

# FISHING HOLE LAX LAKE

**WHY GO:** It's a multi-species lake with more than just your standard walleye, pike and smallmouth populations. You can also pursue largemouth bass, crappies, bluegills and yellow perch. It's a scenic lake, with one side of its shoreline mostly undeveloped and backing up to Tettegouche State Park.

**ACCESS:** A DNR concrete boat ramp with a dock, toilet and five vehicle/trailer parking spaces sits on the northeast shore of Lax Lake. It's seven miles north of Beaver Bay on C.R. 4.

**VITALS:** This 295-acre Lake County lake is about five miles south and southwest of Finland. The lake has 3.91 miles of shoreline. It has a maximum depth of 35 feet and a mean depth of 10 feet, according to Minnesota Lakefinder, which lists its average water clarity at 8.2 feet.

**GAME SPECIES PRESENT:** Walleye, northern pike, largemouth bass, black crappie, bluegill, hybrid sunfish, pumpkinseed and yellow perch.

**RAMPED UP WALLEYE STOCKING:** The state doubled its walleye stocking regimen on Lax Lake a few years ago, according to Dean Paron, DNR's Finland area fisheries supervisor. "It's had inconsistent recruitment," Paron said, noting that there appears to be very little, if any, natural reproduction of walleyes on Lax. "Hopefully, by stocking

every year, we will have less gaps in year classes present." The lake was stocked every other year, and now is getting walleyes every year, a management decision that will be evaluated in 2018 and 2022, said Paron. This will hopefully end the scenario where a single bad year class would in theory leave the lake with one good year class over a four-year period.

The latest survey, conducted in 2014, showed walleyes sampled at the lowest rate in the past 20 years. That survey did show there were some nice-sized walleyes swimming around, though. The walleyes sampled average 2.21 pounds and 17.6 inches, and the largest fish was 25.8 inches. "I guess one thing anglers have been talking about is being able to catch big walleyes, just not the smaller ones preferred for the table," Paron said.

**WINTER 'EYES:** Lax is one of those lakes that ice anglers seem to have success in fishing for walleyes, unlike the majority of lakes in Lake and Cook counties. Paron hasn't figured out why. "I don't know," he said. "I think maybe this is a lake that has residents on it that know the lake well, know the holes and have more experience on it, maybe more knowledge. I am stumped as to why some lakes that

are fantastic summer walleye fisheries seem to be almost impossible to figure out in the winter. I am not sure why this lake is a little different. There is nothing that sticks out."

**OLE BUCKET-MOUTH:** While



15 and 19-inches in length. "There is the chance for a trophy," Paron said. Many of the fish sampled carry black spot parasites, which give them a black pepper appearance. These fish are safe to eat, according to DNR.

**PANFISH FUN:** There are a mix of panfish, including some nice bluegills and black crappies, which are probably the two most common and worth pursuing at Lax. While the gear has turned up pumpkinseed, hybrid sunfish and yellow perch, those fish all were on the small side. "There is quality to some of the bluegills," Paron said.

**CAMP OUT:** Lax Lake Resort, which first opened in 1928, is the only business on the lake. It rents a 15-site campground that operates from June-October. The resort also rents cabins.—*Javier Serna*

largemouth bass aren't as common as smallmouth bass, they do swim in Lax. "It's one of the few that has largemouth bass with the numbers and size worth pursuing," Paron said, noting that bucketmouths first starting showing up in the sampling gear back in 2006. "The last couple of surveys found a decent number." The latest survey showed fish up to 19 inches long.

**PIKE:** That latest survey did turn up one fish that was at least 35 inches long, but most of the pike in the survey were between