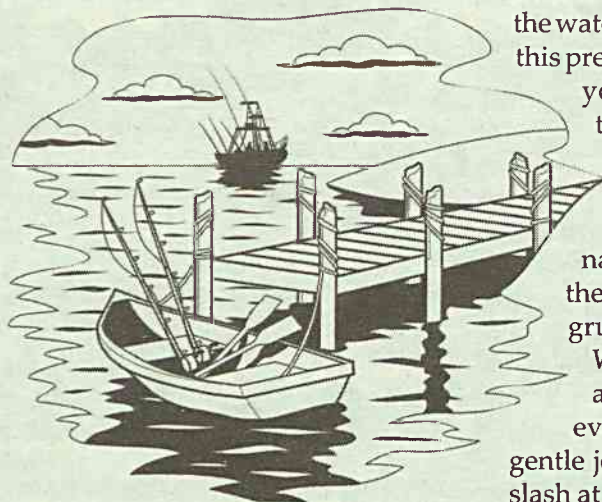


## Fishing – In Cold Blood

By Richard Seale

And so it is with winter fishing. When the temperature dives into the low twenties and the north winds scream through the sailboat rigging, we put on our long underwear, heavy coats and sweaters, gloves and even balaclava to go outside. Even then our eyes run tears and our cheeks burn red. All of our protection keeps our body from losing the heat that our metabolism is generating. Not so with fish. Being cold blooded creatures their metabolism does not generate heat. Rather, the water in which they live defines the temperature of their entire body, including their blood. As the water temperature drops, the blood in a fish gets thicker and slows down. Less oxygen gets to muscles. In winter fish live their daily lives in slow motion. Oxygen transfer from water to gills and gills to blood and blood to muscles all gets slowed down. If the blood flow slows down enough the tissues in a fish go into lack of oxygen stress. As the water temperature approaches freezing the fish can go into cold water shock. In this state otherwise perfectly healthy fish end up floating on the surface on their sides. Respiration slows and the fish

will die unless the water temperature rises. We once had a six pound speckled trout for New Year's dinner. I caught



it barehanded as it lolled by me while I was duck hunting.

In cold water fish move and feed slowly. It takes a different mind set to catch them under these conditions. Dr. Bogus gave out some pointers at the last Salt Water Light Tackle Fishing Club meeting. Let me pass some of these insights along.

Cold water fishing is best done in creeks and marshes. The technique

involves presenting a bait very slowly so the lethargic fish can work up enough energy to try to feed on the slow moving morsel. You cannot drag a grub through the water slowly enough to accomplish this presentation. The trick is to dangle your grub from a float on a

two or three foot fluorocarbon leader. Cast the rig up wind or "up water flow" at about a 45 degree angle and let the natural flow of the water move the bait through the water. The grub tail will slowly undulate.

With a slide float, a bobber on a short piece of wire, you can even get some vibrations with gentle jerks. The feeding fish will not slash at the bait like it does in summer warm water fishing. It will mosey up and carefully inhale the bait. The fish knows that the bait would also be pretty much in cold water shock. Such strike conditions call for a very sensitive line, which means 8 to 10 pound braided line, with a line diameter equivalent to a 2 pound monofilament line. The clear winter waters call for the use of a good 8 to 20 pound fluorocarbon leader.

So what fish are to be had in places

like Gales Creek, Spooners Creek, Broad Creek and Peletier Creek? In these creeks it will be Speckled Trout. But in the creeks off the Pungo and Neuse Rivers, speckled trout, flounder, rock, and even puppy drum will take a slow moving bait this time of year.

So find a nice sunny spot mostly protected from the wind. Anchor up so you can better control the tension on your line. Cast the float rig out up stream or up wind at about 45 degrees, lay back on a cushion and let the forces of nature move the rig in a long slow sweep. If you are still awake when the sweep is finished you can try another cast. If a fish inhales the bait and you have fallen asleep, you can try to recover your senses in time to set the hook. Even this action is best done as a slow motion firm sweep rather than a big jerk.

The cold water makes the flesh of these speckled trout firmer than summer trout. It is a very good meal here in the dead of winter. Oh, I would not invite a lot of folks over for a freshly landed fish dinner. This will not be "fill the cooler" fishing.

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