

## GPS On The Ice

Now, as the days are growing shorter and the temps begin to drop, many of us are anticipating the hard water season. As I dust off the equipment, I can't help but to reflect on how far we have progressed in the sport of Ice Fishing.

There are a couple of stereotypical views of Ice Fisherman. Those that enjoy the social aspects of being penned up in a permanent shack with strangely fowl odors from dusk till dark. This crowd passes the time drinking stout beverages and eating bad food with even worse jokes mixed in for additional flavor. Other periods of boredom are satisfied by "reading" magazines with unusually shiny covers and feature women that typically require a cover charge and tips to see in person. Or, your more serious type, the stationary silhouette hunched over a five gallon pail in frozen silence.

Now, while choosing either solitude or close quarters camaraderie is fine. There's one thing you'll find in common with these groups; they rarely catch many fish.

Myself, I prefer *catching* fish to *fishing*. This is easily achieved by being mobile and spending your time where there are actually fish. With a little effort, a good attitude and armed with the proper tools, you can expect to ice some fish on nearly every outing.

Over the last ten years we have witnessed a revolution in equipment, tactics, and knowledge on the ice. There are a growing number of anglers who embrace these concepts and catch rates have improved dramatically.

We now move quickly and comfortably with all our gear: Auger, Vexilar, Aqua Vue, Mr. Heater, Rods, Tackle and Bait neatly stored in our Fish Traps. Ready to be deployed once we arrive at our chosen destination.

The latest thing on the scene is how we get there. Raymarine's RC 400 is the most recent generation of portable GPS units and feature Navionics Lake Maps. This allows us to see where we are in relation to the structure of the Lake. The days of drilling numerous holes or making multiple soundings with our Vexilar's in search of structure are long gone. We can now go directly to our predetermined locations and be set up exactly where we expect the fish to be, in minutes.

I rely on this technology in open water due to the phenomenal positional accuracy. While in split screen mode (Sonar and GPS), the large screen Raymarine C-120 allows you to literally watch the boat work up and down breaklines outlined on the GPS/Map. These background maps are more detailed than most paper maps and open up new possibilities on Lakes that you previously thought you knew well. The capabilities of the portable units are identical and will prove to be an invaluable aid on the ice.

Many of you may be intimidated by anything electronic and feel that these tools are best left to those of a younger generation or are computer savvy. Nothing could be further from the truth. You don't need to be Inspector Gadget or a Techno Geek to become proficient with these units. They come equipped with a Simulator mode and with a little practice from the comfort of your living room; you'll be good to go. As with most things electronic; price has come down to an affordable level, and to provide even greater value; can serve double duty mounted on your boat

in the Summer or used for Hunting excursions.

I will be at Sodak Sport and Bait on December 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> if you would like to stop in and discuss tools and tactics.

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