"ICE OUT"
FISHIN THE NORTHEAST
By Bean Lefebvre

It's been a long cold winter! I feel like I've been in a cooped up with Cabin Fever running rampant. I've sharpened all the hooks, serviced all the rods, reels and other equipment till I can't stand it anymore. Most of us here in New England have been chomping at the bit waiting for the ice to melt so we can wet a line.

We don't waste any time as soon as we can launch the boats we get to the business of finding and catching some fish. We have a lot of glacier lakes left over from the ice age that have ultra clear water, boulders and rocks of all sizes. These waters warm at differing rates and times, depending on how much sun and location of the area you're going to target. Most of you know the area's on the north shore of the lakes tend to warm first because they get the bulk of the suns rays.

When the water temps reach around 40-50 degrees the fish are just starting to move a little. I find areas where the fish spawn looking for grass and rock I mostly throw a Title Shot Shakey Head Jig, If I can't pick up any quality fish that way I then back out to secondary points and drops. I have a tendency to fish deep at this time 20-35 feet. Other friends of mine like to start banging the banks right away figuring the rocks are warming so the algae is growing and the baitfish are moving in to feed. We catch fish, but I believe you will only catch smaller fish doing that at this time, this is why I prefer to fish a little deeper.

I target the larger fish (Smallmouth) that are still holding in deep structure. I mostly use a seven-foot Spinning Rod and Reel spooled with 8 lb test P-Line flurocarbon. I use a variety of different techniques 1st I try dragging a Fin-Tech Bass-N Nuckle Ball Jig topped with a twin tail grub next I go to blade baits and jigging spoons, Heddon Sonar, Silver Buddy and Hopkins Spoon in various sizes. I cast it out let it go to the bottom keeping my eye on the line for a strike. I fish the sonar and silver buddy the same way, I pump the rod moving the bait about 1-2 feet at a time feeling the vibration, and let it sink again on a slack line. With the spoon I fish it like I'm fishing a worm. Let it sink to the bottom give it a twitch reel the slack when it gets near the boat I jig it for a while.

As the water warms to about 52 + degrees the fish will be moving from the drops toward the spawning grounds. I like to use a Rattling Rouge or Pointer 78 around the flats, boulders etc. jerk, jerk pause or an erratic retrieve. This works equally well for both

Largemouth and Smallies. This is also a good time for cold water cranking. I use red and crawfish colored Crankbaits that run between 8-10 feet with a very slow retrieve trying to bang every piece of cover I can find.

There are a lot of different baits that work well this time of the year, for this water temp. My favorite Goto bait is a split shot rig. I use a 7 foot MH Spinning Rod and Reel spooled with P-Line 10 lb. test. I use or ¼ or 3/16 oz Tungsten bullet weight.
I use a small glass bead and peg it with rubber so I can slide it up or down the line. My favorite bait is a Zoom 5" watermelon/red Lizard, I fish this from 2-12 feet I've caught some quality fish on this rig over the years.

This pretty much sums up how I pattern the waters as soon as it's Ice Out here in New England.

Now if only this damn winter would get over, we could get to it.

"Don't quit till it's over" Bean Lefebvre