

FISHING HOLE ALDER LAKE

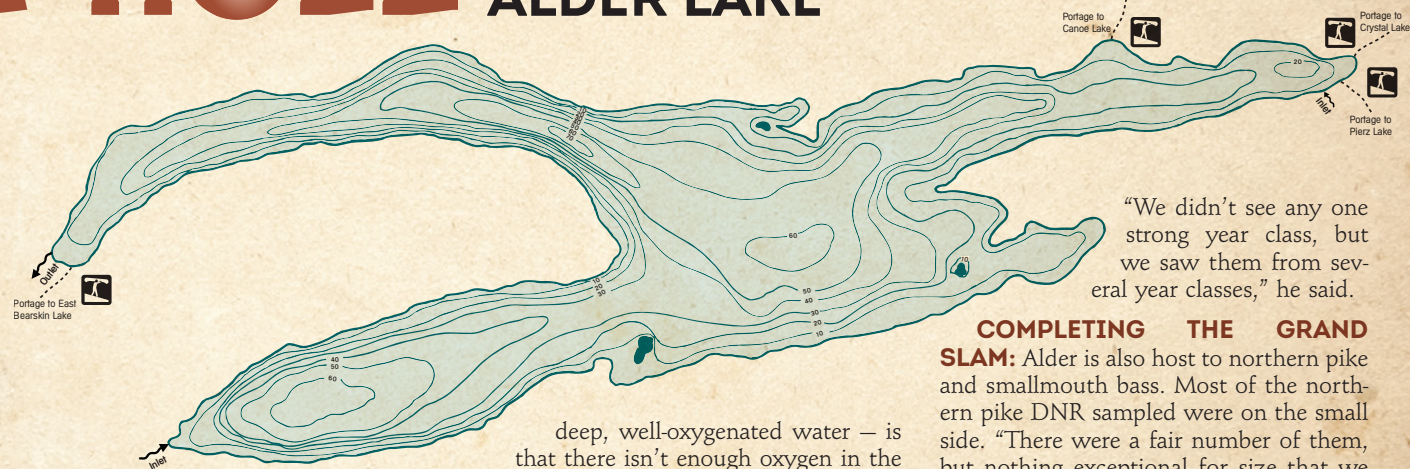
WHY GO: As far as lakes in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness go, Alder is fairly accessible. It's a lake that gives anglers the chance to catch a grand slam — walleye, lake trout, smallmouth bass and northern pike. Come winter, it's a destination for laker anglers.

ACCESS: The quickest way to get here is from East Bearskin Lake, using BWCAW Entry Point 64. Nancy Seaton of Hungry Jack Canoe Outfitters said the 48-rod portage, from south finger on the east side of East Bearskin, is the easier way to get there. There's also an 80-rod portage on the northerly finger on the east side of East Bearskin. On the east side of Alder, there are two portages, a 22-rod from Canoe Lake and a 19-rod from Pierz Lake, according to Voyageur Map No. 10.

VITALS: Alder Lake is entirely in Cook County and the BWCAW, in the portion that's north and east of the Gunflint Trail. It's a 528-acre lake with a maximum depth of 72 feet.

GAME SPECIES PRESENT: Lake trout, walleye, smallmouth bass, northern pike, yellow perch.

LAKER DESTINATION: Steve Persons, Minnesota DNR's Grand Marais area fisheries supervisor, said Alder was most recently surveyed this past spring and the lake seemed largely unchanged since a



survey conducted in 2010.

"We saw fish from several age classes," Persons said.

The lake is targeted in the spring and during the winter hard-water season by lake trout anglers. Persons said fish up to 5 pounds were sampled in the spring. He said lakers in the lake target invertebrates, green sunfish, occasionally small smallmouth bass and sculpins. "They are opportunistic," he said.

Lake trout abundance has historically been low in the lake, a trend that continued, but the presence of difference year classes suggests they are doing OK. Of concern for Alder — and many other marginal lake trout lakes that lack large volumes of

deep, well-oxygenated water — is that there isn't enough oxygen in the depths of the lake in longer, warmer summers, Persons said.

"If there isn't a lot of that deeper water, oxygen can disappear," he said.

WALLEYES: Walleye abundance has been typically low on Alder, but Persons said there was a slight uptick this past spring. "There was a good range of sizes," he said, noting that fish up to seven pounds were sampled. "And they were plump, healthy-looking fish. They were finding something to eat, even though the lake doesn't have many perch."

He said walleye were probably eating sculpins and invertebrates, as well. Walleye reproduction on the lake appears to be doing OK.

"We didn't see any one strong year class, but we saw them from several year classes," he said.

COMPLETING THE GRAND SLAM: Alder is also host to northern pike and smallmouth bass. Most of the northern pike DNR sampled were on the small side. "There were a fair number of them, but nothing exceptional for size that we saw," he said.

Smallmouth bass don't typically turn up in the gill nets that DNR employs, so few were sampled. Anglers do report catching many smallies, including some dandies, Persons said. There's a chance of catching a keeper perch, especially for those jigging for walleyes, but there are not a lot of perch in the lake and most are on the small side, according to Persons.

CAMP OUT: Alder is perfect for a Boundary Waters day trip, since it is easy to get to and has seven campsites. Compared to other BWCAW lakes, it gets moderate fishing pressure, but compared to other lakes of its size around the state, the fishing pressure is light, Persons said. —*Javier Serna*