

Walleyes Down Under

by
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Idle time spent in a boat gets one thinking, like: Why aren't the fish biting and where have they gone? From there you start to imagine where they might be hanging out and what it might look like down there. Getting a bird's eye view from the fish's perspective would be great but it wasn't a real possibility heretofore, that is unless you had the time, and the scuba gear, and the lessons, to get the job done. In that case you had to be really serious and committed, as you would be spending a lot more time investigating and a lot less time angling.

The trade off could be well worth the effort it in the long run, but it wasn't always practical.

All that has changed with the introduction of the underwater camera and has opened up a whole new underwater world. The camera can get you in and out quick, and will allow you to wet a line and investigate all at the same time. Even though that combination is possible there is a good chance that watching a live camera will keep you mesmerized and some of your angling efforts will shift to pure research.

Improvements in electronic depth finders have helped unlock some of the secrets to locating fish and structure, but have come up a little

short when it comes to absolute information, leaving the user with plenty of unanswered questions. For example, the best graph in the world can't identify the species of

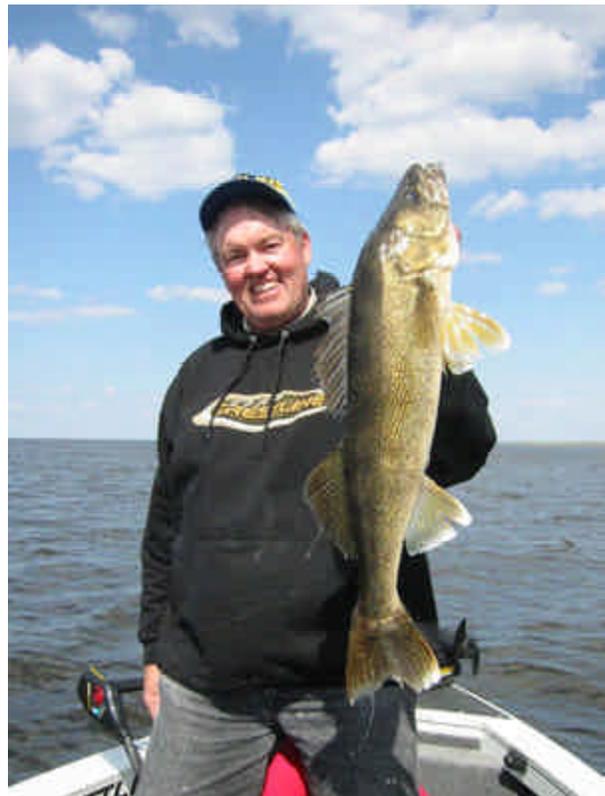


a fish, and it can't reveal the whereabouts of fish clinging tight to a rugged bottom.

For example: Mille Lacs Lake in Central Minnesota is well known for it's tremendous walleye angling and deservedly so, but walleyes aren't the only fish swimming in it's rich waters. Nice big arcs marked on a graph doesn't

necessarily mean walleyes, even if they show up in the right place at the right time of the year. To give you an idea, an early season run to a deep rocky hump indicated a screen full of walleyes.

After a good deal of time spent and wasted trying to get the first fish to take a bait it became apparent that they just weren't interested. A quick scan of the area with the underwater camera produced the answer to the lack of interest exhibited by all those arcs; They weren't walleyes,



they were big suckers. There is no doubt that the same scenario is repeated over and over again by anglers limited to relying solely on their depth finders to locate and identify fish.

Thinking that you know what you're electronics is telling you can waste valuable fishing time, specially when what you think you know keeps you in unproductive areas. Another case in point involved a sandy area that occasionally produces good early season catches, and the depth finder was indicating marks holding belly to the bottom, and which should be catchable. After a good amount of time spent experimenting with different baits and techniques with no success, down went the camera only to reveal that the fishy looking marks were actually short growing clumps of weeds, with absolutely no walleyes in sight.

Besides keeping you from wasting time in fishless waters, the camera can also help you to stay put, even when you think there's nobody home. For example: A recent trip involved a little early season angling on a lake that is known for producing numbers of nice sized walleyes, but the only thing taking the bait was a

bunch of hammer handle sized northern pike. Sure the pike were fun to catch but they really weren't what we were after. The lack of success would have led one to believe that they simply weren't there, but nothing could have been further from the truth. In fact not only did the good spots hold numbers of walleyes, but the marginal spots were holding plenty of fish as well. A quick scan with

the camera of an area known for being an early season hot spot revealed all kinds of walleyes, it's just that they weren't interested at the time. Knowing all those fish were there brought us back later in the evening, where we found the walleyes in a much better mood and where we were able to quickly put together a respectable catch. Without the camera we probably would have hit the road for home prematurely and missed out on the best bite of the day.

An underwater camera should be easy to set up or it probably won't get used and is where the OVS from Marcum Technologies really comes in handy. The whole thing comes in a compact carrying case that is completely set up and ready to go. It also has a built in telescoping sun shade that helps make daytime viewing a breeze. The bottom line is that because the unit is more easily read and used it will get more use, and because it gets more use you'll learn more and have more fun.

The OVS has proven to be a big hit with kids, as they are attracted to it like they would be to a new video game. It's a great teaching tool that will help to grab their attention and keep them interested, even when the fish are being less than cooperative. Slow fishing action translates into boredom for beginning anglers, and boredom may keep them from becoming full fledged participants in a sport that needs new entries.

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