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# The Basis of Kokanee Fishing



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## “The Basis of Kokanee Fishing” Workshop Course Outline

- **Introduction to Kokanee:** Biology
- **Lifecycle:** Where to locate Kokanee throughout the year
- **What makes a Kokanee Strike!??**
  - *Sounds & Vibrations, Colours, UV?, Scents & Baits*
- **Tackle & Gear**
  - Rod & Reels
  - Flashers & Dodgers
  - Lures
  - Hooks





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## “The Basis of Kokanee Fishing” Workshop Course Outline

- **Trolling Methods**
  - Speed & Trolling Tactics
  - Long Lining
  - Sonar
- **Fighting the Fish (Pitfalls to avoid)**
- **Taking Care of Your Catch**





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## Introduction to Kokanee

**Understanding a Kokanee's Biology & Lifecycle will make you a better Kokanee angler!**

No distinct black spots on sides



Long anal fin (12 or more rays)



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## Introduction to Kokanee

### *General Notes on Kokanee:*

- Kokanee are Land Locked Sockeye
- The flesh of kokanee is orange-red, due to the carotenes found in the skeletal structures of the zooplankton they eat.
- They are a fragile fish that are very sensitive to habitat change; they also do not handle catch and release well. High Mortality rate.

**Zooplankton >**





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## Kokanee Biology

### *General Kokanee Biology Notes that Kokanee Anglers Should Know:*

- Primarily Zooplankton Eaters. They use their gill rakers to strain the plankton. Zooplankton is light sensitive, Kokanee will follow their food!
- Early spring they will feed on small bugs & fly larvae
- Kokanee prefer water temps between 50-53 degree F, over 55 F can be somewhat terminal to the fish.
- Kokanee are a primary forage fish for larger predator fish like Rainbow Trout, Bull Trout and Lake Trout
- Lifecycle can be between 3-5 years
- Kokanee either spawn in streams or gravel shorelines



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## Where & How to Locate Kokanee??





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## Early Spring – Shallow Water Areas & Near the Surface

- Keep in mind that Kokanee prefer water temps between 45F to 53F, with optimum 50-53F
- In the early spring when the lakes haven't warmed up yet the Kokanee will be found in the warmest water and near the surface
- Since they will be in shallower water less than 50 feet, they will be mainly feeding in on bugs & fly larvae





## Late Spring & Early Summer – Mid-Lake, $\frac{3}{4}$ 's Water Column **PRIME TIME!**

- Once the surface temp starts to approach within 50 degrees F the fish will be found primarily in mid lake feeding on Zooplankton
- In the early summer a pronounced thermocline develop within the lake and the Kokanee tend to hang out in this zone
- Depths will depend on water temp & light conditions, but usually will range between 25-45 feet





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## Late Summer & Early Fall – Near Inlet Streams & Shorelines

- Late Summer the mature fish will be starting to prepare for spawn. They will start to stage in front of the streams & shorelines
- Non Spawning fish will be deep in the water column seeking refuge from warmer water temps; between 40-80 feet.
- Mortality rate for Kokanee during these high temp times are as high as 85% when played & either released or lost. Not a preferred time to target certain lakes as Kokanee populations can be negatively impacted.

