

Module I – Early Season Fishing

What is Early Season Fishing?

1. Fishing just after the ice leaves the lake and before the hatches start.
2. As there are no hatches to focus the fish, you have to hunt for the fish using various imitator or searching patterns.

Why Early Season Fish?

1. After a long winter the trout are hungry and looking for a food source.
2. The trout are not very selective.
3. Fishermen are desperate get out and wet a line.
4. Most fishermen are still at home, fishing is not as crowded.
5. Trout are at their firmest and tastiest after the ice comes off. If you are going to keep any for eating, this is the time of year to do it.
6. Beware of lake turnover.
 - a. Turnover is when the water in the lakes does a mass flip over.
 - b. It happens at least twice a year, usually once in the spring and once in fall.
 - c. The cause of turnover is unbalanced water structure.
 - d. The surface layer being heavier sinks, which mixes the oxygen rich upper layer with the oxygen poor lower waters, creating poor oxygen levels throughout the lake.
 - e. The low oxygen can make the fish sick and unresponsive for a few days.
 - f. Spring turnover almost always happens within a few days of ice off.

Where do you Early Season Fish?

1. The fish are usually concentrated in the shallow areas as this is where the oxygen is greatest and the water temperature the highest.
2. Drop offs next to shallow areas.
3. Weed beds.
4. Stream inflows and outflows.
5. Look for surface action, or fish moving in shallow water.

When do you Early Season Fish?

1. As soon as the ice leaves, even a small open area can result in good fishing.
2. Before and after lake turnover
3. Before the fish turn on to major hatches
4. If the water is very cold the bite might only be during the midday period.
5. Cloudy windy conditions are usually better as trout tend to avoid the shallows if it is sunny and calm.

Fishing equipment needed

1. **Fishing Equipment needed:**
 - I. Fly rod set up with a floating line and indicator,
 - II. Fly rod set up with a slow sink line (type I or II)
 - III. Float or strike indicator
 - IV. Lots of leader,
 - V. Tippet material (6-8lb)
 - VI. Small swivels
 - VII. Weights to keep your line straight
 - VIII. Fly patterns:
 - a) Micro leeches
 - b) Balanced leeches
 - c) Leeches
 - d) Shrimp
 - e) Dragonflies
 - f) Attractor patterns
 - IX. A method of measuring water depth- sounder, forceps and line etc.
 - X. Throat pump
 - XI. Sample jars
 - XII. Magnifying glass

Early Season Fishing Strategies

- 1) Work the shallows and most likely areas.
- 2) You will probably have to keep moving to keep catching fish. When there are no hatches to key on, trout become more territorial and there may only be a certain amount in each zone.
- 3) Once you fish a zone out, you move over to the next zone to start catching fish again.

Early Season Fish Food

The most abundant food species available at this time are:

1. Freshwater shrimp
2. Damselfly nymphs
3. Leeches
4. Dragon fly Nymphs
5. Water boatmen
6. Backswimmers
7. Mayfly nymphs

You should be using patterns that imitate these.

Early Season Fishing Methods

Your first decision is to decide which food species you want to imitate and how to fish it.

The most popular fly choices and methods for our local lakes are:

1. **Indicator (float) fishing** with a micro leech or balanced leech.
 - a. **Show indicator set up**
 - b. To fish this way you need to:
 - i. Anchor your boat
 - ii. Cast the fly
 - iii. Let the fly sink to the feeding zone
 - iv. Keep your line straight
 - v. Watch your float for a strike
 1. Sometimes it is better to let the float sit still or wind drift it
 2. Sometimes you have to slowly move or twitch your float and fly to get a strike
 3. When you see the float move, set the hook and the fight is on
2. **Casting and retrieving with a wet line and wet fly**
 - a. Cast the fly out and use the count-down method,
 - b. When the fly is just above the bottom, start your retrieve, slow or fast
 - c. Try to keep the fly in the feeding zone as long as you can
 - d. When you feel resistance set the hook.
 - e. Some of the more common flies used with a wet line are:
 - i. Shrimp
 - ii. Immature Damsel flies
 - iii. Leeches
 - iv. Dragon Fly Nymphs
 - v. Water Boatmen
 - f. **Show wet line set up, show different retrieves.**

3. When you start catching fish it is a good idea to throat pump the occasional one to see what type of food they are eating.

Demonstration Equipment needed:

1. Photos of different life stages
2. Vials of sample insects
3. Fly samples
4. Rod set up with a floating line, indicator and the rest
5. Rod set up for wet line fishing
6. Tippet material
7. Leader material
8. Swivels
9. Strike indicators
10. Small weights
11. Depth sounder
12. Forceps
13. Throat pump
14. Sample jar
15. Magnifying glass