

Taxidermy tips for your trophy fish

By Bryce Bellomo,

Always take photos. Shortly after being caught a fish will begin to lose its coloration. Good color photographs immediately after the catch can enable a skilled taxidermist to duplicate the natural color tones and scale tipping of that particular individual fish.

Do not gut your fish, or attempt to dispatch it by cutting the throat!

Handle carefully especially the fins. Keep your trophy fish separate from others. If in a cooler or fish box, keep your fish on top of others. This will help to eliminate any blotchiness of the skin that may occur if other fish lay on top of it. Do not gut or otherwise cut or damage your fish. Do not place your fish in a plastic bag or wrap it in newspaper.

Freezing. If you have access to a freezer you will need a board, or some other type of rigid surface that is as long as the fish is, a towel or cloth (preferably towel), and a plastic bag or plastic sheeting. Wet the towel, place on top of the board then place the fish on the towel (some fish may require more than one towel). Do this with the show side up (side with less scarring,

missing scales, damaged fins, or the side you prefer to have facing away from the wall). Then wrap the fish in the wet towel and put in a plastic bag or on top of plastic sheet and wrap in plastic. Make sure all fins are flat against the fish's body and not folded (to prevent breakage). Then place fish wrapped in towel and plastic on board into freezer and freeze solid. A fish frozen with this method can safely be kept in the freeze for months, sometimes years (though not recommended).

If you will not have access to a freezer within 48 hours or with large slimy fish such as northern pike or muskie then the following procedure would apply. Determine the "show" side of the trophy. Keep "show side" up at all times. Cover both sides of the fish with 20 Mule Team Borax then gently wipe borax off from head to tail being careful around fins (be sure to also get under fins) the idea is to remove the borax and along with most of the slime. Then repeat this procedure a second time except you may leave a light coat of the borax on the fish with exception of the fins. Every bit doesn't have to be removed from the fins, just make an attempt to



remove most of it as it will make the fins dry out and become brittle. Lay the fish on a flat surface with ice underneath to keep the fish cold. Do not lay the fish directly on the ice itself. You may not need the ice depending on air temperatures at the time the fish was caught.

If you are ice fishing, the entire outdoors is your freezer! In this instance you can place the fish outdoors to freeze, ideally it should be placed on a rigid surface on top of a piece of freezer paper or towel and plastic as described earlier. Alternatively, place the trophy fish directly on the snow, not on the ice. It needs to be on a completely flat surface

so that nothing is poking into it and creating sharp edges on your trophy.

Keep in mind these are guidelines for the best results. Even a poorly cared for and damaged fish can be repaired and mounted with great results by a skilled taxidermist although most will charge for excessive repairs.

If you decide on releasing your fish and would like to get a lifelike fiberglass reproduction the following things should be done.

Measure length. The live fish must be measured before releasing it back into

the water. The most essential measurement necessary is the overall length. This is a measurement from the tip of the nose to the tip of the tail with the fish laying flat.

Measure girth. With a soft flexible tape such as a nylon

tape measure (available most places that sell sewing or craft supplies, or a retractable nylon tape available thru taxidermy suppliers and thru some taxidermists) take a girth measurement, a circumference measurement around the largest part of the body (directly in front of the soft dorsal fin) is also helpful, although not essential if the fish is stressed. If the fish is stressed a length measurement and a photo will work as a girth estimate can be made from the photograph. **Take photos.** While taking photos, being careful not to stress your fish! Good photographs will enable a taxidermist to create an accurate fiberglass reproduction of your fish.

Please remember that the less you stress a fish the better chance it has for survival. With that in mind, the two most important pieces of information you can supply to a taxidermist is a nose to tail length measurement and a color photograph.

Angler breaks state record for golden redhorse

Angler Ethan Rasset has broken the state record for golden redhorse in the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' certified weight category.

Rasset caught the 4-pound, 8-ounce redhorse on the Otter Tail River after setting out April 7 with his fishing buddies to lure some roughfish like carp into biting. His rod was rigged with a green artificial twister-tail bait with 15-pound test line when the fish hit in the early afternoon.

"I had to make one last cast into a spot where I knew there was a deep hole," Rasset said. "I thought it was a greater or silver redhorse at first because of its size, but as I got it closer to shore and I saw it flicker I knew it was a big golden."

Rasset took the fish to a store in Moorhead to get the fish weighed on a certified scale, where two observers witnessed the weighing. Two fisheries experts from the Fergus Falls DNR office confirmed that the species of the fish was in fact a golden redhorse.

The golden redhorse has been a popular record fish in the past few years with new state records broken in four of the last five years. In 2014, the record was set at 4 pounds, was broken in 2016 with a 4-pound 4-ounce fish; broken again in 2017 with a 4-pound 7-ounce fish; and now the new state record is Rasset's golden redhorse weighing 4 pounds 8 ounces and measuring 22-1/2 inches in length and 12-3/4 inches in girth.

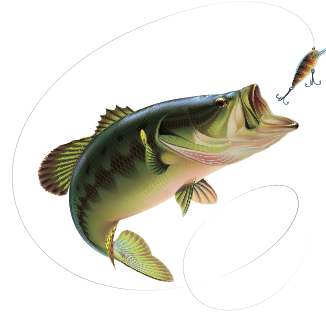
There are two kinds of Minnesota state records: one for catching and keeping the biggest fish in each species based on certified weight; and the other for the length of a caught and released muskellunge, northern pike, lake



sturgeon or flathead catfish.

The DNR announces new state records in news releases, on social media and on

the DNR website. Find current records and guidelines for each type of state record at mndnr.gov/recordfish.



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