

Perch Search

If you want to consistently ice some nice Perch, you might consider expending a little extra energy this season. This will require more than just asking questions at the local bait shop or going onto the ice and looking for the largest congregation of ice houses. At best, you will be fishing where the fish were yesterday, last week, or even last year. Although, the fringes of these areas can be a good place to start.

For the most part, winter Perch are basin orientated and will roam widely from day to day or even hour to hour. Imagine several herds of cattle in a very large pasture. Not much rhyme or reason to their travels. These fish are constantly moving and if you want to stay on top of them, so should you.

I'll begin my hunt by drilling a dozen or two holes in an area of perhaps 100 by 100 yards. With the aid of a Vexilar or Aqua Vu (the Vexilar almost exclusively due to ease of use) I'll start fishing each hole looking for signs of life. No activity after a minute or two and it's off to the next hole.

For this approach, I use an aggressive rattling, glow lure such as JB's Varmit in 1/8 or 1/4 oz. Tip with a minnow head, Powerbait or Gulp. Really pound and work this to attract fish. They may not respond with a bite, but if present, they will show themselves as evidenced on your flasher.

Continue working all the holes in the area. If there are fish in the vicinity but not responding to your presentation, it's time to downsize. Having another rod rigged with a smaller version (Pro Varmit) is often the ticket. This package allows you to get down to the fish quickly while the gold dropper chain and propeller it comes with serves as a powerful attractor. Replace the treble hook with a single #8 or #10 and pack with Waxies or Eurolarvae. Make it dance in place while slowly raising from the bottom. If the Perch are the least bit willing, they will take it.

Still no takers? It's time to make a big move. Depending on size of the lake this could be a mile or more. There is absolutely no sense in fishing a section of lake with either no fish or inactive fish. You may even want to pack up and go to another nearby lake.

Let's put this into perspective. If it were summertime and you were out in the boat you wouldn't even consider going out into the middle of the lake, anchoring up, tossing out a couple of bobbers and waiting all day, hoping for a bite. You would quickly tire of this and move. It should be no different on the ice.

By having the proper tools at our disposal, staying mobile is no more difficult in the winter than it is in the summer. The beauty of this is that we can have all of this equipment for a fraction of the cost of open water gear. If it is easy for you to move you will. If it's not, you won't and it will end up costing you the opportunity to catch more fish.

The heart of the mobile system is a Fish Trap style flip over shelter. This allows us to easily store all the tackle we need and remain comfortable and warm. When it's time to move, just toss in your stuff, jump in the pickup or ATV and tow it all to the next spot.

By hitting the ice with a proactive attitude and the right equipment you can fully expect to enjoy some success on each outing. Do not be reactive and accept the notion the “the fish just aren’t biting”. You don’t plan a day of Pheasant hunting around standing in a slough all day waiting for a bird to fly by. You walk until you find them. Same concept on the ice.

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