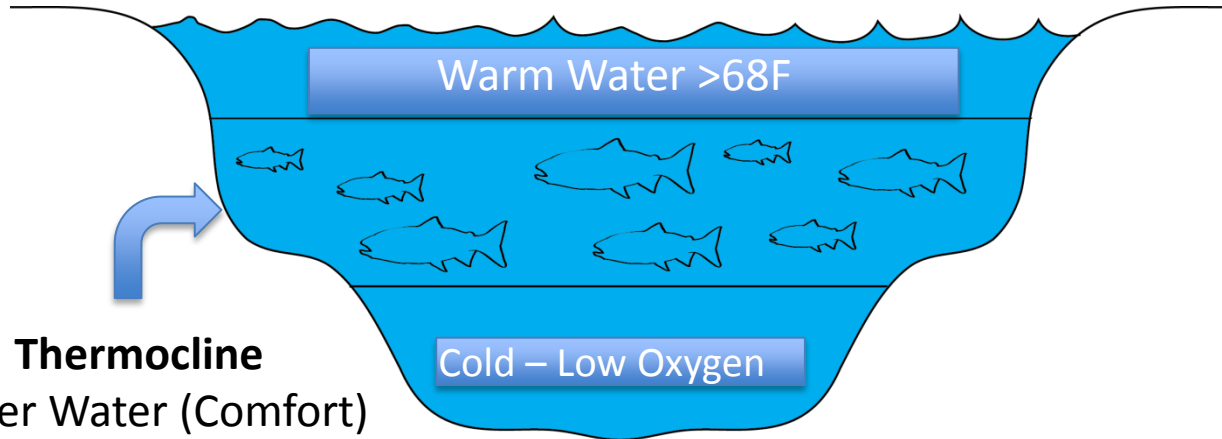




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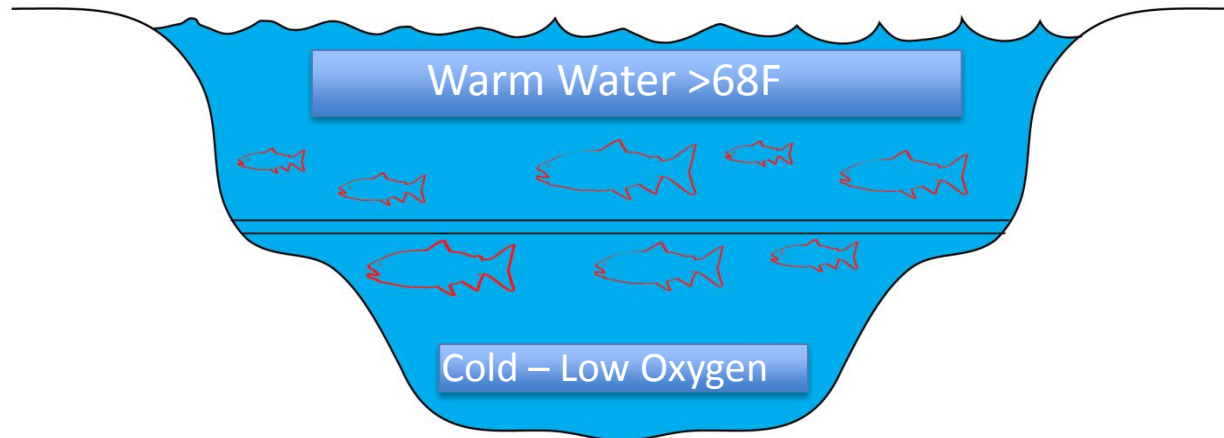
# Understanding Lake Squeeze & Thermocline!

Normal Summer Conditions



Cooler Water (Comfort)  
Lot of Dissolved Oxygen

Deadly Summer Conditions





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## Winter Ice Fishing – 3/4 's Mid Water Column

- During winter months the Kokanee will become moody & somewhat lethargic. Fishing action can change by the minute!
- Usually the fish will remain suspended in the middle of the lake between 15-25 feet deep.





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## What Stimulates a Kokanee to Strike?





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## What Stimulates a Kokanee to Strike?

