

Of The Outdoors | Gary Howey

Early Season Is Best, Most Dangerous Fishing

BY GARY HOWEY
Hartington, Neb.

I have worked the Ice Fishing Expo promotion at the Mitchell Cabela's store for several years. There are always many folks wanting to talk about ice fishing; some had already tested the ice where they found 2-4 inches of ice.

I can see why they are anxious to get on the ice, as first ice is generally some of the best ice fishing there is.

First ice is also the most dangerous as there can be quite a difference in ice thickness from one area to another.

Once we have colder temperatures, you would think there would be some good ice made.

At the time of the expo, it was building on all the bodies of water in the upper Midwest, getting thicker by the day as long as the ice is not covered with snow. On those ponds and lakes that have snow cover, the thickness of the ice may not be consistent from one area to another. Snow piled on unfrozen ground does the same thing to snow piled on the ice; it acts as an insulator, not allowing the cold temperatures to get down and freeze the ground or the water. Ice may look strong or be solid along the shoreline where the snow has blown clear, when in fact there are probably areas on the lake that have very little ice because of the snow that covers it.

Before heading out on any body of water to ice fish, we all need to be aware of the potential dangers of ice.

A good indicator of the strength of the ice is its color. Look for clear blue ice, which is the strongest because it is created by a sustained freeze. Unsafe ice is black, gray or honeycombed because it has frozen and then thawed. Freezing the water 1 layer and not completely through. Discolored or dark spots suggest open water, thin ice, or possibly a spring, all of which are dangerous.

As I mentioned earlier, snow cover insulates the ice, inhibiting solid ice formation and making it almost impossible to judge the thickness of the ice.

Icehouses, fishing piers and bridges absorb the sun's heat and increase melting.

Vegetation will also absorb heat from the sun and rotting vegetation can create its own heat.

Critters such as muskrats, beaver and other animals swimming under the ice can weaken it. This is especially true in shallow lakes and rivers.

Moving water can weaken ice as much as 15 percent with wind creates a pumping action that will force water through the breaks and cracks enlarging them.

If your crossing ice on foot and you are not sure of the thickness of the ice, it is safer to slide your feet instead of stepping, which distributes your weight more evenly.

When I'm ice fishing, I always carry a floatable boat cushion that I can use to kneel down on next to a hole when I'm fishing and thrown to someone that falls through the ice.

You carry an ice chisel or spud bar to probe the thickness of the ice ahead of you as you work your way across the ice.



Gary HOWEY



Outdoorsmen Productions intern, Kella Rodiek (of Mitchell and student at Wayne State College) is pictured with a crappie taken during the early ice-fishing season.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

Another good idea is to carry along a set of ice picks made from a cord attached to large sharpened nails or screwdrivers. Attach this around the neck where you can get to quickly if you happen to fall through the ice, as they can be a lifesaver, allowing you to pull yourself out of the water and back onto the ice.

Once you are back on the ice, roll away from the hole instead of standing up. This allows you to get to thicker safe ice without slipping back into the water.

A general rule of thumb when it comes to how much ice it takes support you and your equipment on "clear-blue" ice formed under ideal conditions listed below.

(Earlier in the winter, it's a good idea to double the thickness just to be safe).

Two inches or less ice thickness won't be the same over the entire pond-Stay Off

Four inches is good for a group of people if they walk in single file.

Five and a half to six inches is

needed for a snowmobile or ATV.

Eight to twelve inches will support an automobile.

Twelve to fifteen inches will support a pickup or truck.

If someone with you falls through the ice, remember to Reach, Throw and Go.

First, try to REACH them with a long pole, board, rope or blanket.

Second, THROW them a floatable seat cushion, life jacket, empty water jug, or other items that will help them to stay afloat.

As a last resort, go to the victim. Should this be necessary, form a human chain to reach the victim? A human chain is made by lying on the ice with each person holding the feet of the person in front of them.

Getting the person out of the water and warmed quickly is very important as hypothermia sets in very quickly.

Early ice fishing can be some of the most productive ice fishing and a lot of fun, but before venturing out onto early ice make sure it is safe, so don't be in a rush to get on the ice.

There will be a lot of old weather and ice around for several months and no fish is worth putting your life in danger!

Team Outdoorsmen Adventure members will be heading to northeastern South Dakota and northern Minnesota before long and in future articles we'll let you know where they're biting and what's being used to catch the fish.

