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## Duluthian creates app to attract fish with underwater sounds

Greg Bambenek remembers as a kid going out on the Mississippi River with his dad, putting out set lines for flathead catfish. In a rowboat, the two would set out 50 baits, all suspended from one long cord. When the last one was baited and dropped, Bambenek's dad, a commercial fisherman, would always whack the water with a paddle.

By: **Sam Cook**, Duluth News Tribune

Greg Bambenek remembers as a kid going out on the Mississippi River with his dad, putting out set lines for flathead catfish. In a rowboat, the two would set out 50 baits, all suspended from one long cord. When the last one was baited and dropped, Bambenek's dad, a commercial fisherman, would always whack the water with a paddle.

"He'd say, 'That should bring 'em in,'" Bambenek said. "I knew there was something going on with sound."

Duluth's Bambenek, now 64, has spent a lot of his free time finding ways to catch more fish, and his latest is all about sound. He has developed an app called TalkWithFish for iPhones, iPads and iPods that allows anglers to play sounds underwater with an attached speaker. Sounds like bass crunching crayfish, bluegills chomping beetles and — yes — herring farts.

If you play it, they will come. At least that's Bambenek's theory.

"Sound brings them in from farther away, and it turns them into a striking mood, either for feeding or to kill," said the longtime angler, a consulting psychiatrist in his day job.

The sounds can be heard up to 100 yards away from the speaker, Bambenek claims.

You may recall that Bambenek also is the guy who created Dr. Juice attractant scents, liquid you squeeze from a small bottle onto your fishing lures to give fish one more reason to strike. He went public with Dr. Juice in 1980, and it's still on the market.

Bambenek began experimenting with underwater sound devices at least 20 years ago, he said. He lives on London Road with Lake Superior in his backyard. He would drop a speaker down through the ice while he fished for Kamloops rainbow trout.

"I'd crush up some eggs and some scent and make it smell like fish spawning," Bambenek said. "Then, at the Lester River, I'd record the sound of a brook. I'd play that under my hole."

He was appealing to the rainbows' desire to seek out a North Shore stream for spawning. He imagined a trout thinking, "It smells like (a stream). It sounds like it. It's gotta be here somewhere."

"It would bring in more fish," Bambenek said. "I kept doing more and more research on it."

With the advent of Apple's app technology and devices like the iPhone, he had a way to both market and play the sounds. The "TalkWithFish" app sells for 99 cents at the App Store on Apple devices. Anglers can order a cable and speaker for \$39.95 that plugs into the iPhone or other device. From there, it's merely a matter of selecting the kind of fish you want to catch and choosing one of the sounds Bambenek has recorded to lure fish closer.

On his website, [www.talkwithfish.com](http://www.talkwithfish.com), Bambenek has videos showing anglers catching salmon while playing the sounds of salmon moving gravel onto their spawning beds, catching sharks in the Bahamas using lobster stridulation calls (rubbing their antennae on ridges of their shells) and crab-crunching calls, and catching smallmouth bass using the sounds of bass slashing at shiners.

So-called herring farts are sounds that herring make by expelling gas, Bambenek said.

"The theory is they're communicating their location at night so the school can stay together," he said. "Salmon and trout are hearing these sounds. When the sun comes up, they want to be where the school is."

In some cases, the TalkWithFish underwater speaker is just suspended overboard. For wading streams, Bambenek suggests wearing the speaker near the foot of waders. While bass fishing, he has attached it to his trolling motor with a bungee cord.

Bambenek said he had the speakers ready a couple of years ago, but it took him a year and a half to get the Apple app approved. That approval came May 29.

The 99-cent app gets an angler three basic sounds: bass chewing crayfish, herring farts and bluegills chomping beetles. With additional in-app purchases, an angler can get another 21 freshwater calls for \$2.99, another 19 saltwater calls for \$2.99, 39 fresh- or saltwater calls for \$2.99, or all 79 calls for \$6.99.

Another underwater sound system for anglers, called HydroWave, sells for \$399.99. It does not use Apple technology.

Bambenek's interest in attracting fish with sound and scent is a logical extension of his day job, he said.

"Being a psychiatrist, I'm interested in animal behavior and trying to change behavior," he said. "One aspect of that is trying to get them to come to you, then to get them to bite your hook."

Just make sure you don't drop your iPhone in the lake.

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