

If you're around a group of fishermen very long, the subject of weather is bound to come up. Weather is probably used more often as an excuse for not catching fish than any other.

You could talk all day about weather and how it might affect fishing, but at this time let us consider those aspects of weather that should be considered, and those things most likely to be misunderstood.

Normally, when speaking of weather, one of the first things to pop into mind is temperature. Many times temperature is looked upon in the wrong light by fishermen. Temperature affects fishing, mainly in two ways.

First, it can make fishing pleasant or unpleasant. At times it may be so hot or so cold it just isn't any fun to be out fishing.

Second, it may have an effect on fish.

In considering how temperature might affect fish, or fishing, let us consider a few things. First, let us realize that a fish is a cold-blooded animal. That is, his temperature is the same as his environment. If the water is forty-five degrees, so is the fish. The fish, so far as comfort is concerned, is comfortable at any temperature. What temperature does to fish is slow down or speed up body functions. His metabolism is slower at low temperatures. Another way we would look at it is: If the temperature is low, the activity of the fish is slow. As the temperature goes up, so do body activities. If a fish is in very cold water, digestion of food is slowed, growth is slowed, and movement is certainly slowed. But as the temperature goes up, then all of these activities speed up.

It would appear then, the greatest activities — digestion, growth and movement — would occur in the warmer conditions. This is true. He moves better, fights better, grows better, eats better, and can more easily be caught. But remember that at low or high temperatures, he is still comfortable.

In this article we are not going to discuss how temperature affects the amount of gasses that a liquid can absorb, other than the fact that temperature could possibly get so high, the amount of dissolved oxygen in the water could affect the movements of the fish. In some isolated cases the depth and speed controls may be affected if the oxygen content got too low.

We, as fishermen, should primarily

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A clear and bright sky can mean trouble for fishermen. The condition following a cold front is a washed-out, bright sky, and as long as this condition exists, fish are affected.

# TOUGH SITUATIONS

**TEACH YOU THE MOST!**

*TOO GOOD TO FORGET:*

Good teachers always repeat important lessons. We're repeating this information from an earlier issue of Fishing Facts, simply because it is so valuable.

**BY BUCK PERRY,  
EDUCATION EDITOR**



## TOUGH SITUATIONS

ly view temperature during the normal fishing season, which is the warmer, hotter months. During this period, we SHOULD NOT THINK ABOUT FISHING IN TERMS OF TEMPERATURE. I am not stating that changes in temperature will not affect the fish and how the fisherman changes his speeds, etc. What I am saying is that he should view weather and temperature in terms of LIGHT.

Those familiar with *Fishing Facts* have heard it stated many times that the weather condition the fisherman should be aware of is the COLD FRONT. Pre-frontal conditions giving good movement, post-frontal conditions giving bad or little movement of fish.

When observing a cold front, a fisherman should not relate it to a temperature factor. He must relate it to LIGHT conditions. This would be for the same reason that you pick dirty or dingy water rather than clear, if you have a choice. A bright sky can mean trouble for the fisherman. The condition following a cold front is a washed-out condition (bright, clear sky) and as long as this condition exists, fish are affected. The light condition may be related to temperature, and if there is a great drop in temperature and it lasts for a long period, the light may be affected accord-

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ingly. But as the light conditions change, so do the movements of fish.

Your immediate reaction might be, if this is so, why not fish at night only? Hold on a minute; we didn't say an ABSENCE of light, we said a light condition. There are many parts to light, many frequencies involved.

You have heard it said that during the hot summer months fish are deep, seeking cooler water. This is wrong; he is seeking a comfortable light condition. You have heard that during hot weather a particular lake should be fished at night after the water cools off. This also is wrong; the water barely changes temperature. The reason fish are caught at night on occasions is due to the fact that if a movement occurs, the ABSENCE of certain light will cause the migrations to come far enough for the fisherman to make contact. To clarify this, let us say that if a movement of fish had occurred at 3:00 p.m. in the afternoon in

a deep, clear lake, the fisherman was never aware that a movement occurred, for the fish did not migrate up to where he was fishing. If he stayed on the lake so that he would catch fish that night, he would draw a blank, as the movement had already occurred and another would not likely occur until early the next morning. Where the fisherman is faced with deep, clear lakes, fishing at night does have its good points, but it doesn't mean fish will move every night.

