

Northwestern Ontario

FREE

Outdoors



Inside this issue...

- **Winter Lakers**
See page 1
- **Tactical Troutin'**
See page 2-3
- **NOSA News**
See pages 4
- **Snow Day Brookies**
See pages 5
- **Fishing for Burbot**
See page 6
- **Coyote Hunting**
See page 7

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO SPORTSMEN'S ALLIANCE



NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO
SPORTSMEN'S ALLIANCE

In The Next Issue:

- **Spring Bear Hunt**
- **Tips for Walleye**
- **NOSA News**

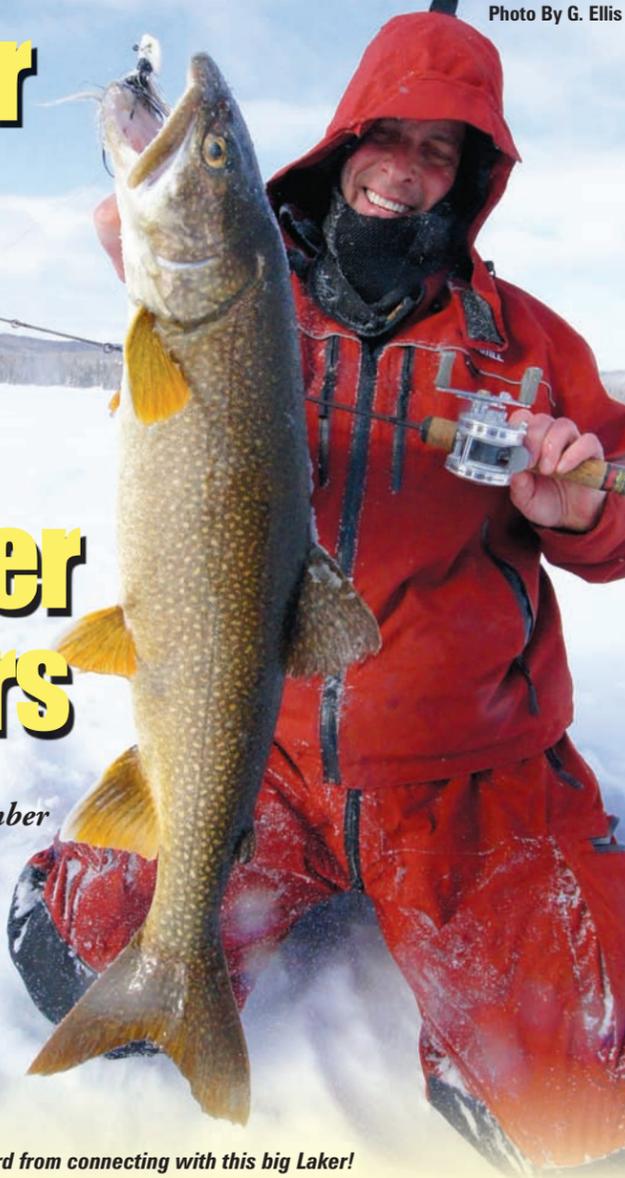
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Photo By G. Ellis

Never Too Cold for Winter Lakers

By Gord Ellis,
Team NOSA Member



Cold weather didn't stop Gord from connecting with this big Laker!

There is really no fish better suited to ice fishing than the lake trout. These creatures laugh at the cold. The brighter, colder and snappier the day, the better the lakers bite. It's literally never too cold to catch a lake trout. It may be too cold to comfortably fish for them, but that's a whole other matter.

As a young man, I spent literally hundreds of hours chasing lake trout out on the frozen expanse of Superior. It was often brutal out there, and we would use large windbreaks - one famously created by my father out of a ping pong table - to try and make the experience more comfortable. As often as not, it was freezing. Yet those lake trout would jam our Swedish pimples as if they were the last bite they were ever going to have. It made all the suffering seem at least partially worth the effort.

