

Look before you leap...

or perhaps as better adapted to fishing...find before your fish. This may sound oversimplified and about as basic as it gets, but as with anything, the basics are always the most important, although most overlooked aspect of any endeavor.

Angling where there are at least a few fish to tempt is about as fundamental as it gets. But, it is surprisingly easy to have some strong preconceived notions about where the fish **should** be and to begin fishing for them even though they may or may not even be present. This applies to traditional seasonal patterns all the way to the “they were there yesterday” situations. I for one fall into this category more often than I care to admit and get far too wrapped up in trying to outsmart the fish, rather than actually locating numbers of them first. No matter how good you are; it’s darn hard to catch fish where there aren’t many and ghosts in any form are always elusive.

I was recently rudely reminded of this by a friend and occasional tournament partner whose demeanor could be described as anything but sweet, but ironically has a name that sounds an awful lot like fudge. His all too descriptive name is more akin to oil that has thickened beyond a useful state and possesses many of the same cantankerous characteristics. But, even this character can be right on occasion as after a lackluster outing, I received a comment (cussing deleted for more sensitive audiences) along the lines of, “you mean to tell me with all those fancy electronics you couldn’t find more fish to catch?”

He was right as I had let myself fall into the trap of spending most of my time fishing where **I thought** the majority of fish should be rather than **finding the fish** and then attempting to work some magic on them. With all of the advances in sonar technology that today’s units offer, this is a Cardinal sin and God knows we are all sinners...some of us just more than others. There are a few good brands to choose from and my advice is to not skimp and compare top of the line models from each to select one that will fit your needs the best. If you need to cut corners due to budget, do it somewhere else as quality electronics will literally allow you peer into the underwater world and consistently help tilt the odds a bit in your favor.

I personally have been fortunate enough to have had a relationship with Raymarine for years and have come to depend on their C-Series of amazingly easy to use multi-function units in my search for not only fish, but other key variables in putting the puzzle together in order to catch more fish. Top flight sonar units are much more than “fishfinders” in that they not only show you fish, but give you an indication of bottom content (hard or soft), display baitfish whether in schools or right down to individual specimens and can even detect thermoclines (distinct temperature differences in layers of water). Not to mention the Navionics background

mapping capabilities and your relative position along with the ability to mark areas of interest, pods of fish, and plot courses, trolling passes, etc.

All of this information is now displayed on large effortless to read and interpret screens so we have fewer excuses for our shortcomings. Leaving us much more time to focus our energies on our attempts to entice some of what we see below to come topside for a quick visit.