You might ask, also, at this point, what triggers the movement of fish? Here again, it would have to be a light condition. Not the moon, not the temperature and certainly not the appetite of the fish. You would have quite a job on your hands trying to figure out how all the fish get hungry at the same time, or why you can get movement with no feeding taking place. It might even be possible to relate atmospheric pressures with movements of fish, but just think back a moment and recall the good fishing you had at the different pressures.

Cold fronts or light conditions affect ALL species of fish. Some to a greater degree than others. The only fish that is noticeably active during a cold front condition is the carp. Many times he may be seen jumping following a cold front, and I have often seen fishermen wasting a lot of time and effort trying

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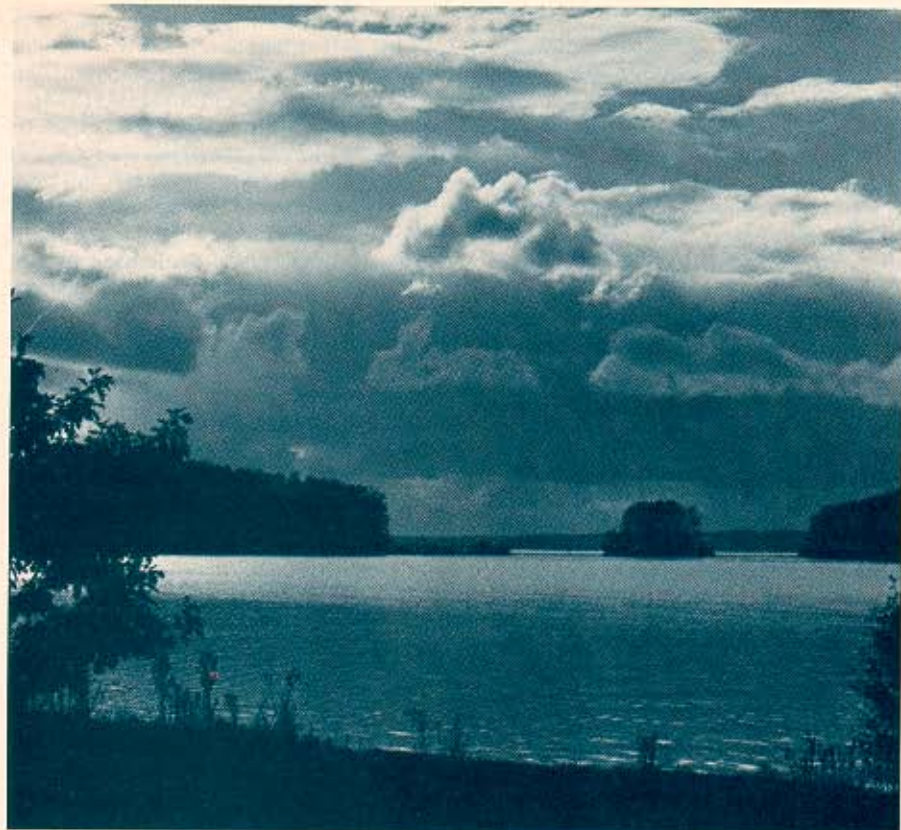
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"A very important thing to remember during the planning stage, and one often overlooked, is the wind. Is the lake in wide open spaces with little protection from the wind, or does the body of water contain alternate areas that can be worked (fished) properly?"—Buck Perry

to catch them as they thought they were bass or some other game fish.

We are concerned here with the major game fish found in our fresh water. However, saltwater fish will be affected in the same manner.

Let us assume that we have a cold front condition and all the fish or species are rather dormant and not moving. Let's improve the weather (light) condition slightly and try to observe some fish movements that would be of benefit. Let's also consider the species of fish which would be less affected or which would be the first to start moving during this condition.

We could place them in this order: first northern pike, then walleye, white bass, smallmouth and largemouth bass. Trout could be placed up in the range of the white bass or walleye. Thus if you have a lake that has all species, the first fish to appear after a cold front would be the northern pike, with largemouth bass being the last one to appear.

Before we get any great mass of either species moving or migrating, there would be some scattered movement of individual fish, mainly the small fish of the species. It appears small fish are not affected as much as the larger fish. This may not be entirely true, as small fish are not too compatible with the larger

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## TOUGH SITUATIONS

fish, and they scoot toward the shallows when the smallest movement is had by the larger fish. It would be logical to assume the first fish to show after a cold front would be the smaller fish.

