr 11-12: Lake Erie, Port Clinton, OH
May 2-3: Petenwell Lake, Rome, WI
May 30-31: Lake Oahe, Mobridge, SD
Jul 18-19: Bay de Noc, Gladstone, MI
Sep 12-13: Cass Lake, MN
2025 Championship (for 2024 Qualifiers)
Oct 9-11: Le Homme Dieu Chain, Alexandria, MN
2026 Championship (for 2025 Qualifiers)
Oct 1-3: Devils Lake, ND

Cabela's National Walleye Tour (NWT)
 Contact: 1-612-424-0708
nationalwalleyetour.com
 Pro Angler--\$1750 (plus membership)

Co-Angler--\$500 (plus membership)
 Mississippi River, Red Wing, MN
Apr 24-25: Lake Sharpe, Pierre, SD
May 22-23: Mississippi River, La Crosse, WI
Jul 10-11: Lake Huron, Alpena, MI
Aug 7-8: Lake Erie, Dunkirk, NY
Championship
Sep 4-6: Bay of Green Bay, Marinette, WI

Minnesota Tournament Trail
 Contact: Mike & Renee Holt @ 320-679-2825
mntournamenttrail.com
 \$220 per team (1-day events) \$260/2-day events
 * = Denotes 50-Boat Field

Lake Pepin Open Walleye Classic
 Contact: walleyesearchers.org
 \$200 per team
Apr 19-20: Lake Pepin/Pool 4

FM Walleyes Spring Classic
 Contact: Barry Chouinard 218-790-4762
fmwalleyes.com
 \$300 per team
May 30-31: Pelican Lake

ALS Walleye Tournament
 Contact: Sandy Judge 888-672-0484
sandy@alsmn.org
 \$250 - \$500+ per team
May 30-31: Virtual Tournament

Leech Lake Walleye Tournament
 Contact: Jim Tuller 218-675-6176
leechlakewalleyetournament.com
 \$350 per team
May 30-31: Leech Lake

Hunter's Point Walleye Shootout
 Contact: 320-676-3227
hunterspointresort.com
Jun 7: Mille Lacs Lake

Knights of Columbus Walleye Tournament
 Contact: 218-556-3651
 \$480 per team
 Lake Bemidji

Osakis Walleye Tournament
 Contact: Mike @ 320-859-4781
 \$325 per team
Jun 14: Lake Osakis

Devils Lake Invitational Tournament
 Contact: 701-662-4903
devilslakend.com
 \$275 per team
Jun 20: Devils Lake, ND

GRAHA Walleye Shootout (Grand Rapids)
 Contact: grahawalleyeshootout.com
 \$400 per team
Jun 28: Pokegama Lake

Hunter's Point Couples Tournament
 Contact: 320-676-3227
hunterspointresort.com
Jun 28: Mille Lacs Lake
 Mille Lacs Lake

FM Walleyes Fall Classic
 Contact: Barry Chouinard 218-790-4762
fmwalleyes.com
 \$280 per team
Sep 19-20: Big Cormorant Lake

MUSKIES

Frank Schneider, Jr. Memorial Tournament
 Twin Cities Chapter of Muskies, Inc.
 Contact: Denise Olson 612-804-4687
twincitiesmuskiesinc.org
 \$100 per person
 21 Walker/Bemidji/Cass Lake/
 Longville/Big Winni Area Lakes

George Wahl Memorial Tournament
 Twin Cities Chapter of Muskies, Inc.
 Contact: Denise Olson 612-804-4687
twincitiesmuskiesinc.org
 \$50 per person/\$100 per family
 12 Twin Cities Metro Lakes

SPECIAL EVENTS

May 11-12: Take-A-Mom Fishing Weekend

DNR DATES

DNR Information Line: Toll-free 1-888-MINNDNR dnr.state.mn.us
Sep 14, 2024 – Feb 28, 2025: Rabbit & Squirrel Season
Oct 19, 2024 – Mar 15, 2025: Gray & Red Fox Season
Oct 19, 2024 – Mar 15, 2025: Raccoon & Opossum Season
Oct 19, 2024 – Mar 16, 2025: Badger Season (North Zone)
Oct 26, 2024 – Mar 16, 2025: Badger Season (South Zone)

2025 SPORTS SHOWS

Mar 6-9: Red River Valley Boat, Camping, & Vacation Show. FargoDome. cenaiko.com
Mar 7-9: George's Minnesota Muskie Expo. Warner Coliseum at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds. mn-muskieexpo.com
Mar 13-16: Sioux Empire Boat, Camping, & Vacation Show. Sioux Falls
Mar 13-16: Northwest Sportshow. Mpls. Convention Center. northwestsportshow.com
Mar 21-23: Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo. Hamline University, St. Paul. greatwatersflyexpo.com

ARCHERY

>Bow Benders Archery Club
 Contact: 439-2462 or Rob @ 763-430-9945
 For more info: Rick @ 507-931-4603
 >Broken Arrow Archery Club
 For more info: 507-248-3230
 >Chilakoot Bowhunters
 For more info: Scott @ 763-439-2462 or Rob @ 763-430-9945
 >Christian Bowhunters of America
 For more info: Gordy @ 320-679-5767
 >Rapids Archery Club
 For more info: Dan Ericson @ 763-427-0808
 >Rochester Archery Club
 For more info: 507-280-6282
 >Twin Arrows 3D Archery Range
 For more info: 320-679-3986
 >Wolf Track Archery Club
 For more info: 763-780-3965 or 763-784-6084

SEMINARS

Laurentian Environmental Center Family/Service Programs. For more info: 1-888-749-1288

NORTHERN PIKE

Zippel Bay Ice Out Northern Tournament
 Contact: Deanna 218-783-6235
 \$60 per team
 Zippel Bay, Lake of the Woods

CATFISH

Catfish Capital Tournament
 Contact: 701-739-5808 or 701-520-1219
 \$300 per entrant

MULTI-SPECIES TOURNAMENTS

MN Kayak Fishing Association
 Contact: 612-669-5759
mnkayakfishingassociation.org

ICE FISHING

2026 33rd Annual Ice Fishing Extravaganza
 Contact: icefishing.org 1-800-950-9461
 Gull Lake

2026 72nd United Northern Sportsmen's Club Tournament

Contact: 218-721-4843
 Island Lake

2026 28th Annual Am. Legion Ice Fishing Derby

Contact: 218-732-3360
 Fish Hook Lake

2026 Justin Morneau Ice Fishing Classic

Contact: 320-676-3227 or hunterspointresort.com
 Mille Lacs Lake

2026 22nd Annual Ducks Unlimited Ice Fishing Tournament

Contact: Greg Erickson 218-678-2116 or fishingforducks.org
Feb 22: Mille Lacs Lake

2026 Hunter's Point Perch & Pout Tournament

Contact: 320-676-3227 or hunterspointresort.com
 Mille Lacs Lake

THE LAKEMASTER® DOWNLOAD



Rainy River

Lake of the Woods to Baudette

by Joe Henry

Tournament angler and licensed charter captain Joe Henry fishes and hunts the Midwest. Henry is a media member of AGLOW and writes for numerous publications, creates videos, appears on a variety of outdoor TV and radio shows and is a frequent seminar speaker. Henry is the Executive Director of Lake of the Woods Tourism.



LOCATION: The stretch of the Rainy River is typically among the later areas to lose its ice during the early catch-and-release walleye season from March 1 thru April 14. At that point, walleye fishing closes until the regular state season opener in May. Catch-and-release fishing for sturgeon remains open until April 23, 2025; gaffs are not allowed. Boat launches are available at several locations and tend to be very crowded during the early season. Fish during the week, if possible, to avoid crowds. Resorts are plentiful; call to check ice conditions and lodging availability.

SIZE/DEPTH: The stretch of the Rainy River from Birchdale down to where it enters Lake of the Woods is about 40 miles in length. The map shows about a 10-mile section where the river flows into the lake. The international boundary with Ontario runs down the center of the river. U. S. anglers are not allowed to fish the Canadian side of the river unless they first cross the border at Fort Frances and clear customs; even before enhanced procedures were set in place due to Covid, few American fishermen feel the need to cross the border, purchase a license and minnows on the Ontario side, and keep the receipt should an Ontario game warden check you for a license in Ontario waters.

DOMINANT SPECIES: The Rainy River is a major spawning area for the Lake of the Woods walleye population. Hordes of big walleyes from the lake enter the river in fall, following shiners; many remain in the river during winter, and are joined by others moving upstream in early spring. Most of the fish disperse downriver into the lake after spawning. The river also hosts good year-round angling for smallmouth bass and large pike.

- 1 Lighthouse Gap on the lake side. This is where the Rainy River flows into Lake of the Woods between Pine Island on the U.S. side and Sable Island on the Canadian side. If this area is ice-free, fishing at the mouth can always be a good spot with flowing water bringing a smorgasbord of food to fish. Oftentimes, there will be open water at the gap and where it enters the lake, but the ice will be still be intact a bit offshore. In that case, anchor up on the edge of the ice; it is often a good spot for both species.
- 2 Lighthouse Gap, Four Mile Bay side. This spot is tucked around the corner of Pine Island on the edge of the current running into Lake of the Woods. The current edge on the sharp break off of the island is a natural fish attractor. Fish will also hang out right in the moving waters of the gap.
- 3 Four Mile Bay, channel edge. The spot near the red buoy is a natural as current from the river feeds it as it tapers off into the shallower bay. A traditional and proven spot for spring walleyes and sturgeon.
- 4 The mouth of the Rainy River. The Rainy River is our international dividing line with Canada, with the border typically about halfway across from shore to shore. There is a big bay on the backside of the reed bed here where the international line bumps up close or to the reed edge. Your GPS unit or map on your smartphone will clearly show the border. The 10- to 16-foot break into the river channel is a good place to anchor up and jig for walleyes just entering the river. Anchor up in deeper water in the middle of the river for sturgeon.
- 5 Wilson Creek. A big bar comes off the Canadian side of the river near Wilson Creek. Fish right on the borderline for walleyes.
- 6 Wabanica Chapel. The area is where Wabanica Creek flows into the Rainy River, which most anglers know from the beautiful white chapel overlooking the river. The adjacent shoreline has good structure, both right on the break and toward the middle of the channel. A spot for both walleyes and sturgeon. The bay holds nice pike as well.
- 7 Mouth of the Winter Road River. This area has various deep holes amongst a flat on the river. Combine that with flowing water coming out of the tributary and this spot can hold good fish. There are plenty of spots to fish. Try the bay for pike.
- 8 Deep Hole at Curve in River. This spot has many spots within it and holds both walleyes and sturgeon. The obvious one is the deep hole at 32 feet of water. In addition, the Canadian line runs up tight to shore on the inside curve where there is a bit of a current break. That entire shoreline can hold fish.

- 9 The edge of flat downstream from the airport. A good-sized flat extends offshore on the U.S. side. That entire edge can be good for walleyes—particularly the downstream portion of the flat as it ends into deep water.
- 10 The International Bridges. This entire area, including the edge of Baudette Bay into the river channel, and on both sides of the bridges, has up-and-down contours that are natural spots to hold walleyes. Baudette Bay can hold nice pike this time of year.



» GET THE MAP ON YOUR HUMMINBIRD® FISH FINDER

» GET THE MAP ON YOUR PHONE WITH A ONE-BOAT NETWORK® APP SUBSCRIPTION

March 2025

**MIDWEST
OUTDOORS**



WISCONSIN

Section Three



Versatile Vibrating Jigs



"Helping you enjoy the outdoors!"

Become an **MWO INSIDER!**

Each week you'll receive timely info from MWO on where to go, what to use, and how to use it!

FREE sign-up at MidWestOutdoors.com/Insider

(We never give your email address to third-party companies)

Minnesota's *ultimate* FISHING DESTINATION *Lake of the Woods*

- ICE FISHING
- CHARTER FISHING
- SMALL BOAT FISHING
- SANDY BEACHES
- HOUSEKEEPING CABINS
- FULL SERVICE BAR & RESTAURANT

ARNESEN'S
Rocky Point Resort
"ESTABLISHED 1897"

800-535-7585



WWW.ARNESENS.COM



DAIWA SHOW SPECIALS

at the Northwest Sportshow, March 13 - 16, 2025

PURCHASE \$400 OR MORE OF DAIWA PRODUCTS

\$400
OR MORE PURCHASE

→ RECEIVE A **FREE** DTTB-PYR TACKLE BAG (\$69 VALUE)

FREE



PURCHASE AN ARDITO TRAVEL ROD

FREE

→ RECEIVE A **FREE** DVEC TACKLE BINDER



PURCHASE A PROREX ROD AND MATCHING REEL (PROREX TW OR LEXA REEL TW)



FREE

→ RECEIVE A **FREE** CAM CUTTER AND SPLIT RING PLIERS



PURCHASE A PROREX TW OR LEXA REEL TW



→ RECEIVE A **FREE** CAM CUTTER



PURCHASE A PROREX STEIN MUSKIE ROD

→ RECEIVE (2) **FREE** BESSIE BAITS



PURCHASE ANY TATULA ROD, REEL OR COMBO

FREE

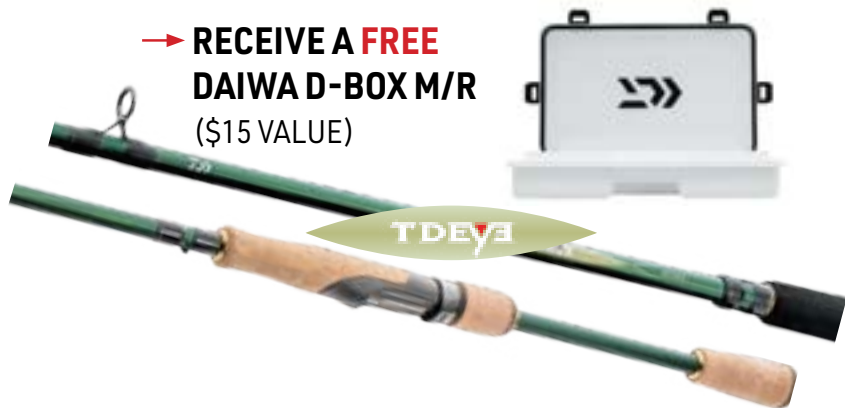


→ RECEIVE A **FREE** DAIWA/AFTCO HOODED PERFORMANCE SHIRT (\$55 VALUE)



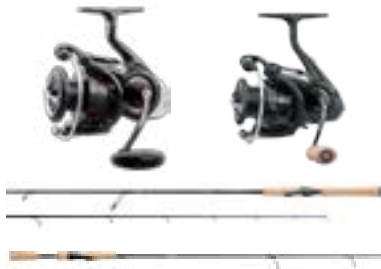
PURCHASE A TD EYE ROD

→ RECEIVE A **FREE** DAIWA D-BOX M/R (\$15 VALUE)



PURCHASE ANY KAGE PRODUCT—ROD OR REEL

FREE



→ RECEIVE A **FREE** KAGE DRY BAG (\$79 VALUE)



SPEND \$100 OR MORE ON ANY DAIWA PRODUCT

\$100
PURCHASE

→ RECEIVE A **FREE** DAIWA CAP
Style varies based on supply

FREE



BUY J-FLUORO SAMURAI OR J-BRAID LINE

→ RECEIVE A **FREE** PAIR OF SCISSORS



PURCHASE (1) SPOOL OF XBRAID

→ RECEIVE A **FREE** SPOOL OF XBRAID (\$25 VALUE)



These offers may be redeemed ONLY with a Daiwa representative on hand.

Limit 1 promotion per customer. All giveaways are limited to quantity on hand with no rain checks.

Joe's Sporting Goods
BOOTH 937
33 E County Rd B
St. Paul, MN 55117
651-209-7800

Reed's Family Outdoor Outfitters
BOOTH 1135
Locations in Walker, MN
& Onamia, MN
reedssports.com

Thorne Bros.
BOOTH 1354
10091 Central Ave NE
Blaine, MN 55434
763-572-3782

Tips and Techniques for Easier Fly Tying

by Doug Thalacker

As with any craft, fly tying has tiers that fall into two categories: obsessive perfectionist and laid-back utilitarians. My friend Rick is one of the former. He ties exquisitely beautiful flies that he then puts into tiny plastic boxes and displays in his study. If a pattern calls for karakul wool, he will search until he finds karakul wool. I am at the other end of the spectrum. My fur and feather boxes are filled with unknown samples from craft stores and resale shops. My flies will never be award winners, and the only place I want them displayed are in the jaws of fish.

No matter what your tying style, some tricks of the trade that make tying go easier, faster and give better results.

Get a manicure

I do lots of outdoorsy stuff with my hands, so I often have rough edges on my fingers and fingernails. These protrusions tend to catch on thread and dubbing. Keep a nail file handy to smooth down fingernails and hangnails. Clean hands make for clean flies and keep skin oil from ruining flies.

Tie off often and use lots of glue

Nothing is more frustrating than having your flies fall apart when you are in the middle of a stream. Tight wrapping is good; a half-hitch knot after every new material and adding a drop of glue between each step and each material is better. I use drug store brand nail varnish for head cement. Dilute it with appropriate thinner so that you get just a thin film.

Cheap equipment

You probably have lots of stuff around your home that you can use instead of buying expensive tools. For example, alligator clips = hackle pliers, lipstick cap = hair stacker, needle in a dowel or wine cork = bodkin.

Cheap or free material

I am not a stickler for using the prescribed materials for flies. They are often hard to find; even more important, they are usually expensive. Cruise resale shops for materials: stuffed toys, fur hats/gloves/coats, leather from purses, to name a few sources. A \$0.99 stuffed toy from Goodwill will get you about a hundred flies worth of synthetic fur. I once got a mink hat for \$5.00 and was able to get about thirty strips for Bunny Lewches.

Leather from purses make a great insect bodies. The wax ring used to seal toilets make great dubbing wax when melted and poured into old film canisters. Lint from dryers. Old carpeting. Did you rip the fingers out of a pair of latex gloves? You now have the makes for "rubber" legs.

If you collect feathers from recently deceased birds, zap them in the microwave for about 30 seconds to kill any mites or other bugs so that they do not infect other materials. Tying tube flies? Use a coffee stirrer or cocktail straw and a length of copper wire. When you throw out the Christmas tree, don't forget to pick off some of the tinsel. It is good for the environment, and you have lots of tinsel for tying. Bead chains from pull lamps make great eyes.

I have also found that craft stores such as Hobby Lobby and JoAnn Fabrics have thread, beads, cement not only in great variety, but usually at cheaper prices. I always look at the remnant section for pieces of "fur."

Scissors

A scissor in the hand is a pain in the thumb. First, get a pair of scissors that fits you, even if it is not a "fly tying" scissors. I found mine (Sorry, but I don't have a name.) at a JoAnn Fabric and Craft store. They had a far bigger selection of scissors than any fly

shop. Most fly tying books that you read have scissors fitting snugly over your thumb and forefinger, and designed so that they stay in place so you never have to put them down. The experts say that putting them down is a time waster; it breaks up the "rhythm" of tying. Well, I ain't got no rhythm, and if I have a choice between wasting a second picking up my scissors and coming away with a sore hand, I will take the former.

Good light for bad eye

A jeweler's lamp is a necessity for tying #20 flies, or if you are blind as a bat, as I am.

Fit the table to you

At \$695 for a to-be-unnamed fly-tying desk—I'll build my own! I also don't like to sit in a chair position when I tie; I found that it hurts my back, and all the cut pieces end up in my lap. So, I built my table so that the top is 36 inches from the floor. It is basically a 2x4 frame with a countertop cut-off. I purchased all the supplies from the Habitat for Humanity resale shop for \$20. I sit/lean on a stool with a 24-inch-high seat.

Wear an apron

I use the same leather apron that I have for working my lathe. As I sit at my table, the apron directs most of the trimmings into a tall wastebasket.

Tie a little, tie a lot

By this, I mean that I pick one type of fly to tie and then tie a bunch of them. By doing this, I can get out all the materials I need and line them up in the order that I will use them.

Tiny fingers for tiny eyes

One of the hardest things to do is paint eyes on dumbbell or pull-chain eyes. My fingers are way too big to hold them, and painting the eyes after tying the dumbbells on the fly usually results in paint on the feathers. A hair comb and a couple of nails will let you paint several eyes at a time. Slide several "eyes" onto the comb and use the head of a nail as an applicator—a large nail for the colored part of the eye, and a smaller nail for the black pupil.

Magnetize your needle-nose pliers

Not many things are more frustrating than

to try and pick up tiny hooks with big fingers. A magnetic pliers or even just a small bar magnetic solves this problem.


Are you going to fish it or look at it?

Anything more than about a minute is too long to spend tying a fly that I am going to fish. Tie flies that fit you. As mentioned earlier, I have a friend who ties exquisite flies—some of which have won awards—but he is a lousy fly fisher. Tie for you, not for someone else. To keep your time to a minimum, get all your materials out and lined up so that you can get to them easily.

My wife will tell you that I am not the neatest (I am clean, however.) person in the world. But I have found that with a little effort, my fly-tying table stays almost neat, and I spend more time tying than searching.

MWO



Doug Thalacker has a Masters of Environment Science from UW-SP and taught high school environmental science and earth science. He has outdoor/wilderness training through Outward Bound and American Red Cross. He has a lifetime of enjoying any activity that involves fields, woods or waters.




Southeast Wisconsin's Fishing Headquarters for over 42 years!

Largest Selection of Live Bait in the Midwest!


www.dicksmithslivebait.com


Check out our Online Store!



- Expert Fishing Information
- Largest Selection of Live Bait
- Shop Local



Open 6am Weekdays. Always Open 5am Weekends



I-94 & Hwy 83, 2420 Milwaukee St., Delafield, WI 53018

(262) 646-2218

Proper Offseason Storage of Ice Fishing Gear

by Blake Tollefson

Whether you're ready for it or not, the ice season is coming to an end sooner than later. It was a refreshing change of pace compared to the last few seasons, as we actually had good ice—and plenty of it. With longer, warmer days on the horizon, we can't help but think of what's coming next.

The angling community puts a lot of emphasis on what's up next—how to prepare, things to get ready, where to start—but we often just gloss over how to properly care for and store our current season's gear. In some instances, equipment gets used year-round, but much of our ice fishing gear is only used for ice fishing. Properly caring for and storing this equipment ensures that it's ready for next season when you pull it out of storage, and that it lasts for years to come.

Here's a great guideline for properly maintaining and storing your ice fishing gear.

Electronics

For many of us, ice fishing without electronics just doesn't feel right. To ensure that things are in working order for next season, store them properly. A simple wipe down of everything is a good first step. Clean up screens, transducers, cables and so forth. Without a doubt, the best place to store your electronics is indoors in a cool, dry place.

Battery storage depends on battery type. Store lead acid batteries with a full charge and recharge them often throughout the offseason. Store lithium-ion batteries above 70 percent capacity, while lithium iron phosphate (LiFePO4) batteries can be stored with a minimum capacity of 30 to 50 percent. Regardless of battery type, it's good practice to charge batteries prior to storage and plan



Proper storage of ice gear ensures continued use.

to recharge (or at least check them) every few months.

While you may want to store other ice fishing electronics, underwater cameras come in extremely handy during the open-water season. If you don't plan to utilize it, store it like your other electronics.

If you have anything that needs service, now is the perfect time to send it in.

Tackle

Tackle care is easy for anglers to completely disregard. We often expect that our tackle is in fine order, but in all reality, it

usually isn't. We've all been guilty of tossing lures in random boxes during the hustle and bustle of a hot bite.

At the end of the ice season, go through your lures and make sure they all have a "home." Give your tackle an opportunity to air out for a few days to prevent rust from building up in a box that'll stay closed for the next six months. Start making a list of lures you want to replace or maybe some new ones you want to pick up. The end of the season is a great time to save a few bucks as retailers are looking to make room for their open-water products.



Electronics should be stored in a cool, dry place.

Rods and reels

Beyond tackle, rods and reels are perhaps most overlooked by ice anglers. You invest good money in these things; why not take care of them? The first step to care is to simply give everything a good wipe down.

Beyond a little cleaning, remove line from reels. It'll save you a lot of time next fall when you're getting things ready for ice. Backing off the tension on your reels ensures longevity of the drag systems. This is also a great opportunity to grease or oil up all your reels for next season.

Put your rods back in a case, if available. A broken rod can ruin a day.

Whether it's **Fishing,**
Hunting or just
 enjoying the outdoors...

MIDWEST
OUTDOORS

has you covered!

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!
 1 year / 10 issues

Print + Digital \$19⁹⁵ • Digital only \$9⁹⁵

www.MWOmag.com



Rods and reels require appropriate storage and care.

Augers

No matter what type of auger you have, perform some simple maintenance before putting into storage. For battery operated augers, make sure your batteries are charged prior to storing. Check the batteries every couple of months and charge again as needed.

Gas augers require a little more care. Add fresh fuel and fuel stabilizer to your tank and run it for a bit. In fact, run the auger for a few minutes every month or so to ensure that things are running properly. If you leave a fuel in the tank, open the fuel cap vent to prevent pressure from building in the tank and causing other issues.

Check auger blades and, if necessary, sharpen or swap them out for new set.

Outerwear

If you fish year-round, you might use some of your winter outdoor gear during the first month or so of the open-water season. However, if you don't plan to use them, now is the time to care for them. Wash and dry your outerwear per the directions on the tags, as not all fabrics are created equal. Neglecting this can make a big difference in the longevity of your gear.

No matter how you store your gear, ensure that they are completely dry before placing them into storage. If you keep them in outside storage, invest in an airtight tote and add a few fabric softener sheets to help prevent mice or other rodents from calling them home during the offseason.



Augers require proper maintenance as well.



Organize and replace tackle as needed.

Ice houses

With temperatures as warm as they typically are at this time of year, you probably haven't used your shack in a few weeks. Take advantage of the next sunny day and set your fish house up outside. Like outerwear, avoid storing your shack until it's completely dry. A wet fish house will acquire mold or mildew during the offseason. This is also a good time to wipe things down and to take note of anything that needs repair or replacement before next season.

Regardless of where you plan to store your shack, fill your house with fabric softener sheets. Your shack may smell like a laundromat for a few days next season, but it's a fantastic way to prevent mice or rodents from accessing them.

Machines

If you rely on a snowmobile, there's a good chance it'll go into storage until next season. If a wheeled vehicle is more your style, you may end up using it outside of ice fishing. Regardless of your on-the-ice transportation, now is the perfect time to do all the required maintenance. Like all your other gear, clean it. Salt from roads or accesses can wreak havoc on machines if left for long.

Additionally, this is a perfect opportunity to change oils, filters, add grease, and make sure no additional repairs are needed. You want your machine in tip-top shape for next season, and a little preventative maintenance pays dividends later.

Proper care and maintenance of your gear helps ensure that your next ice season

starts off a good note. There's nothing worse than spending valuable fishing time repairing things or looking for a replacement. We're all guilty of neglecting things from time to time. A little TLC can go a long way. **MWO**

Blake Tollefson is a fisherman and outdoor writer from Wisconsin. He spends more than 150 days a year on the water targeting a variety of species, including panfish, walleye, trout, and smallmouth bass. He works with several fishing companies, including St. Croix Rods and Eurotackle. Email him at blake.tollefson@gmail.com.

MARINE ELECTRONICS RIGGING & TROLLING MOTOR REPAIR



ADVANCED ANGLING

Marine Electronics Installation
HUMMINBIRD LOURANCE GARMIN

MENTION THIS AD FOR
\$100 OFF
YOUR NEXT INSTALLATION!
EXPIRES 12/31/24

AUTHORIZED SERVICE DEALER

MINNACOTA CONRAD HUMMINBIRD LOURANCE

779-200-4503

Email us: info@advancedangling.com
www.advancedangling.com

We Sell & Buy Vintage Lures & Tackle

FREE APPRAISALS



Check Out The Vault!

This is where we keep the rarest and more antique fishing lures you will find on our site. You can expect to see old Heddon, Creek Chub, Pflueger, Shakespeare, Paw Paw, South Bend and more baits and lures.

SAVE 10%
on your first order
Use Code
MWO



25 Vintage Fishing Lures Worth A Fortune

Scan Code to read now or visit our website

The Harris Brothers and Monster Brook Trout

by Len Harris

March 1967

Even before the gas station crew talk took place, there was the call to the only person my father knew who was more fanatical about brook trout than him. It was his brother Dudley from northern Wisconsin. Dudley was the spring pond expert on brook trout. I remember dad telling me: "Dudley thought like a trout."

Long-distance calls were really expensive back in 1967. It was a short call to Trego, Wis. I only remembered my dad calling his brother just before deer hunting yearly to tell him when he was arriving in Trego. The calls were typically short and to the point.

This call to Dudley in March of 1967 was also short and to the point. Dad told his brother that he needed his help. I heard him lower his voice and say, "Crazy big brook trout." Dudley told him he would make the over 4-hour drive to Gays Mills the next Friday night after work.

Dad was waiting on the porch for Dudley when he arrived at 8:45 pm. They talked about the battle plan for the morning. I was really disappointed when I was not included.

They left downstream in my dad's boat at first light. They came back just after dark. They were dragging their feet as they walked in the yard. It was a long adventure.

I assisted in cleaning the trout they had brought back. I held the flashlight. There were 10 brook trout on the picnic table. Not a one was under 20 inches. The limit back then was 10 or 15 each, and I asked, "Why only ten?" Dudley told me that they ran out of bait at the end. I remember dad and Dudley smiling broadly when he said they ran out of bait.

I remember being jealous of my uncle at that moment. I wanted to be the one who fished with dad and ran out of bait because



The glory days of giant brook trout in the heart of the Wisconsin Driftless are long gone.

they caught so many monsters. I decided I had decades to make scads of memories with Dad. Back to the story.

At about 6 am, they tied off the boat where the tiny tributary flowed into the Kickapoo. They fished their way upstream. The fishing was poor for the first 300 yards. They nearly turned around a couple times before the fishing got good. They both let go every brook trout they caught at first, because both felt there were monsters to be slayed upstream.

The trout were cleaned, a celebratory beer was downed, and they planned the Sunday morning second trip. It was clear that I was not going along again because it was just too dang far for a 10-year-old to walk.

Weeks led to months, and Uncle Dudley made the four-hour drive to Gays Mills every weekend to continue the assault on Shangri-La. Late June came, and the weekend adventures to Shangri-La stopped. The farmer told Dad it was time for the bull and the heifers to go to pasture the watercress

pond was in.

Dad and I began our bank pole trips again. Dad was vexed by Shangri-La Creek. It was all he could talk about on our bank pole outings. He finally spilled the beans.

Dad and Dudley followed the small trickle to its source. It was a giant pond covered with watercress. There were openings in the watercress where they saw potential state record brook trout cruising. The water was crystal clear, and every brook trout they caught spooked the hole, and they had to wait at least 30 minutes for the hole to calm down. They laid on their stomachs to cast. Spinners didn't work with the watercress. Half a 'crawler was their weapon. They began with long-shanked hooks but switched after they were straightened twice. Visualize being schooled by a brookie so big it straightened your hook!

Then Dad told me about the enforcer that cruised the hole. It was a gargantuan male brown trout that liked peeling off brook trout off their lines when they battled them. There were two different line breakoffs of 8-pound test by the enforcer. Dad was obsessed with their discovery.

Fall came quickly, and bow hunting and grouse and pheasants supplanted Dad's obsession with trout. Then came rifle deer hunting up north. November came and went. Dad never came home from Trego. Dad died of a heart attack while deer hunting.

He died doing what he loved the most, and that was deer hunting in northern Wisconsin, and dreaming of monster brook trout in Crawford County. The location of Shangri-La Creek died with my dad. **MWO**

Len Harris lives in the heart of the Wisconsin driftless area. He fishes for anything that has fins. His first love is small stream trout fishing, with northern pike fishing a close second. Harris writes for many local papers and has written two books that are available on Amazon.

Fishing from Shore this Spring

by Don Gasaway

To the casual observer, anglers fishing from shore seek whatever comes along. They do not have a fancy boat with electronics and a big motor. In fact, most do not own a boat. They do not enter and win tournaments. They just catch fish.

Fishing from a lake or riverbank is an uncomplicated and inexpensive approach to life that carries over into fishing.