*There are 4 Stimulants that make a Kokanee Bite*

1. Sound/Vibration
2. Sight
3. Colour
4. Scent





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## Sound & Vibration

*There are Two Types of Sounds that Attract Kokanee*

**Sound = Vibration**      (*Car Stereo in traffic Analogy*)

1) Overall Attraction (*Vibration & Displacement*): **Dodger/Flashers**



1) Striking Sound (*Vibration*): **Lures**





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## Sound & Vibration

### *3 Ways a Kokanee can detect sound & feel displacement*

#### Air Bladder

- Attract
- Dodger/Flasher

#### Lateral Line

- Strike & Attract
- Lure & Dodger

#### Inner Ear

- Strike
- Lure





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## Sound & Vibration



***The Primary Goal is to create a presentation that will effectively entice the Kokanee's curiosity & ignite it's competitive nature to strike!***

- Kokanee being non-predator fish are constantly aware of their surroundings, mostly to avoid being dinner!
- Avoid using flashers & dodgers that can mimic a threat, like a large predator fish. However, presentations that imitate a smaller fish moving through a Kokanee's personal space will invite a strike!
- **Tip:** Lakes with high predation (Lake or Bull Trout) the fish are skittish from being attacked. Try using smaller presentations with smaller vibration patterns. Lakes with low predators reverse of that can be true!

***Monte & Wood Lake: Low Predator      Kalamalka Lake: High Predator***



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## Sight & Colour

***The vibration draws them in but what they see will determine further results!***

### ***Fight or Flight!??***

- The Kokanee has to find your presentation, which is done by sound & sight (flash & colours)
- Kokanee are fickle in their selection of colours! What works one day may not work the next! It can truly change by the minute!





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## Sight & Colour

### *How to choose the right colour of lure?*

- Water absorbs light with depth!
- Plankton blooms, choppy water & cloudy days reduce the penetration of light!
- The deeper you go the more contrast is needed
- Process of elimination: Keep changing! If they aren't biting change the colour!!!

