

Electronics 103: What Are You Looking At

Eric Prey & Mike Webb

In the first two installments of this series Mike Webb and I helped you to pick out and set up your LCD electronics. Experienced or not, the images that you see on your graph can be a bit confusing. Nothing will take the place of time on the water when it comes to becoming familiar with all of the different objects and being able to tell the difference between a fish and the tree or brush pile it is positioned over.

Remember that what you see and how it appears on your graph is effected greatly by the speed you are traveling over the bottom and the other objects under your boat. The faster you move the more the fish will be "arched" and the trees will look like trees, in short the more it will look like the simulator mode. Also, remember that all objects will appear to start deep move shallow and back to deep as you go over them, in other words all objects will be arched as you move over them. The more familiar you become with the images on your graph the more readily apparent what each object is will be. The following list will help you to get a better idea of what each item you are looking at is:

- Groups of continuous horizontal lines with little or no vertical movement – trees and individual limbs in those trees.
- Single continuous horizontal lines with some vertical movement – inactive fish.
- Single or multiple lines moving toward the surface in a fast uninterrupted manner – air bubbles.
- Single or multiple lines moving toward the surface in a varied manner – active fish feed or chasing bait toward the surface.
- Single or multiple lines moving both toward the surface and bottom in a random and varied manner – a school of very aggressive fish!
- Single or multiple lines moving toward the bottom – fish moving deeper, usually caused by the fish being spooked by your boat or lure. Note these fish can still be caught! Work them hard and you can catch them.
- Oddly shaped light grey "blobs" with dark outline – schools of shad, the tighter and rounder the ball the better chance there are fish in the area.
- Oddly shaped light grey "blobs" on the bottom – could be shad or could be brush piles, cedar trees in particular.
- Additional lines lifting off and returning to the bottom – a fish holding tight to the bottom or the cover on the bottom.
- A line or lines with shadows under them rising from the bottom – This is usually found around docks – dock cables.

In addition you should visit www.lowrance.com and go through their sonar tutorial, it has animated graphics that will help you better understand how sonar works and how the images on your graph are processed to represent what is under your boat.

Tip of the Month

Running two sonar units at the same time on the same boat will cause a great deal of interference between the two units and limit their performance. If you want to run your GPS at the console while running an LCD on the bow without interference, simply hit "stop chart" on your GPS and it will stop the LCD graph feature on the unit. When you want to move and use the LCD graph just re-start the chart.

Eric Prey is a Professional Angler and Coast Guard Licensed Fishing Guide. Annually Eric competes in over 30 Regional Tournaments, conducts over 150 guided fishing trips and writes over twenty published fishing articles. His knowledge of both techniques and technology make him a trusted source of information regarding fishing techniques and marine electronics.