

Ideas for end of the season ice-fishing

by Bob Jensen

The end of the ice-fishing season is approaching. It's not here, but it's closer. This is good news in two very different ways. Folks who prefer to fish in open water are glad to see the ice go away. However, those who enjoy ice-fishing know that some of the very best action of the year can take place in late season. Some of my best ice-fishing down through the years has been in late February and early to mid March depending on the area being fished. It doesn't matter if you like to catch perch, walleyes, or an assortment of panfish through the ice, the next few weeks will provide the opportunity to do so. Many ice-anglers feel that mobility is the key to late season ice-fishing. If you can find the fish, they'll usually bite. The key is to get your bait where the fish are, and moving around is the best way to find those fish. Pop a few holes in a fishy area and keep moving until you get on a hole that has fish under it. The air temps are generally pretty comfortable this time of year, but I still like to fish from a shelter to block the wind. It doesn't matter how warm the air temps are, the wind blowing across the snow and ice can get cold. I like to put my shelter in a position where it blocks the wind, but isn't pulled all the way over. The Frabill Glide-Trax shelters pull from hole to hole easily, and serve as a great wind block and fishing position. Pay close attention to your sonar, and do what it tells you to do. One thing that was very apparent on a late ice-fishing trip last season was that the fish, especially the crappies, wanted the bait above them. The MarCum LX-5 sonar that I was using does an outstanding job of showing fish right on the bottom. With some units it's hard to differentiate between bottom-hugging fish and the actual bottom, but the LX-5 leaves no doubt in your mind. The crappies would come in very tight to the bottom. We would put a bait right in their face, but they wouldn't bite. After this happened several times, we started holding the bait above them, trying to tease them into biting. It worked! They were willing to move a foot or two up to take a bait, but they didn't want it right in their face. If the fish won't eat what you're showing them, or how you're showing it to them, show them something else in a different way. That's why I particularly like the Berkley Atomic Teaser. It keeps the fish biting in a wide range of situations. One last idea. Sometimes some fish are more susceptible to being caught than others are. For instance, the perch might want to bite but the crappies don't. Don't get too hung up on catching a particular specie of fish. It's more fun to catch a bunch of perch than to not catch any crappies. The next few weeks of ice-fishing season are a great time to be out. Yes, it might be a little slushy, but it will probably be pleasant weather, and the chance for getting bit is very good. Even if you prefer open water fishing, this is a fishing opportunity you don't want to miss.

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