

# Tough Choice ?

Every year during the Hardwater Season, the most frequent question posed to me is; "Should I spend my money on a Vexilar or an Aqua Vue." For those of you just entering the Electronic Age of Ice Fishing, this can be a daunting dilemma. I'll outline some of my thoughts on the subject to help make your decision making process a bit easier. The information may also help those who are looking for a well appreciated gift, fulfilling a need for the avid ice angler in their family.

On the surface, it would appear that each perform the same basic function; indicating the presence of fish. While this is true, there are some distinct differences and advantages that each possess.

The Vexilar is a more user friendly tool, in that you simply drop the transducer into your hole and you have instant feedback as to if fish, bait, or weeds are below you. Once you understand how to run it, you will also be able to discern relative bottom hardness, i.e. whether you are over a soft silty material or a harder gravel, sand type of substrate. This can be key in finding transition areas, which is of particular importance in locating Walleyes. You can also judge the attitude of the fish you mark as you watch them react to your jigging motions. If aggressively worked baits scatters them, it is time to downsize and switch to a more subtle presentation.

I personally prefer using the Vexilar when I'm actively searching for fish. This involves punching a lot of holes and moving to contact feeding fish. As you don't have to un-spool and position the camera cable each time, the Vexilar is more efficient for this style of fishing.

With that being said, the Aqua Vue also has a number of advantages. Number one being that it is not necessary to interpret electronic signals. Some folks have a little trouble with this and quickly become frustrated. The Aqua Vue shows you everything you need to know, and is on the screen right in front of you. It becomes extremely easy to see how the fish are reacting to every movement you impart into your bait. This allows you to experiment and gain confidence in various jigging motions. You can go from each end of the spectrum and see it play out below. From large darting lifts, down to seductive little jiggles and dances. The fish will tell you what they want. This often changes from day to day, or even hour to hour.

One scenario where the Aqua Vue particularly shines is when the fish are in a neutral to negative mood. They will mouth the bait and spit it out before you can get a hook into them. By watching them, you can time your hookset and ice fish that you would have other-wised missed. A word of advice: Don't wait until the bait is in their mouth. Set once you see their gills flare, and the timing will work out perfectly.

If forced to use only one unit, I would recommend the Vexilar, as it more versatile and allows you to stay on moving fish. If you tend to fish out of a permanent ice house and don't move much, then the Aqua Vue will suit your needs nicely. I personally use both, with Vexilar getting the nod over 90% of the time.

Hopefully, I have shed some light on the subject and not confused the issue even further. Regardless of what you choose, each is an invaluable tool and will make your outings more productive this season.

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