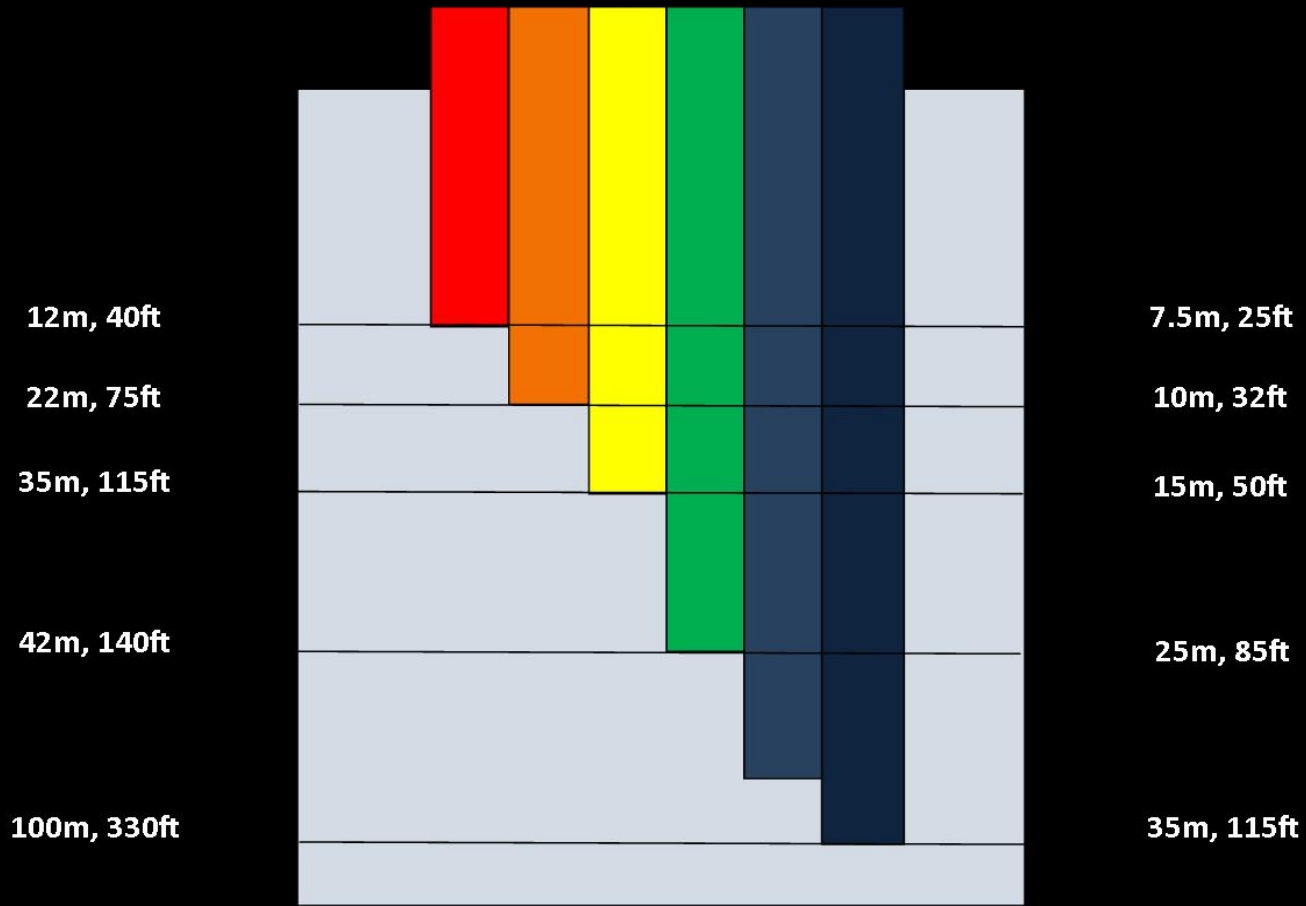
***Think Contrast!***

**THINK CONTRAST!**

## Colour & Light Conditions Underwater

**Best Conditions**

**Regular Conditions**



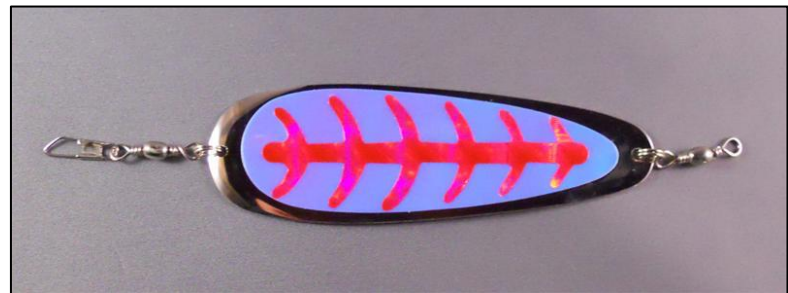


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## Sight & Colour

### What about UV & Glo?? UV= Fluorescent Colours

- UV Colours require less light to hold colour and contrast (approx. double the depth)
- Allows the Kokanee to make out the colour of lure further away, unlike regular colours appear when they are close up in low light conditions.



# Scent

***Think of this...Sockeye Salmon run thousands of kms to their native waters to complete their lifecycle. This is done by scent!!!***

***Kokanee sense of smell is 150 times MORE than a Blood Hound Dog!***

## Benefits of Using Scent?:

- WE STINK! Covers our human smell and other un-natural scents (sunscreen, gas, etc)
- Provides a scent trail to entice the Kokanee to hone in and strike!





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# Scent

Popular Types of Scents for Kokanee: *(Add to Bait, Lure or Both)*

Natural Attractants: Krill, Shrimp, Corn, Mixture of Kokanee Scents



Irritants: Garlic & Anise





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## Popular Types of Baits for Kokanee

### Maggots



Real or Synthetic  
Can add scents

### Corn



Scent holders  
Cure, Dye & Create your own "recipe"

