

Ice Perch – Located and Caught on Camera



After using the underwater camera and catching perch, these fishermen are enjoying an ice fishing shore lunch prepared by John Andrew, the author. *Photos: John Andrew*

by John Andrew

Technology today is leading the way for all working businesses, individual entertainment, vacations, information, and outdoor sports and activities. The underwater camera is also big technological advancement in the fishing industry. In this article the main topic will be the underwater camera for perch location under the ice. I bought my first underwater camera in 1996 and this revolutionized my guiding career under the ice and in open water.

The GPS has been leading the way for the outdoor enthusiasts for the last several years. We, the Angler's Choice Guide Service, have been combining the GPS and the underwater camera for the past 10 years (winter and summer). Other people have been using this extremely effective technique much longer. We work the perch quickly by watching their behavior to our color of lure, bait, and movement we implement to our presentation. By being able to see the perch react, we are now ahead of the competition. Also, by knowing the species of fish we are looking at puts us way ahead of others when we are only after perch.

Perch are very aggressive on certain locations under the ice. This may sound



An underwater camera helped locate these perch from a deep weed edge.

funny, but this is an accurate statement. Some locations are feeding stations (weed edges, channels, ledges, wood piles, etc.). Some areas are holding areas and certain areas are travel routes to and from feeding areas. Some may argue this is controversial, but this is my finding after years and years of underwater camera use. Obviously, this

information can be used for finding, studying and catching other species of fish.

This year we have installed the new 2015 MarCum VS 625 SD (in color) Underwater Viewing System in all our wood, insulated and heated ice houses. This underwater camera is also set up with the Automatic Camera Panner. This device allows all clients to personally view—follow the fish—as they approach the bait by using the automatic switch that is connected by cable from the camera. It's awesome to see as the camera can be completely rotated 360 degrees and back to where it was originally was set up watching the hook.

This truly gives the angler the “angling advantage.” Let's get started on how we do it, as well as how others I have worked with are now utilizing this method.



A small crappie minnow produced this nice perch.



This fisherman caught these perch while fishing with his brother and father; both perch were caught over a deep woodpile using wax worms and Ratso ice jigs.

First, in the late fall we locate a good population of perch and mark this spot on the GPS. Using this same procedure in midsummer and expecting the fish to be there in January, February or March is not a good recommendation since the feeding location changes drastically season to season.

Let's say you have a GPS location on a deep woodpile on a stained lake around 30 to 40 feet deep, which is not uncommon. We stand on the ice precisely over the spot marked in the fall and drill a few holes and then lower our camera down and start searching for the wood. This is critical since the perch (or other panfish) may or may not move too far from the wood to take your bait. Even though the perch are aggressive and take your bait when placed in front of them, they may not venture more than 5 or 6 feet away from the pile.

On a clear lake the fish may swim up a few feet to intercept your bait as it is sinking down to them. This is common, although this behavior will depend on the weather and if your location is being heavily fished. If others are fishing this good location, your fish will stay tight to the cover and you may

story continued...

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While fishing with his grandfather and guide John Andrew, this young man caught this nice perch while watching the fish on an underwater camera.



This young angler caught this perch on a wax worm while fishing over a deep wood pile.

Conservation Views

Dave Leonard

Southern and Central Illinois Hot-Water Lakes Offer Great Spring Fishing Opportunities

Everyone knows that spring fishing offers the best opportunities for fishermen in terms of quality and quantity of the catch. However, most people don’t take advantage of the “early spring opportunities” offered by hot-water lakes. The power plant lakes are almost always visible by the high plume of smoke rising from their stacks. Hot-water lakes offer the first glimpse of spring fishing as early as January in some lakes.