These days, I'm a little more particular about the days I pick to go lake trout hunting. But it may be no coincidence that some of the best fish still seem to come on cold, bright and windy days. Last year, in late February, a few hardy souls and I ventured out on a lake trout spot not too terribly far from Thunder Bay. It seemed relatively nice in the city, so we chose not to bring any tents or heaters. That was a mistake. On the lake, we quickly discovered a north wind was howling and it was substantially colder than expected. All we could do was put our back to the wind and put the park hoods up. Yet when I dropped the transducer of my Humminbird Ice 55 down the hole, I could see there was already some bait fish around. The smelt were marking as yellow lines just off bottom. I clipped on a one ounce Mighty Mitch and Jungle Joe Smelt imitation bucktail jig with a minnow and let it drop near the bottom. I carefully watched the orange mark that showed my bait falling towards bottom. At 40 feet, I stopped the descent, and started to work the bucktail jig with a swimming action. After a few minutes, a red mark appeared that signified a trout. It didn't hit immediately, and then disappeared out of my sonar cone. "I just had a fish come for a look" I said to my partners. No sooner had the words spilled off my lips and the trout was back. This time he roared in and ate the jig. "Fish on," I announced, holding my bait-casting ice rod up over my head.

There really is nothing like the fight of a big lake trout. They are just solid, hard battlers that twist and run with great power. Despite the cold, I had enough adrenaline to pull off the gloves and not feel the sting of the wind. One of my partners got near the hole and grabbed the head of a nice 8 pound laker as I lifted the rod. I held the fish up for a few hero shots, then realized there was no feeling left in my fingers. The thrill of victory and the agony of the after party.

Winter late trout fishing need not be too complicated. I really like jigging for them and usually use one of two presentations. The more subtle technique is a bucktail jig or a white tube jig, often sweetened with a minnow. Use a more undulating jigging motion and make the jig swim like a minnow. A more aggressive jigging technique requires using a heavy, silver jigging spoon. Some classics include the Hopkins, Swedish Pimple and the Williams Ice Jig. The jigging needs to be a bit higher, and less predictable, but always follow the line down on the drop and don't allow slack. Keep your eyes peeled to your electronics to see how the fish are reacting. Trout will often hit a lure on the drop. If you see your line curl on the hole, reel and set. As often as not, it's a trout.

I like to jig for lakers with baitcast reels and medium heavy action rods of about three feet. However, you can certainly use spinning reels and ice rods as well. Just be careful of reel freeze up and keep the ice from building up on your line. Lakers will break you off in short order if there is frozen up gear.

As for location, I find the majority of lakers in 25 to 50 feet of water, but they can be much deeper and shallower. If there is a reef or hump nearby, so much the better. On Superior, Lakers are often found in over 100 feet of water, so make sure the reel is loaded up good.

Winter is in full force and the time is right to catch a few Lakers. Give it a shot before it gets too warm.

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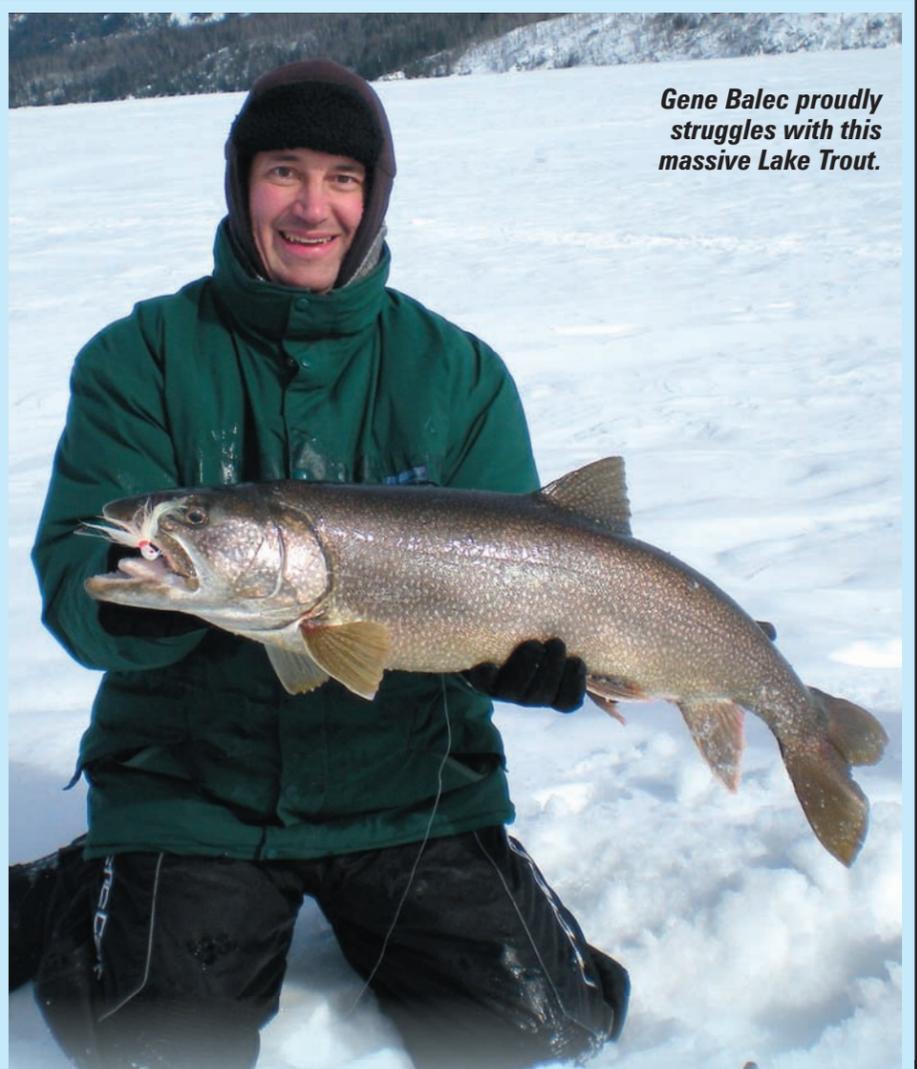