There is no need to purchase a lot of gear or. Often, all you need is a collection of closed-face reels and accompanying rods purchased at flea markets and garage sales. Beginners do not look for a particular brand; they just buy what is there. More advanced shore anglers sometimes invest in longer rods to cast further, and more advanced terminal tackle.

Often, the shore fishing angler's approach to the lake differs from his high-tech competitors, as does his tackle. He fishes



Shore fishing in spring provides an opportunity for parent-child field trips in the warming temperatures. Many a duo catches panfish with basic worm-and bobber-techniques that have warmed anglers' hearts for many generations. Photo: Don Gasaway

from shore or by wading. Often, he/she likes to find and actively fish vegetation. If available, look for holes in the milfoil in about one or two feet of water.

Casting just beyond the hole, slowly begin a retrieve. Allow the lure to settle down into the hole. Leave it still for a while before subtly twitching it. Look carefully for line movement before continuing the retrieve. Poking plastic worms through vegetation during low-light conditions can be particularly effective as fish move from daytime shelter from the sunlight to feeding patterns.

If the fish are not in holes, moves to and fish the edges of cover. These shallow areas often produce fish.

Small spinnerbaits consistently take larger fish. I like using a brass blade and darker tail spinnerbait. They are a snack for fish, even if they are not hungry.

Many unsung anglers subscribe to this "more primitive" type of bass fishing. It is a philosophy of uncomplicated fishing. Smaller waters are ideal for this pattern and are part of our fishing heritage. **MWO**

Don Gasaway is a freelance outdoor writer from Marion, Ill. who has written more than 1,000 magazine articles. Find him on Facebook at: facebook.com/donsjournal. Comments and reviews are welcome.

Mat's Reel Repair

Servicing all makes and models of major brands

Mat Hegy
715.337.2337

- Established 1998
- Fast turn around • Large parts inventory
- Rod repair • Tip-up repair

1961 Hwy 45 N., Eagle River, WI 54521

www.MatsReelRepair.com info@MatsReelRepair.com

Share your bright idea!

Have you got a favorite fishing, hunting, camping or outdoors tip? Share it with us. If we decide to use it in our column, we'll send you a useful thank you gift.

Email your tips to:
info@midwestoutdoors.com

Please be sure to include your name and mailing address where we can send your prize. Prizes will not be sent until/unless your tip is chosen for publication.



Notes from the Dockside

Mike Yurk

Father's Bait

As far back as I can remember (from the time I was about six), Father had an old, metal tackle box. The trays in the box were lined with a thin layer of cork, and in one of the trays was an old, green plug.

In those days, hard baits were called *plugs*. Today, we call them crankbaits. I have no idea when or where Father got that bait. It must have been sometime in the early 1950s when he bought it. I never saw Father use it. It was just there in his tackle box.

Shortly after he passed away in 2000, Mother laid out all his fishing equipment on the ping pong table in the basement, letting my brother and I take what we wanted. As soon as I saw that plug, I grabbed it.

I started collecting vintage fishing equipment and have a display case looking like the bow section of a boat sitting next to the fireplace in our family room. Many of the reels and baits I collected were placed there, and in the front on one of the shelves, I put Father's bait.

From time to time, I would take out some of the old rods and reels and fish with them for a portion of the day. My wife The Bass Queen once gave me a replica of an old wooden tackle box. I put old baits in the box and took them with me, too, finding that those old baits still caught fish.

I never took along or used Father's bait. It stayed in in my family room. I just never wanted to lose it. I would be heartbroken if I did.

There are no markings on Father's bait, either on the body or the metal lip. I have no idea who made the bait, and without something designated on the bait, there is little to go on. The body is two inches long with a greenish finish. There is a short, metal lip and two sets of treble hooks: one set at the back and another screwed into the bottom of the bait.

I had been looking at Father's bait in my display for some time when I said to myself, "I think I have to fish it." I still was very concerned about losing it, but I felt that if I took reasonable precautions, I shouldn't have to worry. I just wanted to catch a fish or two with it and then put it away again.

I figured that it must have been nearly 70 years since Father last fished that bait. It was time for it to catch a fish again. I wondered if it would even run right.

One of the precautions I took was to use a leader. I sure didn't want some northern pike to slice it off my line. And if I didn't use it around a lot of brush, I shouldn't need to worry hanging up.

An added dimension to this day is

that I would be fishing with my 23-year-old grandson Max. I would be using a bait that his great grandfather, my father, once had. The day was becoming a family affair representing three generations of family fishermen. Max is the oldest of our grandchildren, being born a year after my father passed away.

We fished a lake in northwestern Wisconsin's Polk County. It had been some years since I last fished this lake, adding to the excitement of the day. When we got to the landing, I found that the county had put out a dock, enlarged the parking area and added a port-a-potty—all distinct improvements.

Max and I started with plastic worms. Max picked up the first fish, and a dozen casts later, I got my first fish of the day. We worked around a weedy, muddy point, leading us back into a bay. We followed the shallow water bay along a row of docks and boat lifts. We were catching enough fish to keep the day interesting.

As the bay opened up to the main lake, there is a small rocky point where I normally catch a fish or two. It was time to get Father's bait out. The first couple of casts were a bit tentative. I discovered the bait was a sinker, and surprisingly after not being used in 70 years, it still ran true.

I started casting around the point, being very careful to not let the bait sink too deep to snag on rocks. I was fishing for about five minutes when suddenly, there was weight. Pulling back to set the hook, I felt a fish pulling away.

The fish put up a good fight, and getting it next the boat, I hoisted it in. It was foot-long largemouth bass. I was thrilled. I sent Father a brief mental message. I think he liked seeing that bait catch a fish again. Max took photos of me and the fish with the bait still in its mouth before I finally released it.

I decided to keep fishing it to see if I could get one more. Fishermen are always

looking for one more. Half an hour later, I felt a fish slam the bait and my casting rod was bouncing. A moment or two later, I pulled in a 20-inch northern pike and released it.

I should have stopped there—but didn't. Ten minutes later, as I was dragging it through a patch of weeds, I felt something tug on it, but it was gone in an instant. When I got the bait back to the boat, I realized that the set of treble hooks on the belly of the bait was gone. I was not going to tempt fate again, although I did check, and it still ran true, even without the hooks. When I got home, Father's bait went back in the display case. I don't think I will use it again.

That bait is a connection to Father, and I think he might have been as interested in my day of fishing as I was. Thanks, Dad. **MWO**

Mike Yurk grew up in Oshkosh, Wis., where he first started writing about the outdoors. A retired Army officer, he is now a full-time, freelance outdoor writer. He has written more than 1000 articles for outdoor publications and published 12 books on outdoor sports. He lives in northwestern Wisconsin where he has found some of the best bass fishing in the country.

MOVING?

Please let us know.
Call 630-887-7722
 to report your change of address so you don't miss an issue of

MIDWEST OUTDOORS

Our Story...

Founded in 1969, Walleyes Unlimited USA is now recognized as one of the top multi-species fishing clubs in the country and has been educating anglers for over 50 years. In May of 2007 Walleyes Unlimited USA was honored to be inducted into "The Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame."

Although our main interest is on walleyes, our membership includes some of the top local anglers for smallmouth, largemouth, northern pike, muskie, panfish, salmon and other great lakes fish.

Learn more at walleyesunlimitedusa.org or our Facebook page.

Wisconsin Meeting

Tuesday, March 25th @ 6:00 PM

Speaker: Chris Groh – Bass Tournament Angler

Topic: BLACK BASS Strategies

Chris Groh hails from Lake County Illinois where he grew up fishing the Chain O'Lakes. Chris fished bass tournaments while working at Triangle Sports as a young angler and describes himself when he was younger as a "Chainrat. Groh always dreamed of becoming a big-time professional bass angler. He made a momentous step toward that reality by finishing fifth in the 2017 Bassmaster Northern Open AOY standings that earned him a spot on the Bassmaster Elite Series. The past few years he has fished the Major League Fishing Tackle Warehouse Invitationals.

Chris will share some of those national tournament experiences with us while telling us how he dissects new bodies of water to locate and catch both largemouth and smallmouth bass. This will certainly be a great opportunity to learn how the pros approach new water and what they do to catch fish effectively. Bring your questions to this meeting as Chris will be prepared to talk about boat rigging, mapping, and about other electronics issues. You can learn more about Chris on Facebook at [grohschmehl.fishing](https://www.facebook.com/grohschmehl.fishing) or on Instagram at [chrisgrohfishing](https://www.instagram.com/chrisgrohfishing).

Saturday April 12th

40th Annual Kids Open Water Fishing Clinic
9:00 AM – 3:00 PM | Scout Lake Park
5902 W. Loomis Rd., Greendale, WI 53129

This is another of our events encouraging children to participate in the great outdoors and the sport of fishing. The 40th annual event is sponsored in cooperation with the Wisconsin Council of Sport Fishing Organizations; Milwaukee, Racine, Washington and Waukesha County Parks; Milwaukee County House of Correction Fish Hatchery; and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

The Scout Lake Clinic is located at 5902 W. Loomis Rd. in Greendale, WI. We conduct clinics on open water fishing and safety around the water. Members also help the youngsters fish. Fishing instruction is free for children 15 years old and younger. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Clinics begin every hour from 9:00 a.m., with the last clinic starting at 3:00 p.m. Fishing equipment will be available for the kids. No pre-registration is necessary. Instructions include Fishing Techniques, Equipment Use, Knot Tying, Safety and Fish ID. We need club member volunteers for this event.

Illinois Meeting

Wednesday, April 30th @ 6:00 PM

Dale Helgeson – Multi-Species Guide & Walleye Tournament Angler

SPRING TACTICS FOR RIVER WALLEYES

Join us at Wisconsin meetings on the last Tuesday of the following months –
 Jan. | Mar. | May | July (Alt. Location) | Sept. | Nov.
 Hideaway Pub & Eatery | 9643 S 76th St. | Franklin, WI 53132

Join us at Illinois meetings on the last Wednesday of the following months –
 Feb. | April | June | Aug. (Alt. Location) | Oct. | Dec.
 American Legion | 749 Milwaukee Ave. | Gurnee, IL 60031

Lake Michigan's Salmon Fishery Assured

by Jerry Pabst

With the big lake's open-water fishing season just around the corner, trollers and shore anglers can take a break from readying their fishing gear for another action-packed summer; instead, they should hoist a cool refreshment to celebrate the news that last year's Coho and Chinook salmon fully cooperated with DNR biologists in Michigan and Wisconsin to provide all the fish eggs needed to fill the newly emptied hatcheries.

Both Michigan and Wisconsin, with their extensive lakefronts, experience substantial salmon spawning runs in several of their rivers, providing the necessary eggs for next year's stocking—not only for themselves, but for Indiana and Illinois as well. If a spawning run falls short, as occasionally happens, stocking schedules for the following year could suffer.

In the days of yore, when alewives were abundantly plentiful, as many as 16 million salmon and trout were poured into Lake Michigan every spring. But when zebra—and now quagga—mussels showed up, they



Every troller (including the author!) dreams of catching a big Chinook like this, but not everyone is lucky enough to get one. Still, the chances of hooking into a Lake Michigan trophy salmon are getting better each year. Photo: Jerry Pabst

outcompeted alewives for the lower portion of the forage base, and baitfish population (invasive alewives) crashed.

Without the massive alewife schools to support them, hungry salmon and trout fell on hard times, and their stocking numbers

had to be decreased accordingly, falling by more than 50 percent.

The future of this huge sport fishery looked dim indeed. But Mother Nature had a few tricks in her bag, and she came to the rescue. After virtually taking over the lake, the zebra mussels were overwhelmed by the arrival of the larger quagga, and were soon starved into obscurity. While the new arrivals are firmly established, they apparently aren't gobbling as much forage as the zebra did, and the alewife population has staged a small, but noticeable, comeback.

For the past several years, it has been possible to increase Chinook salmon stocking numbers. Also, the lake trout replaced the missing alewives by switching back to native prey, which not only took some pressure off the alewives, but supplied missing nutrients that were preventing their eggs from surviving for well over fifty years. Suddenly, there were big, fat lakers all over the place, and it won't be long before they become self-sustaining.

Getting back to the DNR egg-taking, the Manistee River weir, in Michigan, collected enough Chinook eggs to fill their own needs, but also fully supply Illinois and Indiana. The weir at the Platte River garnered 6.5 million Coho eggs, enough for all four Lake Michigan state's hatcheries.

But wait; there's more! Michigan also keeps adult fish at hatcheries for egg-taking purposes, and they produced 378,000 brook trout, 448,000 lake trout, 2.5 million brown trout, and 1.5 million rainbow trout eggs. As a bonus, the captive trout also provided 422,000 splake eggs.

So, what not very long ago what looked like a doomed fishery has become a huge resource on the rise. I guess the old adage holds true: You just can't fool Mother Nature!

MWO

Jerry Pabst has been writing about the outdoors for over 40 years. He captained a Lake Michigan charter boat for 25 years and was inducted into the Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame. He has hunted waterfowl in all North American flyways, pursued upland game extensively, and trains his own dogs.

MAY 30 - JUNE 1
NEW EVARTS RESORT
 GLENHAM, SOUTH DAKOTA

CALCUTTA

PURCHASE YOUR TEAM FOR \$300

PAYOUTS TO THE TOP 10 TEAMS

ALL UNSOLD TEAMS WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC PURCHASE AFTER 6 PM AT THE FRIDAY, MAY 30 BANQUET

REGISTER HERE

NORTHERN STATE **2025** UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS

WOLVES ON THE WATER

IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE ROYAL ORDER OF THE GYPS

\$5,000 TOP PRIZE

Presented by **HELM MARINE**

\$360 REGISTRATION FEE UNTIL MAY 9, 2025 (2-3 PERSON TEAM) PRICE INCREASES TO \$390 PER TEAM AFTER MAY 9, 2025

FRIDAY MAY 30	SATURDAY JUNE 1
PRE-FISHING CONCLUDES 3:00 PM REGISTRATION/SOCIAL HOUR 4:00 PM BANQUET DINNER 5:30 PM RULES MEETING* 6:00 PM LIVE AUCTION & RAFFLES TO FOLLOW *TEAM ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED	4 FISHING FLIGHTS 7 HOURS OF FISHING PAYOUTS TO THE TOP-25 TEAMS

REGISTRATION INCLUDES STEAK DINNER AND ENTRY IN THE BIG FISH AND ROUGH FISH CONTESTS

\$50,000+ IN PRIZES

FLIGHTS DETERMINED IN THE ORDER PAID REGISTRATIONS ARE RECEIVED

WOLVES ON THE WATER

FISHING TOURNAMENT

Presented by **HELM MARINE**

TOURNAMENT LIMITED TO FIRST 140 TEAMS

A TOURNAMENT TO SUPPORT NSU ATHLETIC PROGRAMS AND SCHOLARSHIPS
 CONTACT Marlin Heitmann at 605-380-8069 or marlinheitmann@yahoo.com
 MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THE 36TH ANNUAL WOLVES ON THE WATER WALLEYE TOURNAMENT TODAY

OVER \$50,000 IN PRIZES AT FRIDAY BANQUET

Follow

on our Socials

youtube.com/MidWestOutdoorsTV

facebook.com/MidWestOutdoorsUSA

instagram.com/MidWestOutdoorsUSA

twitter.com/MWOOutdoorsUSA



NO PAYMENTS UNTIL JULY!

\$90,795



**LEAVE THE COMPETITION
IN YOUR WAKE**

Powered by the
Yamaha VF250XB,
F300XA

SKEETER'S **NEW** WXR2060F



LIMITED
LIFETIME
WARRANTY

- Limited Lifetime Standard Warranty
- 10-Year Limited Transferable Structural Warranty
- 3-Year Limited Compound Warranty



*Buy, **\$ave**, Fish.*

UP TO
\$4,000
INSTANT REBATE*

OR

5.49%
APR**
for 72 months

OR

6.49%
APR**
for 180 months

plus up to
\$1,000

eGift Card
(total of up to \$5,000 in value)

Show Specials!



N.A.P.
\$99,995



**EVERYTHING YOU DEMAND
IN A BASS BOAT**

Powered by the
Yamaha
VF250LB

SKEETER'S **FXR21 LIMITED**



LIMITED
LIFETIME
WARRANTY

- Limited Lifetime Standard Warranty
- 10-Year Limited Transferable Structural Warranty
- 3-Year Limited Compound Warranty



530 S. Rand Road
Wauconda, IL 60084
847-526-2211

www.lakecountywatersports.com

March Forth...To Open Water

by Tom Luba

March means that open water is on the horizon, if not already happening on rivers across Wisconsin. But, as the minutes draw near to the first fractures in the ice, I am a bit concerned. On the Wolf, for instance, I've seen anglers pushing their jon boats out to the edge of the ice, set out an anchor and hop aboard, rod in hand, with the first jig and minnow of the season already zipping toward bottom. I've not yet seen a fish caught that way. And I'm more grateful than you know that a sheet of ice hasn't slipped out from beneath a boat and tossed an angler into the 40-degree water.

There is also a boat parked on the Wolf's ice further upstream in New London, with two occupants in it. Ice is out when the boat breaks free. No rods. No reels. No fish. Just two figures. Between you and me, I don't think they're real.

In March, walleyes are generally the main quarry. By now, they are moving up many rivers toward dams, current and rock where they will spawn.

In most years, you can find fish already moving under the ice to their key spawning areas, which in the Wolf's case, is marshes, which are usually underwater at this time. The fish generally plot their upstream route to take advantage of the side where the current is slacker. They spawn in marshes, then head back downriver, using the current for a push toward home. In general, look for areas that offer the fish a place to rest.

Baitfish may also use the same types of areas. Sunken logs and trees, shoreline wood, the back sides of rock- and sandbars, and riprap that offers notches, slices and crevices to deflect current. Keep those jigs on the bottom, regardless of whether you anchor, or



River walleye fishermen often anchor on the slack side of the river, searching for early arrivals to spawning areas. The walleye migration can start even before the ice goes out.

drift and vertical jig.

Over the years, I've seen early March snowstorms, yet also nice, sunny days that can hit 70 degrees. Wisconsin seems to be getting less snow and cold these days, but I would still bet on colder and higher water as open-water fishing begins. Warmth is a wonderful bonus. I suggest just dealing with

the weather if you want to fish. That way, you won't feel abused by Mother Nature. But a line in the water can be worth it when fishing is in your blood.

Currently, walleyes are not the only gamefish going. Bass regulations have changed to catch-and-release available all year. But the fish can only be harvested—i.e., put on stringers or in livewells—after the May season opener. Smallmouths can be active along with walleyes in the spring.

This now gives bass chasers—both smallmouth and largemouths—a chance to learn more about when and where the fish go during this early time frame. You can learn much by doing and by listening. There are exceptional bass fishermen in the Wolf area of the state. And you can pick up some good info if you are nearby when they talk.

I learned an important fact during a summer discussion with a resident of one of our larger and deeper area lakes at a boat landing. Said person lived right over the wire fence between the landing and his property. Basically, he said you wouldn't believe how many largemouth bass were right off his front yard in two feet of water as soon as the ice went out. Sunbathing? Even current-fearing largemouths? Back then, I thought the bass up here all had southern accents. But, if you are going after bass early, take a long look at shallow, sun-warmed water—although most of the fish probably move back to deeper water and emerging weeds as they await proper spawning temperatures.

Regardless of where you are looking for early bass, keep your bait touching bottom. I've become partial to the free-moving hook on the relatively new swing jigs. I bought the two Do-It Molds for swing jigs. The smaller size mold covers 1/8- to 3/8-ounce heads, and the larger from 1/2- to 1 1/4-ounce. They can be used in pretty much all waters, both rivers and lakes, for both smallmouth and largemouth bass. You can exchange hook sizes and even types based on how and where you fish. Keep bass jig'n pig rigs ready, and don't be afraid to deadstick baits like 5-inch Senkos.



A 1/2-ounce swing jig. Rig it weedless.




A variety of jig types can be used for walleyes. Find the colors and sizes that work best for your waters.

I normally use fluorocarbon line on baitcast combos—usually 14-pound-test. On spinning, I typically go with mono and a fluoro leader. Some people prefer braids and fluoro leaders. I like medium-heavy rods for good hooksets. You know your own rod racks, so pick your particular poison.

One other thing I've learned over time: Nice, sunny, spring days may feel really good. But you still get hit with the sun's UV rays. So don't forget the Glacier Glove sun gloves, as they offer maximum protection. Just like using the swing jigs, it's good advice for all seasons. **MWO**

Tom Luba is a freelance outdoor writer living in New London, Wis. He has written about open-water fishing for more than 35 years.



THE LAKE GENEVA FISHING CLUB IS DEDICATED TO PROMOTING SPORT FISHING FOR ALL SPECIES ON GENEVA LAKE. WE ALSO ENCOURAGE KIDS AND FAMILIES TO FISH TOGETHER. THE CLUB HAS OUTINGS THROUGHOUT THE OPEN WATER SEASON, INCLUDING A "LEARN THE LAKE OUTING" FOR THOSE NOT FAMILIAR WITH GENEVA. WE FEATURE SPEAKERS THAT INCLUDE VETERAN MEMBERS, POPULAR FISHING GUIDES, ELECTRONICS EXPERTS, OR OTHER INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS.

Wednesday, March 12th | 6:00 PM

William Heim – Nightprowler Guide Service

PRE-SPAWN BASS STRATEGIES

William "Billy" Heim started Nightprowler Guide Service in 1992 as a part time service that taught people the joys of night fishing on Geneva Lake. He also guides ice fishing clients. Recently, he has begun to guide from a pontoon boat which accommodates additional anglers each trip as well as offering clients protection in cold or inclement weather conditions.

Heim began a professional tournament career several years ago. He experienced success on the Angler's Choice Tournament Trail finishing in the top three overall multiple times and most recently, a first-place finish in the 2021 Anglers Choice - Team of the Year.

William specializes in unique ways of teaching others how to adapt to the toughest conditions on Geneva Lake. William's presentation for this meeting will focus on how to target and catch pre-spawn largemouth and smallmouth bass on Geneva. To learn more about Heim, check him out on Facebook. William typically draws the largest attendance at our monthly meetings, you should arrive early to find a seat.



Wednesday, April 9th | 6:00 PM

Bob Biedrzycki – The Hook Up Guide Service

FISHING THE OPENER ON GENEVA LAKE

Illinois Club Meetings are on the 2nd Wednesdays
Learn more at lakegenevafishingclub.com or Facebook

<p>Poplar Creek Bowl Banquet Entrance 2354 W Higgins Rd Hoffman Estates, IL 60192</p>	<p>Guests Are Always Welcomed, Guest Fee \$5.00 Food & Beverage Available For Purchase @ 5:00 PM</p>
--	---

Versatile Vibrating Jigs



Targeting shallow cover with a vibrating jig resulted in this fat largemouth.

by Glenn Walker

From time-to-time, a lure has such a buzz in the bass fishing community that anglers go to great lengths to keep it quiet—while simultaneously looking high and low, along with spending good amounts of money, to acquire that lure.

The ChatterBait was this lure back in the early 2000's; it won three straight tournaments in Florida, and just like that, *the vibrating jig* was given a jolt of life. Just like any fishing lure, a vibrating jig has its place and time to shine. But what makes vibrating jigs attractive to bass fisherman is that they are very versatile lures.

Bass fisherman can tie on, and rely on, a vibrating jig all season long. But there are times of the year when they seem extremely effective. One of those times occurs during early fall.

Vibrating jigs were primarily designed to fish up shallow, around cover, and this is where they really shine. A 1/4- or 3/8-ounce

bait gets the nod from me when I'm targeting bass around shallow cover. Depending on the lake or river and time of year, that could consist of lily pads, weed lines, laydowns, in between boat docks—or it can be used to effectively cover and fish open-water flats.

What makes the vibrating jig so versatile for bass fishermen? You can keep your vibrating jig rod in your hand and keep moving the whole time. You can fish it around vegetation or wood without getting it hung up; and then, if some boat docks are next up on the shoreline, you make accurate casts in, and around the boat dock and have success. And you can keep fishing a vibrating jig when the visible cover goes away, and you're faced with a barren shoreline with the bass roaming a flat.

I feel that a constant, steady retrieve is, many times, all that is needed to trigger a strike. The vibration and action of the bait, and the plastic trailer on it, is all that bass need. Yet sometimes, varying your retrieve to impart an erratic action is what bass need to get them to strike.

Other retrieves could be as simple as a reel-and-pause, where the vibrating jig freefalls when paused. Or a slight twitch of the rod tip that has your vibrating jig quickly dart off to one side, mimicking a fleeing baitfish.

As more anglers target offshore structure, bass become accustomed to the traditional crankbaits and jigs they see over and over. This is why manufacturers began producing vibrating jigs in larger sizes. I'll use a 1/2-ounce size when fishing mid-depth structure such as weed lines, or flats where bass are roaming the 6- to



Many successful tournament catches are attributed to a vibrating jig.

Vibrating Jig Gear

Z-Man JackHammer: The originator of the vibrating jig teamed up with pro angler Brett Hite and Evergreen to design and build what many feel is the industry standard for vibrating jigs. Its unique action, strong vibration, and having the blade connected directly to the eye of jighead makes the JackHammer a top choice for many bass fishermen.



Z-Man JackHammer



Z-Man Tungsten ChatterBait ELITE EVO.

Z-Man Tungsten ChatterBait ELITE EVO: The newest addition to the ChatterBait family has a unique hunting action, which allows the bait to be crawled and bounced off fish-holding cover. Couple this with unmatched vibration and unique, durable blade finishes, and the EVO is a vibrating jig you'll want in your

tackle box this fall. And with its 96% tungsten head, this ChatterBait sinks quickly; your bait gets down to that fish-holding depth right away.

Northland Fishing Tackle Eye-Candy Paddle Shad: Constructed out of Super TPE material, the Paddle Shad is 3 1/2 inches long and features a boot tail that has a subtle swimming action—perfect for threading onto your favorite vibrating jig. And with the Super TPE material, you'll be able to spend less time re-rigging your vibrating jig during the day.



Northland Fishing Tackle Eye-Candy Paddle Shad.



Gary Yamamoto Zako SwimBait.

Gary Yamamoto Zako SwimBait: Designed to be paired with the JackHammer, the Zako is extremely soft; when a bass bites down, they won't want to let go after being enticed into biting by the bait's segmented bod, and forked tail. The larger belly of this bait perfectly mimics larger shad or bluegills.

8-foot depths. When bass are holding on deeper structure, or off the edge of a main river ledge, you can use a vibrating jig in 3/4-, 1- or even a 1 1/4-ounce to target these bass in deeper water with a presentation they likely haven't seen.

Several ways to fish a vibrating jig in deep water include: casting the bait out, letting it sink to bottom and slowly rolling it back in; another method includes reeling it in, then letting it freefall down the face of the vegetation or off the drop of a ledge.

One thing that I think is great about fishing a vibrating jig: You can dig into your tackle compartment, grab nearly any plastic bait, and it will work as a trailer. However, you do not want the plastic trailer's action to *overpower or counteract* the already powerful action of the vibrating jig's blade.

Certain soft plastic baits rigged on the back end of a vibrating jig have their own unique action and affect the performance of the vibrating jig, forcing you to alter your retrieve to achieve the best possible presentation.

Depending on the depth of water, and the type and density of cover I'm fishing, along with the forage I'm trying to mimic, I select different types of soft plastic trailer to use on the back of my vibrating jig.

Swimbait: The combined flash of the blade and action of a swimbait tail excel when used to target bass feeding on shad. The key thing is to find a swimbait that doesn't overpower the vibration of the blade on the jig, as the vibration is key to getting bites. Select any size swimbait you want to match the weight of your vibrating jig and the size of the baitfish that bass are feeding on. Anytime you are rigging a soft plastic as a trailer, make sure it is rigged on straight, as this will ensure that the bait runs true in the water column. This is paramount in this scenario, as nothing will curb a fish eating your bait more than a vibrating jig running wonky!

Grub: I like to use either a split-tail spinnerbait trailer or a single-tail grub when bass want a compact lure offering, or I'm throwing the bait around thick cover, as it will

be less likely to get fouled up.

Craw: There is no hiding the fact that a vibrating jig with a crawl-imitating soft plastic bait will attract crawl-hungry bass. Many craws have a compact profile that, when used in the correct color, can mimic the action of baitfish. Slow-rolling a heavier vibrating jig with a soft plastic crawl along riprap bank or a mud cutbank is a great way to match the craws' scurrying along the bottom.

If you are looking to increase the effectiveness and ability to use a vibrating jig, start looking at your soft-plastic bait arsenal and formulate an idea of when and where to use each a trailer on your vibrating jig.

Using the right rod, reel, and line setup is important when fishing a vibrating jig; you want a rod that you can make long casts with, while still being sensitive enough to feel the bait's vibration and accept feel strikes from bass. Many rods are designed for this technique and are constructed from a blend of materials to accomplish all the above needs.

When fishing a vibrating jig, I want a rod that loads up when the bass tracks down and inhales my bait. I also like a rod that I can make pinpoint casts with if needed, and which also helps me launch the bait if I'm fishing a flat. This is why I go with a 7' 4"—either a Witch Doctor Tackle Kahuna 7'4" H or a Phenix Rods M1 Series 7'4" MH. I'll pair either rod with a 7.2:1 gear ratio casting reel spooled with 15- or 17-pound-test Seaguar Inviz X Fluorocarbon.

When you hit the water this fall and want to cover water in a quick, yet effective manner, tie a vibrating jig on your line, look for the baitfish and keep casting; eventually, you are going to run into a hungry school of bass. Be ready to have that vibrating jig get hammered! **MWO**

Glenn Walker has been fishing Minnesota and Mississippi River tournaments for more than 15 years, spreading his passion and knowledge of the sport via articles and videos. For more information, check out glennwalkerfishing.com or on Facebook @GlennWalkerFishing.



Change Lure Size for More Strikes

In many cases when fish are "off their feed," a change needs to be made—and not necessarily a drastic change. It can often be nothing more than keeping the same lure and color but going to a different lure size. This is especially true when there are light strikes, or a few fish being caught, but the action sort of slow.

All species of fish can be affected by the size change, up and down, but some are more prone to be affected in a certain direction than others. However, other than ice jigs, some of the lures commonly being used are not available in various sizes; with those, you might have to change to something similar in action, color and design, which can throw a bit of a difference other than strictly the size making a difference.

The following is what I've found on the different species with which I have had experience using lure size change.

Improved productivity of sunfish/bluegill and ring perch results are nearly always due to the downsize side of things. Rarely does the production improve when increasing the size.

Crappies are somewhat the same way, but catching larger crappies often improves with an increase in lure size. I've found this occurrence when finger jigging a T-Shad or Phat Shad; and then moving to a Lil Killer, which is a different design, but still having the straight tail to offer about the same, but larger,



During a calm, early-December day, the catch-of-the-day was made by downsizing from a 4-inch Natural Forage Baits green shad Swimbait to the same color in a similar 2-inch T-Shad.

profile and tail action provided by the finger jigging method.

The black bass and white bass families can definitely go both ways, with the white bass

leaning more to hitting on whatever is being served up for them to attack. One of the best examples for size change is a Rat-L-Trap, where you can drop to a Tiny Trap or go all the way up to a Magnum Trap. In most of my experience, the change between using a 1/4-ounce Mini Trap or a 1/2-ounce Original Trap in either direction has been significant. I've seen days when, in either direction, I'll start with catching a few fish, and once I switch to the other size in the same color, the fishing will improve to the point where it is the "lure of the day."