### Krill & Shrimp



Good for float fishing

### Worms



Attracts all Species





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## Rods & Reels

**Rods:**

**Downrigger Rod - Medium Soft Action 7-8 Foot**

*(Require very soft action so it doesn't rip the hook)*

**Long Lining Rod – Medium Action 7-8 Foot**

*(Requires a little bit more back bone for inline weights & troll flashers.*

*Be sure to use snubbers when using Medium Action)*

**Kokanee Rod Suggestion (Best Bang for Your Buck!)**

**Shimano Talora 7 Foot Medium Soft Action**





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## Rods & Reels

**Reels: Spool Reels with 8-10lbs Monofilament**

**Baitcast Reels: Best Option! 6:1 Gear Ratio**

*Smooth drag & easy to let line out. Great for downriggers! Line Counters added benefit for long lining!*



**Spinning Reels: Great for Beginners!**

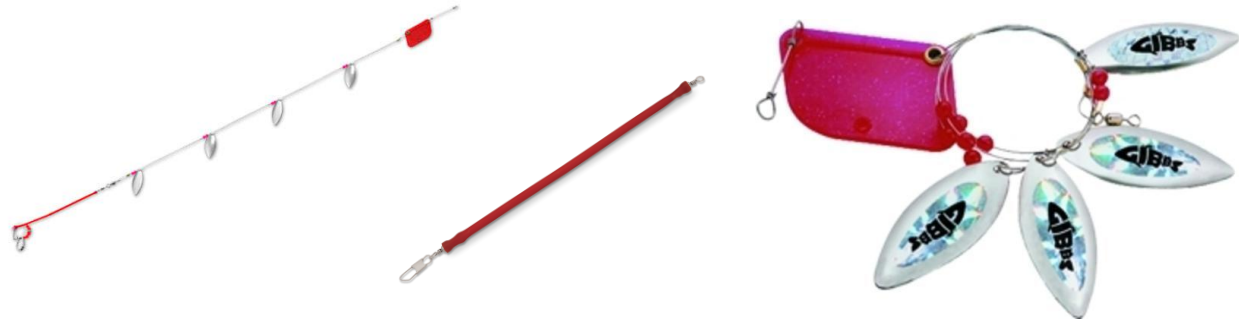
*Be sure to keep an eye on the drag!*





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## Flashers: Gang Trolls & Lake Trolls



- **Great for long lining!**
- **Colorado Blades (Round blades) for slow troll .8 to 1.2mph and willow leaf for faster, 1.2 to 2.0mph**
- **Silver on bright days and copper or darker colours on low light days**
- **Water Clarity will help determine size of flasher to use**
- **Adjust leaders to lure based on water clarity! (Avg Leader 20-28inches)**
- **Use Rubber Snubbers!**
- **Work great as false flashers or ball trolls off downrigger!**



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## Dodgers



- **Preferred Dodgers Manufacture: Mack's Lures Double D 4 Inch Dodger**
  - **Adjustable and comes in a variety of colours!**
- **Great for downriggers!**
- **If long lining be sure to have weight at least 8 inches up the line from Dodger**
- **Tune the action: The action of your Dodger will transfer to your lure. More action more vibration (Sound)**