Bring your antlers to the NOSA Big Game Measuring Event before 2pm Sat. Feb. 27 to be eligible for great prizes supplied by Team NOSA

If your "Rack" is "thick, big or heavy" then Country 105 wants to see your Rack!

"Show Us Your Rack" contest winners will be announced at 2pm Sat. Feb. 27 at the Central Canada Outdoor Show

Listen to Country 105 Radio for contest details



Gene Balec proudly struggles with this massive Lake Trout.

Tactical Troutin'

Putting the odds in your favour!

By Davis Viehbeck

Unlike many other freshwater fish, lake trout come alive during the cold-water period which makes them one of the most logical fish to pursue during the winter months. On top of being active on even the coldest and nastiest days, lake trout tend to bite all day long and will often prefer those bright, sunny, high-pressure days when other species tend to become less aggressive.

I like to think tactically when going after all fish species, and lake trout are no exception. Understanding the habitat requirements and preferred diet of a fish allows anglers to be one step ahead of their target species which generally results in more success on the water. Here's a quick look at the diet, habitat, gear and techniques to help you land some lakers this winter!

The Menu-

One of the most critical factors in being successful for winter lake trout is to understand the predator-prey relationship for this species. Interestingly, habitat can greatly influence what's on the menu for lakers. In general, on smaller bodies of water, a lake trout's diet will consist of aquatic insects, small freshwater shrimp and a variety of minnow species often found in soft-bottomed areas of a lake. These smaller lakes tend to produce smaller fish, but there are some exceptions, particularly if the lake has a population of whitefish or ciscoe (lake herring). On larger bodies of water, juvenile lake trout will tend to feed on many of the same things as their small-lake counterparts; however, as the fish mature and grow in size, they'll eventually switch their dietary focus to pelagic, nutrient-rich species like ciscoe, smaller whitefish and smelt.

Due to the nomadic nature of these pelagic forage species, I like to cover ground and fish aggressively for trout using a variety of power fishing techniques. Power fishing for lake trout is not only effective, it's exciting! Although there is something relaxing about soaking some live bait on set lines or tip ups, very few aspects of ice fishing are as exhilarating as watching a lake trout on your electronics zoom up from 70 feet of water to 40 feet of water in a matter of seconds and smash your bait!

How to Find Them-

My basic game plan for chasing winter lake trout consists of drilling a pile of holes in high-percentage areas including mid-lake rock piles and submerged reefs, sharp drop-offs along shorelines and deeper points that extend into the main-lake. When I locate these areas, I'll quickly drill a series of holes in a variety of depths so that I'm able to move between shallower areas and deeper areas with ease. The most effective way to do this is by referencing bathymetry maps (depth maps) or electronic charts like those offered by Navionics in advance of your trip or while you're on the water so that you have an idea on where to start drilling. Having one angler operate the power auger and another following closely behind with a flasher to announce depth changes is the best approach to ensure you'll have some different areas to fish and to pinpoint drop-offs in the process. Once one of these high-percentage areas is covered in holes, I'll grab my flasher and a few rods and will quickly move between holes in search of fish. It's actually amazing how often you'll mark a lake trout positioned directly below you as soon as you put your transducer cable down the hole. Because of this, it's important to

