

FISHING HOLE

ROUND LAKE

WHY GO: Despite a fair amount of traffic as the portages to two BWCAW entry points are on Round, the lake doesn't receive a whole ton of fishing pressure. Managed for walleyes and smallmouth bass, Round is a decent place to fish for either species.

ACCESS: There is no boat ramp on the lake. There's a carry-in access on the north side of the lake for canoes and small boats. This access is near the end of the Gunflint Trail, off Round Lake Road, from which you will follow the signs and turn right onto Forest Service Road 1495. Though the lake sits entirely outside of the BWCAW, the entry points for 51 (Missing Link) and No. 52 Brant Lake (by way of West Round and Edith lakes) are accessed via two portage trails on the south-west side of the lake.

VITALS: This 148-acre Cook County lake sits mostly inside the Superior National Forest, with some private property on the north side of the lake, where Tuscarora Outfitters operates. According to the Minnesota DNR, the lake is 45 feet deep, with average water clarity at 15.5 feet.

GAME SPECIES PRESENT: Northern pike, smallmouth bass, walleyes, white suckers, and yellow perch.

WALLEYES: While most people that set paddle on Round rarely take time to fish it, the lake is a decent walleye hole.

"It's kind of a flyover lake," said Andy Mc-

Donnell, co-owner of Tuscarora Lodge, speaking of typical canoe trippers on the lake, coming and going. "All of their stuff is packed. They never even give it a thought."

But McDonnell does manage to fish the lake a little every year, and he hears reports from his guests on the lake, which generally check out with a 2015 fisheries survey conducted by Minnesota DNR. The survey turned up fair numbers of walleye, with five year classes present.

"The majority of the walleye are 14 to 16, even 18 inches," McDonnell said.

DNR manages the lake for ol' marble eyes, as well as smallmouth bass, and the most recent survey was the first of three scheduled in a 2014 lake management plan that will determine whether a stocking regimen starting in 2009 (a cycle of stocking for two consecutive years, followed by no stocked fish for two consecutive years) would produce a walleye fishery that meets a long-term goal of three fish per set, with fish over 20 inches.

That first survey, which employed both trap and gill nets, jibed with McDonnell's observations, with most of the fish between 12 and 19 inches. Indeed, two fish in the survey did measure at least 20 inches.

June, as the water temps warm, offers typically the best walleye fishing, he said, but there's a classic fall walleye bite on the lake, with fish tending to hold deep, when some big walleyes have been caught in the deeper

waters.

"You fish the big holes with big bait and minnows, but it is painfully slow," he said.

SMALLIES: While Round may be managed for smallmouth bass, it's status as a decent smallie hole has yet to be reflected in DNR's survey, though bass don't always turn up in the gear fisheries crew tend to use.

"I see one legit 20-inch smallmouth bass a year," McDonnell said, noting that a number of 16-inchers tend to turn up, too.

That recent survey showed a strong group of three-year-old fish from the 2012 year class.

The survey suggested that growth of young smallmouth bass was slow, with three-year-old fish reaching just 6.1 inches by the end of their third year.

PICKIN' UP SPARE PERCH: While the survey showed only five perch total, and none of any size, McDonnell said the lake does have a few decent-sized perch.

"If people are looking for yellow perch, this is not a bad lake for it," he said, noting the occasional 13- and 14-inch perch reported.



While there are also white suckers in Round, yellow perch are the main forage fish for the lake's predators, which include northern pike. Round isn't known for its pike, though McDonnell said he hears occasionally of decent fish caught, the biggest being a 40-inch-er.—*Javier Serna*