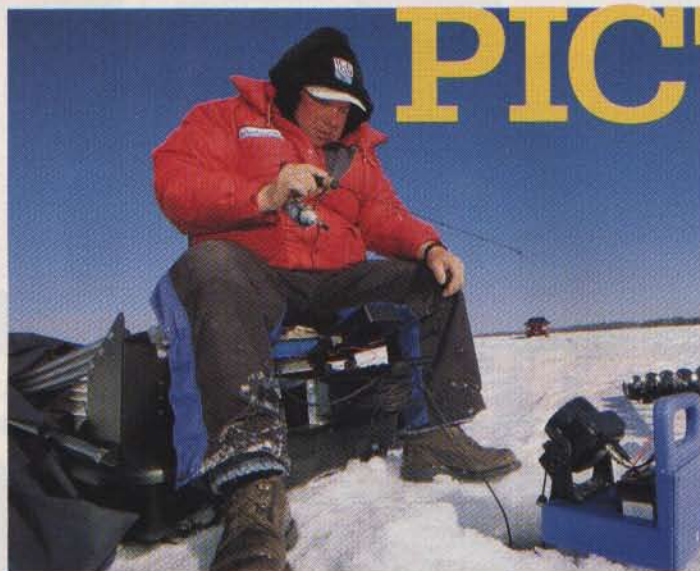


The HOLE PICTURE



A Simple Way To Rig Under-Ice Cameras

Dave Genz is a known tinkerer. The Fish Trap, itself, was the result of Genz's tinkering around with the idea of being mobile and comfortable on ice. His own Fish Traps, however, are just tinkerer's playpens. Lure trays, rod holders, deadstick holders, auger mounts, candelabras, chandeliers—you name it, it's in the Genz Trap.

So it's hardly surprising to hear that Genz has come up with a better way of viewing with underwater cameras while fishing. Genz uses the Aqua-Vu underwater camera, which he mounts on the lip of his Fish Trap right in front of the seat. He simply bolts a 5½-inch piece of aluminum angle iron to the bottom of his camera and rests it on the lip while fishing.

"I drill two holes in the angle iron to match the screw holes in the top of the cable arbor," Genz says. "That way, when I place the angle iron on the lip of the Trap, the bottom part of the cable arbor rests against the outside. It's basically a gravity rig, simple as it gets. The camera screen is pointed right at me, and it's closer to my face. I don't have to pick it up and move it while walking from hole to hole, either."

Next, Genz clips the cable into the "downview" accessory fin on the back of the camera lens, which keeps it pointing straight down. "Now I'm looking straight down the hole," he says. "There's no spinning the camera to see if fish are down there. Now I know what the marks on my Vexilar are. I see which species is down there and I adjust my presentation accordingly, or begin my selective harvest before the

fish bite by pulling baits away from smaller fish, which is critical when you're bringing crappies, walleyes, or perch up from depths of 40 feet or more."

At Devil's Lake, Genz says he could see the fish at 45 feet (with the camera lens lowered 43 feet below the hole).

"There were too many smaller fish, but we could see them approaching the jig so we pulled it away, thereby selecting for larger fish. Once you pull a perch out of 45 feet, it's in your bag, whether it's 5 inches or 2 pounds."

Underwater cameras have become a vital part of the Genz game plan. "First-ice last year the crappies and bluegills were all off bottom in 20 feet of water. We had two groups of guys—one group with cameras, the other without. The guys without cameras basically couldn't catch bluegills at all, because the fish were biting so light. We could see them inhale our offering. If we didn't see it happen, they spit it out too fast for anybody to feel the bite. And we had some good bluegill fishermen in the group without cameras."

"Vertical viewing is critical," Genz added. "You want the camera lens about 3 feet above the fish, even in clear water. With more than 3 feet, the size of the fish becomes harder to determine. Certainly you can work the column more than that, but I like to be 3 feet from the strike zone. With the lens 5 feet from a Fat Boy, you can't see it. But sometimes, you can scope more of the area. At 5 feet off bottom, you're seeing about a 5-foot-diameter circle of bottom. You actually see fish with the Vexilar first in most depths, because the cone angle of the Vexilar is larger than the area covered by the camera lens."

"But sometimes the bright red mark on your Vexilar is not looking at the jig at all. You're trying to finesse while you should have been fishing erratically, trying to get the fish to turn around."

When towing behind a vehicle or a snowmobile, Genz puts the camera down in the Trap. But it takes only a second to mount it back on. "Vertical viewing helps you see bites, identify species of fish and weeds, and determine patterns quicker, but only if you can put the screen where it's easy and comfortable to watch." ■



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