



# Snow Day Ice Fishing



*by Jeff Woleslagle*

*photos by the author*

The morning alarm clock went off, and I groggily slumbered over to the bedroom window to see a fresh blanket of snow on the lawn, with snow still steadily falling. Turning on the news, I saw that school was canceled for the day and that the wind and air temperatures weren't going to be brutal. This unexpected day off had the makings of the perfect snow day spent on the ice.

After breakfast and allowing some time for the snowplows to clear the main roads, my son and I loaded up our gear and were soon on our way to a pond not far from the house, where we had permission to fish. We checked the thickness and condition of the ice, and in less than 30 minutes, we had several holes drilled and rods set up. The snow was supposed to taper off in a few hours and the wind had completely died down. It didn't take long for the first bite from a fat Bluegill. My son was grinning wildly as it came up through the hole. Almost as soon as

he returned the jig to the bottom, he hooked up with an even bigger one. The action remained steady for nearly 3 hours, at which point it was time to pack up and head home. Falling atmospheric pressure, as brought on by a snowstorm, increases fish feeding behavior and can often lead to success throughout the day.

Of course, even with this increase in fish feeding activity, there are some things to consider to improve your odds of success. Fish relate to structure under the ice. Submerged brush piles, rock piles or artificial structure under the ice are great places to begin the search. If it's early enough in the season, weed edges are fantastic places to target as well.

If you're fortunate enough to take a young angler or two out on a snow day, plan other fun activities in case the fishing is slow. A thermos of hot chocolate and snacks help keep them on the ice, and there is always time to explore or build a snow fort. Make sure kids are bundled up, as nothing can limit time on the ice quicker than getting cold. You want them to have a memorable experience that they will want to repeat.

To take advantage of a snow day, I like to keep my ice fishing gear ready to go. If I see measurable snow in the forecast, I make sure I have ample bait and that all my

rods are rigged up. I strive to be dropping baits down into the depths as soon as the holes are drilled and cleared. Targeting panfish is an excellent way to get youngsters into fish as they are often plentiful and willing to bite. They also make a delicious meal. Small tear drop jigs tipped with a single waxworm or spike are effective. For larger fish, introducing someone to the excitement of line peeling from the spool of a tip-up with a large baitfish can get a young angler hooked for life. I have great memories of my son and my niece pulling large bass and Chain Pickerel through the ice at one of our favorite spots.

The next time you are presented with a snow day and the ice conditions are safe, consider spending it on the water, especially if you take a young one along. ☐

## Gear Up for Adventure

Don't Forget to Wear Your Life Jacket!



Check state park ice conditions:



[dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks/WinterReport/Pages/default.aspx](https://dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks/WinterReport/Pages/default.aspx)



*A Bluegill caught while ice fishing on a snow day.*



*It's a good idea to have your gear organized and ready, so when a snow day happens, you can take full advantage of spending time ice fishing with young anglers.*