

Under the Surface:

Why Don't More Anglers Use Underwater Cameras?

One day, while fishing a large impoundment (and not catching anything), my partner suggested dropping his underwater camera down on the hump we were working to see just what was down there. I had never used an underwater camera, so I jumped at the opportunity.

He slowly trolled around the offshore hump while I watched the screen. The experience was fascinating. I didn't see any fish there, but just viewing the bottom contours and composition was an eye-opening experience.

Hoping to locate something to catch, we moved to a familiar chunk-rock point that created a current break. We marked balls of bait and prey fish that were stacked on this small point. We immediately landed several solid bass. But I couldn't help but put my rod down and drop the camera below the surface.

What I saw was amazing. In water less than 10 feet deep, baitfish by the tens of thousands were hovering about 2 feet off the bottom. Underneath them sat nearly every type of predatory fish living in the lake – bass, saugers, catfish, crappies, bluegills, white bass and others. Seeing the way each species related to the rocky bottom and current taught me more about fish behavior on that spot in 15 minutes than I had previously learned in two years of fishing it.

After that experience, as I interacted with more professional anglers – walleye and bass pros in particular – I realized underwater cameras are tools serious anglers use on a regular basis to learn about fish behavior and bottom composition. Identifying fish species, size and the type of cover or structure allows anglers to quickly identify productive locations, patterns and fish mood.

There is, however, something about underwater cameras that still puzzles me. Few recreational anglers own one.

Why is that?

There exists a device that shows where your favorite game fish are located and their size, depth and behavior. Worked in unison with a sonar, underwater cameras can make fishing a lot more productive.

So why don't more anglers use these cameras?

Some anglers may feel they are too expensive while others simply have not been exposed to their benefits. Some anglers may also think they are too complicated. I think those are the excuses most anglers use. But if you think about it, for \$200 you can get a quality underwater camera that is simple to use and easily stored in a boat. Anglers often spend more money on a single fishing rod. But other than a depth finder, there really isn't a piece of equipment that can increase fishing productivity more than an underwater camera.

In this issue of FLW Outdoors Magazine, field editor Dave Csanda discusses the advantages of underwater cameras. They are, without a doubt, some of the most underutilized pieces of equipment for walleye anglers. Check it out. We want you to catch more fish. That's our purpose.

Until next time,

