

FISHING HOLE

MISTLETOE LAKE

WHY GO: Mistletoe's general remoteness keeps the fishing pressure low and makes it a place you can probably have to yourself for the day.

ACCESS: There's a DNR carry-in access trail from Caribou Trail (C.R. 4) across state land to the east bay of the lake. Also, you can portage in from the southwest end of Holly Lake.

VITALS: This 145-acre Cook County lake, (near Lutsen), is fairly shallow, with a maximum depth of six feet.

FISH SPECIES PRESENT: Walleye, northern pike, yellow perch, pumpkinseed, white sucker.

SAMPLED: Minnesota DNR fisheries got into Mistletoe to survey the lake in 2014 for the first time since 1989, according to Grand Marais area fisheries supervisor Steve Persons. Among the surprises were the presence of pumpkinseed sunfish, which likely got into the lake via Holly Lake, and shallower depths than they were expecting. "Some of these lake maps are pretty old and the techniques they used weren't always the best," Persons said. "It's not unusual to see some pretty striking differences between what the map says and what's actually there." Despite much of the lake being shallower than five feet, there was no evidence of winterkill in the survey. "There is a fair amount of water moving through it, even during the winter," Persons said.

WALLEYES: DNR set both gill nets and trap nets. It's hard to say just how good or bad the

walleye population is doing, Persons said, because a below-average number of walleyes were found in the gill nets while a higher-than-average number of walleyes were counted in the trap nets.

"I don't know if I would say walleyes were abundant," he said. "I would settle on average compared to similar lakes."

A single larger walleye, falling into the 25- to 29-inch range, was sampled, with most of the walleyes between 12 and 19 inches. The lake isn't stocked. "It's self-sustaining," Persons said. "It looks like there is pretty good reproduction in there. That was good to see. They have a fair amount to eat. There's a yellow perch population, and that always benefits walleye."

While there are lots of yellow perch in the lake, there aren't many big ones, which means they are probably not worth an angler's attention.

NORTHERN PIKE: According to Persons, while no fish were surveyed that were 30 inches or larger, the toothy fish were fairly abundant in the lake, with a lot of fish longer than 20 inches and many approaching 30 inch lengths. "It's better than a lot of other lakes," he said. That's where the lake's remote nature probably helps, since anglers can quickly wipe out a population of larger pike, especially on a smaller lake such as Mistletoe.—*Javier Serna*

