

OF THE OUTDOORS | GARY HOWEY

First Ice=Best Fishing

BY GARY HOWEY

Hartington, Neb.

My Vexilar locator lit up like a Christmas tree just about the time the screen on my Double Vision started showing Bluegill, Bass and Crappies appearing on the screen.

Team outdoorsmen Adventures member Larry Myhre and I had decided to try some early season ice fishing as first ice is generally some of the best ice fishing you can find.

We'd be fishing on a friends small farm pond's located in northeast Nebraska, one that had provided excellent fishing the summer before.

It was early season with no one having been on the ice since it froze over, so we cautiously made our way out onto the snow covered ice pond.

We knew that if snow covers the ice before it had a chance to freeze hard, it acts like an insulating blanket, keeping the cold temperatures from really freezing the ice.

Since it wads early season, both of us carried sets of ice picks and a floatable cushions just in case there was some unsafe ice.

Once we got onto the ice, it was obvious we had a good base below us, with the Jiffy auger punching through 6-8 inches of good ice.

I'd man the auger while Larry would come behind with his Vexilar checking the depth and to see if any fish where cruising in the area.

We'd fished the pond during the warm season and had a pretty good idea as to where the deeper water was, but we wanted to cover all depths as fish during the early ice season can be scattered at any depth and can be located from just below the ice on down to the bottom.

We located our first fish at about 8', but for some reason, they weren't looking for what we had to offer as they cruised right on through. It was obvious these fish were on the prowl as my locator would light up with my camera showing fish moving through the area and then Larry's locator which was about 15 yards off to my right would light up as the fish moved through.

The key to catching early ice fish is a two prong approach, first locating the larger school of feeding fish, those up off the bottom and then to narrow down the bait they are looking for.

We were well equipped when it came to tackle as we each had several rods rigged with different lures, which allowed us to switch quickly if one bait didn't seem to trip their trigger. We also had several baits to tip our micro-jigs with including wax worms, spikes and Gulp minnow heads.

We did miss the boat when it came to Bass in the pond, as we should have picked up some minnows on the way out. If the Bass did approach our micro-jigs, they'd pause for a bit and then swim off, in search of bigger and better things.

The locator unit I was using The Vexilar Double Vision not only let me locate fish using the FL-20, it also had a camera that can be dropped down to any depth allowing you to see just what was down there messing with my lure.

As lowered the camera, I began seeing fish almost immediately as the panfish were scattered, stacked up from just below the ice on down to about 4 foot off the bottom, a good sign as fish off the bottom are generally searching for a food source.

Our locators would show three colors when ever fish moved in under our transducer, green for fish that were off to the side, yellow as they got closer and then red when they were directly below our holes.



PHOTO: LARRY MYHRE

First ice Bluegill caught by columnist Gary Howey on a recent ice fishing trip to a small farm pond in northeast Nebraska.

I peered intently at the locator waiting for the lines on the locator to turn bright red, then it happened, one slightly above where my jig was suspended glowed red. I brought my jig up a foot to where the fish was located with the width of the red line doubling, indicating I was at the same depth as the fish, I twitched it a few times to get the fish's attention then slowly dropped it down a bit.

The red line above my lure moved downward, indicating the fish was following it, I let the bait set motionless for a second, waiting for my spring bobber to twitch, indicating a bite.

My spring bobber attached to the end of the rod dipped slightly, not much, verily visible, indicating the fish had picked up the bait and as I raised the rod, detecting the additional weight, set the hook and after a short battle, put my first 10.5-inch Bluegill on the ice.

When the fish quit biting, would cruise in, take a nip at my bait, then cruise off, it was time to switch to another rod with another lure, the change seemed to draw interest and I'd ice a fish or two before they lost interest when I'd switch rods and lures again.

At times, when the bite slowed, I'd attach a alligator clip depth finder to the lure and let it slam into the bottom, creating a cloud which seemed to attract the fish, any way for awhile If that didn't work and the bite quit, it was time to move to another hole and start the

process all over again.

