

# Have to Haves for Hardwater

It's now time to drag out all of our ice fishing gear and put some serious thought into what goodies you need to add to your arsenal. Be sure to jot down a list of what you just can't do without; and conspicuously leave it lying around the house as a not so subtle Christmas wish list. With that in mind, I'll list some of the most notable new equipment for this year.

Berkley has now come out with Fireline Crystal. This offers all of the fine diameter, low stretch and incredible strength of original Fireline, in a version that is virtually invisible. The lines weights are now down to 1lb and it is literally thinner than a human hair, with plenty of strength to easily handle the grumpiest of panfish. This will let us present the wispiest baits with precision and the sensitivity to react when they are picked up.

Vexilar has improved their legendary flashers with the introduction of the FL-12 and FL-20. They both feature a flat face design and the largest screens ever developed. This prevents snow and ice from being trapped and increases your viewing angle by more than 50%. Add enhanced interference rejection with a low power setting for depths under 20 feet and you have a great unit.

The FL-20 goes a couple of steps further by offering a night mode that lets you turn down the intensity of the LED display for more comfortable night viewing. This will prove to be a welcome upgrade for those of us who suffer each winter from what I term "Vexilar Eyes", which can best be compared to being snow-blind. Throw in the dual beam transducer and two zoom ranges and you have a locator that will do it all.

A product that I will be using extensively this year is Reel Weeds. It's a very realistic artificial weed system designed to attract and hold fish. They are extremely durable and come packaged in a hassle free foam storage unit. Thus, you can deploy and store them in seconds flat and move locations without a tangled mess. This is one of the most exciting tools to come along in some time and will prove invaluable in stopping the dreaded "roaming Perch" long enough for us to present our baits and solicit a strike.

A new lure that will help you to put more fish on the top side of the ice is JB Lures Holie Angel. I had the opportunity to field test the prototypes late last year and was quite pleased with the results. It's destined to become a great all around search lure for Panfish and Walleyes. They have astutely improved their proven Angel Lure by incorporating a vent in the center that causes it to spin erratically and create a great deal of disturbance when swiftly lifted, drawing in fish from a great distance. On the fall it flutters seductively and the fish readily suck it up.

Spring bobbers will help you catch more fish, but remain a major pain to use. St. Croix has solved the problem with their Legend Spring Bobber Rods. It has an ultra-sensitive, super tough gold plated stainless steel spring bobber, built right into the rod tip. It's fully adjustable to fine tune tension according to lure and species and allows you to store your lure on the rod without distorting the bobber.

I will be at Sodak Sport and Bait all day on December 9<sup>th</sup>, if you would like to come out and visit about any topic or technique related to ice fishing.

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