

Insider Visions AND VIEWS

Alternative Tip-Ups

I've caught thousands of fish with the HT Enterprises Polar Tip-Ups since beginning to fish with them in 1981. Inventor Paul Grahl dropped by the office to show me the Polar during the summer of 1981. There were other tip-ups out there, but nothing like the Polar—so smooth and reliable in the coldest conditions. You can choose from multiple trip settings for fine-tuning.

Grahl told me last year when we fished together for pike on Lake of the Woods that HT has sold several million Polars over the years. That means that besides all the fish they've caught for me, they've meant millions of fish for others, too.

As much as I love the Polar, I use three other HT tip-ups a lot, depending on conditions—and I started experimenting with another one last season. You might find them applicable to your ice fishing.

Polar Pop-Up

The Polar Pop-Up is a wind- and freeze-proof design with a sealed tube with a tripod stand and a line spool mounted at the base. The stand rests on the ice, straddling the hole, and the spool is submerged. An orange signal shaft is within the sealed tube. A trip mechanism consists of a spring tipped with a magnet is positioned at the base of this internal signal shaft and is set to align with another magnet positioned on the rim of the external spool rim.

When a fish strikes and turns the spool, magnetic tension is broken, and the spring pops the signal shaft up. Magnetic tension is regulated by sliding the spool up or down within an



Polar Therm

adjustment slot: Moving it up decreases the distance between the magnets, thereby increasing the tension for a heavier trip; moving it away increases the distance for a lighter trip.

Pop-ups probably are the easiest of all tip-ups to deploy and pick up. They're my favorite tip-up for fishing with livebait for walleyes—I keep half a dozen rigged and ready, packed in an HT Tackle Tote. After seeing how Guide Dennis Foster, from Mellette, South

Dakota, modifies his pop-ups, I do the same, adding a strip of red glow tape at the top of the tip-up, while wrapping the top of the pop-up flag with a strip of standard glow tape. With a flashlight it's easy to monitor tip-up sets at a distance and also see if a fish has tripped the pop-up arm.

Polar Therm

The Polar Therm has a spool mechanism identical to the Polar, but is built into a round plastic frame that covers an 8- or 10-inch hole. This blocks light to help eliminate spooking fish. It also stops blowing snow from entering the

hole and traps heat from the water to almost totally eliminate frozen holes. A telescopic flag offers good visibility at long range. The spools choices hold either 200 or 500 feet of line. I usually fish with bigger spools, because when they're filled to capacity, the line peels off the spool smoothly. HT makes a handy round carrying case for them, too.



Polar Pop-Up



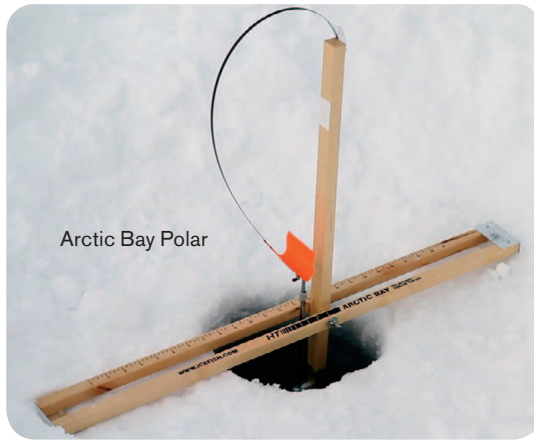
Foster modifications

I also have at least 6 rigged Polar Therms with me at all times. I switch from Polars to the Therms when conditions get really tough—wind and blowing snow, and extreme cold.

Arctic Bay Polar

The working mechanism is the same as the Polar. The difference is height. The Arctic Bay is built with a 30-inch wood base matched by a 30-inch high main arm, with a 31-inch flag that extends 40 inches above the frame when tripped.

In any tip-up set where I'm setting tip-ups at a distance, these are the ones at the outer limits of the set. They're also handy in deep snow, where you have to dig down 2 or 3 feet with a shovel to get at the surface of the ice, a fairly typical problem at times. Logically, the only spool choice is 500 feet. This also typically is the tip-up that I use for giant fish like fishing for lake sturgeon. It's a sturdy option, indeed.



Electronic Polar

This was my experimental option last year. The modular alarm system mounted to the center frame makes this option unique. Within the slightly enlarged trip shaft a magnet aligns with another magnet in the alarm.

When a fish strikes, the trip spins, breaking the magnetic tension and activating the system. As a fish runs and the shaft rotates, the magnets alternately pass each other, causing a light and alarm to flash and sound intermittently in time with the speed of the run. It works great in the dark and it's nice to set them outside a portable shack. No need to check them visually because you can hear the alarm. The Electronic also is available in a hole-cover design. ■

Electronic Polar





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