

North Shore Steelhead Report

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Spoons for Staging Steel

by Tom Armstrong



Tom Armstrong with early season spoon caught steelhead.

With this mild weather in the Thunder Bay area lately, all diehard steelhead anglers are likely chomping at the bit, waiting for the first sliver of open water to crack enough to run a float down it, or run a fly through it. The way things are going, it looks like it may be coming soon.

When nature does begin to pry its icy grip from the waters of Northwestern Ontario, the river mouths usually open up first, offering anglers a great opportunity to catch some early season steelhead. Without wasting any time, fishing the mouths of these rivers before, during and after they open up can be a great tactic to catch steelhead.

Before the warmer temperatures of spring thaw the frozen rivers, fish are cruising the shoreline along their river of choice, waiting for the ice to break so they can continue their spawning migration upriver. Even after the ice is out, and the river is flowing, there is still great opportunity to catch fish that are awaiting the right conditions to move upstream.

This type of fishing is great for anglers of all skill levels, as it doesn't take much to cast spoons, and doesn't require some of the fancier gear that float or fly fisherman use in the rivers. A good casting rod, and a tackle box with an assortment of spoons is all you need. In some places you can fish right from shore, while a pair of waders does make it a lot easier, and opens up more areas to fish. I have even fished river mouths in the spring out of a boat,

crusing up and down the shoreline, casting spoons for cruising steel. The earliest I have been out on the big lake in a boat was several winters ago, when my friend Jeremy and I hauled his tin boat out behind a skidoo during first week of February. Despite the freezing temperatures, heavy snow, and gale force winds, we managed to fish for a couple hours, and even hook a couple steelhead!

As far as gear goes, I use a 9'0" medium action rod, with a spinning reel and 8 lb test mono on it; a good setup for throwing spoons way out into the lake, and for wrestling with scrappy steelhead. As far as lures go, there are a wide variety of spoons that will work, my favourite being a Gibbs Croc, but there are many others, like a Little Cleo, 5 of Diamonds, Blue Fox Pixee Spoons, or any other casting spoon. Mixing up your retrieve can help illicit strikes when casting spoons, whether its a steady retrieve, or a few twitches or pauses along the way, try varying it a little bit to see what works. One thing to note,

make sure you bring a few extra spoons along, as the rocky lake bottom is sure to claim a few!

Always remember safety when out fishing like this though, as slippery rocks and icy shorelines can be dangerous, as well as the dangers of wading in Superior in the late winter/early spring weather. Make sure you have good footwear, and think about wearing a mustang floater jacket or inflatable pfd, in case you lose your footing and go for a dip. Also, there is usually nothing warm about this type of fishing, especially when wading out into superior, so make sure you're well dressed and layered up to keep warm.

So instead of waiting for your favourite river to crack, now can be a good chance to get out, go for a drive, and see how close spring really is. It'll give you an opportunity to spend a day out angling, and get you more excited for what's to come.

Inside This Issue

Steelhead Populations How Low Can They Go?	2
Fisheries Management Zone 9 Council	2
Current River Ladder Operations	3
McVicar's Creek Project	3
Lake Superior BiNational Award	3
Fisherman's Park Update	3
NSSA & Stewardship Council Working Together	4