There have been very similar results with billed



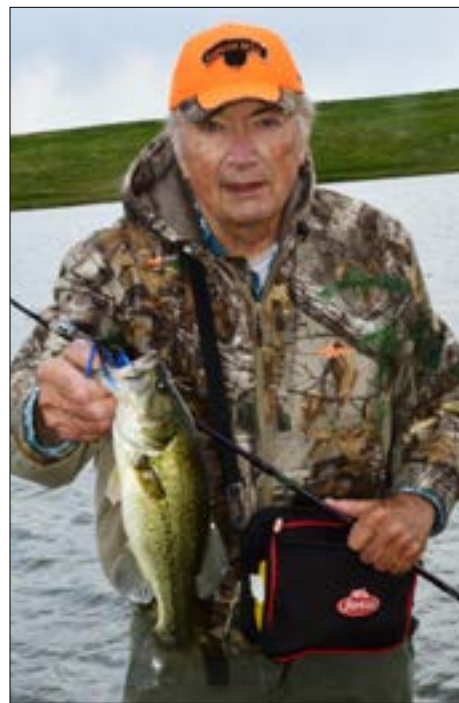
Normally, downsizing works for catching crappies, but this time, it went from a 2- to a 4-inch swimbait to start catching some 12- and 13-inch crappies on a mid-October day.



By upsizing from a 1/4- to a 1/2-ounce Rat-L-Trap, a slow September day of bass fishing went to a 'hot' one.



A good selection of lure sizes, such as this box of Blitz Blades, in the same or similar colors, makes it easy to up- and downsize while keeping the same style lure and action.



Fellow outdoor writer and master of shoreline fishing, Don Banning is known for being a proponent of downsizing. However, on this cold mid-October day, he had to change from his finesse lures to a larger 'chatter style' lure in the same black/blue color to start producing some bass.

crankbaits, Blitz Blades, spinnerbaits, plastic worms and jig combos, where the same lure and color are found in various sizes. But in most cases, you don't need to switch to the extreme sizes up or down to see a difference. For example, if you're fishing something in the 3/8-ounce range, which is a good "in-between" size, you shouldn't have to go more than to the 1/2-ounce size above or 1/8-ounce size below.

While muskies can always be finicky, I have experienced several times when they hit a downsized lure of the same design, and again going to a spinnerbait or crankbait of some sort. A good example was when I was filming a show for my old television series on

PBS. We were trying to show that muskies would take bass-type baits, and when passing through one area using a larger Norman N crankbait, I had a follow that would not bite, which happened with some others on the same day. I switched to a slightly smaller N size, returned to the same area of the first muskie follow, and it was "fish on" without any hesitation. This same sort of thing has happened with inline or overhead spinnerbaits where I was using a 1-ounce size and dropped to a 1/2-ounce with same color and blade configuration.

The time of year is another factor. In winter, it is normally downsizing, other than when pursuing larger crappies or bass; yet many times, I'll upsize two to three sizes, such as with a Custom Jigs and Spins Tutso, where I'll go from a size 10 to 6, or with a Ratfinkee, from a 10 to a 4.

As spring hits, it is normally a case of downsizing, because what prey is available is smaller. Summer is a time where it goes both ways, depending on the day. As fall rolls around, larger sizes can be the trick; but as it gets later towards winter, after their initial fall feeding, start looking at downsizing. Just remember, this has been the general rule, and on any given day, because of water or weather conditions, a switch one way or the other can make the difference between a productive day and a less productive one.

If you have a day when you know the fish should be hitting, or they are hitting slow but you are getting aggressive strikes, then change the size of the lure, and see if the strikes don't start picking up. **MWO**

Dan Galusha has fished all his life, worked more than 45 years in the outdoor/media industry, and was inducted into the Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame as a Legendary Communicator. Direct questions through dansfishntales.com, facebook.com/dansfishntales and facebook.com/shootnplink.



Upsizing is normally not the trick for bluegills, but on this summer day, switching to the larger Ratso with a Crappie Nibble produced larger fish after having a few smaller ones strike a smaller lure.

Don't Overlook Classic Lures that Still Play



Minnesota bass and pike legend Milt Zernechel knows the deadliness of a slow-rolled weedless spoon through vegetation. Spoons like the Johnson Silver Minnow or Milt's Sota Spoon have been forgotten but remain effective.

by Marc Wisniewski

I've seen all the advances in electronics, from the original Lowrance Green Box Flasher to the newest forward-facing sonar. Rods have gone from fiberglass buggy whips with metal ferrules to today's scientifically designed, lightweight graphite works of art. Reels felt like coffee grinders back then, and are now frictionless, hi-tech machines that seem like they will spin forever on their own. I still have my first serious rod and reel from around 1970. I pick it up now and then and wonder how I ever set a hook or landed a fish with it. But we did.

Lures have also changed tremendously. Soft plastics have revolutionized all types of fishing. Hard baits have incredibly realistic paint-jobs and finishes that rival a taxidermist work. Entire new categories of lures have emerged, and continue to emerge yearly. Designs not only from the U.S., but from Japan and beyond, are changing how we fish every year.

It would be horrible to use my original rod and reel. Although I am not interested in forward-facing sonar, I would have a hard time using my original Humminbird Bird Trap flasher. But every year, I still use some of the lures that I had 50 years ago, and they still catch fish.

Here are my top ten that shouldn't get overlooked in today's flood of new lures. These are all still produced and available.

1. The Arbogast Jitterbug. This lure owns at least four U.S. state records for bass. Do you need any more proof than that? For both day and night fishing, this one has an age-old tantalizing, walk that bass, pike and muskies can't resist.

2. The #9 Original Floating Rapala. Reel it straight in or twitch it on the surface; this is one of the most fish-catching lures ever made. It will catch anything. Twitch it on the surface around the edges of lily pads in May or June for largemouths and smallmouths. I remember standing on a beach in Hawaii,



When things get really tough, the easy target presentation of the 7-inch Suick can make muskies and pike take notice.



The Arbogast Jitterbug is one of the greatest surface lures of all time. It holds four state largemouth bass records.

scratching my head. With no clue, I went for my #9 Rap in gold and *wham!*, the rest of that week is history. Everything eats a 3-inch minnow and therefore a #9 Rapala.

3. Heddon Sonar. The one that started a whole family of lures know as blade baits. Lake Michigan trout and salmon, cold-water bass and pike, lake trout through the ice—this bait has magical powers. The original Sonar is still available and a deadly fish catcher.

4. Mepps and the Mepps Musky Killer. This in-line spinner is still a great lure for anything that swims. BASS great Mike Iaconelli still carries a spinner in his panic box for when he just needs to put a bass in the box. The Mepps Musky Killer bucktail is still one of the all-time leaders in muskie catches in Wisconsin history. Don't even think about fishing Vilas or Oneida County lakes for muskies without a purple bucktail/copper blade Musky Killer.

5. Mann's Little George. I'm not sure if this is the original "tailspinner," but it's the first one most that most anglers can probably remember. A deadly, deep-water bass and white bass lure. When water is below 50 degrees, this bait will catch bass when other baits will not. A Door County smallie sleeper!

6. Johnson Silver Minnow Weedless Spoon. The ultimate slop spoon that even my grandfather used to fish for bass and pike around weeds and pads. Dress it with a twister tail, pork bait (old school!), or nothing at all, and this one will slither through any vegetation. A simple design that has stood the test of time.

7. Rapala Fat Rap. It's gotten passed by with so many other crankbaits on the market. You can still get the #5 in great colors through on-line tackle shops since you won't find these in brick-and-mortar stores very often.

There is no better finesse crankbait out there for largemouths, smallmouths and Lake Michigan trout. No rattles, a very tight wiggle, and a very subtle presence make this a clear-water killer. If you can find #7s in flea markets or rummage sales, buy them and run. A great, nearly forgotten bait!

8. Suick Musky Thriller. It looks like the most unlikely thing that would ever catch a fish, let alone a muskie. But the Wisconsin-made Suick is still one of the hottest muskie lures in the state of Wisconsin. From 7 to 14 inches, these remain one of the best muskie lures ever made.

9. The Arbogast Hula Popper. I'm not sure what was the first surface popper ever made, but you will find these in tackle boxes from now back to your grandfather's. The skirt moves even when the body is sitting still. Tip for this one: Don't over-pop it.

10. Mann's Jelly Worm. I still get a flashback to the '70s when I open a new pack of blue Jelly Worms. Crème had the first plastic worms, but everyone was fishing the Jelly Worm, and they are still great even in an ocean of different plastic worms. A 6-inch blue or grape, Texas-rigged with a 1/8-ounce bullet sinker, will catch bass anywhere in Wisconsin. Carolina rig an 8-inch in deep water for giant summer largemouths.

Winter should be coming to an end. Check your local tackle shop or on-line dealer for these timeless classics. They are as good as they were 50 or more years ago. Current fish populations have never seen some of these before! **MWO**

Marc Wisniewski is an avid Wisconsin angler specializing in Lake Michigan shore and inshore fishing. He also chases bass, pike, and muskies anywhere he can. He has built custom rods for 35 years and makes lures from wood, lead and soft plastics. Wisniewski has been writing fishing articles for more than 30 years.

THEY PROTECT US.

Every day. Every night.
And they need your support.

Inspire leadership, learning and a legacy of service by supporting the brave men and women of the United States Coast Guard through the Coast Guard Foundation.

To learn how you can help, call (860) 535-0786 or visit our website at www.coastguardfoundation.org

ASK ABOUT OUR BOAT DONATION PROGRAM

USCG PHOTO BY PA3 LOUIS HEBERT



WISCONSIN Sportsman's Calendar

SPORTSMEN CLUBS

The Lake Geneva Fishing Club— holds regular meetings the second Wednesday of February - June and September - November at Poplar Creek Bowl in the Barrington Square Shopping Center, 2534 W Higgins Rd., Hoffman Estates, IL 60169, (847) 310-3227. Meetings begin at 6 p.m. with food and beverage available for purchase at 5:15 p.m. July and August meetings are held in conjunction with weekday fishing outings which will be announced on our website.

The March 12 meeting speaker is William "Billy" Heim of Nightprowler Guide Service; Topic: Pre-Spawn Bass Strategies. Please check our website lakegenevafishingclub.com for any updates. The cost for the 2023 membership is \$50, Family membership (member, spouse & children under 16) is available for \$70. Either membership option also includes a 1 year subscription to *MidWest Outdoors Magazine*. For information contact Bob Clark at 847-274-8247, email info@lakegenevafishingclub.com. or visit lakegenevafishingclub.com.

Wisconsin Fishing Club, Ltd.— Meetings are held on the 2nd and 4th Mondays during the months of Jan., Feb., March, May, Sept., and Oct.; and on the 2nd Mondays during June, July, August (summer schedule), November and December, and on the 4th Monday in April. The 2nd Monday in April are the DNR hearings and we prefer our members attend the DNR meetings. Meetings starting at 7 p.m., with speakers at 8 p.m. Location of meetings: Grainger's Pub & Grill, 3500 West Howard Ave. (Loomis Rd. & Howard Ave.) Milwaukee, WI. Contact: Izzy Sorce, President, (414)550-0699, or at funlovtteachers@gmail.com. Guests and other fishing club members are always welcome. For info: wisconsinfishingclub.com.

Mishicot Sportsmen's Club—The Club meets on the very first Wednesday of each month at 8 p.m. Clubhouse is at 13804 Jambo Creek Road, Mishicot, WI 54228. Everyone is welcome to join. Club was founded in 1946 and is a unit of the Manitowoc County Fish & Game Prot. Assn., founded in 1907. Contact Roger Vander Logt 920-323-4882, roger@VLoutdoormedia.com.

Okauchee Fishing Club—Formed in 1967, we are a multi-species fishing club that fishes all over Wisconsin. The purpose of our club is to promote growth in fishing knowledge and techniques and to foster a mutual fellowship necessary for all members to become better anglers. We meet on the first Tuesday of every month from 7-9:30 p.m. and during the peak fishing season, also on the third Tuesday at the New Berlin VFW 17980 Beloit Rd., New Berlin, WI 53151. Our first Tuesday meeting features door prizes, a raffle, and a guest speaker. The cost for visitors is \$5. Our meetings on the third Tuesday are less formal and feature round table discussions on the latest baits, techniques, or hot fishing spots. We hold 12-14 outings a year at some of the best fishing spots within Wisconsin. Once a year we hold a one-day OFC club tournament with the winner taking home a 50-year-old, 4ft. high trophy with their name engraved on it. In Spring, we hold a WDNR Kids Fishing Clinic, and in the summer, we put on a free OFC Picnic for all members and their families. For more membership information, please contact Rob Newman, OFC Club President at 412-996-6165, or view our Okauchee Fishing Club Facebook page or find us on the web at OFCfish.com. or go to ofcfish.com.

Walleyes Unlimited USA—One of the top multi-species fishing clubs in the country. We fish for pike, muskie, large and smallmouth bass and of course walleye. We have one meeting per month alternating between Wisconsin and Illinois at 6 p.m. In Wisconsin we meet on the last Tuesday of the month at Hideaway Pub & Eatery, 9643 S. 76th St., Franklin, WI 53132. In Illinois we meet the last Wednesday of the month at Gurnee American Legion, 749 Milwaukee Ave., Gurnee, IL 60031. The **Wisconsin March 25** meeting speaker will be Chris Groh, an MLF Tournament Angler; Topic: Tournament Strategies for Black Bass... and more. For info call Bob Clark at 847-274-8247. Please check our website walleyesunlimitedusa.org for updates.

EVENTS

March 10

Green Bay Area Great Lakes Sport Fishermen's Banquet at The Stadium View in Green Bay, WI. Tickets are \$40 and include a chicken and fish dinner along with numerous raffle opportunities to purchase tickets on. Doors open at 5 p.m., with dinner at 6:30 p.m. Corporate tables are available for \$600 and include 8 tickets and a 9mm pistol or a Bourbon package. For tickets contact Bernie Erickson at 920-819-0271 or email to berickson0271@gmail.com.

April 5

Sportsmen's Rummage Sale/Fund Raiser at Beaver Dam American Legion, 300 Beichl Avenue, Beaver Dam, WI. Hours: 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. For Sale: Everything sporting related. New and used. Guns, ammo, fishing, trapping, clothing, camping, collectibles, and some misc. items. Expecting 45+ sellers, 70+ tables. For info: Harold Drake 920-344-6443. Sponsor by Dodge County Sporting/Conservation Alliance.

Non-profit conservation organizations, women in the outdoors, fishing, and shooting clubs, share the word about your upcoming events and tournament information in MidWest Outdoors.

SPORTS SHOWS

February 28 - March 2

RV and Boat Show Main Sales Event, at the EAA Grounds, 3130 Knapp St, Oshkosh, WI 54902. Show hours: Friday 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., Sunday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission CASH at the gate: \$10 adults, \$9 seniors (62 and over), children 17 and under are free. For info: Fox Valley Outdoor Enthusiasts, LLC, rvboatmainevent.com, (920) 676-7903, info@rvboatmainevent.com.

February 28 - March 2

Fishing Boating Outdoor Show, at the Marinette Expanding Horizons, 2501 Pierce Avenue, Marinette, WI 54143. Show hours: Friday 3 to 8 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Sunday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission: \$8 adults, children under 12 free, \$2 military discount. Cash only—ATM available. Free parking.

March 7-8

Northwoods Rifle Range Gun & Knife Show at Gordon Town Hall, 9709 Co Rd Y, Gordon, WI 54838. Hours: Friday 3 - 8 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission \$5 good for both days. Vendor tables \$25 ea. For info: Northwoods Rifle Range, Bob Neubauer, (715) 376-2001, bobdeb1@centurytel.net.

March 7-8

WGCA Spring Show at Hartford Town Hall, 3360 Hwy K, Hartford, WI 53027. Hours: Friday 4 - 8 p.m., Saturday 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Admission \$5, members free. Vendor tables \$20 ea. for members, \$30 ea. for non-members. For info: Wisconsin Gun Collectors Association, Jim Brown, (920) 447-2224, takeitaway99@yahoo.com.

March 7-8

Hillsboro Gun, Ammo & Accessory Show at Hillsboro Firemen's Community Center, 203 Mill Street, Hillsboro, WI 54634. Hours: Friday 12 - 8 p.m., Saturday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission \$5 good for both days. Vendor tables \$30 ea. For info: Gun Buyer Gun Shows, B.J. Keating, (608) 548-4867, keating84@gmail.com.

March 7-8

Menomonee Falls Gun Show at Village Bowl, N86W18330 Main Street, Menomonee Falls, WI 53051. Hours: Friday 3 - 8 p.m., Saturday 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission \$8, veterans free. Vendor tables \$30 ea. For info: Freedom Firearms, Thomas Hein, (414) 430-7617, concealcarrynow@gmail.com, or Troy, (715) 460-4454, freedomfirearmsnow.com.

March 7-9

Racine Gun Show at Fountain Banquet Hall, 8505 Durand Ave., Sturtevant, WI 53177. Hours: Friday 3 - 8:30 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission \$10 good all weekend. Vendor tables \$40 ea. For info: Marv Kraus Promotions, Marv Kraus, (563) 608-4401, or Andrew Kraus, (563) 608-2045, kraus.andrew.ak@gmail.com, marvkrauspromotions.net.

March 7-9

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Sports Show, at the Wisconsin State Fair Park Exposition Center, 8200 W Greenfield Ave., West Allis, WI. Show hours: Friday 12 - 7 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. - 7 p.m., Sunday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Admission: \$12 in advance on line, \$15 at the door; Youth 6-14 \$6, under age 5 free; Military (active/retired/veteran) free every day; Boy Scouts & Girl Scouts free in uniform (March 9 only); Seniors (55+) \$8 at the door (March 7 only). For info: Outdoor Sports Group, Rick Rosalina, (212) 564-8823, rick@osgshows.com, osgshows.com, jssportsshow.com.

March 14-16

Central Wisconsin Musky Expo, at the Central Wisconsin Convention Center and Expo Center, 10101 Market Street, Suite B40, Rothschild, WI 54474. Show hours: Friday 2 - 8 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m. - 6 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Admission \$10, 2-day

pass \$15, 3-day pass \$20, children 12 and under free. For info: Mike, (715) 403-0692, wimuskyyexpo@gmail.com, wimuskyyexpo.com.

March 14-15

Franklin Gun Show at Root River Center, 7220 W Rawson Ave., Franklin, WI 53132. Hours: Friday 3 - 8 p.m., Saturday 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission \$8, all vets free. For info: Freedom Firearms, Thomas Hein, (414) 430-7617, concealcarrynow@gmail.com, or Troy, (715) 460-4454, freedomfirearmsnow.com.

March 14-15

New Richmond Gun Show at Ready Randy's Sports Bar, 1492 131st St., New Richmond, WI 54017. Hours: Friday 3 - 8 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission \$5, children 14 and under free. Vendor tables \$30 ea. For info: New Richmond American Legion, Gary Thompson, (715) 308-8772, g2gpowersportsmenomnie@gmail.com, or Dennis, (715) 377-6046.

March 14-16

West Bend Fairgrounds Gun Show at Washington County Fair Park, 3000 Pleasant Valley Road, West Bend, WI 53095. Hours: Friday 3 - 8 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission \$8, children 14 and under free. Vendor tables \$45 ea. For info: Bob and Rocco's Gun Shows, Bob Pucci, (608) 752-6677, ronmartinsemail@yahoo.com, or Ron Martin, (715) 381-7991, bobandrocco.com.

March 15

Stevens Point Gun and Sporting Collectibles at Stevens Point Gun Show, 5341 Hwy 66 NE, Stevens Point, WI 54467. Hours: 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission \$5, children 12 and under free with paying adult. Vendor tables \$20 ea. (limit 3 tables per vendor). For info: Izaak Walton Lodge, Mary Jo Monday, (715) 343-9933, jmjmonday@gmail.com.

March 15-16

Cornell Gun Show at Cornell High School Gym, 111 S 4th Street, Cornell, WI 54732. Hours: Saturday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission \$8, children 12 and under free. Vendor tables \$40 ea. For info: Marv Kraus Promotions, Marv Kraus, (563) 608-4401, Andrew Kraus, (563) 608-2045, kraus.andrew.ak@gmail.com, marvkrauspromotions.net.

March 21-23

Wisconsin Sports Show, at the Chippewa Valley Expo Center, E5150 old mill plaza, Eau Claire, WI 54703. Show hours: Friday 3-8 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m. - 6 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Admission: ages 12 and up \$7 in advance online, children 11 and younger free. General admission at the door \$5 Friday - Special Friday night, only from 3 - 8 p.m., no advance purchase necessary; \$10 general admission Saturday and Sunday at the door, ages 12-plus. Sunday only - seniors ages 63+ \$5 admission at the door, no advance purchase necessary. For info: Pinnacle Events by C & G Promotions, LLC, Lisa Gill, lisa@wisportsshow.com, (715) 579-7127, wisportsshow.com.

March 28-30

Open Season Sportsman's Expo, at Kalahari Resorts & Conventions, 1305 Kalahari Dr., Baraboo, WI 53913. Show hours: Friday 2 - 7 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m. - 6 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Admission: advanced pricing (valid until March 27) 1-day adult \$10, 1-day child (12 & under) free; weekend pass adult (valid until March 21) \$20, weekend pass child (12 & under - valid until March 21) free; Door pricing (starting March 28) 1-day adult \$15, 1-day child (12 & under) free, military discount (with valid ID) \$10. For info: Bonnier LLC, Brandon Chensky, (262) 444-7378, openseasonsportsmansexpo.com, brandon.chensky@bonniercorp.com.

For the most up-to-date info go to:

MidWestOutdoors.com/events

Free listing for your event!

To list your event in the MWO Sportsman's Calendar, email info to: info@midwestoutdoors.com

Subject line: "Wisconsin Calendar Listing"

Please allow 6 to 8 weeks for publication.

THE LAKEMASTER® DOWNLOAD 

Wisconsin River

Below Wisconsin Dells

by **Phil Piscitello**

Phil Piscitello has 50 years of experience as a multi-species angler on ice and open water. He is a fishing guide, master charter captain and seminar speaker guiding in northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin. Piscitello is also a regular guest on Chauncey's Great Outdoors radio show and MidWest Outdoors TV show. He has fished all five Great Lakes and many major rivers, lakes, and reservoirs throughout the Midwest



LOCATION: The section below the Dells Dam is in south-central Wisconsin, just south of the city of Wisconsin Dells, a popular family vacation destination. Fishing is best during fall, winter and spring. During summer, the river experiences high levels of boat traffic via large tour boats and the famous "Wisconsin Ducks."

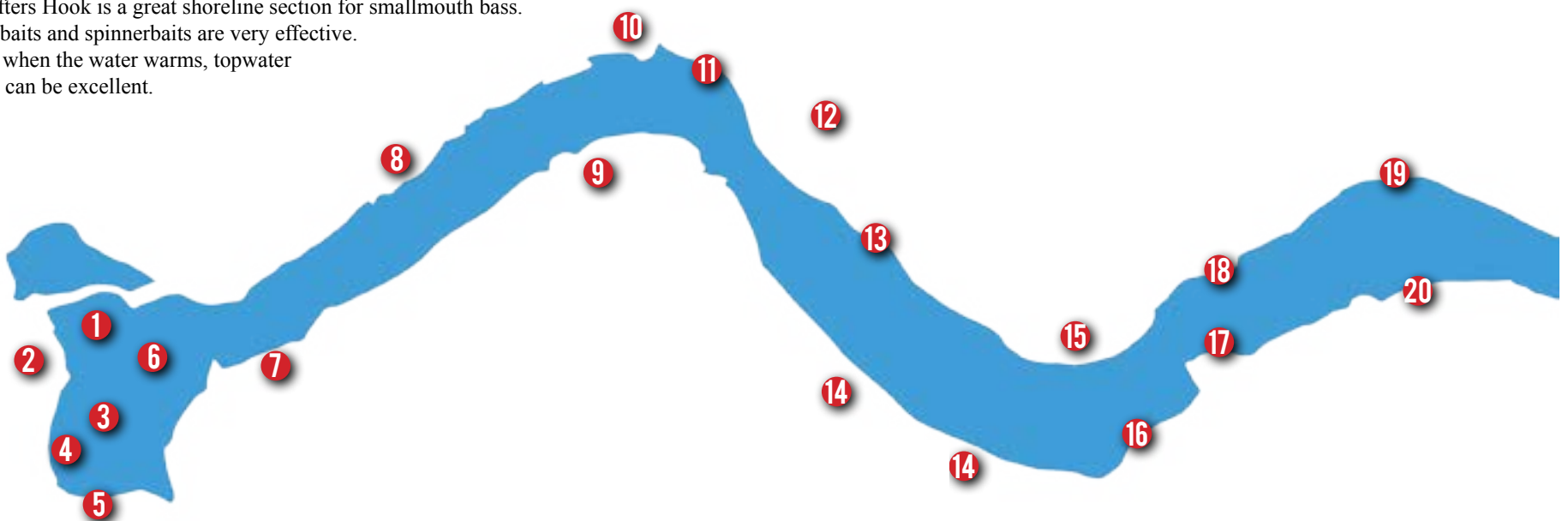
SIZE/DEPTH: The stretch shown is about 3.5 miles in length. Boat launches are available below the dam and at Newport Park.

DOMINANT SPECIES: This section is known for good numbers of walleyes, including some large fish, and sauger.

- 1 During fall, winter and into early spring, the deep hole below the dam produces walleyes and sauger. Vertical jigging or live bait rigs fished along the bottom produce the best fishing action.
- 2 This shoreline produces good walleyes and sauger. Jig or live bait rig the 10- to 15-foot breakline. Before sunup, cast Countdown Rapalas to shoreline eddy areas for above-average-size walleyes. In April, white bass are caught here in good numbers.
- 3 This rock hump tops out at 8 feet and holds good walleyes throughout the season. Cast jigs across the top or rig and jig the breaks.
- 4 This is a good hump for walleye and sauger action.
- 5 Another good shoreline to fish throughout the lowlight periods. Cast Countdown Rapalas and shad-style crankbaits for good-sized fish. During the day, jig or rig deeper water for good sauger action.
- 6 The 5-foot gravel area below the powerhouse produces walleyes during lowlight. Casting jigs or crankbaits is fun and effective.
- 7 A great shoreline area to cast crankbaits for walleyes and smallmouth bass. Low-water and lowlight conditions are the best.
- 8 This shoreline section is best during high-water conditions. Cast crankbaits for walleyes, and later in the season for smallmouth bass. Crappies can also be caught in this area.
- 9 The Sturgeon Hole breakline is good in high-water conditions for walleyes and sauger.
- 10 This shoreline section is good for walleyes and smallmouth bass. Cast shad-style crankbaits throughout most of the spring season.
- 11 Rafters Hook is a great shoreline section for smallmouth bass. Crankbaits and spinnerbaits are very effective. Later, when the water warms, topwater action can be excellent.

- 12 The shoreline section down from the "Ducks" landing can be good for walleyes, and later in the season for smallmouth bass. Jigs and crankbaits are very effective.
- 13 The shoreline around Piano Rock produces walleyes and smallmouth bass. This area is most productive during low-water periods.
- 14 This long shoreline stretch is good for walleyes and sauger. Troll crankbaits to efficiently cover water to locate active fish.
- 15 This large sand and gravel flat is best during lowlight conditions for walleyes and smallmouth bass. Fancast the area to cover water.
- 16 Vertical jigging or drifting live bait rigs to cover this gravel flat for walleyes and sauger.
- 17 Hawks Beak is a good early-season spot for walleyes and sauger. Key on the sharp breakline with jigs and live bait rigs.
- 18 This deep hole produces sauger year-round. Vertical jig with jigs, spoons and blade baits to put numbers of fish in the boat.
- 19 These two bars are good for above-average-size smallmouth bass during the warmer months. Prop-style topwaters and soft jerkbaits can be exciting and extremely effective. 608/254-7707.
- 20 This series of bars known as the Five Fingers is good for walleyes and smallmouth bass. Cast jigs and crankbaits.

For more information: Rivers Edge Resort, 608/254-7707, riversedgeresort.com.









GET THE MAP ON YOUR HUMMINBIRD® FISH FINDER

GET THE MAP ON YOUR PHONE WITH A ONE-BOAT NETWORK® APP SUBSCRIPTION

The Outdoors, Then and Now

by Bob Jensen

I looked out my office window today and saw a flock of swans flying by. For me, that was a pretty big deal. I've seen more swans in my home area in recent years. Certainly, more than we saw just a few years ago, but I still consider it a new experience.

Oddly, or maybe not so oddly, we're seeing more and more of some types of wildlife and fish life. Also not so oddly, we're seeing fewer and fewer of some types of wildlife and fish life. What we see and what we do in the outdoors has certainly changed from then to now.

Fishing has changed in a lot of ways. It used to be that keeping the larger fish was the way to go. On many bodies of water today, it's beneficial to the fishery to keep the smaller fish. Northern pike are a good example. On some lakes, keeping smaller pike is encouraged. A body of water can support a certain amount of fish poundage per acre. For instance, if a particular lake can support a hundred pounds of fish per acre, there can be twenty 5-pounders, or fifty 2-pounders. Take home some of the smaller



As the outdoor world changes, it appears that deer and turkeys are learning to read.



okuma
INSPIRED FISHING

FEEL THE POWER, NOT THE WEIGHT

DEAD EYE Pro

TECHNIQUE-SPECIFIC WALLEYE RODS

Built with maximum power and ultra-responsive sensitivity, the **Dead Eye Pro "A" Series** lets you focus on what matters most: your next move

 **UFR** 
okumafishingusa.com

ones, the ones that we used to throw back, and eventually we'll have bigger pike. That's an over-simplification, but it makes sense.

And when prepared properly, those 2- and 3-pound pike are outstanding on the table. The same concept holds true for panfish in many lakes. In some cases, we're doing the fishery a favor by keeping the smaller fish.

On some lakes, smallmouth bass have taken the place of walleyes. Largemouth bass have always been in these lakes, but they lived in areas where the walleyes didn't. As smallmouth populations grew, they moved into the walleyes' neighborhood. Smallmouths flourished. They were more aggressive than walleyes and forced them out of the areas that were originally walleye territory.

When I was younger, pheasants and jackrabbits were abundant near my boyhood home in Iowa. Now, pheasant numbers fluctuate up and down, but there aren't as many as there used to be, and I haven't seen a jackrabbit in a very long time.

Weather plays a role in pheasant populations, but habitat, or habitat loss, is a very important factor. Since 1990, Iowa has lost 2,637 square miles of habitat. That's a strip of land nine miles wide that stretches from Davenport, Iowa to Omaha, Neb. That's a lot of habitat!

In an earlier era, we never, ever saw an eagle around home. When we went on our annual fishing trip to northern Minnesota, we would usually see an eagle or two, and it was always a thrill. Today, we see eagles in the backyard. And it's still a thrill. I'm hopeful, and certain, that it will always be a thrill.

We also see more deer, geese and turkeys than we used to. Seeing deer, geese and turkeys aren't quite as thrilling to me as eagles, but I sure do like to see them, as long as they aren't on the road in front of my pickup.

Most people who spend time outdoors will agree that the outdoor world is changing. It's up to those of us who enjoy the outdoors to do what we can to make those changes, on land or water, changes for the better. **MWO**

Bob Jensen has been involved in fishing education, promotion and communications for the past 35 years. He is a popular television host and a member of the National Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame. To see episodes of Fishing the Midwest television, fishing-related tips and articles, visit fishingthemidwest.com. Follow on Facebook @ [fishingthemidwest](https://www.facebook.com/fishingthemidwest).



**MIDWEST
OUTDOORS**



March 2025

**INDIANA
MICHIGAN**

Section Three

**Get Ready
for Open Water!**



"Helping you enjoy the outdoors!"

Become an *MWO INSIDER!*

Each week you'll receive timely info from MWO
on where to go, what to use, and how to use it!

FREE sign-up at MidWestOutdoors.com/Insider

(We never give your email address to third-party companies)

OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, March 29th • Opens at 6am
(see full-page ad on page 59 for details)

**IT'S REBATE
SEASON!**

Call for details—
too many to list



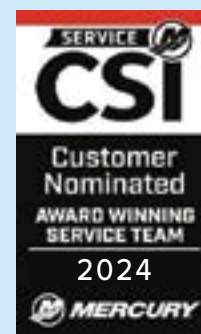
Service your
boat with our
award-winning
service
department!

WATER WERKS 

18660 S. Cicero, Country Club Hills, IL 60478
(708) 798-9700

waterwerks.com

For more than
ten years running,
Water Werks
has received this
prestigious award
for customer
satisfaction!