When observing a cold front, we must admit that we face a condition that spells trouble for the average fisherman. You can make a bet that when you plan a fishing trip or a particular weekend, about Thursday or Friday a cold front comes blasting through. What then can we as fishermen do when faced with a cold front condition?

The first thing to do is to plan the trip BEFORE you go. Take a minute to do some homework.

First, the decision is made *where* to go fishing. In most cases the fisherman has a choice as to the water he can fish.

There are some who cannot make this choice, but still he has homework to do.

The first consideration is to choose water that he is most familiar with, knows where all structure is located. Not only knows where all structure is located, but knows which are the best ones and those that can be worked most effectively. Preferably the water should have no restrictions on fishing procedures, and would have the least amount of traffic.

Next the fisherman should pick out the species of fish he is going after. If the trip is planned and falls right after the cold front, and he has a choice of species, he should pick the northern pike or walleye, if such species are present, but he would not pick bass as his first choice.

Next he should consider the color of the water. Is the lake dirty or dingy, or

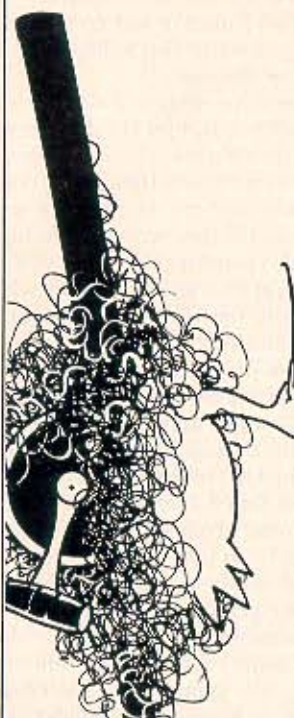


"In dealing with fishing after the passage of a cold front, the first consideration is to pick water that you're familiar with," says *Fishing Facts* Education Editor Buck Perry. "Not only should you know where all structure is located, but it helps greatly to know which are the best ones and those that can be worked effectively. Preferably the water should have no restrictions on sport fishing procedures, and would have the least amount of traffic."

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is it clear? If there is a choice, pick the dingy one. Next look at the depth in the lake. Is it extra deep or not so deep? He should pick the one that is not extremely deep. If the water chosen is a man-made reservoir, plan to fish in the upper reaches of the impoundment. The upper reaches limit the depths fish can go, while at the same time the upper reaches should contain darker or dingy water.

Next the fisherman should give some thought as to the quantity of fish in the lake. Does it have all age groups? Is reproduction good so as to provide the different age groups? In other words, does the water contain a large fish population, especially a lot of two to three-year fish (yearlings, stragglers)?


A very important thing to remember during this planning stage, and one often overlooked, is the WIND. Is the lake in wide open spaces with little protection from the wind? Wind, following a cold front, can be expected to some degree, and often it is quite strong. If the structures that produce fish cannot be fished due to the wind and waves, the fisherman might as well be in water that has less fish.

After considering the above physical conditions, the fisherman has to be thinking about his procedures or the mechanics of catching fish. He is faced with the fact the fish are deep and movement limited. If they do move, he will have to be ready, for most likely the movement will be short and his casts and trolling passes will have to be right-on-the-money to produce a catch.

When fishing during this weather condition, a fisherman will also have to examine his speed control more carefully. Take along a good supply of gas, for there will have to be a lot of running around. All "hot-spots" will have to be checked periodically, and a lot of time spent in trolling for stragglers. A lot of effort should be spent on the 8 to 10-foot levels, hunting for stragglers and smaller fish that might venture out. And plan to spend a long day if you want to make a good catch of fish.

After considering all the foregoing factors, your reaction might be: "To heck with it, it isn't worth the effort!" Sure, this is what you might think, but in many cases you have no choice in the matter. You could be hundreds of miles from home on vacation.

I say go fishing every chance you get. Fishing success is relative. A successful day following the passage of a cold front can be just as satisfying as one of those days when everything is right and you "fill the boat."

Experience makes you a better fisherman. The tough situations teach you most, not the easy road. Each fisherman can become just as good a fisherman as he desires, but only through effort and the desire to learn. 



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