

## A Find Day to be Fishing on Camp Lake

Even though temperatures were actually below normal last Saturday, the sunny weather with light winds was sure better than what we had seen for awhile. The weather was just too nice for me to not go fishing so I dragged my two sons, Scott and Devin, with me to do some late afternoon ice fishing for northern pike.

I knew going ice fishing was not at the top of the list of things they wanted to do that afternoon; it probably didn't even make their top 20. However, I wanted to fish and I needed their help to drill holes in the ice due to me recovering from a sore back; the result from probably shoveling too much snow. One other benefit was that with three people, we could put out a total of nine tip-ups if we wanted to.

I decided that we would head to Camp Lake. While definitely not my first choice if I am looking for big pike, Camp almost always guarantees some pike action unless the fish are in a really bad mood.

When I think about it, I can not remember a time that I have not caught a fish while ice fishing at Camp. The lake is full of small pike; especially fish 18 to 24 inches in length. Pike in that size range are almost always ready to bite whether it is summer or winter.

When we got to the lake at 4 pm, it was clear we were not the only ones who decided to get out to fish during the nice weather. The lake was full of people.

My favorite west side locations on the north end were already occupied, but that did not bother me. Camp is small enough that walking to the east side of the lake, where there were a lot less anglers, wasn't a problem. Well, not much of a problem. The rain from the previous weekend had left slick glare ice over much of the lake, so I strapped a pair of ice cleats onto my boots to help keep me from taking a nasty fall. I have found that the older I get the more those kinds of falls hurt and I didn't want a bruised butt to go along with my sore back.

I found a suitable location where I estimated the weedline to run and we began to set up for fishing. We drilled a total of 7 holes and I do mean "we". Scott and Devin did most of the drilling, but considering the ice was about 16 inches thick, I helped finish off a couple holes and drilled one or two myself. I made a mental note that I need to drag them boys out ice fishing more often to get their drilling muscles into shape. I am after all too cheap to buy a powered auger.

Our shallowest tip-up was placed in 7 feet of water and the deepest was in 12. The rest were spread in between; all baited with medium to large golden roach minnows. We covered the depths that we thought we would most likely catch fish in.

I left one fishing hole open in 9 feet of water in which I could actively jig some artificial lures such as Jigging Rapalas and Zip lures. Given the choice, I prefer to catch fish on the jigging rod instead of tip-ups, so I try to jig whenever I get the opportunity.

Once the holes were drilled and the tip-ups placed, we set up the chairs to sit and wait to see what would happen. That gave me time to look around and take notice of the other people out on the lake.

On the north side of the lake was a group of what appeared to be younger people, possibly in their early twenties, out having a good time. They were goofing around and running to their tip-ups whenever the flags would pop up indicating a fish may have taken the bait. There were a good number of people in their group and they had out a large number of tip-ups.

About 100 yards to the south of us were a gentleman and two youngsters. While he appeared to be watching tip-ups and possibly jigging for panfish, the kids were throwing a small football around and chasing each other around the ice.

Across the lake were others groups of people which often included young kids. It was a very nice sight with families enjoying their time on the ice.

I was hoping that we would get action right away, but it would be about 45 minutes before we landed our first fish. It was a typically small Camp lake pike of about 18 inches, but it was a fish.

Our second fish came 30 minutes after that and turned out to be a bit bigger at about 22 inches and fat. This was a healthy fish that apparently enjoyed eating. It would turn out to be the last fish of the day.

At about 5:30 pm, we watched the sun set and could see the other anglers packing up for the day. We waited it out for a bit longer and then packed up too. It was nice to be out on the ice during such fine weather.

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