LOWE
BOATS

 **MERCURY**

LUND



WORK HARD PLAY HARDER

**DESIGNED FOR SNOW AND ICE, TOW AND HAUL
OR OFF-ROAD TO MATCH ANY CONDITION**

CHEVY SILVERADO

**CARS.COM NAMED
SILVERADO BEST PICKUP FOR TOWING**

- AVAILABLE MAX TRAILER PACKAGE PROVIDES UP TO 13,300 LBS. OF TOWING CAPABILITY
- 6.2L ECO TEC V8 WITH 420 HORSEPOWER AND 460LB.-FT. OF TORQUE
- STANDARD CHEVY SAFETY ASSIST; SIX ADVANCED SAFETY AND DRIVER ASSISTANCE FEATURES



Silverado LT Trail Boss



ChevyDrivesChicago.com

Towing capability requires Silverado Double Cab Standard 2WD with available Duramax 3.0L Turbo-Diesel engine, Max Trailering Package and 20-inch wheels or Silverado Double Cab Standard Bed RST 4x4 with available 6.2L V8 engine, Max Trailering Package and 20-inch wheels. Maximum trailering ratings are intended for comparison purposes only. Before you buy a vehicle or use it for trailering, carefully review Trailering section of the Owner's Manual. The trailering capacity of your specific vehicle may vary. The weight of passengers, cargo and options or accessories may reduce amount you can trailer. Wi-Fi service varies with conditions and location. Requires active service plan and paid AT&T data plan. See onstar.com for details and limitations. See dealer for details.



3:30 p.m.
Spiritual Outdoor
Adventures
with Jimmy Sites



4:00 p.m.
Jimmy Houston
Outdoors



4:30 p.m.
Hunt Hard
by Vital Shot Productions



5:00 p.m.
MidWest
Outdoors



Channel 64:
Over-the-air antenna, DirecTV, Dish, AT&T

Charter 5

Channel 22:
Bloomington Communications, Skitter TV, and WOW!

Comcast:
Channel varies by location, please check with provider



NO PAYMENTS UNTIL JULY!

\$90,795



LEAVE THE COMPETITION IN YOUR WAKE

Powered by the Yamaha VF250XB, F300XA

SKEETER'S NEW WXR2060F



LIMITED LIFETIME WARRANTY

- Limited Lifetime Standard Warranty
- 10-Year Limited Transferable Structural Warranty
- 3-Year Limited Compound Warranty



Buy, Save, Fish.

UP TO **\$4,000** INSTANT REBATE*

plus up to **\$1,000**

eGift Card (total of up to \$5,000 in value)

OR

5.49% APR** for 72 months

OR

6.49% APR** for 180 months

Show Specials!



YAMAHA

N.A.P.
\$99,995



EVERYTHING YOU DEMAND IN A BASS BOAT

Powered by the Yamaha VF250LB

SKEETER'S FXR21 LIMITED



LIMITED LIFETIME WARRANTY

- Limited Lifetime Standard Warranty
- 10-Year Limited Transferable Structural Warranty
- 3-Year Limited Compound Warranty



530 S. Rand Road
Wauconda, IL 60084
847-526-2211

www.lakecountywatersports.com

Three Fun Spring Destinations with Unique Twists

by Jack Payne

Here are three exciting things we like to do when spring rolls around.

Casting for Detroit River walleyes

Tick, tick, bam... and another walleye was on. The past three seasons, we added a casting routine into our Detroit River spring walleye trips. While we still spend most of our time vertical fishing, we do allocate time to cast each time on the water.

In most cases, we catch more fish per hour casting than when vertical jigging. Casting takes an hour or two for some anglers to master.

When we are casting on the Detroit River, we position the boat in the 8- to 10-foot depths and cast into the current and main river. Work the bait up the incline. Livingston Channel is a favorite.

When casting, we use a 1/2-ounce jig head with plastics. I suggest using 10-pound braid, hi-vis line and watch for your line to move or jump. Use the same plastics that you used when vertically jigging.

Mud flats, especially with a few weeds, are another prime location to cast. In this case, keep the boat moving with the wind or at a very slow speed with your electric trolling motor. The walleyes will be in small packs; normally, if you catch one, you can quickly catch a half-dozen. Forget the stinger hook; these fish engulf the entire jig.

Cats galore

I look forward to another fishing adventure: catfishing. Our best channel catfishing days are a throwback to Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn. Drifting on a river or a lake is peaceful and very productive. Our second-best option is sitting on a riverbank with a crackling fire, cooking a few dogs and reeling in ol' whiskers.

All our catfishing takes place in the daylight, and we catch plenty of nice fish. Before we get into the details, here are a few of our favorite locations: Lake Mac in Holland, Muskegon Lake, the Grand River system, the Kalamazoo River system, Black River in South Haven and the St Joe River. Any river connecting to Lake Michigan will host fat cats. Many inland lakes have large populations, too. The quickest way to locate these spots is to call your local sport shop or check the DNR website and survey results of lakes in your area.

Countless baits will get a catfish's attention. Our largest fish come on cut bait, most often suckers, or chunks of liver soaked in anise oil. Pure numbers come on any type of commercial stink baits; the quickest bait to get your hands on is hotdogs. Nuke the dogs 45 seconds and then cut each into four pieces. Nuking the dogs toughens up the skin and they will stay on the hook longer. Soak or freeze them in a baggie with anise oil.

Let's not forget perhaps the top producer: stink baits! Stink baits catch tons of fish. I mean, this bait is a huge producer of cats, and many a serious cat angler will swear by a certain company or secret concoction. A word of advice: Use a stick or a dipping tool. Stopper Lures makes a catfish dipping tool called Catfish Dip Plugger. They also make the catfish balls, catfish dipper and catfish tubes. These are the plastic lures that are dipped into the dip or smeared on with the dip plugger.

We skipped the dipping tool and went with our fingers a few years back. This was a terrible mistake; it gets into your skin, on your face and it takes days to get rid of the odor.

Tackle requirements are basic. You need bell sinkers, hooks and a rod. If using the dip bait, then you need the plastic lures mentioned. We use 14-pound-test line, but you can go heavier if you are targeting large



Dan Boss with a nice catfish.



A nice walleye caught on a plastic jig.



The author with a dandy crappie.

cats. Go lighter, and you might break off on occasion; but hey, the fun is in the fight. We release all of our cats, but they do make great table fare.

Large hooks are required. You need a hook that can hold a piece of meat. Hook sizes from 1/0 to 3/0 are very common. You need the point of the hook to stick out beyond the bait that you are using to ensure a good hookset.

Some anglers prefer to use a slip sinker so they can feed line or let the catfish run on the bite. Others use a 3-way rig. We go with the 3-way rig where your mainline is tied to a swivel. A 1-foot dropper is tied on to a swivel and then to your sinker. We then tie on a 3-foot dropper and attach our hook or our plastic tubes, etc.

Experiment with your dropper lines. Some days, a longer dropper to your hook is best; other days, it's a shorter dropper to the hook and a longer dropper to your sinker. If your sinker dropper is longer than your hook dropper, your bait rides just off bottom. Set two poles up with one having a longer dropper to the sinker and the second with a longer dropper to the hook plastic tubes.

Shore-bound anglers should look for bends on the river, log jams and current breaks. Anglers drifting a river should try deeper water first and then the shallower flats. We like to fish the one-mile section starting at Lake Michigan and heading upstream. Stay close to the big lake for the largest cats.

On lakes, we drift the flats. Some days, it might be the 5- to 10-foot flats, and other days, deeper flats. As we move deeper into spring, work weed lines. When summer arrives, find the deepest water that is the closest to the weeds. Muskegon Lake has plenty of these cool locations.

Lake Cadillac and Lake Mitchell has become regular stopping spots each spring. We catch a variety of fish each day. Casting plastics will land them all, and we use the most basic of equipment.

Memorial Day smorgasbord

We fished three days over this past

Memorial Day weekend. Buck bass were guarding their nests. Pumpkinseed sunfish were attempting to raid the nests of the bass. Crappies were starting to spawn and were on the flats and along any green cabbage weeds found. Pike would roll into the areas, scattering the small panfish and minnows and slashing our plastic baits into worthless pieces of plastics.

This time of the year, a pair of polarized sunglasses just might be your most important item in the boat. As always, we stay as far from the shoreline as possible. We look for small humps, shallow bars out from shore, isolated patches of cabbage weeds—all away from the pack of shoreline anglers.

Lake Mitchell and Lake Cadillac have many such features. The same can be said of some of my favorite "around home" lakes. Pine Lake, Crooked Lake, Miner Lake, Hutchins Lake, Muskegon, White and Fremont Lake are our favorites.

Crappie tackle is basic in nature, like Carlisle Slip floats with the Original Pinkie jig. Sometimes we use just the jig; other times, it's tipped with a minnow. Action tails such as the Charlie Brewer grubs, double tails and single tails are ideal for casting and retrieving. Whirly Bee and Charlie Bee spinners from Charlie Brewer are awesome spinners.

Our graphs are set so that the depths between 7 and 11 feet are color coded a different color. You can do this with nearly any graph, and it becomes a huge time saver.

On Lake Mitchell, we found perhaps 14

small humps and cabbage beds. The best spots are offshore, and we rarely encounter another angler. All you need to do is hop from one hump to the next. When you find a school of crappies, place a waypoint.

Concentrating on weed beds, points and wood is the ticket. I love fishing cabbage weeds. Any weed will work, but cabbage is the best. Look for openings, small points and small cups along the edge. Any change in the weeds can hold fish.

Also look for areas where the weeds do not reach the surface. These are great places to fish over their tops. Lastly, at first light or last light, look for rings and dimples on the surface. Those rings indicate feeding fish. Mark these locations.

When I want a subtle approach, I use a very light jig head and an action tail. A 1/16-ounce jig head would be the heaviest. When I want added flash, I opt for one of the Brewer spinner options with an action tail grub. Yellow or chartreuse cover most situations.

In spring, just about any species will hit a jig. Catfish are not picky, but the best fish come on anise-soaked chunks of suckers. If you want the cleanest fillets, throw them into a Cowboy Pail as you are filleting the fish or putting away your knives. Within minutes, they will be pure white. **MWO**

Jack Payne is an accomplished angler and hunter who enjoys teaching others as much as learning from others. He's a seminar speaker, outdoor photography enthusiast, hunter safety instructor and volunteer at many events for both kids and adults.

We Sell & Buy Vintage Lures & Tackle

FREE APPRAISALS



Check Out The Vault!

This is where we keep the rarest and more antique fishing lures you will find on our site. You can expect to see old Heddon, Creek Chub, Pflueger, Shakespeare, Paw Paw, South Bend and more baits and lures.

25 Vintage Fishing Lures Worth A Fortune



Scan Code to read now or visit our website

SAVE 10% on your first order Use Code MWO





Lake Michigan Corner

Mike Ratter

Just when everyone thought they were out of the woods on the south end of Lake Michigan, Mother Nature threw us a curveball in mid-January, the likes of which we haven't seen in years.

What does it mean to our fishing? Only time will tell. With all the global "experts" predicting global warming, then climate change, I can think of other scams down through the years.

I still remember back when I was in high school during the early 1960s that we had a series of cold, frigid winters. The global "experts" of that time predicted the upcoming Ice Age. We also had a reappearance of frequent spells of record-breaking cold snaps in the early 1980s. Global warming? Climate change? Watch *The Twilight Zone*.

With accurate weather records being kept for only around 160 years, how can the "experts" predict our weather in the far-distant future? After being around for quite a while and having always studied the weather through all my years, I believe that we are simply going through a weather cycle, one of which we have experienced through an eternity.

Back to fishing: Prior to the mid-January cold blast, the fishing has been normal all along the "Big Lake's" southern shores.

Wisconsin, due to the weather, has seen most of its fishing on inland lakes, ponds and backwaters.

Racine has seen some action in the harbor on steelhead through the ice, using spawn sacs and tube jigs (White) dressed with waxworms, but that's about all I've heard from our neighbors to the north.

On a sad note, we recently lost a legend of major league baseball and Lake Michigan salmon fishing. Former major league catcher and the voice of the Milwaukee Brewers, Bob Uecker, passed away at the age of 90.

Growing up in the late 1950s and early 1960s, I still remember a second-string catcher come into a game for the old Milwaukee Braves to give regular catcher Del Crandall a rest.

Ueck, as he was known, never made any headlines with his bat, having finished his well-traveled career with a lifetime batting average of only around .200. He was, nevertheless, fun to watch. He played for several major league teams including St. Louis, Atlanta and Philadelphia.

He was probably best known, though, for his broadcasting career spanning 54 seasons with the Milwaukee Brewers. He was known as "Mr. Baseball" in "Brew-Town."

When I think of Ueck, I also remember him in terms of salmon fishing on Lake Michigan. Each year, being heavily involved with the long-running invitational salmon tournament, which was run each June out of Milwaukee and bore his name.

The Uecker Tournament, as it was known around the Lake, raised thousands of dollars for the Make-A-Wish Wisconsin charity. He commonly wore an ALS Association cap in honor of his daughter, Llean, who had ALS. She lost her battle with the disease in 2022.

A tip of the MidWest Outdoors cap goes out to Ueck and his family. He will be greatly missed. God Bless and RIP, Ueck.

Back to fishing. Chicago has seen some pretty good fishing for both perch and lake trout prior to the Arctic weather blasts. Boats were getting out and taking limits of perch and lakers, but the frigid air masses froze up many areas of the lake, harbors and launch ramps, making boat fishing all but impossible.

Despite the construction, the north side of Navy Pier was giving up some limits of perch when an offshore wind blows out the ice. Fishermen can get discounted parking between 5 and 10 am for \$9.



The author with a limit of winter trout.

The Chicago harbors have pretty much loaded up with ice, but fish are being taken by die-hards who have been busting holes in the ice so they can get their baits down to the fish. The top producers have been Burnham and DuSable. Perch have been hitting minnows or Bait Rigs Tackle 1/64-ounce Slo-Poke jigs dressed with spikes or waxworms.

Lake trout have been decent on heavy, slab jigging spoons like Acme Kastmaster or Hopkins Spoons. Gold or Silver plate have been the top colors, either in the hammered or plain finishes.

If fishing Montrose, Diversey, Belmont, DuSable, Burnham or Jackson Park Harbors, you will need a \$10 pier pass. They are available at Park Bait, Bridgeport Bait & Tackle and Fishtec.

The best bet for perch in Chicago has been on the far south side. Although it will take some sorting, good catches have been taken from the old U.S. Steel slips and from the Calumet River all the way up to 106th Street.

It pays to move around. If the fish aren't hitting in one spot, move to another. Keep moving and try different areas. They can change overnight, so it pays to stay on top of them. Once you find them, you can usually fill a limit in a very short time.

If past catches are any indication of the Illinois Lake Michigan salmonid fishery, we should look forward to another good season this year.

The total harvest of salmon and trout in Illinois waters increased 50 percent with an 8 percent increase of angler hours for sport fishermen and a 4 percent increase for charter anglers.

Changes in the makeup of the catch also occurred. The most notable change was the increase in Chinook, coho and steelhead (rainbow trout) harvested by sport and charter fishermen.

The sport fishing harvest of coho more than doubled, while numbers increased 19 percent for sport fishermen. Chinook increased 39 percent for sport anglers and 43 percent for charters.

Lake trout catches also increased for both sport and charter anglers with brown trout showing only a small portion of the Illinois harvest.

Illinois fishing on the "Big Lake" seems to be headed in the right direction. Let's hope the trend continues.

Indiana, prior to the cold snap, was doing pretty good for perch and a few lake trout in East Chicago with jumbos in 60 feet off the Gary Light, but ice on the lake prohibited boats from getting out for them.

Steelhead have been decent in Trail Creek, Salt Creek and the East Branch of the Little Calumet River on spawn sacs or Voodoo jigs tipped with waxworms.

Steelhead and a few walleyes have been hitting in Michigan's St. Joseph River but be careful with the ice floes.

Hopefully the weather will break this month and we will be able to get the boats out and go after the spring coho that will be stacked up along the Indiana shoreline.

MWO

With his "Lake Michigan Corner" and various other articles in MidWest Outdoors, Mike Ratter has been writing for MWO for nearly 35 years. His writing has also been published in various other publications throughout the Midwest. He is a consultant and field tester for various manufacturers, seminar speaker and current (and long-time) member of OWAA and AGLow.

Get the Net... But What Net?

by Mike Schoonveld

Whether you are fishing from a rowboat in a farm pond or on an offshore cruiser in the middle of a Great Lake, one of the most welcome phrases an angler can say is, "Get the net." The end product of many fishing experiences is a fish being lifted out of the water so the angler can at least get a good look at it. After that, many things can happen to the fish. It can be tossed back, photographed, kissed, cooked or put to some other use. In most cases, there's no better tool than a net to complete the assignment. So, "get the net"—the *right* net.

What's right? Nets come in a variety of lengths, shapes and sizes and are made from a variety of materials.

Size matters

Most important is having a net long enough to reach the fish. A trout angler wading in a stream, or a kayak fisherman, can get by with a net handle just long enough to be a hand grip. A shore-bound fisherman usually needs one a couple of feet longer, while someone fishing from a pier or breakwall may need a lengthy handle up to 10 or 12 feet long just to reach the water's surface, depending on the height of the pier, dock or jetty.

Anglers fishing from boats by jigging

or casting lures can usually bring the fish alongside the boat to be netted. A relatively short net will do. Trollers need longer nets since the fish on the line will usually need to be netted over the stern of the boat. I like to have a handle at least long enough to reach past the outboard.

No one ever said, "The net is too big!" but anglers have lost thousands of fish due to undersized nets. A rule of thumb when selecting the hoop-size of a net is to choose one that's about two-thirds as wide as the length of the fish it's expected to capture. A 30-inch fish will fit nicely into a 20-inch diameter net. I've found that net hoops much bigger than 30 inches are unwieldy to handle. Muskie and pike anglers fishing trophy waters may need something larger, but a 30-inch hoop will handle most other freshwater fish.



Nets need to be sized to the size of the fish being scooped up.



Many anglers prefer rubber-basket nets since they don't tangle with treble hooks, as often happens when using a "string" net.

Remember, most of the weight in a fish is in its front half. If a netter can get half (or a bit more) of the front end of the fish over the rim of the net before lifting, the fish will fall into the net basket 99 percent of the time. That's one of the reasons fish should be netted headfirst, *not* from the tail end.

Net materials

Most net baskets are woven from some sort of cord made of strands of nylon or poly-plastic. Stranded nets work well when netting a fish, but often makes "un-netting" a fish problematic—especially fish caught with lures sporting one or more treble hooks. Once enmeshed, if the fish continues to twist and struggle, the exposed hooks catch in the strands, sometimes the hook points and barbs penetrate through the strands, and the fish, net, and hooks wind in a big tangle.

The knots that hold the strands together can be a bit abrasive to the scales and slime-coat on the exterior of the fish. That's not a big deal on a fish destined to be kept for food, but it can be harmful to fish which are destined to be released.

Some net makers treat their net baskets with a plastic or rubber-like coating. Some anglers treat their nets with a rubberized sealant spray to get the same effect. From the factory or as a DIY project, the rubber coating makes the mesh less prone to tangling and less injurious to fish destined to be released.

Or... go with a totally rubber net basket. There are no strings, no knots, and the individual, molded strands are much thicker than on a woven cord net; it's less likely for hooks to grab on or penetrate and turn the basket into a wad of string. The downside is that a rubber basket net is heavier than a string-net. That's not much of an issue for grown men, but the extra weight could be an issue if youngsters or women are using the net. The weight factor also precludes using rubber basket nets on the largest hoops that many prefer for muskies, pike and big salmon.

Too often, when gearing up for a fishing trip, the nets needed to finish the job are not given enough thought. People in the market for a new landing net should choose wisely so they have the right tool when the time comes to "Get the net." **MWO**

A passion for hunting, fishing, trapping and an outdoor lifestyle has been true north on Mike Schoonveld's compass his whole life. One of the Midwest's most prolific outdoor communicators, scores of his columns have been published in the pages of MidWest Outdoors since 1987.

Have Your Fishing Equipment Ready for Open Water

by Ken Mitchell

If you've been blessed by a great ice fishing season, it might be time to take a break, sit in the front of the stove or fireplace, enjoy some of those fillets you filled your freezer with, and then start getting ready for spring and open water.

I have my boat serviced as soon as possible after Christmas, so when open water is available, I'm ready to go.

Tackle is a different matter. Rods are mainly an issue of checking the guides. The best way to spot little cracks in guides is by pulling a piece of old nylon hose through the guides to expose them. Those problems can be easily fixed if you have a box of guides and tip tops. I always buy an assortment from Netcraft. Get the ones with the ceramic inserts. They last a lot longer although they cost a little more. If I'm on an overnight trip, I take those with me for repairs in my hotel or campground.

Reels are a different matter. I take mine to Tackle Service for cleaning and repairs. The store is south of Indianapolis in Mooresville, Ind.

I prefer to respool line on them myself. I always buy top-of-the-line fishing line; there's nothing more comforting when a hook a monster whether fishing for fun or cash and knowing my tackle is not going to break my heart!

Hooks are another issue. Again, I buy top-of-the-line and check the sharpness of hooks by dragging all the barbs across a thumbnail. If they don't catch on this test, I replace them. Of course, hooks on hard baits and other lures that can't be replaced must be sharpened where they are, using a grooved whet stone.



The author's son John and what can happen when all gear is ready, a fish is hooked, and the angler plays the fish well. Yes, there's some luck in landing a 6-pound hog.

Skirts on spinnerbaits and buzzbaits often need to be replaced, too. Again, go for quality (more expensive) in colors for use in different clarities of water.

While my big engine and trailer are serviced at Shedd's down on lake Monroe, the electric motor and depth finders are our responsibility. My son Darren checks those things over as well as the batteries and wiring.

One item that needs attention in the boat are the hydraulic closers on storage compartments. We paid the price, literally, when a rod box closer failed and three rods not stored properly were broken.

Pedestal seats are easy to replace during the off season, but bench seats that are worn need to be redone by a professional



The author with an early-season hog that can be the result of well-tuned tackle and boat, plus a little luck.

upholstery pro. I'm about to make my second replacement on this; my boat was built in 2003 and gets lots of use, so that's not bad. A local guy does the upholstery and does a beautiful job!

Trailer bunks can be recarpeted by most folks, but that involves launching the boat so that a faulty bunk can be repaired lakeside.

Faulty drain plugs should be replaced while the boat is on dry land. Most of us have been subjected to forgetting to put a plug in prior to launching; if these are worn, replace them during dry dock. Every time I see a guy who just launched, loading up again, I know what happened: the dreaded "no drain plug!"

Winches and ropes can be replaced by most of us in the comfort of the boat garage.

A repair kit for the big engine prop is an absolute necessity. Sometimes, help is not far away, and most people are happy to give

a tow to the ramp. However, we have spun a prop twice when it was dark and there was no cell service. On one occasion, we ran the trolling motor batteries down to a slow turn with the ramp 20 feet away, and we could watch individual rotations of the prop as we finally made it to the ramp!

Other things need attention before heading to open water for the first time after ice-out. One thing that my son Darren differs on is the need for a paddle in the boat. I am reminded of a time when my other son John and a buddy were fishing an old strip mine pit close to his home in Illinois. It was well after dark, and they were throwing topwater baits. There means for propulsion was an electric motor. When it died, they realized they had no alternate means of getting back to the ramp. They finally took the lids off two tackle boxes and managed to finally get to the ramp. They never fished without paddles in the boat again—ever!

So, this is tinker tackle and boat time. Get everything ready you can, so when the word on the street or at the bait shop is that ice—at least most of it—is gone, you're ready to go! Fishing might be tough in the beginning, but not because you aren't ready. When you hear that the fish are biting, you'll be among the first on the bank or in the boat to feel a tug and witness a jump or roll from a noble competitor! **MWO**

Ken Mitchell's outdoor experience includes fishing, hunting, camping, hunting mushrooms, bass tournament competitions and speaking to outdoor groups. He taught high school botany, zoology and advanced biology. Ken has worked as a seasonal naturalist and directed a youth conservation corp. He has written in outdoor publications and as a columnist with weekly contributions called "Woods and Waters." Kmitchell2598@gmail.com.



Firewood available at Ouabache SP

The public is invited to cut up and remove certain downed trees at Ouabache State Park for firewood. Trees eligible for firewood have fallen due to natural causes or have been dropped by property staff for safety purposes. They are along roadsides or in public areas such as campsites and picnic areas.

Permit sales and cutting are permitted through March 15. The cost of one pickup-truck load is \$10. A load is defined as an 8-foot standard pickup truck bed without any modifications. Permits are not available on observed state holidays.

A firewood permit must be obtained for each load at Ouabache's office between 8:30 a.m. and 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. Wood may be cut and removed between 9 am and 4 pm, Monday through Friday. Firewood cut at Ouabache State Park is for personal use only and may not be sold.

Ouabache State Park (on.IN.gov/ouabache) is at 4930 E. State Road 201, Bluffton, 46714.

Avian influenza found in waterfowl

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) confirmed highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) as the cause of death in waterfowl in Gibson County in December, and suspects HPAI as the cause of waterfowl deaths in Allen, Benton, Hamilton, Lake, LaPorte, Newton,

Pike, Porter, Starke, Tippecanoe and Vermillion counties. Public health risk is low; extra precautions are encouraged if interacting with waterfowl.

The recent positive detections of HPAI H5 are part of 98 positive detections across the state in waterfowl since 2022. DNR began this testing in waterfowl and raptors in 2022 and increased testing in hunter-harvested waterfowl with assistance from the U.S Department of Agriculture. With this increased testing, additional detections of HPAI are to be expected.

Most waterfowl species affected are snow geese and Canada geese, but Indiana DNR has also noted deaths in mute swans, tundra swans, mallards, American white pelicans, common goldeneyes and double-crested cormorants.

If you find wild waterfowl dead for no obvious reason, or showing any of the following signs, report it online at on.IN.gov/sickwildlife.

Signs of HPAI in waterfowl include:

- Sudden death
- Neurological impairment (e.g., lack of coordination, swimming in circles, tremors, twisted neck)
- Lack of energy and appetite
- Swelling of the head, neck and eyes
- Nasal discharge, cough, sneezing, lack of coordination, and diarrhea.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

recommends that waterfowl hunters wear protective clothing such as face masks and gloves to process birds, and to process birds in a well-ventilated area or outdoors. Meat harvested from waterfowl should be cooked to an internal temperature of 165°F before consumption.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the public health risk for HPAI is low. However, it is possible for humans to contract HPAI. Members of the public should avoid contact with sick waterfowl and other sick wildlife whenever possible. If a carcass must be handled, wear disposable gloves and a mask, and wash hands with soap and water immediately afterward.

Please contact your healthcare provider if you come into contact with waterfowl and develop flu-like symptoms, including fever, chills, cough, and sore throat with or without conjunctivitis within 10 days of exposure.

Some domestic and agricultural animals are also known to be susceptible to HPAI, including poultry, cattle and cats. If you have these animals at home, be sure to process any harvested waterfowl away from your animals and practice good biosecurity measures.

For more information on HPAI, visit on.IN.gov/avian-flu. For more information about poultry biosecurity measures, visit aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/defend-the-flock.

If you see any of your poultry acting sick or find any dead, please report it to the Board of Animal Health at IN.gov/boah/species-information/avianbirds/small-flock-and-exhibition-poultry/sick-and-or-dead-poultry-questionnaire/.

Morrison new DNR Director

Alan Morrison began leading the Indiana Department of Natural Resources as its new director this week, following his appointment by Gov. Mike Braun to lead the agency.

"Growing up, some of my fondest memories include exploring Indiana's DNR properties. Whether it's hiking, kayaking, fishing, hunting or other outdoor pursuits, I'm now making similar memories with my own kids," Morrison said. "As DNR director, I look forward to traveling the state to hear from Hoosiers about how we can continue expanding opportunities to interact with our natural resources and provide high-quality customer service."

Morrison moves to the DNR after serving Hoosiers from his west-central Indiana home in the state's House of Representatives since 2012. In his elected role, he chaired the House Environmental Affairs Committee and was a member of the House Natural Resources Committee.

As DNR director, Morrison leads the team responsible for furthering the department's mission of protecting, enhancing, preserving, and wisely using Indiana's natural, cultural and recreational resources for the benefit of all Hoosiers.

Morrison appointed Dan Bortner to serve as director of Indiana State Parks and Madalynn Conner to serve as DNR chief of staff.

Bortner is the former DNR director and previously served as Indiana State Parks director for 15 years. Conner is a former assistant vice president at Bose Public Affairs Group and earned her law degree from Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law. **MWO**

Jack Spaulding is an outdoor columnist living in his hometown of Moscow, Ind. with his wife, Chris. From childhood, the smallmouth bass-infested Big Flat Rock River and the surrounding hardwood forest has been his playground. He has written Spaulding Outdoors for MidWest Outdoors since 1986. Email to jackspaulding1971@outlook.com. The Best of Spaulding Outdoors and his latest, The Coon Hunter and the Kid are available from Amazon.com.

Shad Baits for Big Brown Trout

by Tom Berg

At this time of the year, trophy-sized brown trout cruise the shallows of Lake Michigan in search of two things: warm water and food. Warm water is relatively easy for them to find, once they know where it is (and you can be sure they know). They return to warmwater discharge sites all along the southern shore of the lake, to places like the Indiana Harbor shipping canal, the warm water discharge at US Steel by the Gary Light, the BP plant in Whiting, the Port of Indiana, and many others.

The food that they are seeking is not always as easy for them to find, but it is easy to predict exactly what kind of food they want: *shad!* Gizzard shad is one of the primary forage species that brown trout key-in on, and they usually don't care if the shad are live or dead. Any shad that are killed or injured by wave action or other Great Lakes perils are quickly vacuumed up by hungry brown trout.

Alewives are another important prey species for browns, and when they find them, they really gorge themselves. Alewives are closely related to gizzard shad; they even look alike. Both are thin and silvery, and both travel in large schools. When a group of marauding browns finds a good school of these baitfish, they love to herd them up against the beach or shoreline rocks and attack like a horde of piranhas!

Brown trout fishermen who know what the fish want have a definite advantage over those who do not, and some of the most successful brown trout anglers use almost nothing but shad-imitating baits at this time of year. The results often speak for themselves.

Bait fishermen do quite well using dead shad and alewives that they caught during fall or earlier in the year. But if you don't have a ready supply of frozen bait, you need to use shad-imitating plugs. Here are some things to keep in mind:

Slow shad baits

Floating plugs with a diving lip can be characterized as "slow" shad baits because they can be retrieved very slowly without sinking to the bottom. The natural buoyancy of the bait keeps it floating toward the surface even during the slowest retrieve. This is especially important in early spring, because



The author lifts a nice-sized brown trout that he caught in early spring while trolling shad-imitating crankbaits.

brown trout often want a very-slow-moving bait in cold water. On certain days, fast baits are completely ignored.

Early in the season, it pays to reel as slowly as you can. It's often hard to do, as many anglers catch themselves reeling faster and faster to cover more water quickly and find active fish. Instead, force yourself to slow down and match the mood and metabolism of the fish. Sometimes, an erratic action (but still slow) is the most productive.

A lot of good shad-imitating lures that

catch spring brown trout. The Rapala Shad Rap is one of the best. They are made of balsa wood and look just like a baby shad or alewife. They're very buoyant and have a great action in the water. Silver and black is a very productive color, but other colors like shad, silver/blue, gold/black and hot chartreuse are excellent as well. See all the colors at www.rapala.com.

Other floating shad baits perform well, too. Reef Runner (now owned by Acme Tackle) produces some very good ones made to order for the brown trout fisherman. The Ripshad is the perfect bait for finicky browns that won't hit a bigger bait, and they really look like a baby gizzard shad. Chrome/blue, chrome/black and Bare Naked are great

color patterns, and there are plenty of others to choose from. Check out Reef Runner lures at www.acmetackle.com.

The LiveTarget Shad crankbait is 2.5 inches long and is deadly for big brown trout at this time of the year. These lures come in extremely realistic finishes, and they are excellent brown trout lures. They have great shad-imitating colors, too: silver/blue and silver/bronze. Check them out at www.livetargetlures.com.

