

Ice fishing cold, lonely....

BY
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TRAILBLAZERS

Ice fishing can be cold, lonely and often miserable, especially to those who have the wrong gear and insufficient warm clothing.

On the other hand, ice fishing can be very productive and a sport that can be enjoyed by the whole family. There are many operators who cater to the ever-increasing winter anglers.

Such operators supply everything from the warmed huts to the bait and tackle, all except the fish. I have found that more and more anglers seek out their own little fishing spot and stay well clear of the large operations, more often than not, with excellent results.

Assuming that you have enough warm clothing by now, you should take a look at some of the tired old equipment you have been using. It is my experience that the proper equipment will make your trip. There is just no way you will be able to

stay warm, for instance, after working yourself into a sweat while chopping a hole into three feet of ice with a small ice chisel.

DIG A HOLE

There are several ways of digging a hole in the ice. Thin ice can be easily broken with an axe or a more conventional ice chisel, but if you have ice over a foot thick a proper ice auger is a must.

Whatever you do, remember never to work yourself into a sweat as you will never get warm afterwards. There is a type of auger on the market that looks like an oversized drill bit. It will cut an eight inch hole and has removable blades which can be taken off and sharpened.

This auger sells for about \$42 in most stores. Be sure the blades of the auger can be removed and try to stay with the spiral type rather than one that has a spoon-type blade.

FISH HUTS

Most fish huts come with the equipment supplied. The most common type of gear used in the tip-up, a little balanced stick that holds your line and sits on a stand without being held. However, I have found that such gear, when supplied by an operator, is often cheaply made and defective.

Go into a store and look at this gadget and I am certain that most of you can make one much better. Get a few feet of line and a spreader and you can use the stand from the hut. For those

who want to buy a tip-up, they sell complete with stand for about five dollars.

DRUMMING STICK

The final piece of equipment you should have with you when out on your own is a small hand-held ice fishing rod. Such a rod, called a drumming stick, is usually made with a metal spool to hold your line and a stainless steel tip that gives you enough flexibility to play even the largest lake trout.

There are a few ice fishing lures on the

market and most of them will catch fish. My choice is the William's Whitefish, in different sizes, a truly excellent lure for lake trout. For all other species of fish I use minnows, either on a single hook for walleye or on a spreader for whitefish. More about fishing with live bait later

when the season has begun.

A minnow pail, preferably insulated, is a must. If you buy one make certain it is strong enough to be used as a seat. With it, get yourself a small net to catch the minnows from the pail. Getting your hands wet out there is a no-no. The

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January 5, 1978

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