

By **DOUG SMITH** • dsmith@startribune.com

Ice angling, like open-water fishing, has changed dramatically over the years. Technology has brought depth finders, underwater video cameras, portable ice fishing houses — even fancy mobile homes on ice. ¶ And gizmos. Every year, it seems, someone develops another must-have ice fishing thingamajig or doohickey. ¶ The St. Paul RiverCentre was full of them over the weekend at the 14th annual St. Paul Ice Fishing Show. Here are a few:

HOLE NEW APPROACH

Fatal attraction

Fake weeds?

Yes, some people laugh when they first see the 4-foot string of Reel Weeds that Bill Lorimer of Andover is peddling. The plastic weeds come with a weight, cord and float. Drop them down your ice hole and presto: an instant weed bed.



"My buddies were skeptical too," Lorimer said. "But then they tried them. It's structure, and fish relate to structure. As soon as fish see it, they start coming to it."

It all started, Lorimer said, when he and his three partners tried to camouflage an underwater TV camera cable. They noticed fish seemed to be attracted to the faux weeds, and Structure on a String was born. (The company, LaDredge Outdoors, also makes a fake weed device specifically for underwater camera cables.)

Lorimer swears the weeds work, but he and his partners haven't quit their day jobs just yet.

Price: A two-pack totaling 8 feet of weeds runs about \$30.

Where can I buy it? At outdoor stores statewide.

More information: See www.reelweeds.com.

Combo rod and holder

Jim Gasaway (shown right) is a retired firefighter from Indiana who liked the Cobra Ice Rod so much he bought the company and now makes the product himself. It's a one-piece rod and holder. "You can replace the rod tips depending on the species of fish you are fishing for," he said. The rods pop in and out of the handle — light-action rods for panfish, stiffer rods for walleyes or northerns.

Price: \$30 for rod-holder combination.

Where can I buy it? Gander Mountain and some bait shops.

More information: Contact Gasaway at 219-696-0124 or fish_a_way@yahoo.com.

Shedding some light

James Slack can see the light. And it's right on the bill of his cap. Slack, of Chanhassen, sells the Brim Light, a lightweight (1.4 ounces) foam light with five tiny LED lights that clips to the brim of a hat. Powered by four thin watch batteries, the device offers anglers and hunters a light while still leaving both hands free. And it floats.



Price: \$19.99

Where can I buy it?

Direct from Slack.

More information: 952-934-2233 or www.visionsalesonline.com.



Jim Gasaway and his combo rod and reel

Making 'em bite

Rainbow-colored ice fishing jigs that glow aren't new, but Dave Mochinski, owner of Maynards LLC, says his Nite Lite lures glow for eight hours and his Super Glows glow for 20 hours. "Do they catch fish? They must because people keep coming back," he said with a laugh.

Price: \$1.20 for a Fish-N-Eye Nite Lite Super Glow jig.

Where can I buy it? At tackle shops statewide.

More information: www.maynardstackle.com



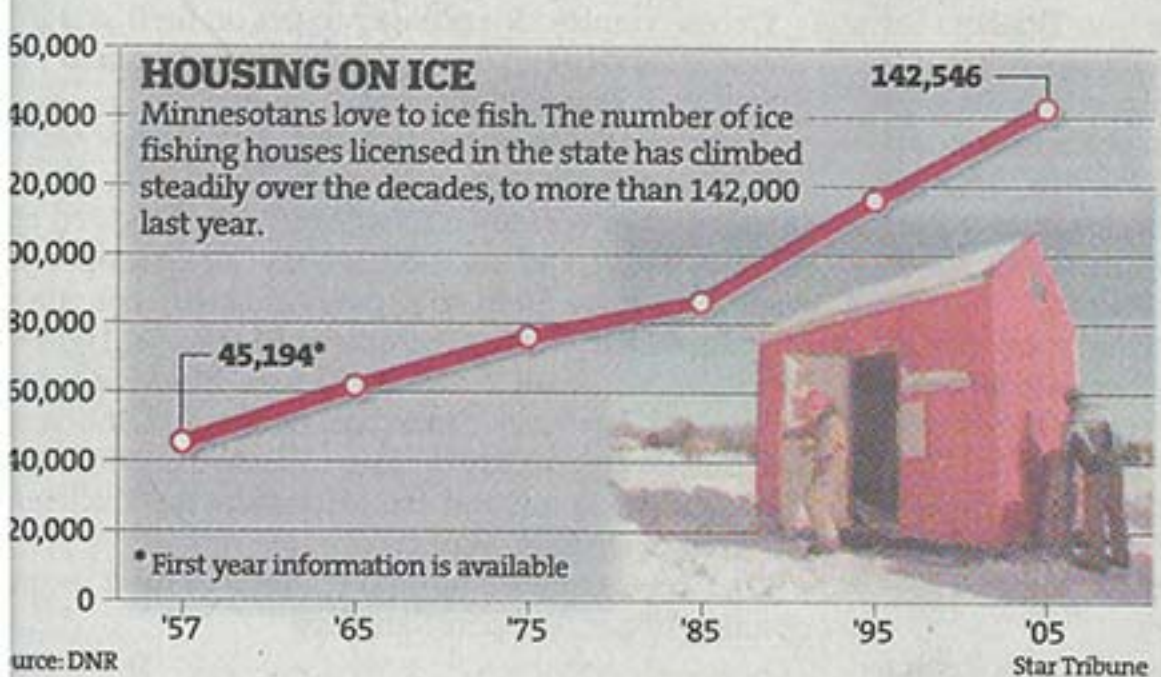
Subtle illumination

Dave Handeland took the glow-in-the-dark technology one step further: He has produced plastic ice fishing hole sleeves that anglers slip into their ice holes. "It'll light up an ice house, and when you wake up at night you won't fall into your hole," said the manager at Milaca Unclaimed Freight, which also sells Ice Castle Ice Fishing Houses. Handeland also makes plastic glowing ice hole covers and glowing rattle reels that signal when a fish is on.

Price: \$16 for the glowing sleeve.

Where can I buy it? Should be available soon at regular outdoor outlets.

More information: 1-888-478-3633



Ice fishing season has begun, but caution is advised

The recent frigid weather has helped launch Minnesota's ice fishing season, at least in the northern half of the state.

Anglers have ventured out onto frozen lakes in many areas, though ice conditions obviously vary depending on location. Lake of the Woods has 7 to 9 inches of ice, and anglers were catching fish last week in 15 to 20 feet of water.

Near Duluth, the ice was reported 3 to 5 inches thick, with open water

on rivers. The Brainerd area reported about 4 inches of ice on some lakes. In the Twin Cities, Lake Minnetonka froze only this week, so travel upon it isn't recommended.

"Always check locally before you head out," said Kim Elverum of the Department of Natural Resources. "With no snow, and if it stays cold, it will be very good to make ice."

As always, experts say ice travelers should use extreme caution.

There's no such thing as "safe" ice. Springs, currents and snow cover can affect ice thickness. When venturing onto ice, follow these safety guidelines:

Less than 4 inches: Unsafe.

4 inches: Person can walk safely.

5 to 6 inches: Snowmobiles and terrain vehicles.

More than 12 inches: Cars and light trucks (but ice should be clear, cloudy).

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FISH AND GAME FORECAST The DataSport Fish & Game Forecast tables are computer-generated timetables that indicate daily feeding and migrating patterns.

