

FISHING HOLE

BLACK BAY, LAKE SUPERIOR

WHY GO: In recent years, Black Bay has become one of the hottest yellow perch spots for ice fishing in Ontario. There's also good lake trout and salmon fishing for boaters in the summer.

ACCESS: Hurkett is about an hour's drive north and east of Thunder Bay on the Trans-Canada Highway.

VITALS: Black Bay is the expansive bay located to the east of Sleeping Giant Provincial Park. At about 60,000 hectares, the bay has a surface area of about 150,000 acres. According to Fritz Fischer, fisheries assessment supervisor with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, the average depth is between 15 and 20 feet north of Bent Island. South of Bent Island, where fewer dare to venture, there's depths dropping off into the 100-foot range.

GAME SPECIES PRESENT: Yellow perch, walleye, northern pike, lake trout, Chinook salmon, coho salmon, steelhead trout.

YELLOW PERCH: After a commercial fishery for perch and walleye on the bay was closed down in 2003, the perch fishery rebounded fairly dramatically, Fischer said. "There was an initial increase until about 2008, a really dramatic increase," Fischer said. "It's kind of leveled off from there." But it's lev-

eled off to a place where many anglers expect to fill their 25-perch limit.

Fischer said most of the better perch action is on the shallower side of Bent Island—to the north.

"There are some jumbos out there, too," Fischer said. "Some people do limit it out."

Light panfish gear will get the job done, along with brightly-colored or gold jigs, tipped with minnows.

BE SAFE: The reason few travel south of Bent Island is because it's deeper and the ice conditions can be much more variable. "The deeper water is closer to the lake, so it's often very sketchy out there," Fischer said. "People don't want to die."

Regardless of where you choose to fish on the bay, be careful. "Take all of your normal precautions," he said. "Have everything you need to be safe on the ice."

HOUSE RENTALS: Shelter is just about required on Black Bay because of the wind, which can bite even on milder days. So bring your shelter and anchors to deal with the mighty wind. Or rent a fish house from Hamilton Baits in Hurkett. They can be reached at 807-857-1462.

WALLEYE: The walleye fishery has not recovered, and is closed north of Bent Island. "People do fish for them south of Bent Island, and some big fish are caught down there," Fischer said, who noted the regulations (namely, the possession limits) differ on that portion of Black Bay than from the rest of the province. While the provincial possession limit is six walleye and/or sauger per day (combined), the possession limit is one fish for those with a conservation license tag and two fish for those with a sport fishing license tag.

COME BACK IN THE SUMMER: For whatever reason, few spend any time fishing for yellow perch during the warm water months, Fischer said. Instead, the angling attention shifts to lake trout and salmon for boaters, once the ice disappears from the bay, which typically occurs in late May.

"If you go out for salmon, you will more likely catch more lake trout than salmon," Fischer said. Most of the salmon that are around are Chinook, but there are occasional catches of coho salmon.

