



# Three Lure Categories for Ice Fishing Lake Erie Walleye

**by Ross Robertson**

*photos by the author*

A walk down the aisles of your favorite tackle store or searching online will show you how many new or specific ice fishing lures are now available. With that said, a wide majority of “go to” ice lures can be placed into one of three categories somewhat easily. Surely, there are those that do not fit or others that may be considered a hybrid, but having a few lures in each category will make sure you are

covered in just about every Walleye ice fishing situation you face.

Walleyes can be particularly fussy during the ice fishing season and require an intimate knowledge of horizontal, traditional and flutter spoons to consistently get bites.

## **Horizontal**

Horizontal lures hang horizontal. The Jigging Rapala is arguably the lure that started it all 58 years ago. Lures in this category typically swim in a circle when slowly fished vertically and jigged with controlled slack line.

While this category is known for its unique circle swimming action, it is an extremely versatile lure option.



Horizontal lures (left to right): Rapala Rippin' Rap®, Nils Master Jigger Shad, Rapala Jigging Rap, Lunkerhunt Straight Up Jig™ and Salmo Chubby Darter.

When fish are not present on sonar, simply ripping the jig with sharp pulls is an effective way to draw fish in, and hook aggressive fish. However, when fish are present but neutral, simply dead sticking it motionless often proves irresistible to fish that otherwise seem uncatchable.

Tipping a horizontal jig is where opinions seem to differ depending on the region you are fishing. Anglers in northern states and Canada seem to fish the jig without tipping it with minnows. On the Great Lakes and specifically Lake Erie, it is not uncommon to make it look like a chandelier, tipping each hook point with a minnow.

Other horizontal lures of this type such as the Chubby Darter can be tipped, but it seems to do more harm than

good in most cases. The balsa body construction of the Chubby Darter also fishes light and is not effective when currents are strong.

Regardless, if you add minnows or not, have a variety of sizes on hand in order to swim or keep the jig vertical. Even when lure weight is not a concern, Walleyes can be size sensitive, so lures from 1½ inches all the way up to 3 inches play a role.

## Traditional

Easily the largest category, it includes iconic lures such as the Swedish Pimple, Kastmaster, Buck-Shot®, Rattle Streak and Little Cleo to name a few. While this category



Traditional spoons (left to right): Acme Little Cleo, Bay de Noc Swedish Pimple, Silver Streak Rattle Streak, Northland Buck-Shot® and Acme Kastmaster.



Flutter spoons (left to right): Silver Streak Mini, Silver Streak Junior, Clam Leech Flutter Spoon, Bay de Noc Do-Jigger and Custom Jigs & Spins Slender Spoon.

could be broken down into sub-categories of curved, slab and rattle models, a lure when jigged has a level or erratic action but still can be fished vertically. Many open water spoons do not work well for ice fishing because of action or inability to easily be fished vertically.

Slab or rattle spoons fish heavy and are often constructed of lead. This allows lures to be fished heavy but often restricts the action unless fished aggressively. A simple rule of thumb with lead spoons is that thinner spoons result in more action.

Many of the top producing traditional spoons are stamped from brass instead of steel and plated or painted over. While spoons may appear the same on the surface, below water is often a much different story.

Use an underwater camera to see how traditional spoons fish under the water. An underwater camera quickly lets you see each spoons nuances and how it reacts to different jigging cadences. Having several good deliveries with each style of lure increases your odds of success in different circumstances. Lifts, jiggles, shakes and controlling the amount of slack in your line can make a simple traditional spoon appear lifelike.

## Flutter

While different models of horizontal or traditional spoons can be fished in heavy current or worked quickly, flutter spoons generally cannot. This small category often

goes overlooked. Easily the most popular in this category is the Slender Spoon. Its thin cupped and compact design causes it to erratically kick out and seemingly not do the same thing twice. This dying baitfish action can be deadly when fish are finicky.

Perhaps, the biggest benefit of flutter spoons is that lures can be worked without using much movement, whereas other lures need to move farther into the water column to impart their action. In many cases, more movement means moving the lure out of the strike zone.

The biggest grouping of flutter spoons for Walleye ice fishing are open water Walleye trolling spoons. While trolling spoons have a larger profile than the Slender Spoon, spoons such as the Silver Streak Mini or Silver Streak Junior perfectly imitate a dying shiner in action and size. In most cases, these spoons perform best without being tipped, but I have experienced success at using a small minnow head for scent and flash.

When fishing deeper water or when a little more current is present, slightly thicker versions of flutter spoons like the Leech Flutter Spoon or Do-Jigger allow for a finesse approach, while keeping the lure vertical.

The reality is that there are a lot of good lures on the market, but knowing when and how to use each one is the key. Spending time with an underwater camera or on a dock in clear water quickly allows you to understand your gear better, and the results will speak for themselves. ☐

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