

Wildlife Express

Volume 34 | Issue 5

January 2021

Ice Fishing



Photos CCBY Sara Cassinelli for IDFG

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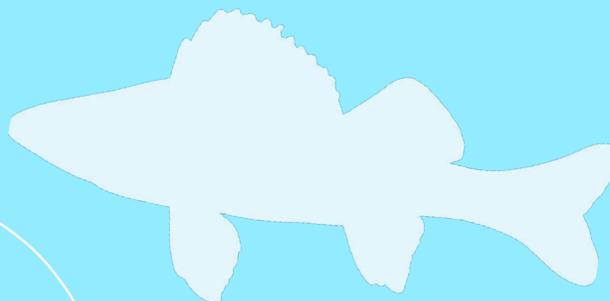
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idfg.idaho.gov

LET'S GO ICE FISHING!



Fish in the winter on a frozen lake? You bet! Ice fishing is a great way to spend time outdoors and provide a tasty meal for your family. You might also be surprised by how warm it is on the ice, especially if the sun is shining and you are wearing the right clothing.

There are lakes and reservoirs across Idaho that are great places to ice fish. Visit Idaho Fish and Game's website at <http://fishgame.idaho.gov> for ideas on where to ice fish around your home. From the homepage, click on the fishing tab then click on Fish Planner. Here you will find places across the state to go fishing, details about the site and other great information.

As you can imagine, ice fishing is a bit different than fishing during warmer times. There is equipment you need and rules to follow. Don't forget safety. No one wants to fall through the ice! Let's explore the things you need to know to ice fish in Idaho.



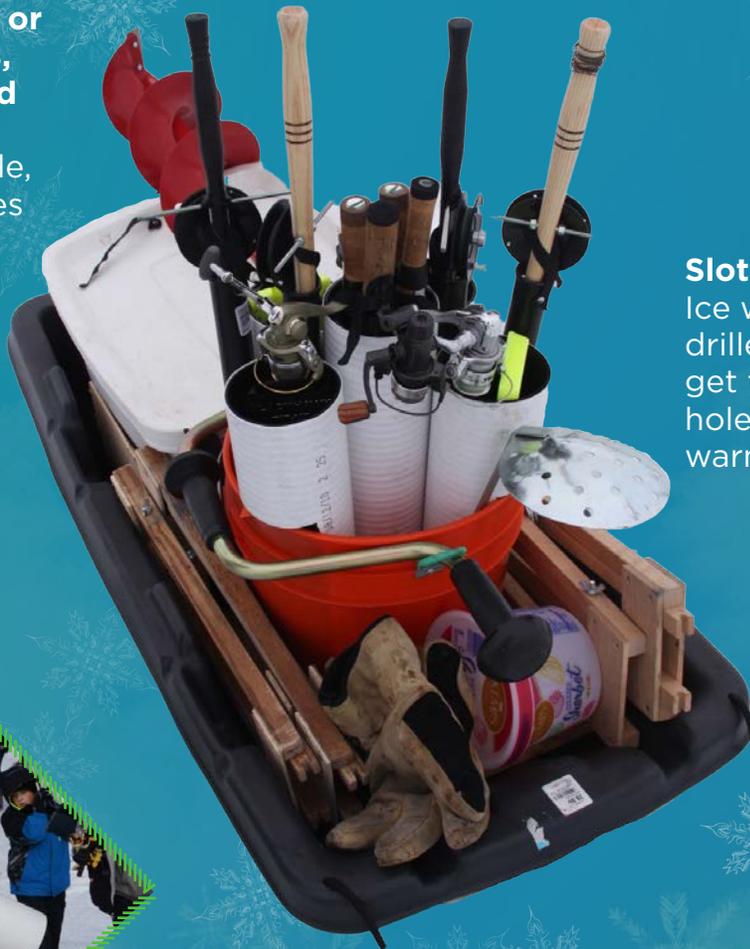
ICE FISHING GEAR

Ice fishing does require some special equipment. Other items will make ice fishing a more enjoyable experience. Below are some things to gather before heading out on the ice.

Iced Auger This is what will drill the holes through the ice to get to the water. They can be operated by engine or by manpower. Using a manual ice auger can be a workout and will get your blood flowing!



Ice Fishing Tip-ups or Short Jigging Rods, Jigs, Lures, Bait and Tackle You can use a regular fishing pole, but the shorter poles and tip-ups make it easier to gather around holes and watch your rods.