Fast shad baits

Floating plugs can be called "fast" shad baits if you reel them in fast (and they catch fish that way, too), but another group of shad lures fits the description a little better. These baits are generally lipless, and the best ones are sinking models. Since they sink, they have the added advantage of running anywhere in the water column from top to bottom.

Lipless shad baits perform the best when they are reeled quickly, and they give off a fast, tight wiggle. Most have internal rattles, so the tight wiggle is accompanied by a good rattling sound. Fast shad baits perform the best when a school of browns is actively feeding in a particular area. That's when they are most apt to chase down a fast-moving bait and pounce on it.

One of the most popular and productive baits in this category is the Rat-L-Trap. It comes in a wide variety of colors, but some of the best patterns for brown trout include silver, gold, firetiger and copper. Rat-L-Traps are great baits when you retrieve them very fast, and they are also quite productive if you add an occasional shake or jerk to the retrieve.

Another good, fast-running, shad-imitator is the Rattlin' Rapala. This bait is a little longer than the Rat-L-Trap, but it has a good action. Hot colors for this bait include shad, holographic shad, firetiger, silver and silver gold.

Shad imitators are some of the most productive brown trout lures available. Try some of the baits mentioned here or experiment with others. Depending on conditions and the mood of the fish on any given day, these baits will catch fish. It's up to you to find them and determine if they want their shad dinner fast or slow. **MWO**

A lifelong outdoorsman and award-winning outdoor writer and photographer, Tom Berg has been the Executive Director/Treasurer of the Hoosier Outdoor Writers group in Indiana since 2004. When he is not writing, he would rather be outside fishing, hunting, trapping or birding than doing just about anything else.

Share your bright idea!

Have you got a favorite
fishing, hunting, camping or outdoors tip?
Share it with us.
If we decide to use it in our column,
we'll send you a useful thank you gift.

Email your tips to:
info@midwestoutdoors.com

or mail to:
Tips Editor at MidWest Outdoors
111 Shore Drive, Burr Ridge, IL 60527

Please be sure to include your name and mailing address where we can send your prize.
Prizes will not be sent until/unless your tip is chosen for publication.



Big brown trout love shad-imitating lures like this classic Rapala Shad Rap. Photos: Tom Berg

WATER WERKS



OPEN HOUSE

Sat, March 29 • Opens at 6 am

HOURS

6am - 5pm

**6am Kickoff
with
Chauncey's
ESPN Radio Show
LIVE
at Water Werks!**

**1% of All Sales
Donated to
No Limits Fishing**

See Water Werks website, Facebook and Instagram pages for additional event updates and schedule!

SEMINARS

- Humminbird & Minn Kota
- High School Fishing Team Programs
- U.S. Coast Guard: Safety Demo & Boat Inspections
- Lake Michigan Fishing & More!

MEET FACTORY REPS

- Johnson Outdoors
Lowe • Lund • Mercury**
- ADDITIONAL REPS FROM:**
- MidWest Outdoors
 - Chicago Adaptive Sports: No Limits Fishing
 - Shimano Sport • STIX Cigars
 - Tight Rope Fishing
 - Wild Dog Guide Service

18660 S. Cicero
Country Club Hills, IL 60478

(708) 798-9700

WATERWERKS.com



WHAT IS THE ISRA AND WHY SHOULD YOU BE PART OF IT?

The ISRA is affiliated with the NRA but we are formed as a state association long before our affiliation with the NRA. We were originally formed as an association to train civilian marksmen prior to the entry in the United States Army. The ISRA was actually formed in 1903 under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Army. It was known as the Department of Civilian Marksmanship.

The Illinois State Rifle Association is here to stop the anti-gunners BUT WE NEED YOUR HELP!



Our Second Amendment rights in the State of Illinois are under attack by the Governor and the State Legislature - and so long

as anti-gun Democrats control the levers of power both in Chicago and Springfield, law-abiding citizens like you and me will continue to be targeted and harassed.

The stakes couldn't be higher, and our opponents will not rest until they have taken away our rights and our firearms. And that's why we need you to join the Illinois State Rifle Association because there's strength in numbers.

As a member of one of the oldest and most respected gun organizations in the country, you'll receive amazing and unique benefits, including:

- Opportunities to attend engaging and well-attended town hall meetings in your area.
- Receive a digital copy of a widely read quarterly publication, the Illinois Shooter.
- Receive up-to-date notifications about ISRA events, including a weekly bulletin.
- Receive notifications on political activities in Springfield, including legislative updates and action alerts on issues that affect gun owners.
- Assistance with your CCL and FOID application or renewal.
- Discounts on ISRA Academy classes and training.

Rest assured, the ISRA will not back down until our right to bear arms is restored in Illinois. And we will continue our fight in the media and oppose any legislation that targets legal gun owners. But, that's not all. We're also leading the charge as a named plaintiff on two cases and playing a supporting role in an additional five more - totaling 7 cases dealing with constitutional issues and on behalf of law-abiding gun owners in Illinois.

Again, the stakes couldn't be higher and it's why we need your support. Please join the ISRA! Visit us at: isra.org.

ISRA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Date: _____ New Renewal #: _____

Name: Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ County _____

Date of Birth: _____ Email: _____ Occupation: _____

Want ISRA emails? Yes No Are you a registered voter? Yes No Are you an NRA member? Yes No

MEMBER TYPE:

AMERICAN HERO*:

- 1 year\$30
- 2 years\$55
- 3 years\$80
- American Hero Lifetime\$550

INDIVIDUAL:

- 1 year\$35
- 2 years\$65
- 3 years\$90
- Lifetime\$700

EXPAND TO FAMILY:

- per year\$20

OTHER OPTIONS:

- Junior (<19)\$20/year
- Senior Lifetime\$400

Name: _____

Spouse's Name: _____ D.O.B. _____ / _____ / _____

Child 1: _____ D.O.B. _____ / _____ / _____

Child 2: _____ D.O.B. _____ / _____ / _____

Child 3: _____ D.O.B. _____ / _____ / _____

DONATIONS \$ _____

*AMERICAN HERO refers to any active or retired military, Law Enforcement, and any "First Responders."

- For lifetime memberships ISRA offers an "Easy Pay" option, which is \$100 down, then monthly payments of \$50 until paid in full. This is available for Lifetime, Senior Lifetime, Endowment, Patron, or Benefactor membership
- Other donor/membership levels are available. Contact office for more details.

PAYMENT INFORMATION

(check one)
 Cash _____ Check/MO _____ MC _____ Visa _____ Amex _____ Disc _____

Card #: _____ CVV: _____ Exp. Date _____

Name on Card (please print) _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Mail completed application to:
 ISRA Range, PO Box 637, Chatsworth, IL 60921
Or fax completed application to:
 815-635-3723 (credit card orders only)
 Join online at: isra.org/join-us/
 Questions? Email: member@isra.org or call us at 815-635-3198

Illinois State Rifle Association/ISRA Range Membership Application
 This form is for NEW Range Memberships only. Contact the ISRA office for ISRA Membership renewals.

MOTOR CITY

PAWN BROKERS

WE OFFER A LARGE VARIETY OF

FIREARMS



& TRANSFERS

- **\$0 Transfer fee - Hamtramck**
Until December 31, 2025
- **\$50 Transfer fee - Roseville & Ferndale**

**WE BUY, SELL & PAWN
FIREARMS**

- ✓ Friendly & Knowledgeable Staff
- ✓ Over 2000 New & Used Firearms in Stock
All Major Brands
- ✓ Competitive Pricing On Firearms
- ✓ Special Orders Also Available



CANIK
SUPERIOR HANDGUNS



**FIREARMS AVAILABLE AT THE
FOLLOWING LOCATIONS**

Roseville
26510 Gratiot
(586)-772-2274

Hamtramck
2673 Caniff
(313)-855-5004

Warren
21600 Van Dyke
(586)-758-2274

Ferndale
1461 E 8 Mile
(248)-439-0950

Befriend a Farmer and Find More Antlers

by Collin Mann

I will never forget the day I found this amazing set of antlers. It was a warm, spring day, and I was planting beans in a field full of wild mustard. Thankfully, my grandfather had taken a disc through that field to clean up some washes and do some prep work for me to plant. This strip of freshly worked soil made the first antler stick out like a sore thumb. I stopped the planter and took a break to grab it.

Not only was I obsessed with collecting antlers, being an avid deer hunter, but these would puncture a tire and shut you down in a heartbeat. Most farmers pick up antlers and throw them away, but not this one. You can never have too many antlers around the house, especially when they're this big.

As I walked across the soft spring soil to pick up the antler with the tractor idling behind me, I knew I needed to be on the lookout for the other one. When a buck has antlers this big, he will usually become highly annoyed with the new imbalance created on his head by losing the first one. Bucks oftentimes shake until the second one falls off.

Sure enough, after I had admired the first antler and snapped a few pictures, I headed back toward the tractor and noticed the match to this set just a few feet away in the wild mustard. I couldn't have been happier to have this matching set. They currently act as a piece of décor in my office.

I am very fortunate to have grown up on the family farm. This wasn't the first set of



Applying anhydrous and looking for sheds.

antlers I found like. For the longest time, I was the only one involved in the farm who liked deer hunting. This meant that everyone else gave them to me when they found them.

Being involved in farming presents the perfect opportunity to find sheds in spring. It's the time of year when the ground is worked and crops are planted. Tractors cover every square foot of the fields that border your hunting property.

Hunters, get to know the local farmers! Ask them if they have found any sheds. They may be willing to give you what they have found. This will give you an idea of what bucks are around during the spring. They will



The author holding a large set of antlers found in Indiana while planting beans.

likely allow you to walk their fields and look for antlers. I can assure you that they don't want them left lying. They become quite expensive when they end up in a tire. If you're lucky, they may even let you drive a tractor and find some sheds yourself. **MWO**

Collin Mann is an avid outdoorsman and blogger. His work can be found at StreamAndTimber.com where he writes about hunting, fishing, wild game cooking, and outdoor adventures.

WATCH PURSUITUP FOR FREE

SCAN HERE TO FIND OUT HOW

Scout Early for Spring Gobblers

by Darin Potter

The eastern sky grew brighter as the morning sun slowly rose higher, gradually peeking out over distant treetops. As I lowered the brim of my hat to prevent my eyes from squinting, a group of nearby toms let out gobbles in unison, causing my heart to pick up its pace. Each yelp that I let out on my slate call had purpose: to lure a tom in close enough for a shot. However, these toms weren't going anywhere. They wanted the hen to come to them, so that's exactly what I did.

I gathered up my gear and began walking briskly across the open hayfield, trying to cut some distance between the stubborn longbeards and myself. After reaching an old farm lane, I decided that this would make an excellent setup, so I found the best tree that was available and hunkered down with my back pressing against the bark. After softly yelping on my push-pull call, an intense burst of gobbles filled the spring air, causing me to ready my 12-gauge on my knee in anticipation of a shot.

First, a hen appeared, leading the way. Then, to my disbelief, five mature longbeards stepped into the clearing in front of me. I pointed my barrel at the closest tom, lining up the fiber optic sight on its head and anchored the turkey, instantly sending the other birds back into the safety of nearby cover. I looked down at my watch: 8:10 am.

Seeing how it was only the second day of the first turkey season in Unit K where I was hunting, I decided to spend the remaining days that I had off from work scouting for turkeys. After all, the sooner you get a jumpstart on scouting for spring longbeards, the better. With most turkey seasons lasting only a week or so, you need to find several locations where you can expect to find these birds, just in case your first choice isn't successful. These different places where sign is present, or where turkeys have been spotted prior to the season, will give you confidence, knowing that you chose a good area to hunt come opening morning—especially when you hear a tom gobble his way into your setup.

It is best to begin scouting for wild turkeys a few weeks to a month before your respective season begins. However, if you harvested a bird early, take to the turkey woods and learn their behavior as often as possible. If there are no other turkey hunters in your area, take a few calls with you and try calling other birds in. Especially take advantage of the opportunity to call for someone who hasn't gotten a bird yet. It's not only fulfilling to call in a tom for someone; it also gives you more time to observe turkeys in the wild.

Scouting methods

Drive or walk to areas that provide



Turkey tracks tell the story of where they're spending time and traveling.



The author used the terrain to place a successful shot on this spring gobbler.

you with a good place to listen to distant birds. Toms typically begin gobbling about a month before the spring turkey season begins. It's a good idea to check out places where you've seen birds roost in the past, or trees that look like good locations for them to roost. If you don't hear or see anything for fifteen minutes or so, try using an owl, crow, or coyote call to get a longbeard to shock gobble. This simply means that you surprised a tom, and his response was a reflex. It is vital that you don't use any turkey calls at this time. These will only help educate the birds before the season begins.

Once you start hearing turkeys, mark a waypoint for reference later. If you found these locations by driving your vehicle on roads near private property, then the markings that you took will help you identify the owners of the property so that, hopefully, you can secure permission to hunt these areas.

Don't forget to bring along a pair of binoculars or a spotting scope so that you can distinguish a hen from a tom and receive a better view of the turkeys. It is best to glass fields and other open areas from a hill, which allows you to see the birds more clearly.

Once you locate where the turkeys have been feeding, dusting, strutting and roosting, it's time to put in some leg work, begin looking for sign and studying the lay of the land where you plan to hunt. At this point, you've seen turkeys from afar, but now it's time to gather more details to increase your chances of success.



Covering as much ground as possible prior to the season will help you determine where you'll be during the opener.

Turkey sign

When walking through areas where you've seen turkeys while glassing, keep your eyes open for tracks, scratchings, drag marks, droppings and feathers. Place this sign that you discover in your turkey hunting memory bank because these locations are gold.

Finding feathers and droppings underneath a tree is a safe bet that turkeys were roosting there. Even though turkeys rarely roost in the same tree two nights in a row, this sign will reassure you that they have been frequenting this particular area.

Tracks and scratchings on the ground indicate where the birds were spending time feeding and traveling. Drag marks that you come across, which are best seen on bare dirt or in areas where the ground is covered with leaves, are made by a strutting tom as his wing tips make contact with the ground.

Strutting occurs in open areas such as a field where they can easily be seen performing by nearby hens. These areas are referred to as strutting zones. Towards mid-afternoon, turkeys often take a dust bath in dirt or sand. Hunting near these turkey hangouts can also increase your chances of bagging a gobbler.

Time to hunt

When you've found an area with turkey sign, take a look around and become familiar with the lay of the land, making sure that the birds won't have any obstacles to cross while they come in to your calls and decoy setup. These obstacles could be a wide creek, river, pond or lake, barbed wire fence, or a steep hill. However, a tom may sometimes hang up even when there isn't anything in its way. This usually happens to me at least once a season. When it does happen, I must abandon my setup and try ambushing the stubborn bird like I have done for the last two seasons.

If you've spent many seasons chasing gobblers in the turkey woods, you are aware that every gobbler has a mind of its own, and sometimes we have no choice but to improvise. That's part of what makes spring turkey hunting so exciting and keeps drawing me back every spring. **MWO**

Darin Potter's passion for outdoor writing began at the age of 12 when he first began writing in a journal that his parents bought him on a family camping trip in Northern Michigan. His writings have appeared in several Midwest publications: Michigan-Out-of-Doors, Michigan and Ohio Outdoor News, Modern Pioneer and MidWest Outdoors.

MICHIGAN Sportsman's Calendar



ONGOING EVENTS

Weekly

Bay City Recreation Area—Arrows Away from 9 - 12 noon. Join the DNR for a weekly archery program offered at state parks throughout Michigan. The experienced, friendly instructors will give you step-by-step archery instruction. You'll learn basic archery safety, terminology, and get lots of shooting time. All equipment provided and most sites have equipment for most ages and abilities. For more information contact the Saginaw Bay Visitor Center at 989-667-0717, or visit michigan.gov/dnr/education/public/learn-archery for days and locations.

Monthly

Hands-on Fly-fishing free clinic! The second Wednesday of every month from 6:30-8:30 p.m. All levels—from beginning to advanced. All materials provided! Preregistration required, please call the Fly Shop at 248-209-4200.

Monthly

Adult Beginning Fly-fishing at the Bass Pro Shops in Auburn Hills, Detroit, the first Wednesday of every month from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Free! No equipment necessary, Preregistration required.

Bimonthly

Trap shooting, Individual Tournaments 200 targets the 1st and 3rd Sundays at 12 noon, at Twin Lakes Sportsmen's Club events. For more info call 773-792-3457 or 262-279-3503.

Thursday nights

Hand Gun Night every Thursday from 6-10 p.m., at Four Square Conservation Club and Sportsman's Association, 6777 Cline Road. For more info call 810-327-6859 or foursquaresportsman.com.

Sundays

Shooting 5 Stand and Trap, every Sunday 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., at Big Bear Sportsman's Club. For more info call Dave Somset, 231-362-3103.

SPORT SHOWS

February 28 - March 2

39th Battle Creek RV & Camping Show, Kellogg Arena, 1 McCamly St., Battle Creek, MI 49017. Hours: Friday 1-8 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Sunday 12 - 5 p.m. Admission \$8, seniors \$7, children 12 and under free. For info: MARVAC, William Sheffer, (517) 349-8881, marvac.org.

March 8-9

Huron Gun Collector Show at Washtenaw Farm Council Grounds, 5055 Ann Arbor-Saline Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48103. Hours: Saturday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sunday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission \$5, members \$3, children 12 and under free. Vendor tables \$40 ea., electric for the weekend \$10. For info: Huron Gun Collectors, Mark Brown, (517) 546-4710, huronguncollectors@yahoo.com, huronguncollectors.com.

March 8-9

Grandville Gun Show at Rivertown Crossing Mall, 3668 Rivertown Parkway, Grandville, MI 48328. Hours: Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission \$10, children 12 and under free. Vendor tables \$65 ea. For info: JDR Promotions LLC, Jack Jewell, (810) 858-0078, jackisjewell@gmail.com, greatlakesgunshows.com.

March 13-16

Novi Boating Show, Suburban Collection Showplace, 46100 Grand River Avenue, Novi, MI 48374. Show Hours: Thursday & Friday 2 - 9 p.m., Saturday 11 a.m. - 9 p.m., Sunday 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. Admission: adults \$12, children 12 & under free with an adult. The Novi Boat Show only accepts US currency. Parking is available on-site for \$10. For info: MBIA, boatmichigan.org, (734) 261-0123, mbia.org or noviboatshow.com, boatmichigan.org.

March 13-16

Ultimate Sport Show Grand Rapids, at DeVos Place, 303 Monroe Ave. NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503. Show hours: Thursday 1-8 p.m., Friday 12-8 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. - 8 p.m., Sunday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Admission: adults \$12, children (6-14) \$5. For info: Showspan Inc, John Loeks, (616) 447-2860, Fax (616) 530-2122, showspan.com, events@showspan.com.

March 14-16

Traverse City Boat Show at the Grand Traverse County Civic Center, 1213 W Civic Center Drive, Traverse City, MI 49686. Show hours: Friday 12 - 8 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Sunday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Admission: adults \$8, kids (6-15) \$2, kids (0-5) free. For info: Blue Water Promotions, (231) 775-9900, traversecityboatshow.com, info@traversecityboatshow.com.

March 14-16

48th Annual Flint Camper and RV Show, Dort Federal Credit Union Event Center, Flint, MI. For info: MARVAC, William Sheffer, (517) 349-8881, marvac.org.

March 21-23

33rd Annual Northwest Michigan Camper and RV Show, Howe Ice Arena, Traverse City, MI. For info: MARVAC, William Sheffer, (517) 349-8881, marvac.org.

March 28-30

Cottage & Lakefront Living Show at DeVos Place, 303 Monroe Ave. NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503. Show hours: Friday 12-8 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. - 8 p.m., Sunday, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Admission: adults \$12, children (6-14) \$5, Multi-day ticket (good for all three days, online only) \$18, Online Opening Day ticket (not available after 11:59 a.m. on March 21) \$10. For info: ShowSpan, Inc., John Loeks, (616) 447-2860, showspan.com, events@showspan.com.

April 4-6

Up North Lake & Cottage Show, at Grand Traverse Civic Center, 1213 W Civic Center Drive, Traverse City MI 49686. Show hours: Friday 12 to 6 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Sunday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission: adults \$8, kids (6-15) \$2, kids (0-5) free. For info: Blue Water Promotions, (231) 775-9900, tccottageshow.com, info@tccottageshow.com.

April 26-27

Pontiac Lake Gun Show at Oakland County Expo Center, 2212 Mall Dr. E, Waterford Township, MI 48328. Hours: Saturday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Admission \$10, children 12 and under free. Vendor tables \$65 ea. For info: JDR Promotions LLC, Jack Jewell, (810) 858-0078, jackisjewell@gmail.com, greatlakesgunshows.com.

McDaniel's 'Big Moe' Buck



Cody McDaniel's 16-point buck, nicknamed 'Big Moe,' with an unofficial score of 174 inches.

by Dave Mull

In the waning evening light on December 9, 38-year-old Cody McDaniel of Plainwell was in his stand on his father's farm near Kalamazoo, watching six does and two small bucks browsing. As he scanned with binoculars, the experienced deer hunter's plan started to come together. In the brushy forest of the neighbor's land, he saw the pair of massive, bone-white antlers bobbing through the brush toward the field.

The eight deer already in the field started getting skittish, and Cody felt certain that the big buck, with its pronounced limp, would jump the fence and offer a shot. His arms cramping from sitting still with the binoculars to his face, he lifted his Ruger 350 Legend bolt-action rifle.

It was 'Big Moe,' the buck he'd seen several times on his trail cameras since Thanksgiving.

Cody, a kayak tournament friend of mine, started deer hunting at age 12, and now hunts across the Midwest, hitting Missouri, Indiana and Kentucky—all while running a whitetail outfitter business in Illinois. The 10-year, retired Army veteran figures he's harvested around 150 deer, including some nice bucks over the past 25 years. Most of the big deer came from Illinois, where he owns and runs Western Illinois Hunting Company, a whitetail operation that specializes in trophies. The land he leases is close to that state's "Golden Triangle," a nationally recognized area that produces big deer.

Although his first youthful forays for deer had been on his dad's farm, other family members were shooting any deer with antlers, so he stopped hunting there and switched to his grandparents' nearby farm, selectively taking only bigger bucks. He hadn't hunted his father's farm during the 20 years since high school but decided to give it a go in 2023. He took a nice 8-point that scored around 100 inches, his biggest ever in Michigan. He and his longtime friend Rick Lynch (also a kayak tournament friend) killed five deer for the freezer there that season, and they decided they would shoot only bigger bucks there in future seasons.

Little did he know that the 2024 season and his dad's farm would produce his biggest buck ever.

Running his outfitter company, he has guided clients to some extraordinary animals, including one buck that scored over 190. He

doesn't get to actually hunt when guiding, so when he comes home to Michigan, it's his time to have fun.

So, before heading to Illinois last September, he set out eight trail cameras on his dad's property. Four were the kind that pinged his cell phone with photos; four were non-cell cams that needed to be scanned.

"Since I wasn't coming home until Thanksgiving, I just let them sit," he said.

No big deer pinged the cellphone cameras, and home for Thanksgiving, he went through the images on the standard cameras. The first three showed some deer, including a big 10-point that the neighbors ended up harvesting. Other than that buck, the cameras did little to get him excited about hunting that ground.

Then he scanned the fourth camera's images.

"I found three separate images of the deer I started calling Big Moe, all in daylight," he said. He'd placed that camera on a main trail heading to a well-used bedding area. The same day, he quickly replaced the non-cell cameras with cell cameras, and just as he was getting ready to leave and visit his girlfriend, a cell cam pinged. It was Big Moe, again getting his picture taken in broad daylight—just three hours after Cody had set out the camera.

"I would have killed him on the first sit, at 20 yards from the base of the tree," he said. "But hey, that's hunting right?"

Video showed that the deer had a hard limp, leading Cody to speculate that Big Moe had survived being shot by a neighbor. Cody spent the last five days of Michigan firearms season in his stand but didn't see the deer.

So, December 4, he headed back to Illinois for that state's second gun season, running into foul weather. He went duck hunting with friends, and then, a few days later, harvested a doe.

"I got her hung up, and the next day, I decided to sleep in, planning to hunt the evening," he said. "But the next day, I woke up, checked my cameras, and boom! There's Big Moe! I deboned the doe, packed the truck and headed north."

The first day back, December 8, the wind was terrible for his stand. The next day, he and Rick Lynch decide to tag team Big Moe, Cody sitting in a tree stand on the north side of the bedding area, and Rick on the south side. Cody got settled in about 2 pm.

For the most up-to-date info go to:

MidWestOutdoors.com/events

Free listing for your event!

To list your event email info to:

info@midwestoutdoors.com

Subject line: "Michigan Calendar Listing"

Please allow 6 to 8 weeks for publication.



Trailcam photos in low light and full daylight showed that 'Big Moe' was hanging around the McDaniel's farm near Kalamazoo.

With shooting hours over at 5:36, he started seeing deer at about 4:15. First a young doe, building up to the six does and two spike bucks.

"At about 5:20, they all look back, and I can see him limping through the timber. Oh, my Lord, I can't believe what I'm seeing!" he recounted, noting that legal shooting hours were going to end in about 15 minutes. "The bleach white rack, the hard limp. He jumps the fence and he's on my farm now, but he's facing toward me, just standing there 40 yards away in all his Michigan buck deer glory. He keeps looking to his right, but I need him to move to his left.

After what seemed like an eternity, he finally turns slightly, quartering. I settled the cross hair and squeezed the trigger. Boom! He took off like a shot. I rack another round and shoot. I struggle to rack the third round, and the while I'm fighting the bolt, the woods go silent. At this point, I felt like there was no way that I missed, but at the same time, I felt that I had missed, if that makes sense. I didn't hear or see him go down."

Cody said that he spent the next 10 to 15 minutes shaking and trying to figure out how he was going to get out of the stand, finally mustering up the courage to climb down.

"I met Rick at the truck, still shaking uncontrollably," he said. "We decided that we would look for blood, and within five steps of where he was standing, we found some. It's that glowing, bright-red lung blood that makes you just know you killed the deer, but

we didn't really wanna say it. It ended up that we trailed the deer less than 100 yards. The big buck had died right in front of where I'd sat in a tree stand as a teen.

"We walked up on him, and I was in disbelief," Cody said. "I knew he was big, but this deer got bigger and bigger the closer we got to him."

Cody is not an official scorer, but with twine and a tape measure, he figured the 16 scoreable points added up to around 174 inches. There was no sign of a gunshot wound that made the deer limp. Cody speculated that it might have been hit by a car.

He noted that the Ruger 350 Legend had given him mixed results for knockdown power until he switched to Michigan-made Bear Creek Ballistics ammo, with a 140-grain bullet. This copper bullet, he said, can drop deer in their tracks, and it punches well enough to leave a good blood trail when the deer doesn't drop immediately.

This is a story with a happy ending. Despite the EHD virus killing countless Southwest Michigan deer in late summer and early fall, Cody's hard work, knowledge and a little luck led to the hunting guide's biggest deer. **MWO**

Dave Mull of Kalamazoo, Mich. has spent his career communicating the outdoors experience and runs Inner Viking Media. He enjoys kayak fishing for anything that swims in the lakes and rivers of the Midwest and beyond, and even uses his MirroCraft, from time to time. Available for seminars.



INDIANA Sportsman's Calendar

in.gov/dnr/fishwild/

Sponsored by:

ChevyDrivesChicago.com
CHICAGOLAND & NORTHWEST INDIANA CHEVY DEALERS

EDUCATION

Third Wednesday of the month
Coast Guard Safe Boating Class—Join the U.S. Coast Guard for a free seminar the third Wednesday of every month from 7 p.m. - 8 p.m. The Coast Guard will cover Safe Boating Regulations, PFDs, Vessel Safety Checks, and Distress Signals. To register for this class call Scott Harvey at 812-218-5500 or email Scott at srharvey@basspro.com. All classes are free and open to the public. The class will take place in the Bass Pro Shops movie theater in Clarksville, Ind. The Coast Guard will also have a Question and Answer session at the end of each class.

ONGOING EVENTS

Friday nights

Blythe's Lady's View Elite—Women's Only League is a women's shooting group dedicated to learning and practicing defensive shooting skills. We meet weekly on Fridays from 6-8 p.m., at Blythe's Sport Shop in Valparaiso, Ind. The events are centered around structured drills that help you set goals and develop your skills. Hours: 6 to 8 p.m., at Blythe's Sport Shop, 2810 Calumet Ave., Valparaiso, IN 46383. For info: 219-476-0026, Co-ed classes register at: mwtraininggroup.com, Women only classes register at ladysview.com, or visit blythesgungear.com.

Tuesday nights

Blythe's Sport Shop Tuesday League—

Shooting league meets every Tuesday from 6-8 p.m. Each week offers a different set of drills which are provided by an instructor. At Blythe's Sport Shop, 2810 Calumet Ave., Valparaiso, IN 46383. For information: Amanda Kalman, amanda@blythesguns.com, 219-476-0026, or visit blythesgungear.com.

Tuesday nights

Open Fly Tying Seminar from 6:30 - 9 p.m., every Tuesday at the Bass Pro Shop in Portage. Come spend time with local fly fishermen/women at the seminar room on the 2nd floor behind the camo department. The open fly tying format is an excellent opportunity to trade secrets with and learn from the professionals! For further information call 219-787-6800.

SPORTS SHOWS

March 7-9

Indy 1500 Gun & Blade Show at Indiana State Fairgrounds, 1202 East 38th Street, Indianapolis, IN 46205. Hours: Friday 2 - 7 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission: \$15, good all weekend. For info: Indy1500.com, Indy1500.com, (405) 408-6197.

March 8-9

Dugger Gun & Knife Show at Dugger Community Building, 743 S. Hicum St., Dugger, IN 47848. Hours: Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission \$6, children 12 and under free. Vendor tables \$25 ea. For info: Dugger Gun & Knife Show, Chad Reynolds, (812) 648-2407, cnreynolds@sbcglobal.net, (812) 201-0010, duggergunandknifeshow@yahoo.com, facebook.com/pages/Dugger-Gun-Knife-Show/101981549877598.

March 15-16

Stateline Gun Show at Stateline Gun Show, 18864 County Rd. 13, Pioneer, OH 43554. Hours: Saturday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission \$5, children 10 and under free. Vendor tables \$25 ea. For info: D&K Enterprises, Duane Votaw, (419) 630-6289, duanevotaw@frontier.com, statelinegunshow.com.

March 15-16

Lebanon Gun Show at Boone County Fairgrounds, 1300 E 100 South, Lebanon, IN 46052. Hours: Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission \$8, children 12 and under free (under 18 must be accompanied by and adult). Vendor tables \$45 ea. For info: Central Indiana Gun Shows, Dan Hedger, (765) 993-8942, cigshows@gmail.com, or Brandy Sifford, (765) 969-2536, centralindianagunshows.com

March 22-23

Princeton Gun Show at Gibson County Fairgrounds, 709 N Embree St., Princeton, IN 47670. Hours: Saturday 9

a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission \$6, children 12 and under free. Vendor tables \$45 ea., For info: Central Indiana Gun Shows, Dan Hedger, (765) 993-8942, cigshows@gmail.com, Brandy Sifford, (765) 969-2536, centralindianagunshows.com.

March 28-30

Elkhart 350 Black Friday Gun, Knife & Outdoorsmen Show at Northern Indiana Event Center, Orthwein Pavillion, 21565 Executive Pkwy., Elkhart, IN 46514. Hours: Friday 2 - 7 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Black Friday hours 12 noon - 6 p.m. Admission \$6, children 12 and under free; \$11 two-day pass, \$15 weekend pass, seniors (60+) \$1 off, law enforcement in uniform free. Vendor tables \$50 ea. prepaid, \$60 ea. day of show. For info: Gun Slinger Promotions USA, Charlotte Rodriguez, (260) 624-5996, 1gunshowpro@gmail.com, gunslingergunshows.com.

March 29-30 & April 26-27

Indianapolis Gun Show at Stout Field National Guard Armory, 3912 W Minnesota St., Indianapolis, IN 46241. Hours: Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission \$6, children 12 and under free (under 18 must be accompanied by an adult). Vendor tables \$50 ea. For info: Central Indiana Gun Shows, Dan Hedger, (765) 993-8942, cigshows@gmail.com, or Brandy Sifford, (765) 969-2536, centralindianagunshows.com.

