

FISHING HOLE

NORTH FOWL LAKE

WHY GO: It's one of the few lakes in Cook County where walleyes can be consistently caught in the winter and because it is on the Canada border, the season doesn't close until April 14.

ACCESS: There is a gravel boat launch on the Ontario side, accessed from Hwy. 593, south of Silver Mountain. On the Minnesota side, there is access via a channel with South Fowl Lake, which can be accessed by a logging road off C.R. 16. Some get in by snowmobile, and on ATVs in the winter, but it should be cautioned that the trail leading down to the lake is steep and can be difficult in the winter. North Fowl can be reached by canoe and portage via the Royal River in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW), the river also reached by C.R. 16 to Little John Lake to John Lake.

VITALS: This 1,020-acre lake (1,144-acres via hectare conversion according to Ontario records) sits on the Ontario border and has a maximum depth of 10 feet. The Minnesota portion of the lake is in the Superior National Forest. It's western shore is on the edge of the BWCAW.

GAME SPECIES PRESENT: Walleye, smallmouth bass, northern pike, burbot and yellow perch.

WINTER WALLEYE: For whatever reason, many of the walleye lakes in Cook County don't provide consistent action in the winter. North Fowl has always been known as an exception to that rule. Though Minnesota DNR hasn't done a fish survey on the lake since 1998, Grand Marais area manager Steve Persons said the lake appears to remain a pretty solid walleye fishery. "If problems had developed there, we probably would have heard about it," he said. The Grand Marais office used to hear a lot about the fishing there from a fisheries technician, who had a cabin there but has since retired. "He is probably up there right now," Persons said.

PERCH PURSUIT: North Fowl is also an exception when it comes to yellow perch. Unlike a lot of lakes in this neck of the woods, North Fowl's perch have been known to reach the coveted 12-inch size. "You can see fair numbers of perch up to 12 inches there," Persons said. "It's probably best known in the winter for its perch fishing."

THE REST: North Fowl is known for having lots of northern pike, but most are of the handle-hammer variety. The shallow lake also hosts burbot, according to Ontario records. And the lake has some smallmouth bass in it.



DIFFERENT RULES: One way to fish the Ontario side of the lake, without driving over the Canada border, is with the Remote Area Border Crossing permit, which can be acquired with a bit of hassle, way in advance through the mail, or in person at any port of entry (Pigeon River is the closest). Minnesota anglers fishing the Ontario side, of course, still need an Ontario fishing license, and they can transport fish over Minnesota waters as long as they don't stop to fish. The lake, along with South Fowl, has a 10-horsepower limit on the Minnesota side.—Javier Serna