We at Outdoorsmen Productions wish you and yours a very Merry Christmas and a great ice fishing season.

Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is a former tournament angler, fishing and hunting guide. He's the Producer/Host of the award winning Outdoorsmen Adventures television series, which can be seen on Fox affiliates throughout the upper Midwest. He and Simon Fuller are the hosts of the Outdoor Adventures radio program Monday-Saturday at 6:45 am on Classic Hits 106.3 and ESPN Sports Radio 1570. If you are looking for more outdoor information, check out www.outdoorsmenadventures.com.

OUTDOORS DIGEST

Reminder For Late Season Deer Hunters

PIERRE — Deer hunters who have unfilled antlerless deer tags for the East and West River Deer Seasons will have nine additional days available to harvest antlerless deer beginning Dec. 28 and ending on Jan. 5.

South Dakota Game Fish and Parks Terrestrial Chief Tom Kirschenmann said the change was in effect last season as well.

"Our offices have taken many calls asking about unfilled 'any deer' tags. Prior to last year, 'any deer' tags converted to 'antlerless' tags for these last nine days of the season," Kirschenmann said. "That is no longer the case. Only unfilled 'antlerless' tags are valid during this time frame."

The changes were made in 2012 as part of deer herd management objectives to direct additional antlerless harvest in the areas of the state that need it most while curtailing the doe harvest where deer populations are at or below population objectives.

These changes will also apply to the Archery and Muzzleloader Seasons as well.

Only unfilled 'any antlerless deer' tags are valid from January 1-15.

For specific information on the respective deer seasons, please visit <http://gfp.sd.gov/hunting/big-game/deer/default.aspx>.

Lake Oahe Walleye Limits Lowered

PIERRE — Standard statewide harvest restrictions for walleye are in effect on Lake Oahe as of Dec. 15, 2013. Anglers will be allowed four walleye per day; however, no more than one may be 20 inches or greater in length.

There is no minimum length limit and walleye kept from Lake Oahe count as part of the statewide possession limit of eight fish.

Anglers looking for additional information on the current status of the Lake Oahe fishery can attend one of four public meetings in January and February.

Fisheries staff will be presenting results from 2013 survey work, answering questions and taking input from anglers on the Lake Oahe fishery. Meetings will be held in Aberdeen, Pierre, Sioux Falls and Rapid City. As meetings are finalized, dates, times and specific locations will be released and advertised accordingly.

For additional information on fisheries regulations, please see the 2014 Fishing Handbook at: <http://gfp.sd.gov/fishing-boating/rules-regs.aspx>.

Neb. Bald Eagle Nest Numbers Flat In 2013

LINCOLN, Neb. — The number of recorded active bald eagle nests in Nebraska held more or less steady from 2012 to 2013.

In 2013, 102 active nests were recorded in the state, down from 103 in 2012. The flat numbers came as a surprise to those who track the state's bald eagle population — the number of active bald eagle nests has increased each year since 1991 when the first active nest in a century was recorded in Nebraska.

Joel Jorgensen, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's nongame bird program manager, said the state had substantially increased its survey effort, which made the flat numbers more of a surprise.

"In past years, increased survey effort produced proportionally more active nests," he said. "We have been accustomed to annual increases."

The reason for the flat nest numbers is unclear, though it is possible that prey resources bald eagles depend on may have been reduced during the drought of 2012. Future nest monitoring will determine whether the 2013 results represent a leveling off of Nebraska's bald eagle population or just a temporary pause in long-term increases. Regardless, the number of bald eagle nests recorded in Nebraska in 2013 is 10 times greater than the recovery objective identified in the 1980s by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The recovery of the bald eagle is considered a modern conservation success story. The bird was listed as a federally and state endangered species in 1978. Populations declined greatly throughout the 20th century, primarily due to the use of DDT and other similar chemical pesticides. In 1963, there were fewer than 500 breeding pairs in the lower 48 states. After the banning of DDT and many years of intense management efforts, the bald eagle was removed from both the federal and state lists of threatened and endangered species.

In Nebraska, the majority of bald eagle nests are concentrated along Nebraska's major rivers including the Missouri, Platte and Loup river systems. Bald eagle nest monitoring is conducted and coordinated by NGPC, but also relies on cooperating agencies and trained volunteers to collect some of the data.