The air temperature can vary as much as 40 degrees between Lake Egypt and Springfield in the early spring months. In addition, you may have to contend with snow and ice in central Illinois and sunshine in southern Illinois on the same days. Most people recognize the earliest spring fishing usually starts on Lake of Egypt, south of Marion on Interstate 57. **Lake of Egypt** is a 2,300-acre power

plant lake operated by the Southern Illinois Power Co-operative and is privately owned. Lake of Egypt usually provides a great fishery year round. Populations and size of largemouth bass and crappies are testimony to a great fishery located here. Eight-pound-plus largemouth bass are the norm here in the springtime. Crappies over 2 pounds are not uncommon in the creels of fishermen in the springtime. This lake is usually the first stop for bass tournaments in the springtime. Just east of St. Louis, located near New Athens is **Baldwin Lake**. This 2,000-acre lake sees plenty of fishermen due to its location. The lake is best known for the largemouth bass fishery and the catfish. Workers at the power plant tell me you can see thousands of catfish in hot-water discharge in the winter and spring. Unfortunately you cannot fish that part of the lake. Baldwin is a large open lake and winds can be a huge problem. My advice if it is windy, stay off the lake during these periods. All winter fishermen visit **Coffeen Lake** near Hillsboro for “winter/spring” bass and

crappie fishing at this power plant lake. Also, big striped bass reside in this lake and offer an added bonus to the creel. No one knows for sure when the transition from winter to spring fishing occurs, since they fish this lake year ‘round. Only the most frigid days and snowstorms keep fishermen off this 1,100-acre lake. Just north of Coffeen Lake is **Lake Sangchris**, south of Springfield. The lake is approximately 3,022 acres and warms slowly from the discharge to the outer reaches, offering extended spring fishing. The lake offers opportunities for crappies, largemouth bass, striped bass, and channel cats. **Newton Lake** is located more in the eastern part of the state, just south of Effingham, and has always been known as a very good largemouth bass lake. This 1,750-acre, hot-water lake has churned out some impressive stringers of largemouth bass. This year’s outlook is good for largemouth bass, excellent for channel catfish, and poor for crappie. My advice as the colder weather sets in is to start at Lake Egypt and then work your way north. Calling ahead to the area may provide valuable insight into weather and fishing conditions. As always be very careful fishing in the winter months as hypothermia and drowning are an immediate danger. Always wear a Personal Flotation Device. **MWO**

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need to visually see the fish approach your bait on camera and then you will need to coax them to commit to bite. This is done by the choice of lure color, what type of bait, pound-test line you are using, time of day and the technique you are implementing with your presentation to get the fish to bite. This can only be done with a camera. Wax worms and small crappie minnows are our prefer bait, and when watching the perch on camera we do not use a bobber or spring tip since the bite is very visual with the new cameras. Now, do not misunderstand, a flasher is and always will be a very important fishing tool, especially in dark water where they have to be used when a camera (due to bad visibility) is not recommended. Some flashers are now made with a small camera screens built in. This could be the best technology yet for the ice fishermen and open-water fishermen **MWO**



Grandfather and grandson catching perch using small minnows and Ratso ice jigs with the author John Andrew.

John Andrew is owner and operator of the Angler’s Choice Guide Service, and is a two-time world record holder, a two-time Outstanding Angler Achievement Award winner, a full-time year ‘round tour guide for fishing and hunting for the state of Wisconsin, from which Andrew is a full-time resident and a current and active member of four local chambers of commerce, specializing in Vilas, Oneida and Iron counties. He may be reached at: Phone: 715-892-3020 or 715-686-2012



This young man caught these fine perch while fishing with his grandfather.

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Website: theanglerschoiceguideservice.com

For more information...

Lake of Egypt
Southern Illinois power Co-op
618-964-1448

Baldwin Lake
Baldwin State Fish and Wildlife office
618-785-2555

Coffeen Lake
Coffeen Lake office
217-537-3351

Lake Sangchris
State Fish and Wildlife area
309-968-7135

Newton Lake
Newton Lake Fish and Wildlife Area
217-783-3478

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