When I moved, I had to punch two new holes, one for the transducer and another off to the side for the camera. The direction the camera along with the water temperature at the depth the camera was located appeared on the screen, letting me know what direction I'd have to turn the camera in order to see my lure.

I as surprised at the temperature reading down at 10-10.5 inches as it indicated 39 to 40 degrees, hard to believe, but who am I to argue as the majority of all electronics are a lot sharper than I am.

In the short time we were on the pond, before we were blown off by gale force winds, we managed to pickup over a dozen good bluegills as well as a few bass, making it a worth while trip as what we learned on this first ice trip will help us to make any additional trips much more successful.

Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is a former tournament angler, fishing and hunting guide. Howey is 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 on Classic Hits 106.3 and ESPN Sports Radio 1570. If you're looking for more outdoor information, it can be found at www.outdoorsmenadventures.com.

OUTDOORS DIGEST

Correction

In his Jan. 12 "Of The Outdoors" column, Gary Howey misquoted that at gun shows all purchases from licensed dealers were run through the FBI Background check, which is true in some states, but not all.

The corrected line should have read: On all gun sales by licensed dealers at Gun Shows, purchasers are required to fill out the Firearms Transaction Record, or Form 4473 which includes their name, address, social security number as well as questions about themselves and have a valid I.D. The dealer then records all information from the Form 4473 into their "bound-book". Dealers are required to keep this on file at least 20 years.

Public Invited To Comment On Bighorn Sheep Plan

PIERRE — The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department is inviting citizens to review and provide comments on a draft management plan for bighorn sheep in South Dakota. Input will be accepted during a 30-day comment period from Jan. 16 through Feb. 15, 2013. The management plan will be in place from 2013-2017 and includes information on the current status of the bighorn sheep herd, informa-

tion on potentially new bighorn sheep areas, issues that have affected the bighorn sheep population, and goals and strategies for managing bighorn sheep in South Dakota.

Comments may be emailed to wildinfo@state.sd.us or mailed to: Bighorn Sheep Management Plan, Department of Game, Fish and Parks, 523 East Capitol Ave., Pierre SD 57501.

Wolf Protection Group

Seeks To Overtun Hunt Law

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — A group opposed to killing wolves says it will circulate petitions to force a referendum on a new Michigan law allowing hunting of the once-protected predators. Organizers of the group Keep Michigan Wolves Protected said Monday that it will seek to gather 225,000 signatures by late march to qualify for the November 2014 ballot.

The Legislature last month voted to classify gray wolves as a game species, and state officials are preparing hunting rules. Michigan has about 700 wolves.

The U.S. removed wolves from the endangered species list last year, and hunting has begun in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming.

Twelve Shots, Two Quail — A Successful Hunt

BY PETE ZIMOWSKY

(c) 2013 The Idaho Statesman (Boise)

ALONG THE SNAKE RIVER, Idaho — Quail started buzzing out of the cattails and brush along the Snake River like popcorn on a hot fire.

The dog kept blasting through the thorny and tangled-vine thicket with an adrenaline rush of quail scent. The gamey scent overwhelmed her, and she ignored the foggy, cold weather of the mid-winter day.

Our retriever started laying all control when she heard quail calling or chattering. That's the noise they make when they know danger is approaching.

One. Three. Four birds continued to explode out of the brush, and I still hadn't fired a shot.

What the heck? There were too many birds flushing, and too many decisions on what shots to try to make.

Safety off. Aim. Don't shoot. Safety on. Safety off. Too far. Safety on. Safety off. Too late. Safety on.

Watch your footing. Make sure the safety's on. Don't slip on the river rocks. Watch the mud holes.

The softball-size game birds buzzed over my head, off to the side, straight away and low along the river's edge. They were making banked turns every which way.

Then there were the ones getting up in back of me with the flutter of wings going in the opposite direction. How'd I walk by them?

I almost threw my back and neck out trying to swing on a bird that buzzed 3 feet from my ear.

What made it even more hilarious was standing waist deep in the river trying to keep from slipping on the muddy bottom into 40-something-degree water, as I tried to swing on the scattering birds.

