

**Annual Ice Fishing Report 2008-2009**  
**by Dan Potts**

**General Comments** - With the drop in gasoline prices many anglers are now willing to travel a bit farther to fish this winter, however, there continues to be great ice fishing opportunities close to home. Every winter although some fisheries sour, others like the ones recommended below come on line to offer some great fishing for quite the variety of fishes here in Utah.

**Fish Lake** - This deep, natural lake has never failed to make this coveted list! It is a dependable fishin' hole year in and year out. It is tough to get "skunked" at Fish Lake! Although long periods of heavy snow fall can limit access to the Fish Lake Lodge the county road crews do everything they can to keep the road open. The opportunity to rent a cabin allow groups to spend several nights to fish more conveniently. Getting up to fish first light to catch splake almost at will can be cold but productive. There are locations near the marinas at the south end and at the lodge where anglers can catch rainbow, yellow perch, splake, a few lake trout, and even Utah suckers all out of the same hole. It may take a day or two to locate these spots, but they can really fill the cooler for the trip home and a great fish fry.

The small yellow perch usually associated with weeds (5-15 feet deep). Rainbow trout are found outside the weed beds (15-75 feet deep), with smaller 'bows found just under the ice, especially later in the season. Splake are usually found deeper yet (20-75 feet) and lake trout in the deepest water (25-85 feet). White and chartreuse seem to be the preferred colors for most species, although neutral colors and tipping hooks with sucker meat tend to work best for macks.

**Scofield Reservoir** - Almost always the first water to firm up (usually before Christmas) this water has also always made my ice fishing list. The difference this year is that the tiger trout have finally grown to eaten-size. Tigers are very aggressive, so catching these extremely pretty and unusual-looking fish is usually pretty easy during the daily "bites". Always check the solunar activity tables for the best fishing times, especially during stable weather with new ice. Located relatively close to Huntington Reservoir, many anglers hit both in the same day. It is illegal to keep any cutthroat trout or trout with cut markings at Huntington, so you would not be allowed to keep them at Scofield before going to the other lake. The locals continue to fish glow-in-the-dark, size 10-16 Ratfinkies tipped with one or two spikes (=maggots) to catch virtually everything.

**Rockport Reservoir** - This fishery has remained good for years. Although the yellow perch dropped a bit during the past years from their original boom, the lake has finally reached "equilibrium" with a variety of sizes to 12 inches. Rainbow and the occasional large brown trout still keep things interesting. Larger female perch (and their edible eggs) can be found from six to 26 feet deep, smaller males deeper to 50 feet. Pulling up perch from more than 30 feet will result in their death from pressure differences, so I start shallow in the morning and early season and move deeper in the evening and late season finish out my limit. One can always catch males in deeper water.

**Scofield Reservoir** - Water levels on this popular family fishery are higher this year, so the fish should be fatter. UDWR stocked about 80,000 fingerling tiger trout to provide a new, beautiful, hard fighting fish, but mostly to prey upon illegally stocked Utah chubs. Rather than totally killing the lake out yet again to take years to recover, UDWR has finally taken the bull by the horns to actively manage the lake's balance. The tigers will only be about 5 to 7 inches long by mid winter, so carefully release them to grow up for next year when they will taste great. Remember that this hybrid between brook and brown trout is fast growing partly because it is sterile. Rainbows and cutthroats should continue to grow larger, so expect to catch fewer, larger eating fish this year.

**Starvation Reservoir** - The illegally stocked yellow perch have finally "boomed"! They range in size up to 12", are extremely numerous, and taste great. Look for them in on the muck bottoms of bays in 6 to 45 feet. As usual, you will find more, larger females in shallower water. Fish caught from less than 25 feet deep can be safely caught and released to cull for the larger, more "fillet-able" fish. A "search lure" made of any shiny spoon, with a two inch leader tied to its hook, and a small jig tied to that. Nothing will catch a perch better than a perch eye, carefully extracted, and carefully hooked through the hole created by the optical nerve on the back side with the jig. If the fishing is fast, switch to a piece of perch meat with the skin on. Hook it through the meat and skin to make it last for many perch. Leave the hook on the spoon bait-less for walleye, trout, and the smallmouth bass found there. For perch, drop the lure fast to the bottom and lift it as slow as you can to 6" to 2', before dropping it hard again. To hook more perch do not set the hook upon the bite, but continue to lift a bit more. For walleye, drop it fast, lift it fast to the same levels as for perch, but then hold it dead still for a second up to a minute before doing it again. Remember, walleye are merely larger perch so wait a second before setting the hook on them too! I like to switch from one technique to the other depending upon what people are catching. There are two inexpensive motels, a grocery store, etc. in Duchesne only 5 minutes away, so it is a good idea to at least stay over night.

**Strawberry Reservoir** - Well, the Salt Lake County Fish & Game Association donated \$2000 plus our annual fish hatchery allotment of catchable fish to the Division of Wildlife Resources this year so that they could stock more, larger 8 to 10" rainbows into the 'berry this summer to get better survival. The many large cutthroat trout were eating the smaller stocked fish. These "catchables" have already grown to 12 to 14 inches! It is time to head to the big pond and catch a limit of four of these wonderful family food fish. Plus, there is still a good chance of catching trophy cutthroats to at least five pounds, with a few going to well over 10. Very large tube jigs in either pearl or blue violet have proven to be the best, but be sure to sharpen hooks and bend barbs down to get better hookups, and for easier release of numerous sub-22" cutthroats. Anglers with a "two pole license" can still-fish with smaller, smelly baits for 'bows often found not far below the ice, while actively jigging with very large lures for larger 'cuts deeper. Both species can be found off the ends of points and on the inside bends of bays. Use of a fish finder (and/or binoculars) to locate the best spots.

***NOTE: Be especially careful on Strawberry and Starvation reservoirs on snowmobiles! There may be "pressure" cracks hidden under a mere skiff of last night's snow that could swallow you and your machine. Travel in groups with appropriate safety equipment.***