Slotted, Long Handled Ladle Ice will try to reform in your drilled holes. Use the ladle to get the slushy ice out of the hole and keep your hands warm and dry.



Five Gallon Bucket A big bucket is great for hauling gear and taking your catch home. It also makes a great chair when turned upside down!

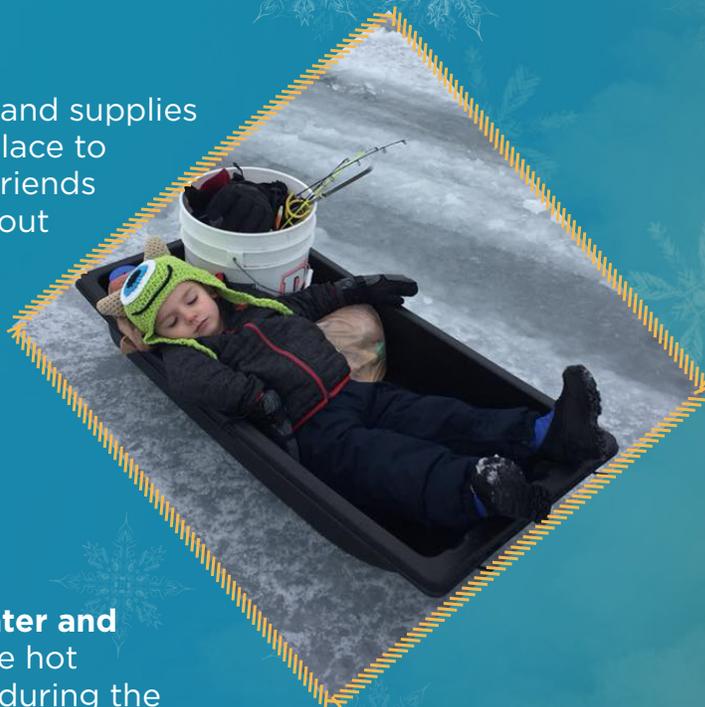


Folding Chair A chair will help you stay off the ice, dry and warm.



Winter Clothing A snowsuit, snow boots, hat and gloves are a must! Dress in layers so you can take off a sweater, coat or hat when you get overheated. Avoid wearing clothing made out of cotton. Instead wear wool or moisture-wicking manmade materials under your snowsuit. There is a saying in winter survival, "Cotton kills!" Cotton holds onto moisture (sweat) making you wet and colder. Something you do not want to be outside during the winter.

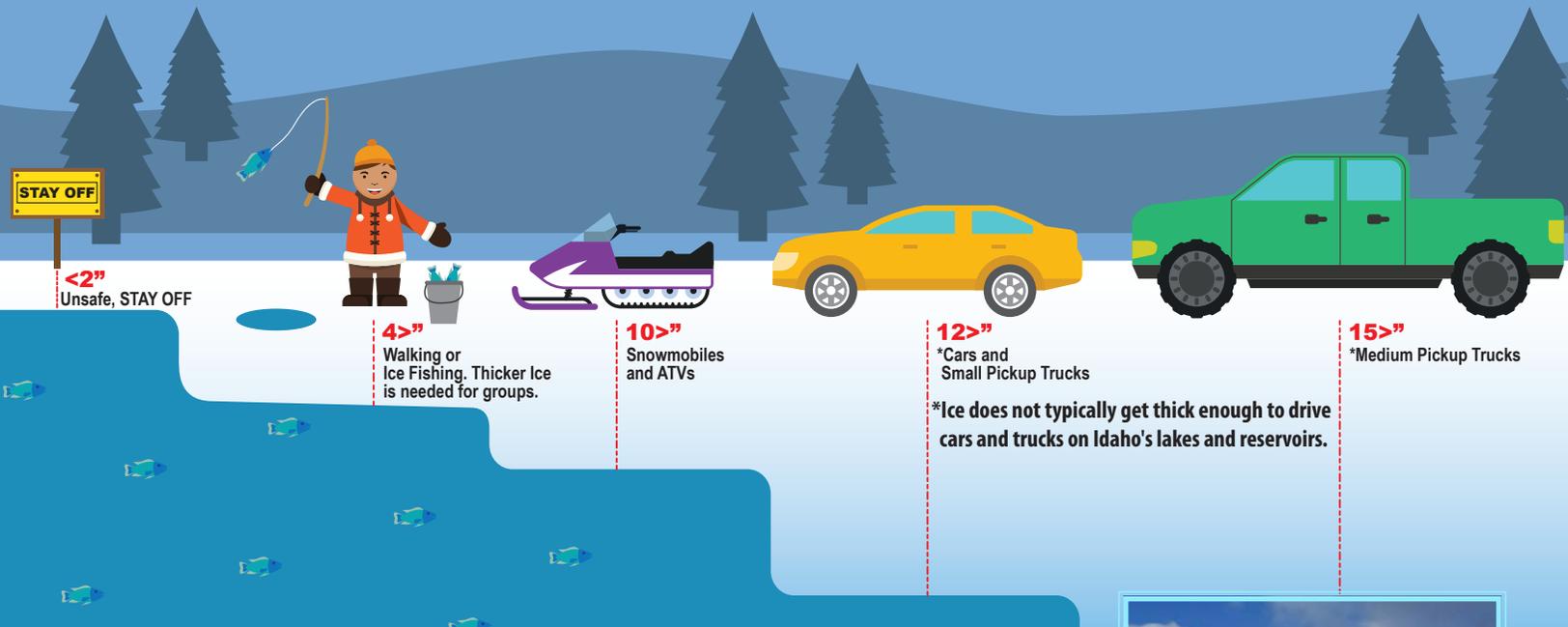
Sled Use a sled to haul your equipment and supplies out on the ice. You can also use it as a place to sit while fishing or pull your family and friends around if the fishing is slow. Just watch out for holes in the ice!



