

Ed and Alan, who have known each other, "since we were old enough to know anybody", pass many winter days fishing for lake trout together and keeping an eye on the fishfinder to spot a school of herring passing by.

"They are usually at a different (depth in the water)," says Alan. "If I see them coming through at different height, I go up and bag them. They are much smaller (than lake trout) but tasty."

On Georgian Bay, anglers can keep one lake trout a day under two-feet long between February 8 to March 31 and June 24 to August 31. Between January 1 and February 7 and September 1 and September 30 lake trout can be caught but must be released. An angler can only have one line down at a time while ice fishing.

Peter Agnello, another local guy who loves ice fishing can be found on Georgian Bay all winter following fish from spot to spot. His wife, Laurette jokes that she's a fishing widow from ice-in to ice-out.

"When I hook them, that's the best time," says Peter, who fishes with Al Racho. "When you feel a fish on, that's really exiting, if you lose them, it's 'damn it' and you throw the reel on the floor."

He describes it as a great sport grandparents can do with grandchildren and parents with children. A couple of years ago, he took his six-year-old grandson out on the Bay.

"I put a minnow on my lure, and let it down for him," Peter recalls. "By the time I could get my line down, he said: 'Poppy, I got a bite.' I went over and hooked it for him. He was so happy. So, by the time I set up his line and got my line down again – he got another one. Boy, he was so excited. Then he got fidgety – he wanted to go snowmobiling. They didn't bite after that, for a long time."

Darcy Bain, of McKellar, ice fishes on Georgian Bay with his two children Tristan, 11, and Shaylynn, 8.

"That's basically what they grew up with," said Darcy. "My father was a CO (Ministry of Natural Resources Conservation Officer). They say before I learned how to walk they put a fishing rod in my hand and I just passed the tradition down."

While out fishing, the family cooks hot dogs, goes snowmobiling, and the children learn about the outdoors, Darcy said.

Ice fishing equipment is slightly different than open

water fishing. The most obvious difference is that hole must be augured for ice fishing. The angler has several fishing methods to choose from including, a tip up, a jigging stick, or an ice fishing rod. With a tip up, a line is attached with a minnow on the other end, and a flag goes up to indicate when a fish grabs the bait. A jigging stick looks like a paint stir stick with the line wrapped length-wise and the rod is a smaller version of the summer model most anglers are familiar with.

Unlike Alan and Peter who prefer the speed of a rod, a line can be brought up when on a reel. Lloyd prefers a jigging stick while on the ice.

"I think, when you get a hit with the stick and give it a jerk, you can get the hook better," he says. "I think that's the idea."

For anyone hoping to catch the first fish of the day, it pays to set the hook a little better. After all, it can get a little competitive out on the ice.

"You know, 50 cents for the first fish, something like that," says Lloyd, who is quick to point out he's not normally the winner. "Usually, we find an east wind means you might as well start home - you never have good luck with an east wind."

However, they stay and try their luck anyway.

Ice huts aren't mandatory for good day of fishing, but they offer comfort on bitter cold and windy days. Other than the mandatory Ministry of Natural Resources registration numbers on the outside, ice huts can be built to suit, providing everything from separate seats to a bench to snooze on and from wood-stoves to propane stoves. Some fishingmen use an underwater camera to see what they're after, while others use a fishfinder, the beep and picture telling them if there are fish below.

"I've been building fish shacks all my life," said Peter. "When I was 12, I used to build fish shacks out of cardboard."

His most recent hut is made out of wood and corugated metal, a bench suitable for

Tristan Bain, 10, left, and Tanner Simms, 7, hold up fish caught while ice fishing on Georgian Bay.



The Mullen fish hut on Lake Rosseau.

Ice fishing is a tradition in Darcy Bain's family and he continues to make the most of the winter fishing season by fishing with his children on Georgian Bay.