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# Lures

**Two Types of Lures: Action & Non Action**

**Action Lures: Apex's, Plugs, Spoons**



**Non Action: Spinners (Wedding Rings), Hoochies, Spin N Glos**

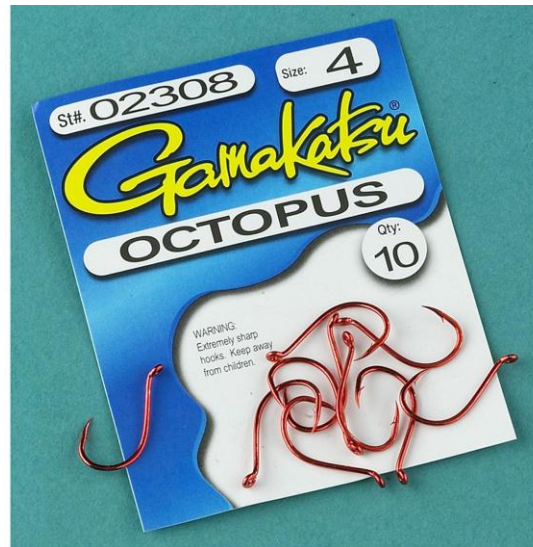




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## Lures & Hooks

- Rigid hooks mounted in lures are frequently the problem. Free floating double rigged hooks behind kokanee lures seem to have an advantage. The lure can act a leverage point!
- Due to the way a Kokanee fights ...add a “Stinger” trailing hook by snelling it to improve catch rate!  
(Check regulations for hook restrictions)
- #2 to #4 red Gamakatsu octopus style hook (depending on fishery)





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## Leaders When Using a Dodger

### Action Lures: Leader Formula

- 20-30 inches or 4 to 5 X the length of dodger
- Ensure the lures own action isn't effected by the dodger

### Non Action Lures: Leader Formula

- Spring: 2.5 to 3 X the length of dodger (Slower action)
- Summer/Fall: 2 to 2.5 X the length of dodger

### Leader Material:

- Monofilament 12-14lbs test! Heavy test because Kokanee attack and destroy your gear!
- Stiffer so it transfer the action from dodger better.... RE-TIE LEADERS!!!





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Leaders When Using a Dodger

# Your BEST Friend!



**Duplicate Results!**





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## Trolling Speeds

### *Knowing Your Trolling Speeds is Critical!!*

#### Late Winter – Early Spring Trolling Speed

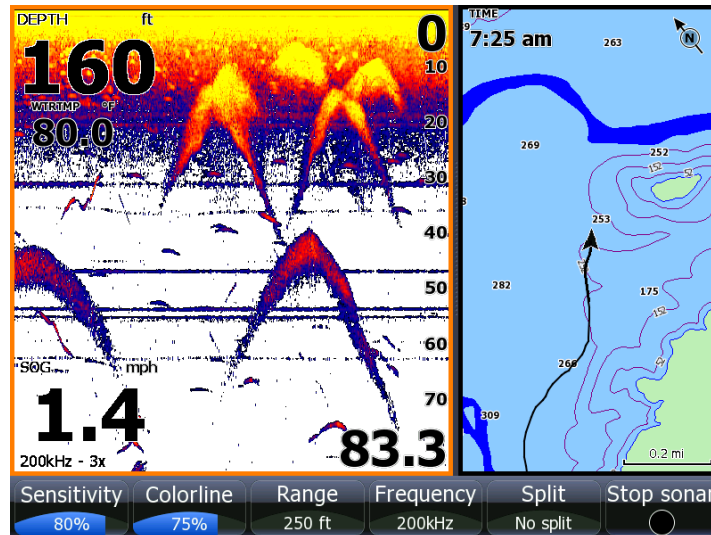
- .8mph to 1.2mph

#### Normal Trolling Speed

- 1.2mph to 1.8mph
- PRIME TROLLING SPEED: 1.2-1.5mph

#### Tips on how to control & determine your speed:

- Tow drift socks or buckets
- No GPS on Sonar, no problem! They have an APP for THAT!





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## Trolling Methods

**How far behind the boat should I troll?**

Surface – 20 feet down – 60' to 100' setback

20 – 40 feet down 35' to 60' setback

40 – 80 feet down 15' to 35' setback

80 – 120 feet down 6' to 15' setback

***Note: When fishing the upper 40 feet, the calmer the water the more you setback!***





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## Trolling Methods

### **Trolling Tactics & Tips: Change it up!!**

*Kokanee will follow your presentation for miles! Change it up and get them to attack your gear!*

- **The Crazy Ivan - 'S' Turns**
- **The Loop d'Loop!** – Troll in large circle around school of Kokanee
- **Dead Stick it!** – Click into Neutral, wait 3-5 seconds & click back
- **Full Throttle!** – Throttle up and down really quickly
- **The DJ!** – Crank the Downrigger half a turn, then back, repeat...
- **Knock on the Door** – Give the line a pull
- **Pump it up!** – Pump the rod when long lining

### ***Tip: Pay Attention to Trolling Directions!***

(With or against the wind? Position of the sun?)