Continued on page 3



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Tactical Troutin'

Continued from page 2

be rigged up with baits that you can drop quickly to the fish. When doing this, it's important to always keep your bait above the fish and never drop the bait below the fish. Aggressive trout will often detect your bait as it's falling and begin swimming up to investigate. Lake trout often react like "yo-yo's", going up and down the water column a number of times before striking your bait which reemphasizes the importance of using lures that you can reel and drop quickly.

The Gear-

Although many jurisdictions allow anglers to fish with two lines during the winter months, I rarely use more than one line when I'm power fishing for lake trout. Instead, I'll have three rods rigged up with slightly different styles of baits that I can alternate between as I move from hole to hole. If I have a fish chase a bait that doesn't end up striking, I'll quickly switch to one of the other rods I have at the ready and try to tempt the fish with a different offering which often results in a bite.

My "Top 3" baits for winter lake trout include a tube jig, a fluke-styled minnow bait rigged on a jig and an air-plane-jig. All of these baits have accounted for their fair share of lake trout over the years and still do!

For tubes, I like to use a 3 to 5" bait in white rigged on a 3/8 to 3/4 ounce tube jig head. The 3" Berkley PowerBait PowerTube has likely accounted for catching more winter lake trout than any other bait in the last 20 years and is still a personal favourite of mine. I'll occasionally fish a few custom tubes including a white tube with red tentacles, a glow tube or even a gawdy chartreuse tube if white isn't producing. The jig should have a super-sharp, premium hook that won't bend on larger fish. I'll occasionally run a small stinger hook on my tubes if the fish are biting short for added hook ups.

Lake trout love fluke-styled soft plastic minnow baits since they're likely the closest match to a smelt, juvenile whitefish or ciscoe. The 5" Berkley Power Jerk Shad in the Arkansas Shiner colour rigged on a 3/8 to 3/4 ounce mushroom-styled jig head with a longer hook shank is a killer for trout. If you're targeting smaller lakers or trout that are focusing on slightly smaller baitfish like shiner minnows, the 3" Berkley Dropshot Power Bass Minnow or Set The Hook Dropshot Minnow are great options.

Air-plane jigs are a classic laker bait that were popularized throughout Northern Minnesota and Northwestern Ontario. Air-plane jigs, as you might expect are a jig with wings on either side of the bait that create a spiraling action when the bait is falling that lake trout can't resist. My all-time favourite is the Northland Tackle Air-Plane jig in the Super-Glo Perch colour.

I like to fish all of these baits on longer, relatively beefy spinning rods paired up with a high-quality spinning reel with a good drag system that can handle the harsh conditions of winter. Some top choices for great "trout sticks" include the 42" long, medium-heavy Fenwick Elite Tech spinning rod and the Ice Hunter(r) Series Jeff "Gussy" Gustafson 38" Heavy-Duty Ice Rod. Both of these rods have the length and strength to fish heavier baits properly, get solid hook sets and tame even trophy-sized trout. Although a number of my ice rods generally have ultra-light sized reels on them, I prefer to run a mid-sized spinning reel when targeting lake trout through the ice. The larger reels allow my baits to free-spool quickly and to reel up line in quick fashion if a trout is chasing my bait. I like a size 20 Abu Garcia Revo or Pflueger Supreme XT spooled up with a premium no-stretch superline like 10lb test Berkley Fireline, Sufix 832 or PowerPro and a two-foot lead of 10 to 15lb test fluorocarbon leader joined with a quality-swivel to reduce line twist.

The cold weather doesn't slow down the lakers and it shouldn't slow you down either. Hit the lakes this winter and be sure to put the odds in your favour and do some Tactical Troutin'!



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THIS
MONTH'S
NEWS

NOSA Applauds OMNRF Wolf Management Proposal



NOSA is applauding a recent OMNRF proposal that would see wolves placed solely on a small game license for resident and non-resident hunters in northern Ontario. This comes after moose conservation stakeholder groups like NOSA have asked for measures to be put in place to assist in predator management to foster moose population growth.