Hot Chocolate, Water and Snacks Nothing is like hot chocolate to warm you during the winter and a picnic on the ice can be just as fun as one during the summer.

Sunscreen and Sunglasses Sunscreen and sunglasses might not seem necessary in the winter, but they are important. Sun reflects off of snow. This can make the rays more intense. You can get a sunburn even in the winter.





Ice Safety

Never run out on a frozen pond or lake! You cannot tell how thick the ice is just by looking at it. The best way to know the thickness of ice is for an adult to drill a test hole. The thickness of the ice will tell you if it is safe for you and your fishing pals, but remember ice thickness can vary and change around a lake and over time. Here are some ice safety guidelines.

- **Three to four inches of solid ice** are the minimum to support one person. Thicker ice is needed for groups.
- **10 inches of solid ice** are needed to support an ATV or snow machine.
- **No cars or trucks** on the ice. Ice does not typically get thick enough to drive on Idaho's lakes and reservoirs.
- **Holes can be no larger than 10-inches in diameter** for safety.
- **Watch for weak ice** around inlets and outlets, springs, or near docks and other places that can absorb sunlight and weaken ice.



Images top to bottom:

Ice thickness illustration CCBY Glenna Gomez for IDFG, Cascade Ice Fishing CCBY IDFG, Cascade Lake CCBY Paul Janssen for IDFG.



Some Ice Fishing Tips

Ice fishing is a bit different than fishing during the warmer months. Here are a few tips when it comes to ice fishing.

Fish at different water depths to find fish. If you do not have a depth finder to help you find fish, try this method. Drop your bait to the bottom. Now reel in your line and count each time you make a revolution with the handle. Stay in one place for a while before reeling your line in more. Remember to keep adding the number of turns as you bring up the line. When you figure out where the fish are biting, lower your hook to the bottom and reel up to the number of revolutions where you last found fish.

Jigging can work well to get a fish's attention. Jigging is when you move your bait up and down in the water. To jig, slowly lift the tip of your rod up about one foot then lower it back down. Repeat this up and down movement. You can try jigging in different patterns and speeds to find what works best.

Some anglers prefer to just set the line and watch for a strike. This is where a fishing tip-up comes in handy. A tip-up is a device that has a small flag on a spring. When a fish strikes and tugs the line, the flag pops up. The flag alerts the angler to jump into action.

It is OK to move. If you're not getting bites, move to a different location and drill new holes, especially if you see others catching fish.



Photos top to bottom:

Mackay Reservoir CCBY IDFG, Horsethief 2018 CCBY Roger Phillips for IDFG, Boys fishing CCBY Sara Cassinelli for IDFG, Kids staying warm CCBY Roger Phillips for IDFG, Colorfully dressed kid ice fishing and sled CCBY IDFG.

Ice Fishing Rules

Ice fishing rules are a bit different than general fishing.

Be sure to check Idaho's [fishing rules booklet](#). It is the angler's responsibility to know the rules for the waters he or she is fishing. Here are some highlights.