April 5-6

Tipton Gun & Knife Show at Tipton County Fairgrounds, 4-H Building, 1200 South Main Street, Tipton, IN 46072. Hours: Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission \$6, children under 12 free with paying adult. Vendor tables \$45 ea. For info: Tipton Gun Shows LLC, Pat Comer, (317) 379-3341, comersguns@yahoo.com.

For the most up-to-date info go to:
MidWestOutdoors.com/events

Get your Indiana hunting, trapping and fishing licenses online at wildlife.in.gov.

If you witness a fish or wildlife violation call: 1-800-TIP-IDNR.

Free listing for your event!
To list your event, email info to:
info@midwestoutdoors.com
Subject line: "Indiana Calendar Listing"
Please allow 6 to 8 weeks for publication

Follow

on our Socials

youtube.com/MidWestOutdoorsTV MidWestOutdoorsUSA twitter.com/MWOOutdoorsUSA facebook.com/MidWestOutdoorsUSA

Get Outdoors: Go for a Trek in the Woods

by John Bennett

The dictionary defines a trek as, "a long journey overland on foot." I am not in favor of long walks at my age, but I do like to get out into the woods and stretch my legs once in a while.

Daniel Boone, Simon Kenton, Lewis Wetzel and other "long hunters" often went on treks into "Can-tuc-kee" which lasted for months, if not years. Definitely above my pay grade, but they are interesting to read about.

Captains Kirk and Picard took long treks into outer space, often encountering less-than-friendly aliens. Way too dangerous for this ol' farm boy!

What I am referring to is turning off the television and getting out of the house and into the fresh air... one of my favorite themes.

A few years ago, two friends and I went into the woods for a couple of days. About all we took was what we carried on our backs. We made more than one trip back and forth, but we really were traveling pretty light.

There was a sense of adventure for us "over the hill" folks, and it turned out to be lots of fun.

We put up open-face, lean-to type shelters using white waterproofed canvas laid over ropes stretched between trees, with canopies that could be lowered in case of rain.

We laid out blankets and "buffle" hides just like the long hunters of ages past. We did this in the spirit of Tecumseh, the famous Shawnee war leader, who once, after being offered a chair, told General William Henry Harrison: "The earth is my mother. Upon her bosom I shall rest."

After we swept the leaves away and cleared the forest floor, we struck a cooking fire with flint and steel. We would have gone without a fire before we would have used a match on this historical outing.

After roasting some game meat—probably venison, I don't recall—we sat on stumps around the fire, drank hot chocolate



The author's camp during a trek in the woods.

out of metal cups and told stories.

Believe me, when sitting around a campfire with some good friends, the stories roll off the tongue pretty easily. All three of us are historical re-enactors, so the names of Boone, Wetzell, Kenton, Tecumseh and other legends of the frontier were favorite subjects.

The following morning, the long guns were brought out and an informal shootin' match was held. The targets were spots on logs, and I am happy to report that we all shot pretty well. Of course, having muzzle-loading rifles only added to the authenticity of the trek.

Due to time constraints, darn it, by afternoon we were out of the woods and headed home. But we carried with us good memories that will last a long time.

Does this sound interesting? Would you care to try this, but do not know where to start?

The first step is to find a suitable woods and then secure permission from the landowner. If this works out, it would not be

a bad idea to invite the landowner to join you, or your small group for a fire-cooked meal and a cup of coffee/chocolate.

Then, plan your shelter. Have a tent? More power to you. Find a level spot that will not flood in a rain and set it up.

No tent? There are scads of videos online that show how to construct primitive shelters, ranging in difficulty from ridiculously simple to quite advanced. Remember, never cut a tree without the landowner's consent. Most shelters are easily constructed with fallen limbs.

For online videos, try *Survival Lilly* and *Corporal's Corner*.

One of the simplest shelters is the open-faced lean-to mentioned earlier. (See photo). If you are only staying for a day or two, this should work out pretty well.

One caveat: Beware of "widow-makers"—dead limbs or trees that could fall on your shelter. Look up and plan carefully.

Because I'm old, I now use a sleeping mat beneath my "buffle" robe that makes

sleeping much easier. Mine came from Bass Pro Shops for less than \$25 and is well worth the price.

Now, one of my favorite subjects: cooking over a fire. There is nothing wrong with dragging along a Coleman stove, especially if the landowner forbids any open fires.

For a fire, dig a pit which can be refilled later, or sweep away the leaves in a 6-foot circle. If you can find large stones, create a fire circle. Just be sure to have at least one bucket of water to douse the fire when necessary.

You might want to include a kid or two in this historical trek. Activities? Leaf and tree identification, avoiding poison ivy, finding and identifying animal tracks, eating snacks, bird calls and identification, storytelling—the scarier the better—eating snacks, telling jokes, various kinds of fire starting (with adult supervision), archery, and eating snacks. The possibilities are darned near endless.

Necessities? Soap and water, bug repellent, drinking water, first aid kit, flashlights, toilet paper, a camera and plenty of snacks.

Kids can quickly become bored, so it might not be a bad idea to limit the amount of time on each activity, and to allow some time for a quick nap. Let them suggest some of the things to do.

It is a matter of judgment whether to allow smart phones and electronic games. Frankly, I like to see kids leave them behind, but for the very first outing, maybe they could pack them along and only use them for a limited amount of time.

If any of this has struck a note with you, get together with a buddy or two and plan your own trek into the woods. Who knows? You just might find ol' Daniel, Simon or Lewis peering out from behind a tree. **MWO**

John Bennett is a retired history teacher, historical re-enactor, father and grandfather. As a four-season outdoorsman, his passion is waterfowl hunting and fishing for smallmouth bass. He lives in Ohio and spends quite a bit of time in his primitive log cabin, which he built.

Lake Michigan's Salmon Fishery Assured

by Jerry Pabst

With the big lake's open-water fishing season just around the corner, trollers and shore anglers can take a break from readying their fishing gear for another action-packed summer; instead, they should hoist a cool refreshment to celebrate the news that last year's Coho and Chinook salmon fully cooperated with DNR biologists in Michigan and Wisconsin to provide all the fish eggs needed to fill the newly emptied hatcheries.

Both Michigan and Wisconsin, with their extensive lakefronts, experience substantial salmon spawning runs in several of their



Every troller (including the author!) dreams of catching a big Chinook like this, but not everyone is lucky enough to get one. Still, the chances of hooking into a Lake Michigan trophy salmon are getting better each year. Photo: Jerry Pabst

rivers, providing the necessary eggs for next year's stocking—not only for themselves, but for Indiana and Illinois as well. If a spawning run falls short, as occasionally happens, stocking schedules for the following year could suffer.

In the days of yore, when alewives were abundantly plentiful, as many as 16 million salmon and trout were poured into Lake Michigan every spring. But when zebra—and now quagga—mussels showed up, they outcompeted alewives for the lower portion of the forage base, and baitfish population (invasive alewives) crashed.

Without the massive alewife schools to

support them, hungry salmon and trout fell on hard times, and their stocking numbers had to be decreased accordingly, falling by more than 50 percent.

The future of this huge sport fishery looked dim indeed. But Mother Nature had a few tricks in her bag, and she came to the rescue. After virtually taking over the lake, the zebra mussels were overwhelmed by the arrival of the larger quagga, and were soon starved into obscurity. While the new arrivals are firmly established, they apparently aren't gobbling as much forage as the zebras did, and the alewife population has staged a small, but noticeable, comeback.

For the past several years, it has been possible to increase Chinook salmon stocking numbers. Also, the lake trout replaced the missing alewives by switching back to native prey, which not only took some pressure off the alewives, but supplied missing nutrients that were preventing their eggs from surviving for well over fifty years. Suddenly, there were big, fat lakera all over the place, and it won't be long before they become self-sustaining.

Getting back to the DNR egg-taking, the Manistee River weir, in Michigan, collected enough Chinook eggs to fill their own needs, but also fully supply Illinois and Indiana. The weir at the Platte River garnered 6.5 million Coho eggs, enough for all four Lake Michigan state's hatcheries.

But wait; there's more! Michigan also keeps adult fish at hatcheries for egg-taking purposes, and they produced 378,000 brook trout, 448,000 lake trout, 2.5 million brown trout, and 1.5 million rainbow trout eggs. As a bonus, the captive trout also provided 422,000 splake eggs.

So, what not very long ago what looked like a doomed fishery has become a huge resource on the rise. I guess the old adage holds true: You just can't fool Mother Nature! **MWO**

Jerry Pabst has been writing about the outdoors for over 40 years. He captained a Lake Michigan charter boat for 25 years and was inducted into the Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame. He has hunted waterfowl in all North American flyways, pursued upland game extensively, and trains his own dogs.



Like us on
facebook

Stay informed of the latest
happenings at

**MIDWEST
OUTDOORS**

Facebook.com/
MidWestOutdoorsUSA

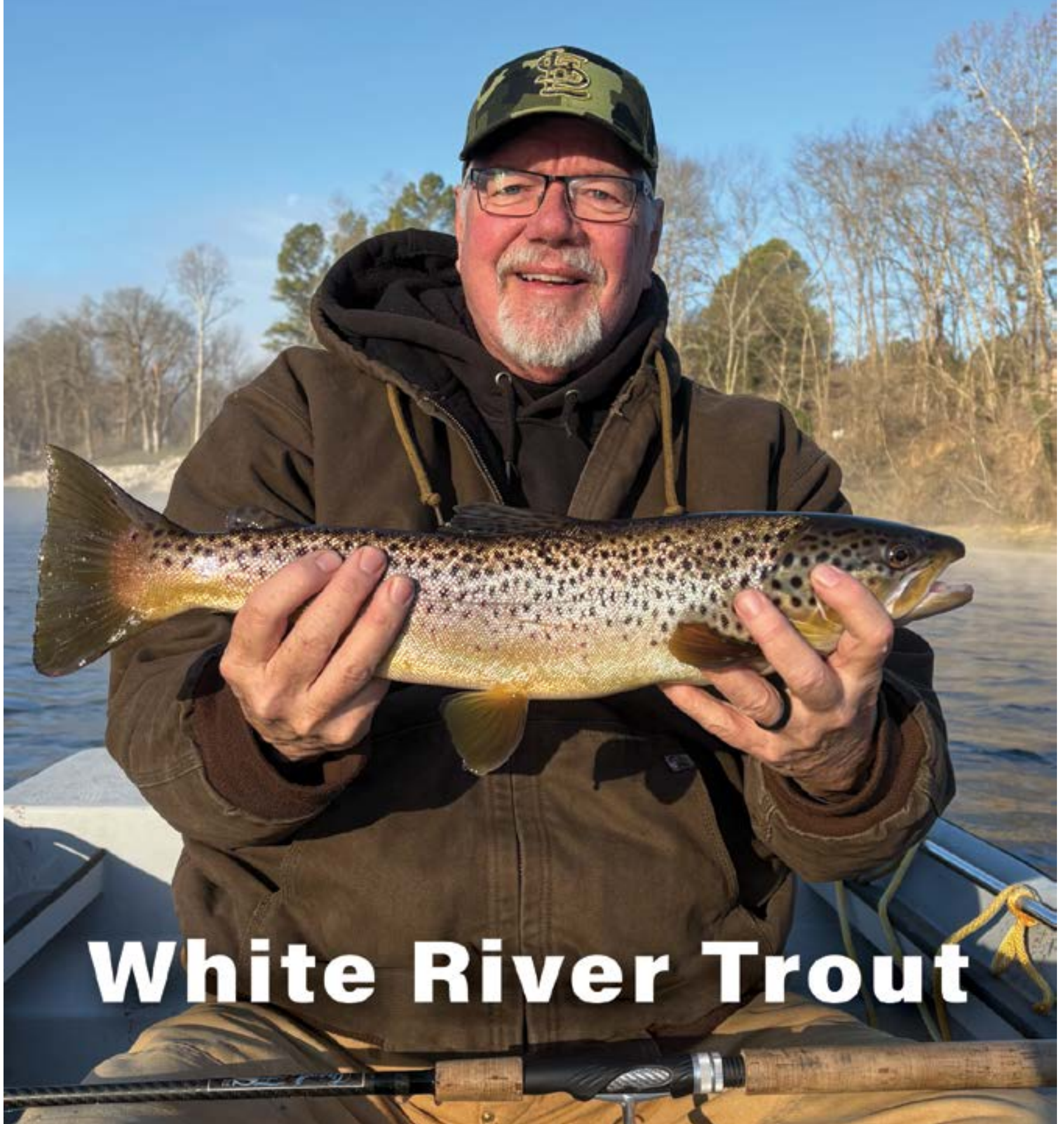
**MIDWEST
OUTDOORS**



March 2025

**IOWA
MISSOURI**

Section Three



White River Trout

**MIDWEST
OUTDOORS**

"Helping you enjoy the outdoors!"

Become an *MWO INSIDER!*

Each week you'll receive timely info from MWO
on where to go, what to use, and how to use it!

FREE sign-up at MidWestOutdoors.com/Insider

(We never give your email address to third-party companies)



White River Trout

I grew up fishing for trout in Missouri's crystal-clear State Park streams. My family spent an average of three weekends a month, from March through September, at Montauk. When dad took a summer vacation, we would go to Bennet Springs. Occasionally, we would spend a week on the shores of Lake Taneycomo at Branson. Trout fishing was Dad's passion.

My love of fishing includes trout. I do not share my dad's obsession with trout, by I still enjoy a trout trip at least once a year. I have caught some good trout in Lake Michigan. But for the past couple of years, my annual trout excursion has taken me to Arkansas, where I fish with my great friend Donald Cranor.

Donald runs six to eight guides on the White River virtually every day of the year. Some months are busier than others, but his guides stay busy because they can find and catch trout anytime. Their track record is second-to-none.

My favorite time to visit Donald and get in his boat with him is January. Yes, it can be cold, but the fishing can be amazing. In fact, the colder the better. When the temperatures become bitterly cold, they must let lots of water through the Bull Shoals dam to generate electricity. When this happens, and the water in the river rises, trout fishing can be fast and furious.

You see, January is spawning season for trout. The White River is home to both brown and rainbow trout. The rainbows are fun to catch and great to eat. But they do not grow nearly as big as their brown cousins. Monster brown trout bring anglers to the White River by the hundreds. This time of year, brown trout ranging from 20 to 35

inches can be caught. These are true trophies.

I use very specific gear for trout fishing. I prefer a Fin-S 22 custom spinning rod from Grandt Rods. There are no better rods anywhere than those made by Jim Grandt. I mount a Shimano Sedona 1000 spinning reel to my Fin-S. I have Shimano braided Power Pro line on my Sedona.

Cranor uses two types of presentations in winter, during the spawn. When the dam is open, and the water is rising, female trout are laying eggs. The fertilized eggs are heavy and sink right into the bed. Dead eggs, however, are light and float away. The floating eggs heading downstream put the big browns on a feeding frenzy.

When this happens, Cranor rigs a plastic bead the same size and color as the floating eggs. With a hook positioned just below the bead, the trout move to let the current put the bead right in their mouth, thus engulfing the hook. A small bell sinker on the line about 2 feet above the bead keeps the bait near bottom and slows the drift to the perfect speed.

Donald controls the drift of the boat perfectly, so the bait stays in the right place in the river. He has his favorite "drifts," and we hit those often. When the bite is on, we might float the same section of river several times, usually catching fish on each drift.

So, you must wonder about how fishing is when there is no water being released from the dam. That is a very good question. Luckily, Donald Cranor and his covey of guides can find trout under almost any conditions. They just switch to a different presentation when the water is down or falling.



These are just a couple of the great trout that Donald Cranor and the author recently caught on the White River. Photos: Donald Cranor

Every morning, one or two of Donald's guides set minnow traps in the river. Yesterday's minnows will be used today, today's minnows will be used tomorrow, and so on. The live bait presentation works well with steady or falling water. The minnows are rigged with lead weights, just like the beads. This method does not produce the number of big browns as the beads, but the fishing for rainbows and up to 20-inch browns is awesome. That is where I have been for the past two years.

The two-day trip that I just completed was during the best weather they have had this month. Both days got up near 50 degrees, and therefore no water was running. So, Donald and I fished minnows both days... and the fishing was great.

I arrived on a Thursday afternoon. We fished for about three hours that day. I spent the night, and we fished another three hours on Friday morning. We averaged about 8 trout an hour overall. I not only caught four browns between 18 and 20 inches long, but I brought home 10 fat rainbows for the smoker.

Donald and I filmed each other catching these trout for an upcoming episode of Mid-Mo Reapers on YouTube. On one particular drift, the fishing was so good that as Donald set the hook on a trout, I rapidly retrieved my minnow in order to film him catch his fish, and I accidentally left my minnow in the river.



Vintage photos showing how long the author has been chasing brown trout. Photos: Glen Roux and Bob Jenkins

As I was filming, Donald yelled at me to grab my rod. I got hit by an 18-inch brown with my bait hanging off the side of the boat.

MWO

Mike Roux is an award-winning outdoor writer and a former Illinois Outdoor Writer of the Year. Roux is also a renowned speaker available to sportsmen's groups as well as youth and church groups. For regular and constant outdoor content, check him out at mikeroux.com or like and follow Mike Roux Outdoor Enterprises on Facebook.

**For more information...
Cranor's White River Paradise:
870-430-5484**



Father's Bait

As far back as I can remember (from the time I was about six), Father had an old, metal tackle box. The trays in the box were lined with a thin layer of cork, and in one of the trays was an old, green plug.

In those days, hard baits were called *plugs*. Today, we call them crankbaits. I have no idea when or where Father got that bait. It must have been sometime in the early 1950s when he bought it. I never saw Father use it. It was just there in his tackle box.

Shortly after he passed away in 2000, Mother laid out all his fishing equipment on the ping pong table in the basement, letting my brother and I take what we wanted. As soon as I saw that plug, I grabbed it.

I started collecting vintage fishing equipment and have a display case looking like the bow section of a boat sitting next to the fireplace in our family room. Many of the

reels and baits I collected were placed there, and in the front on one of the shelves, I put Father's bait.

From time to time, I would take out some of the old rods and reels and fish with them for a portion of the day. My wife The Bass Queen once gave me a replica of an old wooden tackle box. I put old baits in the box and took them with me, too, finding that those old baits still caught fish.

I never took along or used Father's bait. It stayed in in my family room. I just never wanted to lose it. I would be heartbroken if I did.

There are no markings on Father's bait, either on the body or the metal lip. I have no idea who made the bait, and without something designated on the bait, there is little to go on. The body is two inches long with a greenish finish. There is a short, metal

lip and two sets of treble hooks: one set at the back and another screwed into the bottom of the bait.

I had been looking at Father's bait in my display for some time when I said to myself, "I think I have to fish it." I still was very concerned about losing it, but I felt that if I took reasonable precautions, I shouldn't have to worry. I just wanted to catch a fish or two with it and then put it away again.

I figured that it must have been nearly 70 years since Father last fished that bait. It was time for it to catch a fish again. I wondered if it would even run right.

One of the precautions I took was to use a leader. I sure didn't want some northern pike to slice it off my line. And if I didn't use it around a lot of brush, I shouldn't need to worry hanging up.

An added dimension to this day is that I would be fishing with my 23-year-old grandson Max. I would be using a bait that his great grandfather, my father, once had. The day was becoming a family affair representing three generations of family fishermen. Max is the oldest of our grandchildren, being born a year after my father passed away.

We fished a lake in northwestern Wisconsin's Polk County. It had been some years since I last fished this lake, adding to the excitement of the day. When we got to the landing, I found that the county had put out a dock, enlarged the parking area and added a port-a-potty—all distinct improvements.

Max and I started with plastic worms. Max picked up the first fish, and a dozen casts later, I got my first fish of the day. We worked around a weedy, muddy point, leading us back into a bay. We followed the shallow water bay along a row of docks and boat lifts. We were catching enough fish to keep the day interesting.

As the bay opened up to the main lake, there is a small rocky point where I normally catch a fish or two. It was time to get Father's bait out. The first couple of casts were a bit tentative. I discovered the bait was a sinker, and surprisingly after not being used in 70 years, it still ran true.

I started casting around the point, being very careful to not let the bait sink too deep to snag on rocks. I was fishing for about five minutes when suddenly, there was weight. Pulling back to set the hook, I felt a fish pulling away.

The fish put up a good fight, and getting it next the boat, I hoisted it in. It was foot-long largemouth bass. I was thrilled. I sent Father a brief mental message. I think he liked seeing that bait catch a fish again. Max took photos of me and the fish with the bait still in its mouth before I finally released it.

I decided to keep fishing it to see if I could get one more. Fishermen are always looking for one more. Half an hour later, I felt a fish slam the bait and my casting rod was bouncing. A moment or two later, I pulled in a 20-inch northern pike and released it.

story continued on next page

Early Spring Crappies Teach Fishing Skills



Fishing a dual crappie rig often pays added dividends in spring as the fish gobble up forage ahead of the spawning season. Fish often display voracious appetites during mild weather.

move the jig from one spot to the next. Jig it a bit and then pull up and move it to the next area.

Casting a jig involves casting up the shoreline and then retrieving it with a slow, swimming motion. The depth at which the jig runs varies by speeding up and slowing down the retrieve. Once fish are located at a specific depth, concentrates on fishing that depth.

Cold-water fish are not usually aggressively feeding. Proceed slowly. They will not chase a bait very far. You must put it on their nose. Most of the bites will come as the lure descends and pauses.

Determine the level of suspended fish. Dropping a jig to the bottom, then cranking or lifting it back up, accomplishes the same thing. Crappies feed above their location; that is how they see best. Once you start catching fish, it tells you just how deep the fish are feeding.

If you are fishing a depth zone, stay within five feet of that level as the fish will concentrate at that depth. Keep your jig right among or just above the crappies. You can count down the jig to the desired depth. Count 1, 2, 3, etc.; a small jig will fall about one foot for each number.

In cold water, keep your technique simple, and keep an open mind.

A friend says that there are three keys to catching cold-water crappies: Use the right equipment, fish slowly and keep your lure where the fish are. Not a bad philosophy.

MWO

by Don Gasaway

Pre-spawn crappies help teach us how to fish for all species. They require stealth, patience, ability to read the water, sound knowledge of the species and in general provide an apprenticeship to all fishing.

Early-season crappie anglers need to pinpoint their hideouts and hone their tactics to match fast-changing conditions. In natural lakes and rivers, they relate to bays and coves. In impoundments, they follow creek channels to move to and from the shallows where they feed and eventually spawn.

Crappies feed according to weather and barometric pressure changes. Spooky fish move tight to cover and become inactive. Smart anglers look for warmer water, usually seeking out discolored water, a windward shoreline, a dark, soft bottom, shallow water, tributary streams, and heat-absorbing cover such as wood.

Early season crappies tend to be shallower on dark, warm days and deeper on clearer, colder days. High water is common, and fish often move up into the temporarily flooded

vegetation. Wise anglers check a variety of depth zones.

Small jigs are the most popular crappie lures. They have little to no action of their own. The angler provides all the action via line movement. To enhance action when vertical jigging, tie a small sinker on the end of the line to allow the jig to move freely and permit it to rest in a semi-vertical position.

In cold water, the color of the jig is often not that important. White, yellow and black jigs cover all the bases. Use the smallest jigs you can find. Jigs of 1/16-ounce or smaller are best. Early on, it helps to add a minnow to the jig. For those who want to use plastic lures, a 1-inch grub is good. Rig it with the tail down for the best swimming action.

Light, small-diameter line of 4- to 6-pound-test is best unless wood snags are prevalent. Increase line size if needed. You must be able to feel the tiny bump of a biting fish or you will miss it.

There are three basic methods to catch reservoir crappies and other species: vertical jigging, dabbling, and casting/retrieving jigs.

Vertical jigging involves parking the boat

over a known crappie location and dropping the jig straight down into it.

Dabbling requires a long pole to drop the jig into pockets and holes amidst heavy brush or flooded cover. Use a short length of line to

Don Gasaway is a freelance outdoor writer from Marion, Ill. who has written more than 1,000 magazine articles. Find him on Facebook at: facebook.com/donsjournal. Comments and reviews are welcome.

Father's Bait

...continued from previous page

I should have stopped there—but didn't. Ten minutes later, as I was dragging it through a patch of weeds, I felt something tug on it, but it was gone in an instant. When I got the bait back to the boat, I realized that the set of treble hooks on the belly of the bait was gone. I was not going to tempt fate again, although I did check, and it still ran true, even without the hooks. When I got home, Father's bait went back in the display case. I don't think I will use it again.

That bait is a connection to Father, and I think he might have been as interested in my day of fishing as I was. Thanks, Dad. **MWO**

Mike Yurk grew up in Oshkosh, Wis., where he first started writing about the outdoors. A retired Army officer, he is now a full-time, freelance outdoor writer. He has written more than 1000 articles for outdoor publications and published 12 books on outdoor sports. He lives in northwestern Wisconsin where he has found some of the best bass fishing in the country.



MOVING?

**Please let us know.
Call
630-887-7722**

to report your change of
address so you don't miss
an issue of



Send us your bright idea!



Send us your favorite fishing, hunting,
camping or outdoors tips.
If we decide to use it in our column,
we'll send you a useful thank you gift.

Email your tips to:
info@midwestoutdoors.com
or mail to:
Tips Editor at MidWest Outdoors
111 Shore Drive, Burr Ridge, IL 60527

Please be sure to include your name and mailing address where we can send your prize.
Prizes will not be sent until/unless your tip is chosen for publication.

We Sell & Buy Vintage Lures & Tackle





SAVE 10%
on your first order
Use Code
MWO



Check Out The Vault!

This is where we keep the rarest and more antique fishing lures you will find on our site. You can expect to see old Heddon, Creek Chub, Pflueger, Shakespeare, Paw Paw, South Bend and more baits and lures.

25 Vintage Fishing
Lures Worth A Fortune



Scan Code to read now
or visit our website

Proper Offseason Storage of Ice Fishing Gear

by Blake Tollefson

Whether you're ready for it or not, the ice season is coming to an end sooner than later. It was a refreshing change of pace compared to the last few seasons, as we actually had good ice—and plenty of it. With longer, warmer days on the horizon, we can't help but think of what's coming next.

The angling community puts a lot of emphasis on what's up next—how to prepare, things to get ready, where to start—but we often just gloss over how to properly care for and store our current season's gear. In some instances, equipment gets used year-round, but much of our ice fishing gear is only used for ice fishing. Properly caring for and storing this equipment ensures that it's ready for next season when you pull it out of storage, and that it lasts for years to come.

Here's a great guideline for properly maintaining and storing your ice fishing gear.

Electronics

For many of us, ice fishing without electronics just doesn't feel right. To ensure that things are in working order for next season, store them properly. A simple wipe down of everything is a good first step. Clean up screens, transducers, cables and so forth. Without a doubt, the best place to store your electronics is indoors in a cool, dry place.

Battery storage depends on battery type. Store lead acid batteries with a full charge and recharge them often throughout the offseason. Store lithium-ion batteries above 70 percent capacity, while lithium iron phosphate (LiFePO4) batteries can be stored with a minimum capacity of 30 to 50 percent. Regardless of battery type, it's good practice to charge batteries prior to storage and plan



Proper storage of ice gear ensures continued use.

to recharge (or at least check them) every few months.

While you may want to store other ice fishing electronics, underwater cameras come in extremely handy during the open-water season. If you don't plan to utilize it, store it like your other electronics.

If you have anything that needs service, now is the perfect time to send it in.

Tackle

Tackle care is easy for anglers to completely disregard. We often expect that our tackle is in fine order, but in all reality, it

usually isn't. We've all been guilty of tossing lures in random boxes during the hustle and bustle of a hot bite.

At the end of the ice season, go through your lures and make sure they all have a "home." Give your tackle an opportunity to air out for a few days to prevent rust from building up in a box that'll stay closed for the next six months. Start making a list of lures you want to replace or maybe some new ones you want to pick up. The end of the season is a great time to save a few bucks as retailers are looking to make room for their open-water products.



Electronics should be stored in a cool, dry place.

Rods and reels

Beyond tackle, rods and reels are perhaps most overlooked by ice anglers. You invest good money in these things; why not take care of them? The first step to care is to simply give everything a good wipe down.

Beyond a little cleaning, remove line from reels. It'll save you a lot of time next fall when you're getting things ready for ice. Backing off the tension on your reels ensures longevity of the drag systems. This is also a great opportunity to grease or oil up all your reels for next season.

Put your rods back in a case, if available. A broken rod can ruin a day.

Augers

No matter what type of auger you have, perform some simple maintenance before

Whether it's **Fishing,**
Hunting or just
enjoying the outdoors...

MIDWEST
OUTDOORS

has you covered!

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

1 year / 10 issues

Print + Digital \$19⁹⁵ • Digital only \$9⁹⁵

www.MWOmag.com





Rods and reels require appropriate storage and care.

putting into storage. For battery operated augers, make sure your batteries are charged prior to storing. Check the batteries every couple of months and charge again as needed.

Gas augers require a little more care. Add fresh fuel and fuel stabilizer to your tank and run it for a bit. In fact, run the auger for a few minutes every month or so to ensure that things are running properly. If you leave a fuel in the tank, open the fuel cap vent to prevent pressure from building in the tank and causing other issues.

Check auger blades and, if necessary, sharpen or swap them out for new set.

Outerwear

If you fish year-round, you might use some of your winter outerwear during the first month or so of the open-water season. However, if you don't plan to use them, now is the time to care for them. Wash and dry your outerwear per the directions on the tags, as not all fabrics are created equal. Neglecting this can make a big difference in the longevity of your gear.

No matter how you store your gear, ensure that they are completely dry before placing them into storage. If you keep them in outside storage, invest in an airtight tote and add a few fabric softener sheets to help prevent mice or other rodents from calling them home during the offseason.



Organize and replace tackle as needed.

Ice houses

With temperatures as warm as they typically are at this time of year, you probably haven't used your shack in a few weeks. Take advantage of the next sunny day and set your fish house up outside. Like outerwear, avoid storing your shack until it's completely dry. A wet fish house will acquire mold or mildew during the offseason. This is also a good time to wipe things down and to take note of anything that needs repair or replacement before next season.

Regardless of where you plan to store your shack, fill your house with fabric softener sheets. Your shack may smell like a laundromat for a few days next season, but it's a fantastic way to prevent mice or rodents from accessing them.

Machines

If you rely on a snowmobile, there's a good chance it'll go into storage until next season. If a wheeled vehicle is more your style, you may end up using it outside of ice fishing. Regardless of your on-the-ice

transportation, now is the perfect time to do all the required maintenance. Like all your other gear, clean it. Salt from roads or accesses can wreak havoc on machines if left for long.

Additionally, this is a perfect opportunity to change oils, filters, add grease, and make sure no additional repairs are needed. You want your machine in tip-top shape for next season, and a little preventative maintenance pays dividends later.

Proper care and maintenance of your gear helps ensure that your next ice season starts off a good note. There's nothing worse than spending valuable fishing time repairing things or looking for a replacement. We're all guilty of neglecting things from time to time. A little TLC can go a long way. **MWO**

Blake Tollefson is a fisherman and outdoor writer from Wisconsin. He spends more than 150 days a year on the water targeting a variety of species, including panfish, walleye, trout, and smallmouth bass. He works with several fishing companies, including St. Croix Rods and Eurotackle. Email him at blake.tollefson@gmail.com.



Augers require proper maintenance as well.



Commit to Stopping Litter

We know that sportsmen and women are the watchdogs of our waterways. Still, our ponds, lakes, and rivers are being littered with worn-out soft plastic lures. Commit to stopping litter – including used tackle. When a soft plastic lure is worn or damaged, dispose of it properly. Recycle it or pitch it in a trash can.

Get involved - sign the Pledge to Pitch It on our website.

By signing the Pledge, you demonstrate that the recreational fishing community supports clean waters, abundant fisheries and access to both.



PledgeToPitchIt.org

We Sell & Buy Vintage Lures & Tackle

FREE APPRAISALS



Check Out The Vault!

This is where we keep the rarest and more antique fishing lures you will find on our site. You can expect to see old Heddon, Creek Chub, Pflueger, Shakespeare, Paw Paw, South Bend and more baits and lures.