This proposal by OMNRF is part of the larger Phase II Moose Project which is taking aim at addressing factors that are contributing to the decline of moose in much of Ontario's traditional moose range. Of the six Cervid Ecological Zones (CEZs) where moose populations are identified, three of these are well below the lowest range of population objectives for each zone. Another CEZ is trending down toward the lowest limit of the target population range and it is expected to decline further. This decline of moose population across northern Ontario is due to many factors, however NOSA believes predation and habitat are two of the major factors that need to be managed intensively to improve moose population health.

OMNRF has accepted public comment submissions concerning the proposed changes for wolf management/hunting but has not yet formally passed these changes into regulation. If passed into regulation, the changes will come into effect in 2017. Watch for more updates on this subject in future issues of NOSA Outdoors news.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Feb. 27th - "Salmon Saturday" fundraiser at the Victoria Inn. Support the Thunder Bay - Salmon Assoc. Tickets available at D&R Sporting Goods! Great prizes and great food!

Feb. 26th-28th - The Central Canada Outdoor Show: featuring NOSA Sponsored Big Game Measuring - Event in co-operation with the Lakehead Archery Club.

Feb. 26th & 27th - The Northwestern Fur Trappers Assoc. Convention at CLE Heritage Building

March 12-13 - Murillo Gun Show March 12-13 at Oliver-Paipoonge Township Community Centre, 4569 - Oliver Road, Murillo. Show Hours for the Public: Saturday 12 March — 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Sunday 13 March — 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

April 1st - The North Shore Steelhead Association's 33rd annual Dinner and Auction fundraiser: Ballroom of Valhalla Inn, doors open at 5pm, buffet dinner @ 630pm. Tickets \$60 ea. Contact Larry Doggett 939-1811 or Frank Edgson 475-7712 OR email: northshoresteelhead@gmail.com

Big Game Measuring Event!



The Northwestern Ontario Sportsmen's Alliance (NOSA) is proud to announce the return of the BIG GAME MEASURING EVENT, to be held at the Central Canada Outdoor Show Friday Feb. 26th to Sunday Feb. 28th. Bring your moose or deer antlers and bear skulls to the show, or leave them with the NOSA booth that will also be set up at the Heritage Building during the Northwest Fur Trappers Convention held that same weekend - and be eligible for great prizes totalling over \$1000 !!

The Rules of the Event are as follows:

- 3 species/4 divisions
- 1) - Bear skulls
- 2) - Moose antlers
- 3) - Typical Deer and Non-Typical Deer
- 4) - 1st, 2nd and 3rd place prizes for largest gross score in each division - based on minimum 5 entries per category (5 or more entries - 3 prizes, 4 entries - 2 prizes, 3 entries - 1 prize)
- 5) - 1 Mystery prize for each species, randomly drawn from all entries in each species will be awarded
- 6) - Additional Random draw prizes will be selected from all entrants regardless of species.
- 7) - "All-Time" entries will be accepted for each species and will be eligible for 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes as set out for other categories. Eligible for random draw prizes.
- 8) - All entries must have been legally taken within Ontario. If a legal harvest occurred outside a specified season for species and weapon type the corresponding entry will be eligible in the "All-Time" category only. All-Time also includes "found dead".
- 9) - All event sponsors/volunteers/directors are permitted to enter the measuring event however all such entries must be made by noon on Saturday Feb. 27th with fees paid same time for their entries.
- 10) - All FROW recognized species will be eligible for free measurement, however only paid entries will be eligible for any prizes (see rule #11).
- FROW measuring by the Boone and Crockett scoring system will be utilized.
- 11) - Registration fee is \$15 per entry or 3 for \$30. Should an entry be eligible for entry into the FROW record books additional FROW registration fees are the responsibility of the entrant.
- 12) - All scores and decisions are final and at the discretion of The show directors: Joe Dampier(Lakehead Archers) and Shane Baker(NOSA Director)

(NOTE: This event was originally scheduled to be held at the NWFurTrappers Assoc. Convention in the CLE Heritage Building however the location of the event has been moved to the Central Canada Outdoor Show to accommodate co-sponsor Lakehead Archers Inc. who will be assisting with measuring at their booth during the Outdoor Show)



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Photo By G. Ellis

A Sport Angling "Snow Day"



By Kirsti Harris,
Team NOSA Member

A big ice brookie that fell to Kirsti's mighty mitch jig fly.