Anglers 14 years old or older need a fishing license.

Licenses can be bought at Fish and Game offices, any place Fish and Game license are sold or try our free [Go Outdoors Idaho](#) phone app. The app is not just for buying licenses. You have access to rules booklets, the fish planner, the hunt planner and news releases. You can even store the whole family's licenses on the app and always have them when needed.



Anglers can fish with up to five poles or lines at a time and have up to five hooks per line.

Just make sure that you can manage that many lines. Anglers must keep watchful eyes on all the lines they set. Some waters have special rules that limit the number of poles or bait while ice fishing so be sure to check the fishing rules for exceptions.



The statewide daily trout limit is six fish, but there is no limit on perch, bluegill or crappie! Check the rules for the waters you are fishing for any special regulations that may apply.



Fishing is allowed only through a hole up to 10 inches in diameter. There is no restriction on the number of holes.

Photos top to bottom:
Horsethief CCBY Roger Phillips for IDFG, Horsethief, kid with rainbow trout 2018 CCBY Roger Phillips for IDFG, Lots of perch CCBY Dale Allen for IDFG, Trout and the 10 in hole in ice CCBY Roger Phillips for IDFG.



FISH YOU MAY CATCH

You may catch yellow perch, trout, crappie, bluegill, kokanee or bass while ice fishing. Let's take a closer look at two of these fish and the techniques that may help you hook one.

YELLOW PERCH



Yellow perch are common fish to catch when ice fishing. In fact, Idaho's weight record yellow perch was caught ice fishing one of Idaho's most popular destinations, Lake Cascade. It weighed in at almost three pounds and was just over 15 and one-half inches long!

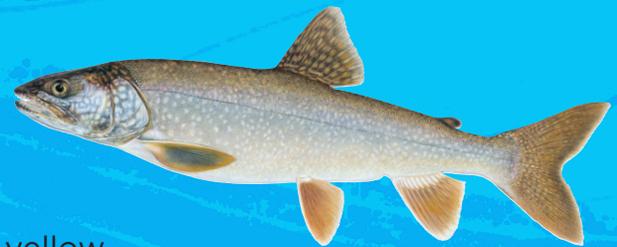
Perch are usually found around 10 to 40 feet down in the water and close to the bottom. They tend not to move around. You may need to move until you find them. Searching for perch is worth the work. Yellow perch are schooling fish; they travel in groups. Once you find a school, fishing is fun! You can pull perch after perch out of the water in a short amount of time. Yellow perch can be dainty biters, nibbling instead of all out attacking bait. Small hooks, small bobbers and a light touch may be needed to hook them.



TROUT

Trout are cruisers. They can be found deep in the water or only a foot down from the ice. This means that unlike yellow perch, trout may find your bait without you having to find them.

Most waters where ice fishing occurs are stocked with rainbow trout. Other locations may also have cutthroats, hybrids or brook trout. Check out the Fish Planner on Idaho Fish and Game's website <http://fishgame.idaho.gov> to see the species found where you plan to ice fish. Fish stocking records are also listed on the Fish Planner.





Be Outside!

Winter safety

Being outside in the winter is a lot of fun. Ice fishing, sledding, skiing, skating, or just playing in the snow is a great way to spend time outdoors. As you learned by reading some of the articles in this issue of Wildlife Express, dressing to stay warm is important. So what's the big deal about what you wear outside?

You are a mammal. Part of being a mammal is having a body temperature that stays pretty much the same. If your temperature goes up, you have a fever. This can happen when you get sick. While a fever can help your body fight germs, a fever that gets too high is a worry. Your body temperature can also go down and that's bad, too. This is called hypothermia. Knowing the signs of hypothermia can help you and your friends safely enjoy being outside in the cold. It's important to understand that hypothermia does not only happen when the outside temperature is cold. Hypothermia can occur when it's well above freezing, too.

People get hypothermia when they do not dress to stay warm and dry outdoors. If your clothes get wet or really sweaty, they pull warmth away from your body. You start to cool and your temperature will begin to drop. A person who is becoming hypothermic might first say that they feel cold. After that they will begin to shiver. Shivering is an important sign of hypothermia. This shivering can become uncontrollable, but will stop as the person gets even colder. Hypothermic patients cannot speak clearly. They might slur their words. They also start to act strangely, even forgetting where they are or what they are doing. As they continue to get colder, they will also become sleepy. This is an emergency!

