

# Raise 'em up!

By Brian Hammarsten

My go to lure thru the ice, hands down is the Northland Buckshot Rattle Spoon. When I can't get walleyes to commit, I switch jigging style before I take off my favorite lure. One trick that I have learned over the years is to tease the fish a bit, a game of cat and mouse!



I first saw this in action when watching big ol' eel pout come strolling by on my underwater camera. When it came in for closer inspection I started messing with him for a few seconds jigging the lure in his face. When he would attempt to strike the lure I would pull it away from him. Instead of leaving the eel pout started getting more and more aggressive... he started circling around faster and faster – every time I would raise up the jig he became more and more aggressive until finally once he committed I could not get the jig away from him fast enough. I then thought this might work on walleyes too...can you vary your jigging technique to get a walleye's attitude to turn from negative to aggressive by playing hard to get? The day was winding down so we would have to wait until the next to give my theory a try.

We woke the following day to worsening weather conditions - negative temps and increased winds. We knew these were perfect conditions for a tough bite. Knowing the fish were going to be lethargic we drilled plenty of holes so we could get right of top of them. Then we slowly worked each hole for a couple minutes before moving the shelter. It wasn't long before we started marking some walleyes on the finder. The first fish or two that came along we used our traditional jigging method – a 4 to 5 inch jig stroke 12 inches off bottom every few seconds. Slowly decreasing the jig stroke as the fish gets closer and closer eventually just making the spoon "shiver". The fish would come in, take a look, then keep going on their way.

Since our traditional jigging pattern wasn't working we decided to try raising 'em up like we did with the eel pout the night before. To find some more fish we continued moving our shelter from hole to hole looking to place ourselves right over the top of a few more potential bitters. It wasn't long before we jigged a fish onto the screen of the finder. Again we started jigging a foot, even two or three off bottom. When the fish appeared on the screen I smoothly raised the spoon 6 to 8 inches and started the "shiver". As soon as the fish started rising up to take a

closer look I raised the spoon another 2 inches. This 2<sup>nd</sup> lift in the jig triggered the walleye to take off like a bullet straight up after my jig and it crushed my spoon. I knew we were now on a pattern to get these sleepy fish to wake up and chase a meal. If wasn't long after that we figured out this variation in jigging style, that we scratched out enough fish for dinner.

So, next time you are out on the ice and your go to jig is not producing, get creative with your jigging style and play hard to get. After all, these fish are predators and yes, you can get them to change their moods and bite by triggering their natural instincts.