North Dakota State Advances To FCS Title Game For Third Straight Season

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — Brock Jensen threw three touchdown passes and John Crockett ran for 196 yards to help North Dakota State overpower New Hampshire 52-14 in the Football Championship Subdivision semifinals Friday night.

The two-time national champion Bison (14-0) advanced to the FCS title game Jan. 4 in Frisco, Texas, against the winner of the second semifinal between Eastern Washington and Towson.

North Dakota State is trying to match Appalachian State's string of

three straight FCS crowns from 2005-07.

The Bison overcame two turnovers and a 7-0 deficit in the first 3 minutes to roll before a playoff record-crowd of 18,694 fans at the Fargodome in the last home game for 24 seniors and head coach Craig Bohl, who's leaving for

Wyoming after the championship game.

Jensen, the winningest quarterback in FCS history, threw touchdown passes to Zach Vraa, Derrick Lang and Kevin Vaadeland in the first half and scored a 1-yard keeper early in the second.

Boys

From Page 8

points and 10 rebounds in the loss. Both squads will compete in Brookings on Dec. 28. Arlington will play Flan-dreau and Estelline will play Chester Area.

Madison 62, Lennox 44

LENNOX— Madison led Lennox the first half 25-17 and kept the lead throughout the rest of the game winning 62-44 in Lennox Friday night.

Jacob Giles led Madison with 24 points and Trae Vandberg added 14 points. Rush Miline grabbed six rebounds for Madison's win.

For Lennox, both Brody Nelson and Jacob Hinker put up 15 points. Hinker also had six rebounds.

Madison plays Deubrook in the Entringer Classic in Brookings Dec. 28.

Lennox travels to Canton Monday.

MADISON (3-0)12 25 44 62
LENNOX (1-2)9 17 29 44

De Smet 71, Colman-Egan 43

DE SMET— De Smet topped Colman-Egan 71-43 Friday night in De Smet.

For Colman-Egan, Bodee Groos put up 18 points. Trenton Hemmer tallied

nine points and eight rebounds. Colt Hawkins scored seven points for Colman-Egan.

Austin Janssen lead De Smet in scoring with 16 points. Dyland Gehm and Broderick Poppinga each added 12 points and both Christian Small and Tate Munger scored nine. Gehm snatched 10 rebounds.

De Smet plays in the Entringer Classic in Brookings Dec. 28.

Colman-Egan travels to Brookings to play Deuel Dec. 28.

Thursday

Parker 64, Alcester-Hudson 47

ALCESTER— Parker was able to roll past Alcester-Hudson 64-47 despite only a five point lead at the halfway mark on Thursday night.

Jake Anderson led Parker (2-1) with 19 points and 10 rebounds. Zach O'Keefe added 13 points, five assists and five steals.

Sam Jensen led Alcester-Hudson (2-1) with 16 points in the loss.

Parker will host Sioux Valley on Tuesday. Alcester-Hudson travels to Gayville-Volin tonight.

PARKER (2-1)12 30 43 64
ALCESTER-HUDSON (2-1)9 25 38 47

Randolph 52, Bloomfield 29

RANDOLPH, Neb. — The Randolph Cardinals jumped out to a 36-11 halftime

lead on the way to a 52-29 victory over Bloomfield in Lewis & Clark Conference boys' basketball action on Thursday.

Garrett Watters led Randolph with 19 points and 12 rebounds. Seth Lackas netted 12 points in the victory.

Kane Fiedler and Adam Haigh each had seven points for Bloomfield.

Randolph, 4-0, travels to Wynot today (Saturday). Bloomfield, 1-4, plays in the Niobrara-Verdigre Holiday Tournament, beginning Dec. 27 in Verdigre, Neb.

BLOOMFIELD (1-4)0 11 20 29
RANDOLPH (4-0)13 36 44 52

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AM 1450

MORNING COFFEE
WEEKDAYS MONDAY-FRIDAY

Monday, December 23
7:40 am Yankton Homeless Shelter (Jaci Benjamin)
8:45 am USD Athletics (Neal Bendesky)

Tuesday, December 24
7:40 am The Center (Christy Hauer)
8:20 am Hy-Vee Foods (Chef Staci)

Thursday, December 26
7:40 am Yankton Chamber (Carmen Schramm)

Share the Spirit



Left to Right: Cal, Devin, Pat, Stacy, Jennifer, Sheila, Wayne

Happy Holidays from Edward Jones in Yankton

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