This is the ultimate in guerrilla quail hunting. After years of hunting quail, throwing tons of steel shot in air and getting outsmarted 75 percent of the time, I decided that you have to get down in the worst river thicket possible and go after the birds on their terms.

That meant donning chest waders, getting in the river and walking along the bank looking for quail in the gnarliest places.

It means getting tangled in thorns, cattails, cockleburs and getting rips in your best hunting jacket. Good thing for thick neoprene waders with an armor coating that can take barbed-wire fences and thorns.

It's also good to have a dog that flips out over the scent of quail and works the banks feverishly to find the birds.

The simple theory is that the birds will bust out of the brush and fly over the river, giving you a clear shot.

Wrong. They know you're in the river and start running or flying low and cork-screwing through the brush. It ends up like trying to shoot popcorn with a BB gun.

Pound of steel shot versus pound of quail doesn't compute. You end up shooting a half a box of shells or more for two or three quail.

River-bottom quail hunting is a challenge. I keep telling myself I love that challenge. I like the sound of the birds flushing, the sound of the dog breaking through brush and the split-second shooting.

I also love the taste of quail, but if I had to depend on the small upland game bird for dinner, I'd starve.

There are only a few weeks of quail hunting left, and quail populations are in great shape.

I still have a couple boxes of No. 7 steel shot to burn up.

Good hunting.

Boys

From Page 7

Cole Morgan 5-16 0-1 11; Jared Schmidt 2-7 0-0 5; Seth Cavanaugh 3-7 0-0 6; Beau Brown 4-9 4-4 15; Evan Mastel 0-1 0-0 0; Parth Patel 0-0 0-0 0; Ben Prill 0-0 0-0 0; Zach Moen 1-3 0-0 3; Ryker Kruezeft 0-0 0-0 0; Ethan Jones 1-2 0-0 3; Neil Schillingen 0-0 0-0 0; Trenton Lisakowski 0-0 0-0 0; Jon Jamison 1-2 1-1 3; Josh Schmidt 0-1 0-0 0. TOTALS: 17-48 5-6 46.

Halftime: Yankton 28-22, 3-point goals: Y 3-14 (Rucker 1, Hale 1, Benjamin 1), M 7-28 (Morgan 1, Jared Schmidt 1, Brown 3, Moen 1, Jones 1); Rebounds: Y 36 (Breen 11, Hejna 9), M 21 (Cavanaugh 5); Assists: Y 8 (Olson 2, Benjamin 2), M 12 (Morgan 4, Brown 4); Steals: Y 11 (Olson 2), M 14 (Morgan 3, Brown 3, Moen 3); Turnovers: Y 14, M 12; Personal fouls: Y 13, M 13; Technical fouls: None.

Other Games

Bloomfield 47, Crofton 46

HARTINGTON — Nick Miller put up 26 points Friday night to lead Hartington in a 47-46 win against Bloomfield in Hartington.

Tanner Fischer added seven points, while Eric Derickson contributed six points.

Austin Hamm scored 21 points for Bloomfield, with Chet Beckmann adding 12 points.

Bloomfield hosts Gayville-Volin on Thursday, while Hartington hits the road to face Plainview on Tuesday.

BLOOMFIELD (7-8).....6 23 31 47

HARTINGTON (5-8).....13 23 28 46

Viborg-Hurley 67, Baltic 38

HURLEY — Viborg-Hurley continued their undefeated season with a 67-38 thrashing over Baltic on Friday night in Hurley in Tri-Valley Con-

ference boys' basketball action.

The Cougars, who entered the game ranked third in the latest Class B South Dakota Sports-writers Association Poll, improve to 9-0 (3-0 TVC) with the win.

Jack Huether led the Cougars with 15 points while Andrew Hora added 14 points, nine rebounds and five assists. Trevor Jacobsen was also in double figures, scoring 13 points.

Seniors Edward Clark and Matt Moen scored eight points apiece to lead Baltic.

V-H also won the JV game, 41-33.

The Cougars battle James Valley Christian today (Saturday) in the Corn Palace at the Hanson Classic.