SAVE 10%
on your first order
Use Code
MWO



25 Vintage Fishing Lures Worth A Fortune

Scan Code to read now or visit our website

Versatile Vibrating Jigs



Targeting shallow cover with a vibrating jig resulted in this fat largemouth.

by Glenn Walker

From time-to-time, a lure has such a buzz in the bass fishing community that anglers go to great lengths to keep it quiet—while simultaneously looking high and low, along with spending good amounts of money, to acquire that lure.

The ChatterBait was this lure back in the early 2000's; it won three straight tournaments in Florida, and just like that, *the vibrating jig* was given a jolt of life. Just like any fishing lure, a vibrating jig has its place and time to shine. But what makes vibrating jigs attractive to bass fisherman is that they are very versatile lures.

Bass fisherman can tie on, and rely on, a vibrating jig all season long. But there are times of the year when they seem extremely effective. One of those times occurs during early fall.

Vibrating jigs were primarily designed to fish up shallow, around cover, and this is where they really shine. A 1/4- or 3/8-ounce

bait gets the nod from me when I'm targeting bass around shallow cover. Depending on the lake or river and time of year, that could consist of lily pads, weed lines, laydowns, in between boat docks—or it can be used to effectively cover and fish open-water flats.

What makes the vibrating jig so versatile for bass fishermen? You can keep your vibrating jig rod in your hand and keep moving the whole time. You can fish it around vegetation or wood without getting it hung up; and then, if some boat docks are next up on the shoreline, you make accurate casts in, and around the boat dock and have success. And you can keep fishing a vibrating jig when the visible cover goes away, and you're faced with a barren shoreline with the bass roaming a flat.

I feel that a constant, steady retrieve is, many times, all that is needed to trigger a strike. The vibration and action of the bait, and the plastic trailer on it, is all that bass need. Yet sometimes, varying your retrieve to impart an erratic action is what bass need to get them to strike.

Other retrieves could be as simple as a reel-and-pause, where the vibrating jig freefalls when paused. Or a slight twitch of the rod tip that has your vibrating jig quickly dart off to one side, mimicking a fleeing baitfish.

As more anglers target offshore structure, bass become accustomed to the traditional crankbaits and jigs they see over and over. This is why manufacturers began producing vibrating jigs in larger sizes. I'll use a 1/2-ounce size when fishing mid-depth structure such as weed lines, or flats where bass are roaming the 6- to



Many successful tournament catches are attributed to a vibrating jig.

Vibrating Jig Gear

Z-Man JackHammer: The originator of the vibrating jig teamed up with pro angler Brett Hite and Evergreen to design and build what many feel is the industry standard for vibrating jigs. Its unique action, strong vibration, and having the blade connected directly to the eye of jighead makes the JackHammer a top choice for many bass fishermen.



Z-Man JackHammer



Z-Man Tungsten ChatterBait ELITE EVO.

Z-Man Tungsten ChatterBait ELITE EVO: The newest addition to the ChatterBait family has a unique hunting action, which allows the bait to be crawled and bounced off fish-holding cover. Couple this with unmatched vibration and unique, durable blade finishes, and the EVO is a vibrating jig you'll want in your

tackle box this fall. And with its 96% tungsten head, this ChatterBait sinks quickly; your bait gets down to that fish-holding depth right away.

Northland Fishing Tackle Eye-Candy

Paddle Shad: Constructed out of Super TPE material, the Paddle Shad is 3 1/2 inches long and features a boot tail that has a subtle swimming action—perfect for threading onto your favorite vibrating jig. And with the Super TPE material, you'll be able to spend less time re-rigging your vibrating jig during the day.



Northland Fishing Tackle Eye-Candy Paddle Shad.



Gary Yamamoto Zako SwimBait.

Gary Yamamoto Zako SwimBait:

Designed to be paired with the JackHammer, the Zako is extremely soft; when a bass bites down, they won't want to let go after being enticed into biting by the bait's segmented bod, and forked tail. The larger belly of this bait perfectly mimics larger shad or bluegills.

8-foot depths. When bass are holding on deeper structure, or off the edge of a main river ledge, you can use a vibrating jig in 3/4-, 1- or even a 1 1/4-ounce to target these bass in deeper water with a presentation they likely haven't seen.

Several ways to fish a vibrating jig in deep water include: casting the bait out, letting it sink to bottom and slowly rolling it back in; another method includes reeling it in, then letting it freefall down the face of the vegetation or off the drop of a ledge.

One thing that I think is great about fishing a vibrating jig: You can dig into your tackle compartment, grab nearly any plastic bait, and it will work as a trailer. However, you do not want the plastic trailer's action to *overpower or counteract* the already powerful action of the vibrating jig's blade.

Certain soft plastic baits rigged on the back end of a vibrating jig have their own unique action and affect the performance of the vibrating jig, forcing you to alter your retrieve to achieve the best possible presentation.

Depending on the depth of water, and the type and density of cover I'm fishing, along with the forage I'm trying to mimic, I select different types of soft plastic trailer to use on the back of my vibrating jig.

Swimbait: The combined flash of the blade and action of a swimbait tail excel when used to target bass feeding on shad. The key thing is to find a swimbait that doesn't overpower the vibration of the blade on the jig, as the vibration is key to getting bites. Select any size swimbait you want to match the weight of your vibrating jig and the size of the baitfish that bass are feeding on. Anytime you are rigging a soft plastic as a trailer, make sure it is rigged on straight, as this will ensure that the bait runs true in the water column. This is paramount in this scenario, as nothing will curb a fish eating your bait more than a vibrating jig running wonky!

Grub: I like to use either a split-tail spinnerbait trailer or a single-tail grub when bass want a compact lure offering, or I'm throwing the bait around thick cover, as it will

be less likely to get fouled up.

Craw: There is no hiding the fact that a vibrating jig with a crawl-imitating soft plastic bait will attract crawl-hungry bass. Many craws have a compact profile that, when used in the correct color, can mimic the action of baitfish. Slow-rolling a heavier vibrating jig with a soft plastic crawl along riprap bank or a mud cutbank is a great way to match the craws' scurrying along the bottom.

If you are looking to increase the effectiveness and ability to use a vibrating jig, start looking at your soft-plastic bait arsenal and formulate an idea of when and where to use each a trailer on your vibrating jig.

Using the right rod, reel, and line setup is important when fishing a vibrating jig; you want a rod that you can make long casts with, while still being sensitive enough to feel the bait's vibration and accept feel strikes from bass. Many rods are designed for this technique and are constructed from a blend of materials to accomplish all the above needs.

When fishing a vibrating jig, I want a rod that loads up when the bass tracks down and inhales my bait. I also like a rod that I can make pinpoint casts with if needed, and which also helps me launch the bait if I'm fishing a flat. This is why I go with a 7' 4"—either a Witch Doctor Tackle Kahuna 7' 4" H or a Phenix Rods M1 Series 7' 4" MH. I'll pair either rod with a 7.2:1 gear ratio casting reel spooled with 15- or 17-pouond-test Seaguar Inviz X Fluorocarbon.

When you hit the water this fall and want to cover water in a quick, yet effective manner, tie a vibrating jig on your line, look for the baitfish and keep casting; eventually, you are going to run into a hungry school of bass. Be ready to have that vibrating jig get hammered! **MWO**

Glenn Walker has been fishing Minnesota and Mississippi River tournaments for more than 15 years, spreading his passion and knowledge of the sport via articles and videos. For more information, check out glennwalkerfishing.com or on Facebook @GlennWalkerFishing.

Tips and Techniques for Easier Fly Tying

by Doug Thalacker

As with any craft, fly tying has tiers that fall into two categories: obsessive perfectionist and laid-back utilitarians. My friend Rick is one of the former. He ties exquisitely beautiful flies that he then puts into tiny plastic boxes and displays in his study. If a pattern calls for karakul wool, he will search until he finds karakul wool. I am at the other end of the spectrum. My fur and feather boxes are filled with unknown samples from craft stores and resale shops. My flies will never be award winners, and the only place I want them displayed are in the jaws of fish.

No matter what your tying style, some tricks of the trade that make tying go easier, faster and give better results.

Get a manicure

I do lots of outdoorsy stuff with my hands, so I often have rough edges on my fingers and fingernails. These protrusions tend to catch on thread and dubbing. Keep a nail file handy to smooth down fingernails and hangnails. Clean hands make for clean flies and keep skin oil from ruining flies.

Tie off often and use lots of glue

Nothing is more frustrating than having your flies fall apart when you are in the middle of a stream. Tight wrapping is good; a half-hitch knot after every new material and adding a drop of glue between each step and each material is better. I use drug store brand nail varnish for head cement. Dilute it with appropriate thinner so that you get just a thin film.

Cheap equipment

You probably have lots of stuff around your home that you can use instead of buying expensive tools. For example, alligator clips = hackle pliers, lipstick cap = hair stacker, needle in a dowel or wine cork = bodkin.

Cheap or free material

I am not a stickler for using the prescribed materials for flies. They are often hard to find; even more important, they are usually expensive. Cruise resale shops for materials: stuffed toys, fur hats/gloves/coats, leather from purses, to name a few sources. A \$0.99 stuffed toy from Goodwill will get you about a hundred flies worth of synthetic fur. I once got a mink hat for \$5.00 and was able to get about thirty strips for Bunny Lewches.

Leather from purses make a great insect bodies. The wax ring used to seal toilets make great dubbing wax when melted and poured into old film canisters. Lint from dryers. Old carpeting. Did you rip the fingers out of a pair of latex gloves? You now have the makes for "rubber" legs.

If you collect feathers from recently deceased birds, zap them in the microwave for about 30 seconds to kill any mites or other bugs so that they do not infect other materials. Tying tube flies? Use a coffee stirrer or cocktail straw and a length of copper wire. When you throw out the Christmas tree, don't forget to pick off some of the tinsel. It is good for the environment, and you have lots of tinsel for tying. Bead chains from pull lamps make great eyes.

I have also found that craft stores such as Hobby Lobby and JoAnn Fabrics have thread, beads, cement not only in great variety, but usually at cheaper prices. I always look at the remnant section for pieces of "fur."

Scissors

A scissor in the hand is a pain in the thumb. First, get a pair of scissors that fits you, even if it is not a "fly tying" scissors. I

found mine (Sorry, but I don't have a name.) at a JoAnn Fabric and Craft store. They had a far bigger selection of scissors than any fly shop. Most fly tying books that you read have scissors fitting snugly over your thumb and forefinger, and designed so that they stay in place so you never have to put them down. The experts say that putting them down is a time waster; it breaks up the "rhythm" of tying. Well, I ain't got no rhythm, and if I have a choice between wasting a second picking up my scissors and coming away with a sore hand, I will take the former.

Good light for bad eye

A jeweler's lamp is a necessity for tying #20 flies, or if you are blind as a bat, as I am.

Fit the table to you

At \$695 for a to-be-unnamed fly-tying desk—I'll build my own! I also don't like to sit in a chair position when I tie; I found that it hurts my back, and all the cut pieces end up in my lap. So, I built my table so that the top is 36 inches from the floor. It is basically a 2x4 frame with a countertop cut-off. I purchased all the supplies from the Habitat for Humanity resale shop for \$20. I sit/lean on a stool with a 24-inch-high seat.

Wear an apron

I use the same leather apron that I have for working my lathe. As I sit at my table, the apron directs most of the trimmings into a tall wastebasket.

Tie a little, tie a lot

By this, I mean that I pick one type of fly to tie and then tie a bunch of them. By doing this, I can get out all the materials I need and line them up in the order that I will use them.

Tiny fingers for tiny eyes

One of the hardest things to do is paint eyes on dumbbell or pull-chain eyes. My fingers are way too big to hold them, and painting the eyes after tying the dumbbells on the fly usually results in paint on the feathers. A hair comb and a couple of nails will let you paint several eyes at a time. Slide several "eyes" onto the comb and use the head of a nail as an applicator—a large nail for the colored part of the eye, and a smaller nail for the black pupil.

Magnetize your needle-nose pliers

Not many things are more frustrating than to try and pick up tiny hooks with big fingers. A magnetic pliers or even just a small bar magnetic solves this problem.

Are you going to fish it or look at it?

Anything more than about a minute is too long to spend tying a fly that I am going to fish. Tie flies that fit you. As mentioned earlier, I have a friend who ties exquisite flies—some of which have won awards—but he is a lousy fly fisher. Tie for you, not for someone else. To keep your time to a minimum, get all your materials out and lined up so that you can get to them easily.

My wife will tell you that I am not the neatest (I am clean, however.) person in the world. But I have found that with a little effort, my fly-tying table stays almost neat, and I spend more time tying than searching.

MWO

Doug Thalacker has a Masters of Environment Science from UW-SP and taught high school environmental science and earth science. He has outdoor/wilderness training through Outward Bound and American Red Cross. He has a lifetime of enjoying any activity that involves fields, woods or waters.



Iowa-Missouri Sportsman's Calendar

EVENTS

March 8

Anglers in Action Tournament at Lake of the Ozarks, PB #2. Hours: 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. For info: 314-327-4771.

March 9

Joe Bass Team Trail Tournament at Lake of the Ozarks, Alhonna Resort Ramp. Hours: 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. For info: 314-220-7196.

March 15

Ozark Mountain Team Trail Tournament at Lake of the Ozarks, PB #2. Hours: 6:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. For info: 417-861-2983.

March 16

MoYak Fishing Series Tournament at Lake of the Ozarks— Launch anywhere/ end anywhere. Hours: 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. For info: 417-499-1043.

March 16

MO Bass Fishin' Solo Pro Series Tournament at Lake of the Ozarks, PB #2. Hours: 6:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. For info: 417-830-3177.

March 22

MCASSTT Tournament at Lake of the Ozarks, PB #2. Hours: 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. For info: 708-691-1801.

March 22

Iowa Crappie League Coralville Lake

Crappie Tournament at Coralville Lake, North Liberty, IA, 52317. Hours: 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. For info: Iowa Crappie League, (641) 295-4873, jschen17_01@hotmail.com.

March 22

Steel City Bassmasters Tournament at Lake of the Ozarks, Coffman Beach Access. Hours: 6:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. For info: 314-422-9210.

April 5

Iowa Bass Stalkers Bass Tournament at Lake Anita, Lake Anita State Park, Anita, IA, 50020. Hours: 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. For info: Iowa Bass Stalkers, (515) 249-1552, ronlrettig@gmail.com, iowabassstalkers.com.

April 6

Mid-Iowa Anglers Catfish Tournament Series Okoboji, at East Okoboji Lake, Arnolds Park, IA, 51331. Hours: 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. For info: Mid-Iowa Anglers, (515) 229-2574, Ahoisington83@gmail.com.

April 12

Open Bass Tournament at Twelve Mile Lake, Creston, IA, 50801. Hours: 6 a.m. to 2 p.m.. For info: I Bass, (515) 297-2501, j.winkler101@gmail.com.

SPORTS SHOWS

March 7-8

Mammoth Spring VFW Gun and Knife Show at Veterans of Foreign Wars 488 VFW Road, Mammoth Spring, AR 72554. Hours: Friday 5 - 9 p.m., Saturday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission: \$6 (both days), children 12 and under free. Vendor tables \$25 ea. For info: George D Hayes Foundation, Bob Wood, (870) 856-3781, wood_216@yahoo.com, (870) 847-0766.

March 7-8

The Big St Charles County Gun Show at Steel Shop Athletic Center, 49 Lawrence St., St. Charles, MO 63301. Hours: Friday 4 - 8 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission \$14, children 12 and under free; admission good all weekend. Vendor tables: \$60 for 1 table, \$55 ea. for 2-3 tables, \$50 ea. for 4-5 tables, \$45 ea. for 6-plus tables. For info: BK Promotions, Brandon Kelley, (610) 486-7469, director@bkpromotions.us, gunshows@bkpromotions.us, bkpromotions.us.

March 7-9

Iowa Deer Classic, Iowa Events Center, 730 3rd Street, Des Moines, IA 50309. Show hours: Friday: 2 p.m. to 8 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., Sunday: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission: adults \$15, youth (10 to 15) \$5, age 9 and under free; Discounts: \$20 for three-day wristband, Friday is Ladies \$5 all day, Sunday is Military Day \$5 all day for all active and retired military, with I.D. For info: Iowa Show Productions, Inc., (319) 232-0218, info@deerclassics.com, iowadeerclassic.com.

March 8-9

R.K. Springfield Gun Show at Ozark Empire Fairgrounds, E-Plex, 3001 N Grant St., Springfield, MO 65803. Show hours: Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission: \$12, children \$4; VIP tickets \$14.50, children \$6.50. Vendor

tables \$76 ea., prepaid \$66 ea., non-gun tables \$100 ea., electric \$35, license fee \$5. For info: R.K. Shows Inc., (417) 567-2002, rkshows@yousq.net, rkshows.com.

March 13-15

Whitetail Classic Sports Show and Auction at Circle M Auctions Gallery, 611 N. Main St., Marquoketa, IA. For info: Circle M Auctions, Steve Morehead, (563) 652-9780, circlemauctions@yahoo.com, circlemauctions.com.

March 14-16

Eastern Iowa Sportshow, at the UNI-Dome, Cedar Falls, IA. Show hours: Friday 3 - 8 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. - 8 p.m., Sunday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Admission: Online \$7.00 + fees (prices increase day of show), children 12 & under free. For info: Events, Inc., (317) 716-2684, boatrvandsportshows.com, info@events-inc.com.

March 14-16

Cedar Rapids Gun Show at Hawkeye Downs, 4400 6th St. SW, Cedar Rapids, IA 52404. Hours: Friday 5 - 9 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission \$10, children under 12 \$1. Vendor tables \$55 ea., prepaid (7 days in advance) \$50 ea. For info: Trade Show Productions, Daryl Klein, (888) 552-1486, darylklein959@hotmail.com, or Sandy Klein, tpsandyklein@aol.com, gunshowtsp.com.

March 22-23

R.K. Kansas City Gun Show at KCI-Expo Center, 11730 N Ambassador Dr., Kansas City, MO 64153. Hours: Saturday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission \$14, children \$6; VIP tickets \$16.50, children \$8.50. Vendor tables \$86 ea., prepaid \$76 ea., non-gun tables \$100 ea., electricity \$125. For info: R.K. Shows Inc., (417) 567-2002, rkshows@yousq.net, rkshows.com.

For the most up-to-date info go to:

MidWestOutdoors.com/events

Free listing for your event!

To list your event in the MWO Sportsman's Calendar, email info to:

info@midwestoutdoors.com — Subject line: "Iowa/Missouri Calendar Listing."

Please allow 6 to 8 weeks for publication.



Change Lure Size for More Strikes

In many cases when fish are "off their feed," a change needs to be made—and not necessarily a drastic change. It can often be nothing more than keeping the same lure and color but going to a different lure size. This is especially true when there are light strikes, or a few fish being caught, but the action sort of slow.

All species of fish can be affected by the size change, up and down, but some are more prone to be affected in a certain direction than others. However, other than ice jigs, some of the lures commonly being used are not available in various sizes; with those, you might have to change to something similar in action, color and design, which can throw a bit of a difference other than strictly the size making a difference.

The following is what I've found on the different species with which I have had experience using lure size change.

Improved productivity of sunfish/bluegill and ring perch results are nearly always due to the downsize side of things. Rarely does the production improve when increasing the size.

Crappies are somewhat the same way, but catching larger crappies often improves with an increase in lure size. I've found this occurrence when finger jigging a T-Shad or Phat Shad; and then moving to a Lil Killer, which is a different design, but still having the straight tail to offer about the same, but larger,



Normally, downsizing works for catching crappies, but this time, it went from a 2- to a 4-inch swimbait to start catching some 12- and 13-inch crappies on a mid-October day.



During a calm, early-December day, the catch-of-the-day was made by downsizing from a 4-inch Natural Forage Baits green shad SwimBait to the same color in a similar 2-inch T-Shad.

profile and tail action provided by the finger jigging method.

The black bass and white bass families can definitely go both ways, with the white bass

leaning more to hitting on whatever is being served up for them to attack. One of the best examples for size change is a Rat-L-Trap, where you can drop to a Tiny Trap or go all the way up to a Magnum Trap. In most of my experience, the change between using a 1/4-ounce Mini Trap or a 1/2-ounce Original Trap in either direction has been significant. I've seen days when, in either direction, I'll start with catching a few fish, and once I switch to the other size in the same color, the fishing will improve to the point where it is the "lure of the day."

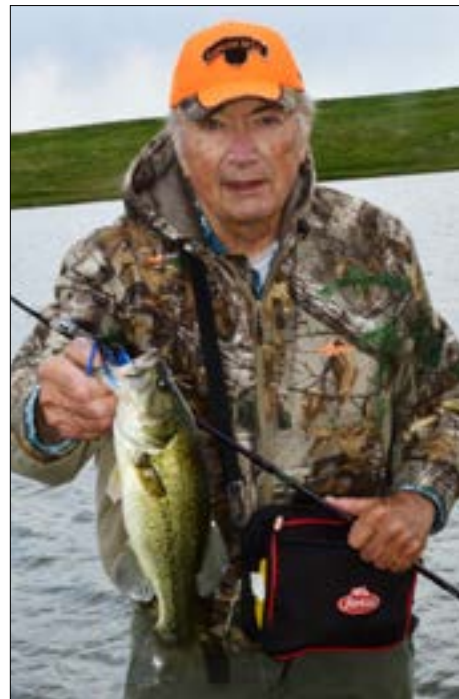
There have been very similar results with billed



By upsizing from a 1/4- to a 1/2-ounce Rat-L-Trap, a slow September day of bass fishing went to a 'hot' one.



A good selection of lure sizes, such as this box of Blitz Blades, in the same or similar colors, makes it easy to up- and downsize while keeping the same style lure and action.



Fellow outdoor writer and master of shoreline fishing, Don Banning is known for being a proponent of downsizing. However, on this cold mid-October day, he had to change from his finesse lures to a larger 'chatter style' lure in the same black/blue color to start producing some bass.

crankbaits, Blitz Blades, spinnerbaits, plastic worms and jig combos, where the same lure and color are found in various sizes. But in most cases, you don't need to switch to the extreme sizes up or down to see a difference. For example, if you're fishing something in the 3/8-ounce range, which is a good "in-between" size, you shouldn't have to go more than to the 1/2-ounce size above or 1/8-ounce size below.

While muskies can always be finicky, I have experienced several times when they hit a downsized lure of the same design, and again going to a spinnerbait or crankbait of some sort. A good example was when I was filming a show for my old television series on

PBS. We were trying to show that muskies would take bass-type baits, and when passing through one area using a larger Norman N crankbait, I had a follow that would not bite, which happened with some others on the same day. I switched to a slightly smaller N size, returned to the same area of the first muskie follow, and it was "fish on" without any hesitation. This same sort of thing has happened with inline or overhead spinnerbaits where I was using a 1-ounce size and dropped to a 1/2-ounce with same color and blade configuration.

The time of year is another factor. In winter, it is normally downsizing, other than when pursuing larger crappies or bass; yet many times, I'll upsize two to three sizes, such as with a Custom Jigs and Spins Tutso, where I'll go from a size 10 to 6, or with a Ratfinkee, from a 10 to a 4.

As spring hits, it is normally a case of downsizing, because what prey is available is smaller. Summer is a time where it goes both ways, depending on the day. As fall rolls around, larger sizes can be the trick; but as it gets later towards winter, after their initial fall feeding, start looking at downsizing. Just remember, this has been the general rule, and on any given day, because of water or weather conditions, a switch one way or the other can make the difference between a productive day and a less productive one.

If you have a day when you know the fish should be hitting, or they are hitting slow but you are getting aggressive strikes, then change the size of the lure, and see if the strikes don't start picking up. **MWO**

Dan Galusha has fished all his life, worked more than 45 years in the outdoor/media industry, and was inducted into the Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame as a Legendary Communicator. Direct questions through dansfishntales.com, [facebook.com/dansfishntales](https://www.facebook.com/dansfishntales) and [facebook.com/shootnplink](https://www.facebook.com/shootnplink).



Upsizing is normally not the trick for bluegills, but on this summer day, switching to the larger Ratso with a Crappie Nibble produced larger fish after having a few smaller ones strike a smaller lure.



"Helping you enjoy the outdoors!"

Become an **MWO INSIDER!**

Each week you'll receive timely info from MWO on where to go, what to use, and how to use it!

FREE sign-up at MidWestOutdoors.com/Insider

(We never give your email address to third-party companies)

REELFOOT LAKE, TN

FISHING PACKAGE 2025

2 Days Fishing & 2 Nights Lodging

(EXCEPT MARCH 12-MAY 22, 2025)



\$209⁰⁰

per person, plus tax min. 2 people

Includes:

LAKEFRONT LODGING,
BOAT, MOTOR, GAS, BAIT & ICE
KIDS 12 AND UNDER FREE

Limit 1 child per each paying adult.

\$50.00 Deposit Required Per Person Non-Refundable
You choose the day of the week to start.

SPORTSMAN'S Resort

THE QUAKE LAKE

REELFOOT LAKE, TN

"Operating since 1986"



Check out fishing reports and year 'round specials on Facebook at:

www.facebook.com/reelfootlakesportsmansresort



Two Great Locations!
on Reelfoot Lake "North & South"

R.V. Fishing Packages with Full Hookup are Available at Both of Our Campground Locations

FISHERMAN'S SPECIAL

MARCH 12 THRU MAY 22 FISHING PACKAGES

2 Days & 2 Nights = \$269 + tax

3 Days & 3 Nights = \$369 + tax

4 Days & 4 Nights = \$449 + tax

per person, min. 2 people

\$100.00 Deposit Required Non-Refundable

100 Sportsman's Resort Lane, Tiptonville, TN 38079

731-253-6581 • reelfootlake.com • sportsmansresort@reelfootlake.com

When Crappies Scatter in Spring

by Ken McBroom

When chilly winter waters begin to warm, crappies begin to move. As the days get longer, crappies know spring is near. Coupled with even slightly warmer water temp, crappies are on the move to prepare for the spawn.

Crappies have their favorite areas to spend their winter months. As changes begin in February, March and April, crappies come in a few at a time and scatter throughout their favorite spawning bays.

Different waves of crappies moving throughout this warming period can be found scattered. Some will be up shallow; others will be deep. Some might be found tight to brush while others are swimming near the surface in open water.

This time of year, you can use every crappie-catching technique you know. Longlining jigs, pulling crankbaits, vertical jigging soft plastics, hair jigs or casting a Li'l Tuffy swimbait to shallow or deep brush piles can all work, and several techniques are sometimes needed to fill the livewell.

Open water

During early spring, crappies pile up in deep water leading into spawning bays. If you know where a spawning bay is, search for schools of crappies at the mouth, close to the main lake. When the water first begins to warm but the weather is still fluctuating, creating a rise and fall in water temperatures, crappies hold in these areas, waiting for the time to move in to spawn.

These areas can hold a lot of crappies. If the warmup is slow, crappies will increasingly pile up here waiting for that perfect time to move in. If warm weather is steady with very few cold fronts, crappies will make their way back sooner, with a few at a time leaving this staging area to move up and spawn. During this time, it may seem that there are fewer crappies in this area than during fast-warming springs, but they are just moving steadily into shallow water to spawn. Crappies are scattered throughout their spring migration, making it difficult to narrow down just one technique to use.

Deep brush

Early spring brings drastic weather changes that affect water temperatures, clarity, and levels. These drastic changes can cause crappies to slow down and seek cover. Crappies constantly change what they are doing. During a cold front, they will seek cover. If they are in deep water when the change occurs, they may get in some brush and refuse to bite. When this happens a hair jig fished vertically over this brush is hard to beat.

When the bite is tough, there is something about a hair jig that just works. The smaller size coupled with the subtle action that hair exudes in the water is what is often needed. At times, you must position your lure right in the crappie's face and hold your pole as still as possible to be noticed, and sometimes they will even bite. Cold fronts can definitely put a damper on the bite, but with some practice, you can get some



Anthony Owens with a couple nice, pre-spawn slabs. Photo: Ken McBroom

bites, and with them gain enough confidence to stay out there during tough weather and a tough bite.

Shallow cover

Shallow cover is often overlooked in early spring or even during March before most crappies move up to spawn. Always hit these shallow brush piles even when you think they are empty. I have been surprised more than once with a big crappie trying to get their spawn over before the others move up. I call them early spawners, and while they might be few and far between, you can catch some dandies.

During the spring spawn, shallow crappies are usually in some brush. You can find some in shallow, open water in spring, searching for a brush pile that suits them. I used to complain as a boy sitting on a brush pile with a bobber and a minnow, waiting for a bite. Other boats were trolling around looking for crappies, but my dad always liked to sit and fish brush along a travel route. He said that while those other boats were busy chasing fish around, we would sit there and let them come to us. Sometimes, we'd go 30 minutes or more without a bite, and then catch 4 or 5 in just a few minutes. This is a great way to catch a limit, especially once you learn your lake and pinpoint brush piles that produce each year.

Moving baits

As previously mentioned, subtle presentations work well when the bite is tough. However, spring is feeding time for crappies, and when the weather is right and crappies are on the move, then they can be very aggressive. Much like the fall season, big crappies are feeding up for the spawn and will

aggressively strike a moving bait.

My favorite way to catch crappies during early pre-spawn bite is by casting a Li'l Tuffy Swimbait into a brush pile and slowly reeling it through it. Whether it be shallow cover or deep brush in 20 to 25 feet, this tactic can be deadly. Crappies primarily feed on small shad and other minnows, and reeling a minnow-type bait over brush can bring big crappies from 20 feet away to eat it.

I always make a cast to brush before moving up to fish it vertically with a hair jig. Sometimes, even when they are not biting well, there will be a few aggressive feeders. I love to feel those bites the best, and they are usually good ones.



Crappies are scattered during March as they move up to spawn. Photo: Tammy McBroom

Conclusion

As the season progresses and water temperatures steadily climb, crappies start to seek out the perfect spots to spawn. Fishing during this transitional period requires an adaptive approach, as crappies disperse and occupy various depths and structures. You need to stay versatile, switching between deep and shallow techniques, and paying close attention to weather patterns that can impact crappie behavior. The key is to remain patient and persistent, diligently targeting several types of cover and adjusting strategies to match the crappies' unpredictable movements during this time. **MWO**

Ken McBroom is an outdoor writer and photographer living on Kentucky Lake. For more information, please visit ramblingangler.com.



The author with a couple early-season, Barkley Lake slabs. Photo: Ken McBroom

Share your bright idea!

Have you got a favorite fishing, hunting, camping or outdoors tip? Share it with us. If we decide to use it in our column, we'll send you a useful thank you gift.

Email your tips to:
info@midwestoutdoors.com

Please be sure to include your name and mailing address where we can send your prize. Prizes will not be sent until/unless your tip is chosen for publication.

Fly Fishing for Bluegills

by Don Gasaway

The tranquility of fishing a pond enhances the grace with which my fly line snakes across the water. A couple of false casts and I let the fly settle to the surface. Following a couple of tugs, and the surface of the water explodes with a big bluegill sucking in feathers and steel.

Bluegills are pound-for-pound one the great fighters of the fish world. On a light fly line with the whippy flexibility of a fly rod, they are a tremendous fish to hook and fight.

There is no real mystery to this sport once you line up the basic tackle. Enjoy the finesse of casting a light fly or popper and fooling some unsuspecting fish into thinking it is dinner.

Fly fishing works on virtually all species of fish. Here in western Kentucky (and Tennessee), it is primarily for largemouth and smallmouth bass, trout, bluegills and sunfish. It can also be for other species if you adapt to the situation.

There are four basic areas of tackle in taking up the sport: rod, reel, lines and lures. In addition, it is a good idea to take some instruction or view a couple of the excellent videos available. Check your local tackle shop for the fly-fishing section and ask their advice. With the right equipment and a little practice, you can quickly get started.

Fly rods come in different weights with markings on the rod numbered from one to 13. They predominantly run in lengths from 6 feet to 9 feet. The longer ones are usually for casting large, wind-resistant lures with heavier line. Shorter rods are for fishing the close confines of small streams.

