

## A clean boat is a happy boat

The wandering mind leads one down many paths. For example, a walleye fisherman that only fishes in the summertime on “soft” water has many hours of time on his hands during the long Minnesota winters. This idle time creates a lot of different thoughts. Some may be of fishing trips past, others of future adventures. The following is a compilation of these thoughts by the worlds “foremost authority of his own opinion” Jim Listerud, walleye angler. They are intended to amuse you, and hopefully make you a more successful walleye fisherman.

Much of what you will read are things that actually took place, with perhaps a little embellishment caused by the previously mentioned long Minnesota winters. It’s not that they aren’t true stories. Only enhanced somewhat by the longing to be back on the water so one can re-catch the big fish and have a do-over on the ones that got away.

Fishing for the walleye is not a complicated thing, if you follow some basic rules. First of all, you need a boat. The boat is very important because it gets you out on the water where the walleye is most likely to be found. I don’t care if it is a big boat, a little boat, a expensive boat or a cheap boat. It just needs to float and it helps a great deal if it doesn’t leak.

A simple rule of boating is “a clean boat, is a happy boat”. If you can keep the inside of the boat clean and clear of clutter it will make for a much better fishing experience. Rod holders are an essential tool in keeping the space organized. They not only keep your rods off of the floor and seats so they don’t get stepped on or sat on, they are a great place to put the rod when you want to have a beer. Not that I condone fishing while intoxicated but you have to admit a beer tastes pretty darn good on a hot summer day in the middle of the lake.

Coolers are another absolute necessity in keeping a clean boat. You should take great care in the selection of your coolers making sure they are of ample size to hold enough beer to last you through your fishing adventure. Do you know how embarrassing it is to have to pull up to a complete stranger on the water and ask if you can buy some beer? Be prepared, that’s all I’m saying.

Tackle boxes, tackle bags, whichever you prefer, should be stocked with at least a bare minimum of \$300.00 in tackle. You never know what you might need to try on those days when the fish are being less than cooperative. You should have 35 bottom bouncers that weigh from  $\frac{3}{4}$  ounce up to 3 ounces. This will allow you to fish in all types of water and current and still get to the bottom where the walleye like to spend most of their time. Not only that, your tackle box becomes a great counterbalance when you are carrying your fully stocked cooler to the boat.

The tackle box is probably the most under utilized tool in fishing for walleye’s. If you are a jig and minnow kind of fisherman, you can stock all kinds of jigs in those neat little

plastic containers so you have whatever you need in size, weight, color, and type. Those of you who like to troll can put your spinner rigs on those handy little round Velcro covered things so you can change rigs in a heartbeat after you get snagged and lose your favorite rig on those rocks and stumps on the bottom, where, once again, the walleye likes to hang out. All of these items should be kept in the tackle box not on the floor of the boat. Remember, “a clean boat is a happy boat”.

Life preservers or personal floatation devices should be kept in a bag when not in use. A large duffel bag that zips open is a very nice item to put on your Christmas list. You should always wear your life jacket while boating, but if you don't, than you should have the storage bag zipped open and readily accessible so you can put them on in a hurry if the sea's get rough or the Sheriff is approaching. You might also want to keep all the empty beer cans out of sight. “A clean boat is a happy boat”. Just ask the Sheriff.

Live bait can create a lot of mess in a boat. Worm containers should be kept in a separate little cooler that has sufficient ice in it to keep them comfortable. There is nothing worse than trying to put a mushy worm on a hook. The worm is mushy because it has been sitting out in the sun all day long. A cooler with ice keeps the worms nice and fresh and prevents them from being tipped over, spreading the worm bedding all over the floor of the boat. A boat that has worm bedding spilled in it is not a happy boat. Those little soft-sided insulated coolers work great for protecting the worms and the boat.

A friend of mine who shall remain anonymous, we'll call him John, mostly because that's his name, is a firm believer in keeping a clean boat. One day John took a couple of his friends out fishing with him. The one friend wasn't paying much attention to maintaining a clean boat. After putting a worm on his line he set the worm container on the platform at the back of the boat. As luck would have it the worms got knocked over, covering the floor with that grayish, brown worm bedding that worms like so much.

Perhaps it wasn't just the worm bedding on the floor. It may have been the cigar ash that burned a hole in the carpet just prior to the worm incident. John picked up the remaining cartons of worms and dumped them overboard, thus preventing any further contamination of the boat. It also prevented any more fishing for the day because there was no more bait. This boat wasn't clean or happy.