## Trolling Methods

### Long Lining:

- Great method for early spring when fish are on or near the surface!
- Variety of weights between ½ ounce to 6 ounces.
- Fish will be pushed aside when on surface. Have enough line out to make sure to put back into their strike zone once they fall back.
- Planer boards are a huge benefit when the fish are near the surface.
- Mack's Lure Adjustable Dodgers can help!





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## Trolling Methods

### Approximate Depth Chart At 1.5 MPH

Feet Back	1 oz.	1.5 oz.	2 oz.	3 oz.	6 oz.
10	4	5	6	7	9
20	7	8	9	12	16
30	9	11	13	16	23
40	10	13	15	20	29
50	12	15	17	24	35
60	13	16	19	28	40
70	14	18	21	31	46
80	15	19	23	35	51
90	16	20	24	39	56
100	17	21	25	42	61

*Reference from FishwithGary.com*

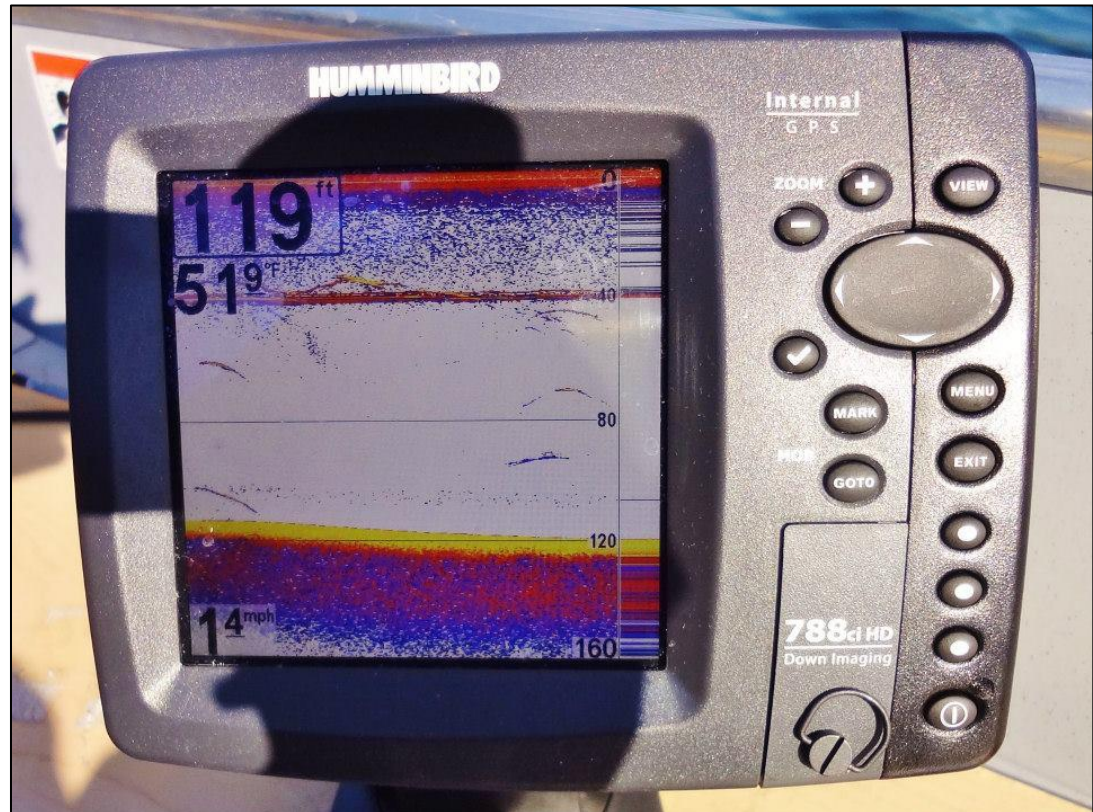


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## Sonar

### Get the Most of Your Electronics

- Use the Chart Plotter! Mark fish and connect the dots! Once you get a bite, mark a way point!
- Set your presentation above the fish, in the right water clarity Kokanee will chase your gear up to 20 feet up!
- Kokanee have long airbladders making them stand out on the sonar screen. Brighter colour on sounder

