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# With warm weather in forecast, experts say stay off the ice

By [Xavier Ward](#)  
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With temperatures as high as 60 degrees, ice fishing experts recommend staying off the ice this weekend, and likely for the rest of the season.

The weather is unseasonably warm, said Rudy Schaar, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service.

“So far it's been a relatively mild winter,” he said.

The weekend forecast includes temperatures in the 50s and as high as 61 degrees on Monday, according to the National Weather Service.

After that, temperatures should return to seasonable levels, Schaar said.

Recently, two ice fishermen were rescued from Delavan Lake after their ATV broke through. The early season yielded two thin-ice fatalities, one on Geneva Lake in January and another on Lake Como in December.

With warm weather in the forecast, this weekend signals the end of the ice fishing season, said Shawn McCarten of It's A Keeper Bait and Tackle.

“That's just my honest opinion, just to be safe,” McCarten said.

McCarten says he's been ice fishing for about 40 years. A lot of people have already packed it up for the season because ice has receded from the shorelines of most area lakes, he said.

The early winter yielded lots of anglers with high hopes, McCarten said, because the early winter conditions were perfect for ice fishing.

But recent weather coupled with the temperatures projected for the weekend officially make the ice unsafe, McCarten said. Lots of people were expecting to be on the ice until the first week of March.

McCarten's last day on the ice was Tuesday on Delavan Lake, and ice near the shoreline was almost gone, he said.

Every year some people try to push the limits of the season, he said.

“Ice conditions are going to deteriorate very rapidly, especially with the sun,” said Brian Huser of Rock River Bait Box in Fort Atkinson.

“You take an ice cube out of the freezer and it's fairly hard, when it's been in a soda or drink it starts to get soft,” Huser said.

Warm weather causes lake ice to perforate and soften, he said.

McCarten warned would-be ice fishers to watch out for black ice. When the ice takes on a dark grey color, that means it is very unstable, he said.

Neither of the men recommended venturing onto area lakes, but for those who do, they echoed one message: safety first.

“If you are going to take the chance of going out on the ice this weekend, have a spud bar available,” Huser said.

A spud bar is a tool used to check ice conditions. Huser said ice that makes a hollow sound when struck with the spud bar is not safe to stand on.

Driving any sort of vehicle on the ice is “strictly insane,” Huser said.

Would-be risk takers should invest in an inflatable vest and ice picks, Huser said.

The Rock River is almost clear of ice outside of Huser's shop he said, which is typically a sign area lakes are not in good condition, he said.

Those wanting to get their angling fix have other options. The walleye are biting in the Rock River, and Traxler Park in Janesville has great bluegill and crappie fishing right now, McCarten said.