How do you help? Always pay attention to how you and your friends are feeling. If someone says they are getting cold, go inside to warm up. This is especially true if they start shivering. Take off wet clothes and get into something dry. If you are not close to home, put the person in a vehicle and crank up the heat. Wrap them in extra clothes, a blanket or sleeping bag. If you have a warm drink like hot chocolate, tea, or even soup, let them sip some as they warm up. Cut short your outdoor activity for the day and head home. Always make sure to find a trusted adult to help you and your friends in case of emergency.

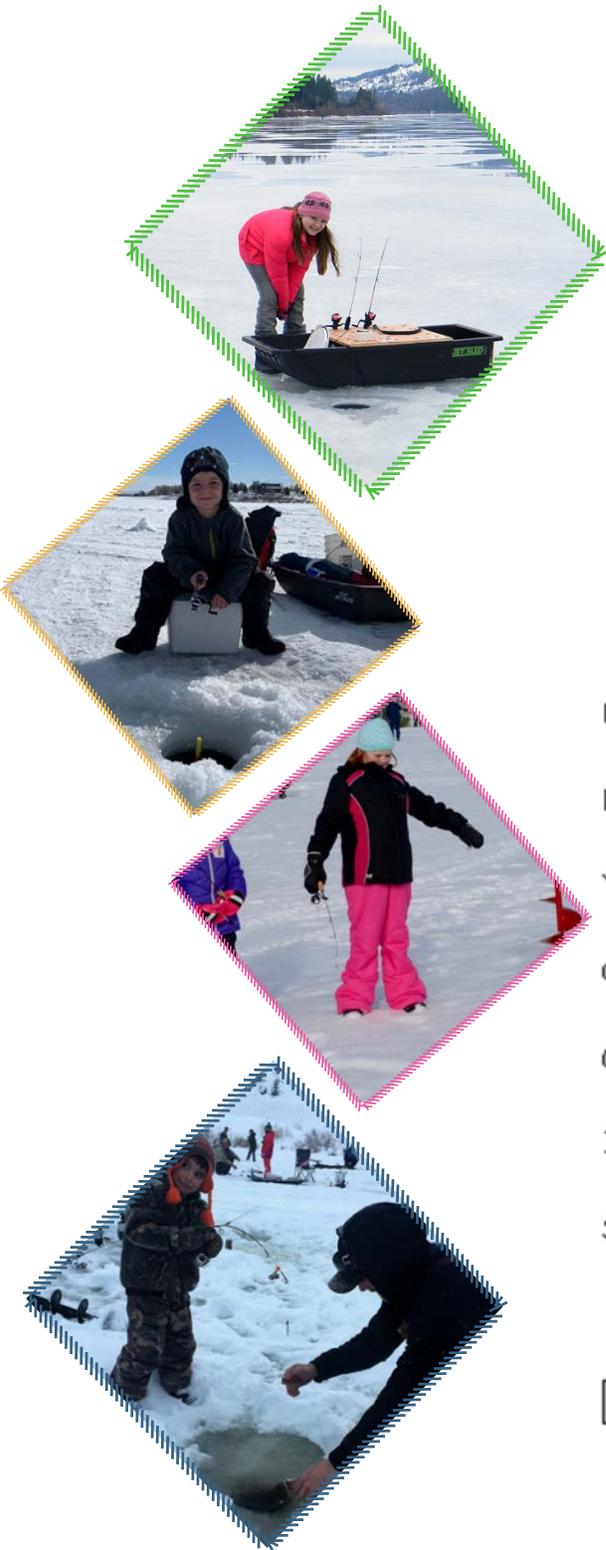
Hypothermia is dangerous! But if you know how to dress properly and understand the signs of hypothermia you can stay safe. This will help you enjoy fun outdoor activities in winter's snow and cold.

Photos top to bottom:
Young angler CCBY Mike Demick for IDFG, Family at Horsethief CCBY Roger Phillips for IDFG.



ICE FISHING DOUBLE PUZZLE

Unscramble the clue words. Copy the letters in the numbered cells to other cells with the same number to figure out the sentence.



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Photos CCBY IDFG

Wildlife Express

Volume 34 • Issue 5 • Ice Fishing • January 2021

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WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU!
If you have a letter, poem or question for Wildlife Express, it may be included in a future issue! Send it to: adare.evans@idfg.idaho.gov or Wildlife Express, Idaho Fish and Game PO Box 25, Boise, ID 83707