Baltic has a 10 day break before they host Elktion-Lake Benton on January 28.

BALTIC.....9 15 26 38

VIBORG-HURLEY (9-0).....19 43 55 67

Crofton 64, Plainview 38

CROFTON, Neb. — Brock Mueller and Evan Woodman led Crofton in a 64-38 win Friday night against Plainview in Crofton.

Mueller and Woodman each scored a total of 12 points, while Ben Heggegy added 11 points.

Sam Meuret scored 15 points for Plainview.

Crofton hits the road to face Madison next Tuesday, while Plainview next hosts Hartington.

PLAINVIEW (4-10).....6 14 28 38

CROFTON (5-9).....15 32 48 64

Lennox 52, Platte-Ged. 50

LENNOX — Austin Harms scored 17 points to lead Lennox in a win against Platte-Geddes with a score 52-50 Friday night in Lennox.

Zach Koosman also contributed 12 points in the win, with Derrick Devries adding four rebounds.

Coby Johnson scored a total of 15 points and had six rebounds for Platte-Geddes, with Matthew Randall adding 11 points. Richard Sterberg had 10 points on the night, while Hunter Johnson recorded six rebounds.

Platte-Geddes faces McCook Central in the Hanson Classic today (Saturday) at the Corn Palace, while Lennox travels to face Parkston on Thursday.

PLATTE-GEDDES (6-3).....17 30 36 50

LENNOX (5-9).....13 28 40 52

Bridgewater-Emery 64, Gayville-Volin 36

GAYVILLE — Bridgewater-Emery's Clayton Dye posted a huge double-double on Friday night as the senior scored 39 points and grabbed 18 rebounds as the Huskies' defeated Gayville-Volin 64-36 in Gayville.

Freshman Jerret Weber added 11 points as the Huskies improved to 5-6 this year.

Sophomore Alec Barta led the Raiders with 11 points and eight rebounds.

Bridgewater-Emery, who also won the JV game, hosts Alcester-Hudson in Bridgewater on Thursday.

Gayville-Volin, 0-12, hosts Menno on Tuesday in Gayville.

BRIDGEWATER-EMERY (5-6).....22 36 51 64

GAYVILLE-VOLIN (0-12).....10 15 29 36

Canton 73, Beresford 44

BERESFORD — Canton won for the sixth time in its last seven contests with a 73-44 Big Sioux Conference victory against Beresford on Friday night in Beresford. The C-Hawks now sit at 7-3 after opening the year 1-2.

Juniors Jay Lems and Cody Willet led Can-

ton with 24 and 10 points respectively as Lems also added four steals. The C-Hawks shot 57 percent from the field for the game.

Austin Meester's double-double led the Watchdogs as the junior scored 13 points and added 11 assists.

Canton won the JV game (52-29) while Beresford won the C-Game (46-33).

Canton hosts Tea Area today (Saturday) while Beresford (2-9) travels to Marion on Monday.

CANTON (7-3).....16 33 55 73

BERESFORD (2-9).....6 23 28 44

Huron 53, Lincoln 51

HURON — Huron upset third-ranked Lincoln on Friday night as the Tigers jumped out to a 31-20 first-half lead and withstood a Patriot rally to hold on for the 53-51 victory.

Justin Decker led the Tigers with 17 points and seven rebounds. Will Carr added 10 points while Adam Zwanziger just missed a double-double, scoring nine points to go along with his 10 boards.

For the Patriots, Nermin Krdzalic scored 18 points while Calvin Krause added 15.

LINCOLN (6-3).....14 20 34 51

HURON (7-3).....19 31 42 53

Milbank 63, Brit.-Hecla 41

MILBANK — Milbank defeated Britton-Hecla 63-41 on Friday night in Milbank as the Bulldogs used a 24-6 first quarter edge to lead them to victory.

Andy Buchele and Isaac Lindquist had 18 points apiece to lead Milbank.

For the Braves, Dallas Goedert scored 15 points and grabbed seven rebounds.

BRITTON-HECLA.....6 18 28 41

MILBANK (4-7).....24 34 49 63

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