

Of The Outdoors

Run & gun ice fishing can work

BY GARY HOWEY
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As we headed out from River Bend Resort, our snowmobile, towing our Otter sled raced across the frozen surface of Lake of the Woods. Our destination, the outside edge of the hundreds of icehouses located on this section of the lake.

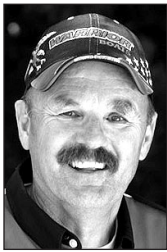
Our plan was to set up our portable shelters on a sand flat located just outside the permanent houses, in an area known to hold walleye and sauger during the winter months.

Our arsenal of Otter Outdoors icehouses consisted of a one person Ice Cottage, along with the one person Ice Cabin and the 2-3 person Ice Lodge, allowing us to quickly locate the fish, fish comfortably, catch the active fish and then move on to another spot.

I'd be using the Otter Ice Cabin, which allowed us to carry all of our gear out onto the ice, to film and fish comfortably. The Ice Cabin was equipped with two comfortable seats, enough room for me to fish two lines, ample room for my heater, Vexilar locator and our cameraman and his gear.

The method of fishing we were using, the run and gun method, allowed us to quickly and easily move from spot to spot, to take advantage of the active fish. In less than a minute, we were able to drill two holes and put up the Otter.

With my Vexilar locator, I had the ability to watch my Lindy Darter and Slick Jig descending to the bottom as they showed up as a red/green line. Once a fish moved in under the Vexilar transducer, a red blip would appear on the screen and then all that was needed was to bring the Darter up to that depth which changed the red/green line, indicating my bait to a wider red line, once this happened, I knew I was at the same depth as the fish so I work the bait a bit and "Wham", I had my first fish of the day on, a chunky 2-pound walleye. What's nice about a



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potable sled such as the Otters is that they allow you to fish in all kinds of conditions. If the weather wasn't all that bad, we could fish with the top down and if it started to cool off or if the wind came up, we could flip over the top, giving us an enclosed shelter, allowing us to fish comfortably in the coldest of conditions.

Once the bite cooled off, it was a simple matter to fold up the Otter and move off to the next spot where one of the guys would begin to drill holes, followed up by another who would clean out the slush. The Otters were than slid into position and we were back to fishing.

Another item that proves helpful, especially on larger bodies of water such as LOTW as there are times when you're way out there that the shoreline isn't visible and everything around you looks the same. This is when a hand-held GPS comes in handy as it helps to direct you to the spot you'd located fish on during the warmer weather.

Other equipment needed to run and gun needs to be lightweight as the sled/icehouse you'll be towing needs to carry all

the gear/tackle needed to spend a day on the ice jumping from one spot to the next.

As I mentioned, I bring along my small propane powered Mr. Heater, Vexilar locator, several rods and numerous tackle boxes.

At one time I had PVC pipe riveted onto a five-gallon bucket that allowed me to carry several rods out onto the ice. One problem that I've had carrying my rods in a bucket was my rods becoming so badly tangled that it took forever to get them untangled so I could fish. Ice fishing is a game of micro lures, lightweight rods and very light line. When my three-pound Micro Ice Fireline and Cold Weather line, the tangles can be a real nightmare. To solve this problem I've went to a case that I carry my rods in.

My first was a canvas type bag, which only magnified my problem, as the rods were closer together, instead of tangling only one or two rods. I was able to tangle all of them. Now, I use a rod case, a lightweight case made from high impact plastic that's foam lined allowing me to carry my rods without getting them all tangled.

The key to run and gun ice fishing is to know the body of water you're going to be fishing. If you're fishing a new body of water, especially a large one, it can take days to



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Columnist Gary Howey (right) and another angler yield good results from a recent ice fishing outing on Lake of the Woods.

figure things out. One method that a lot of ice fishermen use is to head for the concentrations of ice houses, which at times can be good, but not always the best choice. Most resorts and bait shops will be able to give you a good start, giving you the depth the fish are being taken, if the fishing is being done in the channel, over sand or around the rocks and what type of lure and bait has been working the best.

Run and gun fishing may not be for everyone,

but it can be much more productive than setting up in one spot, waiting for the fish to come to you.

Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is the Producer/host of the award winning

Outdoorsmen Adventures television series seen on Fox throughout the upper Midwest. For more information on the outdoors, videos and outdoor information go to www.outdoorsmenadventures.com.

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