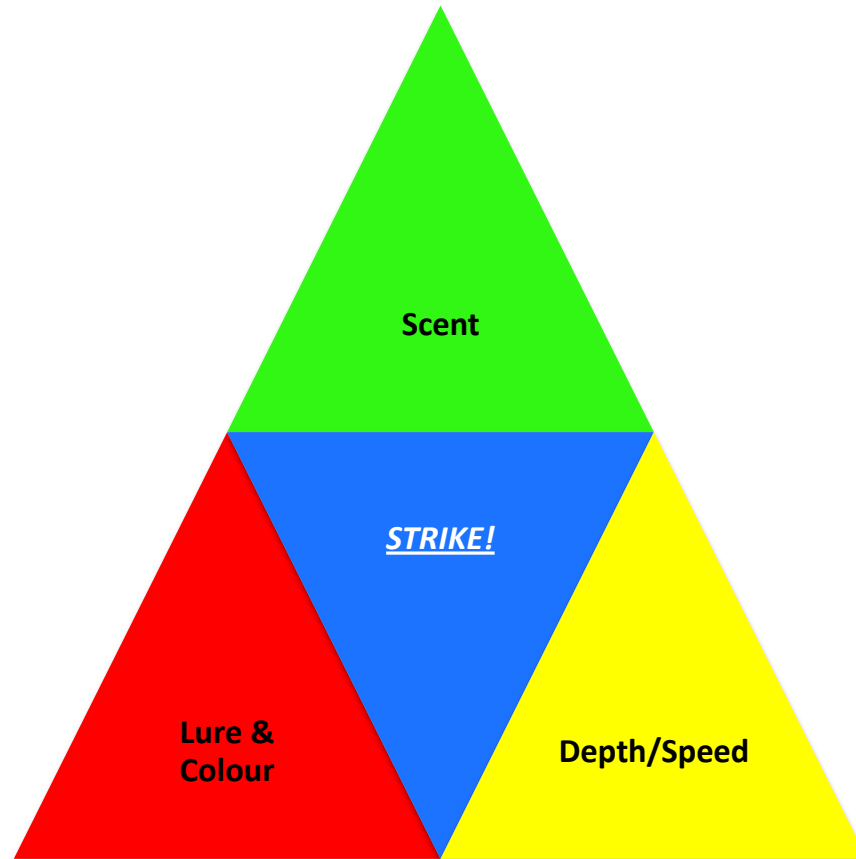




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## Putting it All Together!

### Establishing a Pattern! – Process of Elimination



## Fighting the Fish!

**Most Kokanee that are hooked are lost within 15 feet of the boat!**

- **Don't set the hook!:** Remember Kokanee have soft mouths. Setting the hook will rip the hook out!
- **Bury the Rod Tip** – Stop the Kokanee from coming out of the water & try your best to keep the Dodger or flashers submerged.
- **Slow and Steady Wins the Race:** Wait for the Kokanee to stop rolling then reel in slowly, keeping the rod bent to absorb the fight.
- **Rubber Extendable Nets:** Reduce tangles and the added reach allows you to net the fish away from boat.







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## Taking Care of Your Catch!

### Meal Preparation Starts When You Land the Fish!

- Bleed out your fish right away. This will reduce the “fishy” taste.
- Bring along a cooler of ice and make an ice slurry!
- Invest in a vacuum packer; helps keep fish fresh for a long period of time!





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**Thank You!**