Every now and again you have to just take a day off and do what you love to do most. I'm an avid multi species sport angler with a passion for the outdoors. On this particular day, a snowy Sunday morning, a few friends and I set out on an adventure to try our luck at one of the many stocked brook trout lakes in the area. We packed up 2 vehicles loading them with our 4 huskies, fishing gear, and some food. It was going to be a great day. I visited this lake once in the fall and did really well by landing a nice sized male brook trout by simply casting from shore using a Blue Fox Mepps spinner. So I was excited to get on the ice and walk out to a spot I had picked out in the fall time. It was close to shore and in shallow waters.

It was just over a 100km drive to this lake and the highway wasn't in the best of conditions from all the snow we were getting so it took us longer than usual to get there. It was just before noon once we arrived and the dogs were real happy to get out and stretch their legs. My girlfriend's little puppy was joining us on our adventure today. Best to start them young! It was still lightly snowing and there was a fresh blanket covering the lake. A few ravens were cawing loudly, making their presence known and flying over us. We were surrounded by some cliffs that looked absolutely beautiful with the freshly fallen snow. We were the only ones on the lake. I love when that happens!

Once we got all of our gear out on to the lake, we began to drill some holes. We first started off by trying in the area where we had success in the fall time. The ice was only about 3-4 inches thick, just safe enough. It was perfect for the hand auger to drill some holes. About a half hour went by and there wasn't a single bite. We looked around the lake for any structure that looked out of the ordinary. On the west side of the lake there was a fallen cedar tree that looked promising. I was using an ultralight rod with 6lbs test line and my choice of lure today was a Mighty Mitch & Jungle Joes Jigfly tipped with a piece of Gulp worm. I was jigging right on bottom.

It was just past noon, the snow was still coming down, and that's when I finally had my first hit. I reeled up a beautiful male brook trout. Finally the bite was on. Throughout the day we ended up landing 5 male brookies and 3 females. The reddish bellies on the males were spectacular. I think that trout are one of the most beautiful fresh water fish to catch. The colours on them are vibrant, especially in the fall.

I catch and release 90% of my fish. The conservation of our fish populations, by releasing and letting them grow is important for our future angling opportunities. I only keep the odd walleye, perch, or crappie for a meal here and there but today I was itching to use my new fillet knife and my girlfriend who joined me that day also enjoys eating the odd brook trout so we kept a few for a meal. Plus, I recently had a handmade custom fillet knife made for me by Steven Tedford knives that I was itching to field test!

We just had a few hours of daylight left and a long drive home so we decided to call it a day. It was a successful day out on the ice. The dogs were happy to get out on an adventure, we were with good people, and we had the added bonus of bringing home a healthy meal of fresh fish for ourselves.

Everyone has their own way of celebrating the New Year! Well I rang in the New Year by celebrating my angling success of 2015, and that included catching 14 different species of fish, and making it to 49 different lakes! And this last trip of 2015 capped it off. Angling, hunting, and hiking opportunities in Northern Ontario are spectacular. We're spoiled with so many different opportunities for angling! So this year it's on my bucket list to make it out to 150 different lakes. I can't wait to see what the rest of 2016 has in store for me!



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Fishing for Burbot: By the pale moon light!

Landon Brochu loves the challenge and the taste of fresh caught Burbot!

A Burbot is an elongated fish from the Cod family and is the only member of that family found in fresh water. Burbot thrive in cold rivers and lakes and can be found in many lakes across Northern Ontario. Often going by the name of "Ling", it is a bottom dweller and is mottled greenish or brown in color depending on water type. Spring fed lakes seem to produce a greenish color fish while tea stained lakes produce a brown color fish. It can grow up to 1.1 meters in length making it an exciting fish to catch. Despite having a face that only a mother could love, it is a valued food source in some areas, however it is often overlooked as a target species by anglers in our northern region.

My dad and I started targeting these fish about five years ago during hard water angling for trout. Dad caught a ten pound Burbot on an inland lake and at first had no idea what to do with this gorgeous fish. Fortunately, another angler fishing near us came by to see this massive fish and informed us of its delicacy. The angler also showed us how to clean the fish and gave us a few tips on cooking it. Once we tried the fish at home, we were hooked.