Beginners are probably better off with a midrange, 6- or 7-weight rod, which is good for both bass and bluegills. Beginning anglers may elect to stick to one made of inexpensive fiberglass rather than other, more expensive materials (graphite). A glass rod allows you purchasing a lighter, more sensitive fly rod.

Next, you need a reel to go on the fly rod. The reel has nothing to do with casting in fly fishing. It is a simple, single-action line holder. The spool is usually about 3/4-inch wide with friction built in so that line does not roll off it without some pull by the angler or fish. The weight of the reel should balance the rod. It should also match the species you plan to catch. For bass and panfish, the reel helps keep kinks out of the fly line. Bigger fish like pike require a different reel with drag.



As spring runoff waters flow and creeks begin to fill, a great opportunity for catching bluegills arises. It also offers a pleasant opportunity to prowl the banks of pristine creeks.

Photo: Don Gasaway

A good-quality reel is a lifetime investment you can pass on to other generations. Purchase the best reel you can afford.

Fly lines are of many types and weights matched the fish species, size and fishing conditions. The best all-around line for beginners is a floating line. It works for bass and bluegills as well as dry flies. Later, you can graduate to a floating line with a sinking tip, and slow-sinking and fast-sinking lines used to put flies at different depths for fish such as northern pike and walleyes. In all cases, the average fly line is only about 30 yards long. Use sufficient Dacron line or other backing to fill the reel, allowing enough space to then splice in your fly line.

Many fly lines taper toward the leader end, although beginners should use a weight-forward line to cast medium-sized bass bugs as well as small panfish flies. The extra weight

at the forward end of the line helps propel small bugs or flies through the air on the cast. Most rods have the size and type of line recommended for that rod written on the rod blank just above the handle.

At the end of the line, attach a leader which is usually about 6 to 7 feet in length. Most taper to a small size at the tippet end. Knotless tapered leaders are easiest to handle. Leader strength is indicated by an "X" number. 4X or 5X are good leader weights for panfish (approximately 6- and 4.75-pound test, respectively). Use heavier leaders for bass.

For bass, begin with small surface bugs in plastic, cork or deer hair for topwater fishing. Both floating and sinking bugs are good or bluegills.

For bass, begin with small surface bugs in plastic, cork or deer hair for topwater fishing. Both floating and sinking bugs are good or bluegills. Flies are classified according to hook size; number 10 or 12 are good sizes in dry, wet or nymph flies. Number 6, 8, or 10 are good for streamers which imitate minnows. As for colors, choose black and browns or grays and white.

Once you become addicted to fly fishing, there is more to it than we are able discuss here. This will get you started in the right direction. Be aware that this is an addictive sport that will soon consume your thoughts 24/7. It also is good for your blood pressure, unless you take your fishing too seriously.

MWO

Don Gasaway is a freelance outdoor writer from Marion, Ill. who has written more than 1,000 magazine articles. Find him on Facebook at: facebook.com/donsjournal. Comments and reviews are welcome.

MidWest Outdoors magazine

Now available
in both print & digital editions!



PRINT + DIGITAL

1 Year / 10 issues \$19⁹⁵

DIGITAL ONLY

1 Year \$9⁹⁵

MidWestOutdoors.com/subscribe

We Sell & Buy Vintage Lures & Tackle

FREE APPRAISALS



Check Out The Vault!

This is where we keep the rarest and more antique fishing lures you will find on our site. You can expect to see old Heddon, Creek Chub, Pflueger, Shakespeare, Paw Paw, South Bend and more baits and lures.

25 Vintage Fishing Lures Worth A Fortune

SAVE 10%
on your first order
Use Code
MWO



Scan Code to read now
or visit our website

Versatile Vibrating Jigs



Targeting shallow cover with a vibrating jig resulted in this fat largemouth.

by Glenn Walker

From time-to-time, a lure has such a buzz in the bass fishing community that anglers go to great lengths to keep it quiet—while simultaneously looking high and low, along with spending good amounts of money, to acquire that lure.

The ChatterBait was this lure back in the early 2000's; it won three straight tournaments in Florida, and just like that, *the vibrating jig* was given a jolt of life. Just like any fishing lure, a vibrating jig has its place and time to shine. But what makes vibrating jigs attractive to bass fisherman is that they are very versatile lures.

Bass fisherman can tie on, and rely on, a vibrating jig all season long. But there are times of the year when they seem extremely effective. One of those times occurs during early fall.

Vibrating jigs were primarily designed to fish up shallow, around cover, and this is where they really shine. A 1/4- or 3/8-ounce

bait gets the nod from me when I'm targeting bass around shallow cover. Depending on the lake or river and time of year, that could consist of lily pads, weed lines, laydowns, in between boat docks—or it can be used to effectively cover and fish open-water flats.

What makes the vibrating jig so versatile for bass fishermen? You can keep your vibrating jig rod in your hand and keep moving the whole time. You can fish it around vegetation or wood without getting it hung up; and then, if some boat docks are next up on the shoreline, you make accurate casts in, and around the boat dock and have success. And you can keep fishing a vibrating jig when the visible cover goes away, and you're faced with a barren shoreline with the bass roaming a flat.

I feel that a constant, steady retrieve is, many times, all that is needed to trigger a strike. The vibration and action of the bait, and the plastic trailer on it, is all that bass need. Yet sometimes, varying your retrieve to impart an erratic action is what bass need to get them to strike.

Other retrieves could be as simple as a reel-and-pause, where the vibrating jig freefalls when paused. Or a slight twitch of the rod tip that has your vibrating jig quickly dart off to one side, mimicking a fleeing baitfish.

As more anglers target offshore structure, bass become accustomed to the traditional crankbaits and jigs they see over and over. This is why manufacturers began producing vibrating jigs in larger sizes. I'll use a 1/2-ounce size when fishing mid-depth structure such as weed lines, or flats where bass are roaming the 6- to 8-foot depths. When



Many successful tournament catches are attributed to a vibrating jig.

Vibrating jig gear

Z-Man JackHammer: The originator of the vibrating jig teamed up with pro angler Brett Hite and Evergreen to design and build what many feel is the industry standard for vibrating jigs. Its unique action, strong vibration, and having the blade connected directly to the eye of jighead makes the JackHammer a top choice for many bass fishermen.



Z-Man JackHammer



Z-Man Tungsten ChatterBait ELITE EVO.

Z-Man Tungsten ChatterBait ELITE EVO: The newest addition to the ChatterBait family has a unique hunting action, which allows the bait to be crawled and bounced off fish-holding cover. Couple this with unmatched vibration and unique, durable blade finishes, and the EVO is a vibrating jig you'll want in your tackle box this fall. And with its 96%

tungsten head, this ChatterBait sinks quickly; your bait gets down to that fish-holding depth right away.

Northland Fishing Tackle Eye-Candy Paddle Shad: Constructed out of Super TPE material, the Paddle Shad is 3 1/2 inches long and features a boot tail that has a subtle swimming action—perfect for threading onto your favorite vibrating jig. And with the Super TPE material, you'll be able to spend less time re-rigging your vibrating jig during the day.



Northland Fishing Tackle Eye-Candy Paddle Shad.



Gary Yamamoto Zako Swimbait.

Gary Yamamoto Zako Swimbait: Designed to be paired with the JackHammer, the Zako is extremely soft; when a bass bites down, they won't want to let go after being enticed into biting by the bait's segmented bod, and forked tail. The larger belly of this bait perfectly mimics larger shad or bluegills.

bass are holding on deeper structure, or off the edge of a main river ledge, you can use a vibrating jig in 3/4-, 1- or even a 1 1/4-ounce to target these bass in deeper water with a presentation they likely haven't seen.

Several ways to fish a vibrating jig in deep water include: casting the bait out, letting it sink to bottom and slowly rolling it back in; another method includes reeling it in, then letting it freefall down the face of the vegetation or off the drop of a ledge.

One thing that I think is great about fishing a vibrating jig: You can dig into your tackle compartment, grab nearly any plastic bait, and it will work as a trailer. However, you do not want the plastic trailer's action to *overpower or counteract* the already powerful action of the vibrating jig's blade.

Certain soft plastic baits rigged on the back end of a vibrating jig have their own unique action and affect the performance of the vibrating jig, forcing you to alter your retrieve to achieve the best possible presentation.

Depending on the depth of water, and the type and density of cover I'm fishing, along with the forage I'm trying to mimic, I select different types of soft plastic trailer to use on the back of my vibrating jig.

Swimbait: The combined flash of the blade and action of a swimbait tail excel when used to target bass feeding on shad. The key thing is to find a swimbait that doesn't overpower the vibration of the blade on the jig, as the vibration is key to getting bites. Select any size swimbait you want to match the weight of your vibrating jig and the size of the baitfish that bass are feeding on. Anytime you are rigging a soft plastic as a trailer, make sure it is rigged on straight, as this will ensure that the bait runs true in the water column. This is paramount in this scenario, as nothing will curb a fish eating your bait more than a vibrating jig running wonky!

Grub: I like to use either a split-tail spinnerbait trailer or a single-tail grub when bass want a compact lure offering, or I'm throwing the bait around thick cover, as it will be less likely to get fouled up.

Craw: There is no hiding the fact that a vibrating jig with a crawl-imitating soft plastic bait will attract crawl-hungry bass. Many craws have a compact profile that, when used in the correct color, can mimic the action of baitfish. Slow-rolling a heavier vibrating jig with a soft plastic crawl along riprap bank or a mud cutbank is a great way to match the craws' scurrying along the bottom.

If you are looking to increase the effectiveness and ability to use a vibrating jig, start looking at your soft-plastic bait arsenal and formulate an idea of when and where to use each a trailer on your vibrating jig.

Using the right rod, reel, and line setup is important when fishing a vibrating jig; you want a rod that you can make long casts with, while still being sensitive enough to feel the bait's vibration and accept feel strikes from bass. Many rods are designed for this technique and are constructed from a blend of materials to accomplish all the above needs.

When fishing a vibrating jig, I want a rod that loads up when the bass tracks down and inhales my bait. I also like a rod that I can make pinpoint casts with if needed, and which also helps me launch the bait if I'm fishing a flat. This is why I go with a 7' 4"—either a Witch Doctor Tackle Kahuna 7' 4" H or a Phenix Rods M1 Series 7' 4" MH. I'll pair either rod with a 7.2:1 gear ratio casting reel spooled with 15- or 17-pouond-test Seaguar Inviz X Fluorocarbon.

When you hit the water this fall and want to cover water in a quick, yet effective manner, tie a vibrating jig on your line, look for the baitfish and keep casting; eventually, you are going to run into a hungry school of bass. Be ready to have that vibrating jig get hammered! **MWO**

Glenn Walker has been fishing Minnesota and Mississippi River tournaments for more than 15 years, spreading his passion and knowledge of the sport via articles and videos. For more information, check out glennwalkerfishing.com or on Facebook @GlennWalkerFishing.



Father's Bait

As far back as I can remember (from the time I was about six), Father had an old, metal tackle box. The trays in the box were lined with a thin layer of cork, and in one of the trays was an old, green plug.

In those days, hard baits were called *plugs*. Today, we call them crankbaits. I have no idea when or where Father got that bait. It must have been sometime in the early 1950s when he bought it. I never saw Father use it. It was just there in his tackle box.

Shortly after he passed away in 2000, Mother laid out all his fishing equipment on the ping pong table in the basement, letting my brother and I take what we wanted. As soon as I saw that plug, I grabbed it.

I started collecting vintage fishing equipment and have a display case looking like the bow section of a boat sitting next to the fireplace in our family room. Many of the reels and baits I collected were placed there, and in the front on one of the shelves, I put Father's bait.

From time to time, I would take out some of the old rods and reels and fish with them for a portion of the day. My wife The Bass Queen once gave me a replica of an old wooden tackle box. I put old baits in the box and took them with me, too, finding that those old baits still caught fish.

I never took along or used Father's bait. It stayed in in my family room. I just never

wanted to lose it. I would be heartbroken if I did.

There are no markings on Father's bait, either on the body or the metal lip. I have no idea who made the bait, and without something designated on the bait, there is little to go on. The body is two inches long with a greenish finish. There is a short, metal lip and two sets of treble hooks: one set at the back and another screwed into the bottom of the bait.

I had been looking at Father's bait in my display for some time when I said to myself, "I think I have to fish it." I still was very concerned about losing it, but I felt that if I took reasonable precautions, I shouldn't have to worry. I just wanted to catch a fish or two with it and then put it away again.

I figured that it must have been nearly 70 years since Father last fished that bait. It was time for it to catch a fish again. I wondered if it would even run right.

One of the precautions I took was to use a leader. I sure didn't want some northern pike to slice it off my line. And if I didn't use it around a lot of brush, I shouldn't need to worry hanging up.

An added dimension to this day is that I would be fishing with my 23-year-old grandson Max. I would be using a bait that his great grandfather, my father, once had. The day was becoming a family

affair representing three generations of family fishermen. Max is the oldest of our grandchildren, being born a year after my father passed away.

We fished a lake in northwestern Wisconsin's Polk County. It had been some years since I last fished this lake, adding to the excitement of the day. When we got to the landing, I found that the county had put out a dock, enlarged the parking area and added a port-a-potty—all distinct improvements.

Max and I started with plastic worms. Max picked up the first fish, and a dozen casts later, I got my first fish of the day. We worked around a weedy, muddy point, leading us back into a bay. We followed the shallow water bay along a row of docks and boat lifts. We were catching enough fish to keep the day interesting.

As the bay opened up to the main lake, there is a small rocky point where I normally catch a fish or two. It was time to get Father's bait out. The first couple of casts were a bit tentative. I discovered the bait was a sinker, and surprisingly after not being used in 70 years, it still ran true.

I started casting around the point, being very careful to not let the bait sink too deep to snag on rocks. I was fishing for about five minutes when suddenly, there was weight. Pulling back to set the hook, I felt a fish pulling away.

The fish put up a good fight, and getting it next the boat, I hoisted it in. It was foot-long

largemouth bass. I was thrilled. I sent Father a brief mental message. I think he liked seeing that bait catch a fish again. Max took photos of me and the fish with the bait still in its mouth before I finally released it.

I decided to keep fishing it to see if I could get one more. Fishermen are always looking for one more. Half an hour later, I felt a fish slam the bait and my casting rod was bouncing. A moment or two later, I pulled in a 20-inch northern pike and released it.

I should have stopped there—but didn't. Ten minutes later, as I was dragging it through a patch of weeds, I felt something tug on it, but it was gone in an instant. When I got the bait back to the boat, I realized that the set of treble hooks on the belly of the bait was gone. I was not going to tempt fate again, although I did check, and it still ran true, even without the hooks. When I got home, Father's bait went back in the display case. I don't think I will use it again.

That bait is a connection to Father, and I think he might have been as interested in my day of fishing as I was. Thanks, Dad. **MWO**

Mike Yurk grew up in Oshkosh, Wis., where he first started writing about the outdoors. A retired Army officer, he is now a full-time, freelance outdoor writer. He has written more than 1000 articles for outdoor publications and published 12 books on outdoor sports. He lives in northwestern Wisconsin where he has found some of the best bass fishing in the country.



**Release Fish,
Not Lures**

Commit to Stopping Litter

We know that sportsmen and women are the watchdogs of our waterways. Still, our ponds, lakes, and rivers are being littered with worn-out soft plastic lures. Commit to stopping litter—including used tackle. When a soft plastic lure is worn or damaged, dispose of it properly. Recycle it or pitch it in a trash can.

Get involved - sign the Pledge to Pitch It on our website.

By signing the Pledge, you demonstrate that the recreational fishing community supports clean waters, abundant fisheries and access to both.



PledgeToPitchIt.org

Whether it's **Fishing,**
Hunting or just
enjoying the outdoors...

**MIDWEST
OUTDOORS**

has you covered!

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!
1 year / 10 issues
Print + Digital \$19⁹⁵ • Digital only \$9⁹⁵

www.MWOmag.com



Change Lure Size for More Strikes

In many cases when fish are "off their feed," a change needs to be made—and not necessarily a drastic change. It can often be nothing more than keeping the same lure and color but going to a different lure size. This is especially true when there are light strikes, or a few fish being caught, but the action sort of slow.

All species of fish can be affected by the size change, up and down, but some are more prone to be affected in a certain direction than others. However, other than ice jigs, some of the lures commonly being used are not available in various sizes; with those, you might have to change to something similar in action, color and design, which can throw a bit of a difference other than strictly the size making a difference.

The following is what I've found on the different species with which I have had experience using lure size change.

Improved productivity of sunfish/bluegill and ring perch results are nearly always due to the downsize side of things. Rarely does the production improve when increasing the size.

Crappies are somewhat the same way, but catching larger crappies often improves with an increase in lure size. I've found this occurrence when finger jigging a T-Shad or Phat Shad; and then moving to a Lil Killer, which is a different design, but still having the straight tail to offer about the same, but larger,



During a calm, early-December day, the catch-of-the-day was made by downsizing from a 4-inch Natural Forage Baits green shad Swimbait to the same color in a similar 2-inch T-Shad.

profile and tail action provided by the finger jigging method.

The black bass and white bass families can definitely go both ways, with the white bass

leaning more to hitting on whatever is being served up for them to attack. One of the best examples for size change is a Rat-L-Trap, where you can drop to a Tiny Trap or go all the way up to a Magnum Trap. In most of my experience, the change between using a 1/4-ounce Mini Trap or a 1/2-ounce Original Trap in either direction has been significant. I've seen days when, in either direction, I'll start with catching a few fish, and once I switch to the other size in the same color, the fishing will improve to the point where it is the "lure of the day."

There have been very similar results with billed



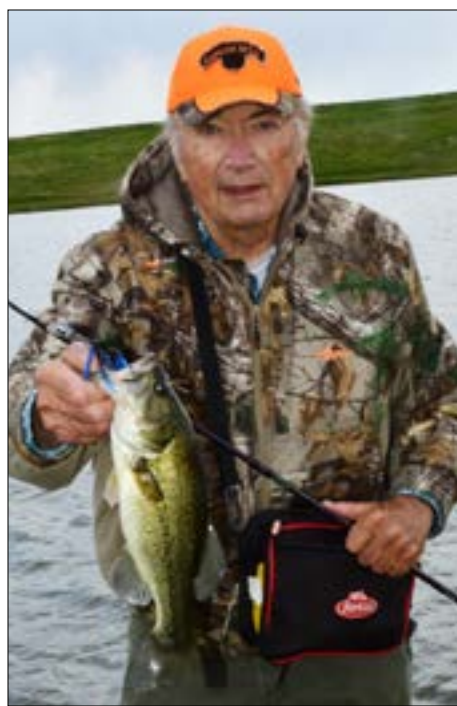
Normally, downsizing works for catching crappies, but this time, it went from a 2- to a 4-inch swimbait to start catching some 12- and 13-inch crappies on a mid-October day.



By upsizing from a 1/4- to a 1/2-ounce Rat-L-Trap, a slow September day of bass fishing went to a 'hot' one.



A good selection of lure sizes, such as this box of Blitz Blades, in the same or similar colors, makes it easy to up- and downsize while keeping the same style lure and action.



Fellow outdoor writer and master of shoreline fishing, Don Banning is known for being a proponent of downsizing. However, on this cold mid-October day, he had to change from his finesse lures to a larger 'chatter style' lure in the same black/blue color to start producing some bass.

crankbaits, Blitz Blades, spinnerbaits, plastic worms and jig combos, where the same lure and color are found in various sizes. But in most cases, you don't need to switch to the extreme sizes up or down to see a difference. For example, if you're fishing something in the 3/8-ounce range, which is a good "in-between" size, you shouldn't have to go more than to the 1/2-ounce size above or 1/8-ounce size below.

While muskies can always be finicky, I have experienced several times when they hit a downsized lure of the same design, and again going to a spinnerbait or crankbait of some sort. A good example was when I was filming a show for my old television series on

PBS. We were trying to show that muskies would take bass-type baits, and when passing through one area using a larger Norman N crankbait, I had a follow that would not bite, which happened with some others on the same day. I switched to a slightly smaller N size, returned to the same area of the first muskie follow, and it was "fish on" without any hesitation. This same sort of thing has happened with inline or overhead spinnerbaits where I was using a 1-ounce size and dropped to a 1/2-ounce with same color and blade configuration.

The time of year is another factor. In winter, it is normally downsizing, other than when pursuing larger crappies or bass; yet many times, I'll upsize two to three sizes, such as with a Custom Jigs and Spins Tutso, where I'll go from a size 10 to 6, or with a Ratfinkee, from a 10 to a 4.

As spring hits, it is normally a case of downsizing, because what prey is available is smaller. Summer is a time where it goes both ways, depending on the day. As fall rolls around, larger sizes can be the trick; but as it gets later towards winter, after their initial fall feeding, start looking at downsizing. Just remember, this has been the general rule, and on any given day, because of water or weather conditions, a switch one way or the other can make the difference between a productive day and a less productive one.

If you have a day when you know the fish should be hitting, or they are hitting slow but you are getting aggressive strikes, then change the size of the lure, and see if the strikes don't start picking up. **MWO**

Dan Galusha has fished all his life, worked more than 45 years in the outdoor/media industry, and was inducted into the Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame as a Legendary Communicator. Direct questions through dansfishntales.com, [facebook.com/dansfishntales](https://www.facebook.com/dansfishntales) and [facebook.com/shootnplink](https://www.facebook.com/shootnplink).



Upsizing is normally not the trick for bluegills, but on this summer day, switching to the larger Ratso with a Crappie Nibble produced larger fish after having a few smaller ones strike a smaller lure.

Fishing from Shore this Spring



Shore fishing in spring provides an opportunity for parent-child field trips in the warming temperatures. Many a duo catches panfish with basic worm-and bobber-techniques that have warmed anglers' hearts for many generations.

Photo: Don Gasaway

by Don Gasaway

To the casual observer, anglers fishing from shore seek whatever comes along. They do not have a fancy boat with electronics and a big motor. In fact, most do not own a boat. They do not enter and win tournaments. They just catch fish.

Fishing from a lake or riverbank is an uncomplicated and inexpensive approach to life that carries over into fishing.

There is no need to purchase a lot of gear or. Often, all you need is a collection of closed-face reels and accompanying rods purchased at flea markets and garage sales. Beginners do not look for a particular brand; they just buy what is there. More advanced shore anglers sometimes invest in longer rods to cast further, and more advanced terminal tackle.

Often, the shore fishing angler's approach to the lake differs from his high-tech competitors, as does his tackle. He fishes from shore or by wading. Often, he/she likes to find and actively fish vegetation. If, available, look for holes in the milfoil in about one or two feet of water.

Casting just beyond the hole, slowly begin a retrieve. Allow the lure to settle down into the hole. Leave it still for a while before subtly twitching it. Look carefully for line movement before continuing the retrieve. Poking plastic worms through vegetation during low-light conditions can be particularly effective as fish move from daytime shelter from the sunlight to feeding patterns.

If the fish are not in holes, moves to and fish the edges of cover. These shallow areas often produce fish.

Small spinnerbaits consistently take larger fish. I like using a brass blade and darker tail spinnerbait. They are a snack for fish, even if they are not hungry.

Many unsung anglers subscribe to this "more primitive" type of bass fishing. It is a philosophy of uncomplicated fishing. Smaller waters are ideal for this pattern and are part of our fishing heritage. **MWO**

Don Gasaway is a freelance outdoor writer from Marion, Ill. who has written more than 1,000 magazine articles. Find him on Facebook at: facebook.com/donsjournal. Comments and reviews are welcome.



Events

March 8

Barren River Fishing League Open Tournament at Barren River Lake, Port Oliver Ramp, from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Must qualify for classic through fishing previous tournaments. For info: Jason Phillips, jrphil0@uky.edu, 270-776-0614.

March 8

CAST Ministries Open Tournament at Kentucky Lake, Big Bear Public Use Area Ramp, from 5:45 a.m. to 3 p.m. Any variations or changes will be posted on the CAST FB page. For info: Tim Yates, castministriespad@yahoo.com, 618-645-1900, castministries.net.

March 8

KBN West HS (Central Hardin High School Bass Team) Open Tournament at Kentucky Lake, Moor's Resort Ramp from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. For info: Andy Perry, chbassfishing@gmail.com, 270-766-2472.

March 15

USA Bassin Green River Lake Day Open Tournament at Green River Lake, Ramp #1, from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. For info: Nathan Moore, nathanmoore01@yahoo.com, 606-669-2670, usabassin.com/modules.php?name=Divisions&divisionID=29

March 15

FTF Open Bass Tournament at Barren River Lake, Port Oliver Ramp, from 7 a.m.

to 3 p.m. For info: Morris Hogue, happy_hogue66@yahoo.com, 270-606-3321.

March 15

LBL BFL #2 Major League Fishing - BIG5 Open Tournament at Kentucky Lake, Moor's Resort Ramp from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. For info: Robert Evans, robert.evans@majorleaguefishing.com, 270-252-1616, majorleaguefishing.com.

March 22

Renegade RBT Green Division Open Tournament at Green River Lake, Ramp #1, from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. For info: Marty Basham, martymar333@yahoo.com, 270-268-6192, renegadebasstournaments.com.

March 23

Renegade RBT Tournaments at Barren River Lake, Port Oliver Ramp, from 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. All fish will be 15 inches. For info: John Newton, weld1482@yahoo.com, 270-535-5774, renegadebasstournaments.com.

March 27

Renegade RBT Tournaments OSH, at Green River Lake, Ramp #1, from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. This is a Senior event one person in the boat must be over 50. For info: John Newton, weld1482@yahoo.com, 270-535-5774, renegadebasstournaments.com.

Sports Shows

February 27 - March 2

Downtown Knoxville Boat Show, at the Knoxville Convention Center, Knoxville, TN. Show Hours: Thursday 2 - 8 p.m., Friday 12 - 8 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. - 8 p.m., Sunday 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. Admission: Single Day Admission \$15, Weekend Pass \$25, children 4-10 \$6. For info: Ryan Jones (865) 919-4180, info@downtownknoxvilleboatshow.com, downtownknoxvilleboatshow.com.

March 8-9

R.K. Lebanon Gun Show at Farm Bureau Expo Center, 945 E. Baddour Pkwy., Lebanon, TN 37087. Hours: Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission \$14, children \$4; VIP Tickets \$16.50, children \$6.50. Vendor tables \$81 ea., prepaid \$71 ea. non gun tables \$100 ea., electricity \$75. For info: R.K. Shows Tennessee, (417) 567-2002, rkshows@yousq.net, rkshows.com/events/category/tennessee.

March 15-16

R.K. Somerset Gun & Knife Show at The Center For Rural Development #300, 2292 US HWY 27, Somerset, KY 42501. Hours: Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission \$10, children \$4; VIP tickets \$12.50, children \$6.50. Vendor tables \$66 ea., prepaid \$56 ea., non-gun tables \$100 ea., electricity \$35 ea. For info: R.K. Shows Inc., (417) 567-2002, rkshows@yousq.net, rkshows.com.

March 22-23

R.K. Chattanooga, TN - Gun Show at Alhambra Shrine, 1000 Alhambra Dr., Chattanooga, TN 37421. Hours: Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission \$12, kids \$4; VIP ticket \$14.50, kids \$6.50. Vendor tables \$81 ea., \$71 ea. prepaid, prepaid non-gun tables \$100 ea., non-gun tables \$110 at show or within 10 days. For info: R.K. Shows Inc., (417) 567-2002, rkshows@yousq.net, rkshows.com.

March 29-30

Cave City Gun & Knife Show at Cave City Convention Center, 502 Mammoth Cave St., Cave City, KY 42127. Hours: Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission: \$10 (weekend), children 12 and under free with paying adult. Vendor tables \$40 ea. For info: S/T Promotions, (270) 618-0998, hoosiergunworks@aol.com, (270) 622-2185, hoosiergunworks.com/cave_city.html.

April 26-27

R.K. Knoxville Gun Show at Knoxville Expo Center, 5441 Clinton Hwy, Knoxville, TN 37912. Hours: Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission \$14, children \$5; VIP \$16.50, children \$7.50. Vendor tables \$81 ea., prepaid \$71 ea., non-gun tables \$100, electricity \$75. For info: R.K. Shows Tennessee, (417) 567-2002, rkshows@yousq.net, rkshows.com/events/category/tennessee.

For the most up-to-date info go to:

MidWestOutdoors.com/events

For more information contact the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency or the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources at the following website or phone numbers:
tnwildlife.org • phone 800-332-0900
fw.ky.gov • phone 800-858-1549

Free listing for your event!

To list your event in the MWO Sportsman's Calendar, email info to:
info@midwestoutdoors.com

Subject line: "Kentucky/Tennessee Calendar Listing"

Please allow 6 to 8 weeks for publication.

Become a

MIDWEST OUTDOORS Insider



Each week you'll receive timely info from MWO on where to go, what to use, and how to use it!

FREE sign-up at

MidWestOutdoors.com/Insider

(We never give your email address to third-party companies)

The Outdoors—Then and Now

by Bob Jensen

I looked out my office window today and saw a flock of swans flying by. For me, that was a pretty big deal. I've seen more swans in my home area in recent years. Certainly, more than we saw just a few years ago, but I still consider it a new experience.

Oddly, or maybe not so oddly, we're seeing more and more of some types of wildlife and fish life. Also not so oddly, we're seeing fewer and fewer of some types of wildlife and fish life. What we see and what we do in the outdoors has certainly changed from then to now.

Fishing has changed in a lot of ways. It used to be that keeping the larger fish was the way to go. On many bodies of water today, it's beneficial to the fishery to keep the smaller fish. Northern pike are a good example. On some lakes, keeping smaller pike is encouraged. A body of water can support a certain amount of fish poundage per acre. For instance, if a particular lake can support a hundred pounds of fish per acre, there can be twenty 5-pounders, or fifty 2-pounders. Take home some of the smaller ones, the ones that we used to throw back, and eventually we'll have bigger pike. That's an over-simplification, but it makes sense.

And when prepared properly, those 2- and 3-pound pike are outstanding on the table. The same concept holds true for panfish in many lakes. In some cases, we're doing the fishery a favor by keeping the smaller fish.

On some lakes, smallmouth bass have taken the place of walleyes. Largemouth bass have always been in these lakes, but they lived in areas where the walleyes didn't. As smallmouth populations grew, they moved into the walleyes' neighborhood. Smallmouths flourished. They were more



As the outdoor world changes, it appears that deer and turkeys are learning to read.

aggressive than walleyes and forced them out of the areas that were originally walleye territory.

When I was younger, pheasants and jackrabbits were abundant near my boyhood home in Iowa. Now, pheasant numbers fluctuate up and down, but there aren't as many as there used to be, and I haven't seen a jackrabbit in a very long time.

Weather plays a role in pheasant populations, but habitat, or habitat loss, is a very important factor. Since 1990, Iowa has lost 2,637 square miles of habitat. That's a strip of land nine miles wide that stretches

from Davenport, Iowa to Omaha, Neb. That's a lot of habitat!

In an earlier era, we never, ever saw an eagle around home. When we went on our annual fishing trip to northern Minnesota, we would usually see an eagle or two, and it was always a thrill. Today, we see eagles in the backyard. And it's still a thrill. I'm hopeful, and certain, that it will always be a thrill.

We also see more deer, geese and turkeys than we used to. Seeing deer, geese and turkeys aren't quite as thrilling to me as eagles, but I sure do like to see them, as long as they aren't on the road in front of my pickup.

Most people who spend time outdoors will agree that the outdoor world is changing. It's up to those of us who enjoy the outdoors to do what we can to make those changes, on land or water, changes for the better. **MWO**

Bob Jensen has been involved in fishing education, promotion and communications for the past 35 years. He is a popular television host and a member of the National Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame. To see episodes of Fishing the Midwest television, fishing-related tips and articles, visit fishingthemidwest.com. Follow on Facebook @ [fishingthemidwest](https://www.facebook.com/fishingthemidwest).

WATCH PURSUITUP FOR FREE

SCAN HERE TO FIND OUT HOW

QR Code

Smartphone Screen: 3:39 PM, 52% battery, PursuitUp ANYTIME, ANYWHERE LIVE STREAMING, Hunting, Fishing, General Outdoors, Shooting, Home, Favorites, More.