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## Peck: Unseasonably warm weather has anglers anxious to set a hook

By Ted Peck Special to The Gazette Mar 11, 2018

St. Patrick's Day isn't until next weekend, but we may have experienced the last burp of winter before taps are flush with green beer.

A week ago, Lake Koshkonong was pretty much locked with ice and a legion of winter weary anglers was crowding any place which resembled a boat ramp both up and downstream to get out on Rock River after walleyes.

Occupants of every boat believe they hold the winning ticket in the trophy fish lottery, sometimes using this quest to justify less than sportsmanlike behavior. Being anywhere close to this type of experience puts the pin in the good times party hog for all.

Walleyes may be Wisconsin's gold and green standard of spring fishing, but the lowly channel catfish may be willing to provide that sweet tug on the line without the angst of jostling with other anglers.

These whiskered omnivores are scavenging in quiet water next to faster water right now in Rock River and in Koshkonong at places like Busseyville Creek, where spring makes its initial efforts to pry away winter's ice.

Most shore access on Koshkonong is on private property where you'll need permission to go fishin'. If you are respectful and don't have MS-13 tattooed on your forehead, getting a go-ahead nod is still fairly common even in this increasingly crazy world.

If you are refused, odds are that a previous guest left trash behind. There is one spot on Kosh's north shore where a promise to leave no trace and pick up trash already there resulted in an open door which has remained open ever since.

Koshkonong's north shore warms quicker than other points because of increased exposure to the March sun. A firm, dark bottom warms quicker than lighter-colored sub-strate. This welcome change in hydrodynamics is welcomed by cold-blooded creatures like fish.

Slowed metabolism and loss of icy cover overhead contribute to a sense of uncharacteristic wariness in the forktail's feeding frenzy.

Going with light line and terminal tackle provides an adequate countermeasure which will put a bend in your rod.

Use the lightest eggs sinker possible, which still enables a "tight line" presentation, adding a small swivel and 10-14 inch leader above a No. 4-6 circle hook at the business end of your line.

Channel cats are primarily scent feeders. A couple of freshly squished minnows will draw them in quicker than livelier bait. Redworms aren't easy to thread on a small hook but are worth the effort as these annelids contain much more scent than nightcrawlers or common garden worms.

Circle hooks are essentially self-setting. Intentionally trying to set the hook on an aggressive bite will result in a missed fish every time.

All you have to do is keep one eye on the rod while scanning the sky for southbound geese, raucous sandhill cranes and the sweet music of boastful cardinals.

When the rod bends with a bite, simply pick your rig up and start reeling. The fish will hook themselves, and you'll soon realize all is good in your world.

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Ted Peck, a certified Merchant Marine captain, is an outdoors columnist for The Gazette. Email him at [tedpeck@acegroup.cc](mailto:tedpeck@acegroup.cc)