I started to research this species of fish and discovered they are active in daylight hours but increase their feeding activity at night. Since they are bottom dwellers, they are not finicky eaters. A dead minnow on a jig or a hook and sinker dangled near the bottom can get you hooked on to one. Thinking of night fishing, I figured a glow in the dark jig might also be beneficial to attract a fish. I purchased my glow in the dark jigs from DNR and had everything set and in place for night fishing. My next task was to convince my fishing partner that night fishing might be interesting.

Hard water angling is cold and difficult enough on any given day, but night fishing for these fish would increase the intensity. First things first, I needed to convince my father that this would be an adventure we should try. After some work on my part to convince him, we decided we would wait for the right outdoor temperature before venturing out on this escapade. The day came in mid march and according to the weatherman, temperatures would be mild.

With all our gear in place we headed to our favourite lake and set up our ice tent, heater, cot and other essentials for a night of fishing. Everything was in place except the prediction of a mild night. But we must have hit a hidden vortex of cold and windy temperatures the weather man was unaware of. Despite the cold, we decided to tough it out and stick to our plan. The evening bite was slow until darkness hit. We lit up our glow in the dark jigs baited with minnows and sent them down the ice hole. Within minutes the bite was on. We landed a dozen fish before midnight and decided to end the experiment. Night fishing for Burbot was a success, now dealing with the frigid temperatures and keeping our heater going through the night was our next challenge. Morning eventually came and it was time to call it a day.

Night fishing in the cold on frozen ice is not for everyone. Burbot can be caught during daylight hours but will not be as active as in the dark. It was an adventure I enjoyed and may try again one day. My hope is that next time; the weatherman gets his forecast right. This way, if we head out we can focus more on fishing and not so much on staying warm. Everyday day can be an adventure in the north. Get out and enjoy the outdoors.



Coyote Hunting

By Amanda Lynn Mayhew, Team NOSA Member

Coyote hunting has swept the nation with more hunters getting involved to extend their post big game season adventures. Over the past few years I have become more involved in the adventure of predator hunting to keep up my skills during the winter months and to do my part to assist in this valuable wildlife management tool. Chasing coyotes had always been a rather under rated side hunt to fill winter weekends, but recently predator hunting has become very popular largely due to upticks in wolf and coyote population levels. I've become hooked on coyote hunting and have been able to experience different styles of hunting these animals. Here are some tips to help you chase these wiley predators:

Use Hunting Dogs: I have experienced running dogs a few times for coyotes and well trained dogs are smart enough to get on the trail and run the coyotes. But beware. Hunting with inexperienced or youthful dogs can be challenging because the coyotes may end up dancing circles around the dogs and you end up running the dogs and simply losing control of the hunt itself. This is not one of my favorite styles but you sure end up with a ton of exercise and you'll see a lot of the country side. I rate this method as: Advantage to coyote!

Use a Predator Call and Decoy: With an animated decoy set out in combination with persistent vocalizations, this way is one of the best for attracting a coyote to your location and keeping him distracted from you the actual caller/hunter. Coyotes will approach from any direction, but with their interest centered on the decoy, they will let their guard down some. The "Dancing Hare" decoy with remote control seems to do the trick here, but any piece of fur wiggling above the snow covered ground while the hunter uses a "distress" call will suffice.

The method of vocalization/call comes in two forms: electronic and "mouth" calling with the use of a commercial vocalization product, similar to what a duck hunter uses or the hunter can simply vocalize by placing a hand to the mouth and laying out a distressful "scream" in hope of attracting a coyote's attention. I tend to use this style of hunting when the winds are a bit higher and the weather a bit more stormy, especially if I have the ability to be more concealed with good camouflage. I can control the calling volume and make more realistic sounds that are unique and varied. And you are your own battery! Call for as long as you want to!

Hunting Location: Owning a farm has advantages! When all else fails, load your hobby farm up with waterfowl and chickens and the coyotes will dive into your backyard without thinking twice. I'm talking from experience here! But having access to coyote rich farmland certainly increases your odds of success. Scout out private land to limit competition by other hunters and get to know the farmers in your hunting area. They are often a hunter's best friend!

Firearms: Thanks to Cabela's in Barrie, Ontario, my firearm of choice is a .243 Savage Axis XP in Realtree APS snow camo stock with a stainless corrosion resistant barrel which helps combat the tough Canadian winter weather, and a matching scope in 3-9 x 40mm. My ammunition of choice is Winchester .243 Varmint X in 58 grain with polymer tipped which are explosive upon impact and allows for maximum long range performance.

Clothing: The key is layering in the deep cold of winter. The outer wear I use is fool-proof. FXR clothing is known for providing outstanding warmth for motor sports enthusiasts, but now they've added a very cool "snow camo" line! Warmth and comfort is what I'm interested in, and of course it matches my rifle! Nothing makes a woman smile like color coordinated clothing and accessories!

Accessories: Utilizing a "bi-pod" to prop up your rifle makes for a much easier set-up while sitting for extended periods of time. It will allow for more comfort and less movement when you are ready and set up to take the perfect shot. Coyotes are very aware of their own surroundings, and moving is frowned upon if you want to be successful.

Get outdoors and try your hand at predator hunting and you'll have an adventure in the making, a memory forever, and many stories to share.

Amanda is a proud Cabela's Canada Pro Staff member, Outdoors & Fitness Ambassador, Official Ambassador of the Toronto Sportsmen's Show, 5.11 Tactical, Bear Archery, FXR Outdoors, Skechers and Team NOSA www.amandalynnmayhew.com - #JUSTHUNT



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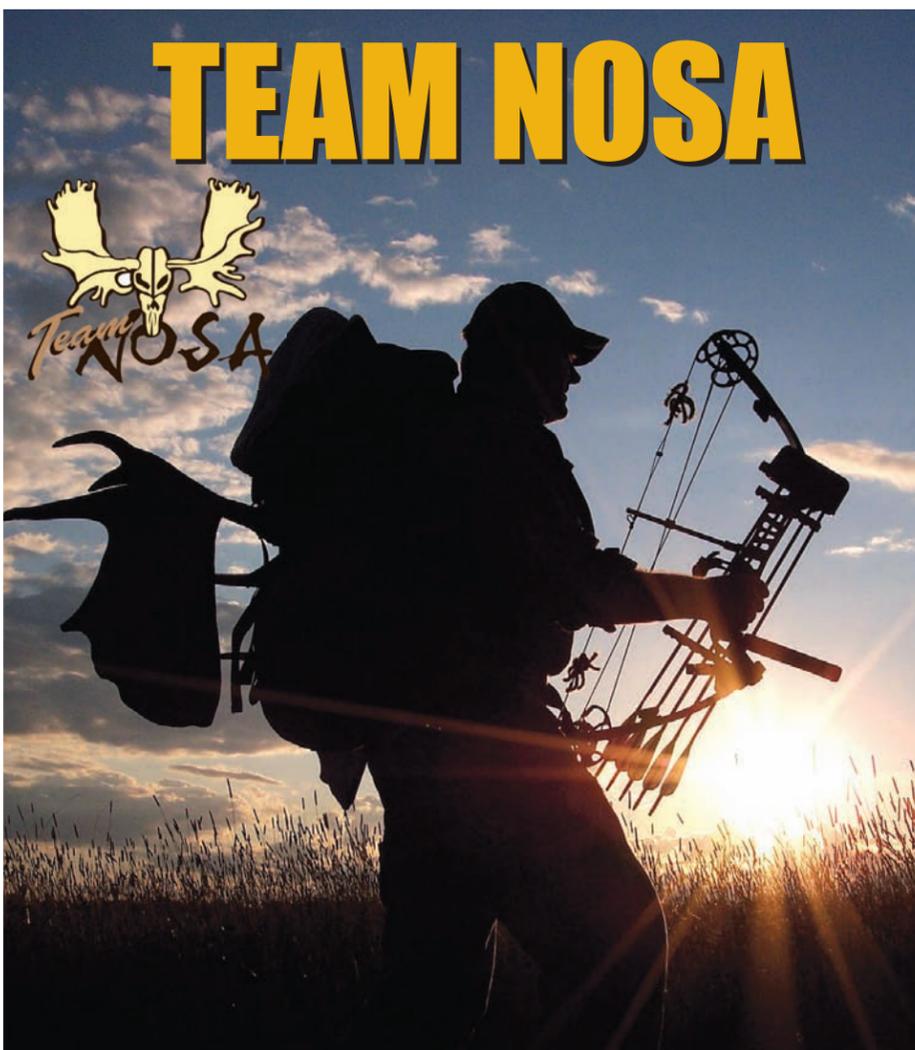
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