

FISHING HOLE

SILVER ISLAND LAKE

WHY GO: This multi-species lake is a good option for pre-opening day crappie action and it's also a good place to pursue walleyes. There are also rustic and backcountry campsites on the lake. Besides from that, there's a lake whitefish population and it has a netting season in the fall.

ACCESS: The main access is a concrete boat ramp located inside the U.S. Forest Service campground. To get there, from Temperance River State Park, take F.R. 343 inland for 4.5 miles and take a left at the T intersection onto F.R. 166 (The 600 Road). Follow for five miles to C.R. 7 and turn right, driving for 9 miles through several intersections. Turn left onto F.R. 369. Drive 2.5 miles and take a right onto F.R. 921 (Silver Island Access Road). The campground is 1.5 miles up the road.

VITALS: This 1,238-acre lake lies entirely in the Superior National Forest and Lake County. Despite having lake whitefish, it's a relatively shallow lake, with a maximum depth of 16 feet and water clarity of 5.3 feet, according to a DNR survey conducted in 2012. There are some shallow areas with boulder hazards, particularly in the north-west corner of the lake and southern basin, so navigate with caution.

GAME SPECIES PRESENT: Black crappie, lake whitefish, northern pike, pumpkinseed, rock bass, walleye and yellow perch.

CRAPPIE: Dick Stern, a DNR fisheries technician at the Finland area office, said crappie at Silver Island Lake are better than average for the area, where the fish are hit or miss, in general. On a year such as this, with a potentially early spring, a few anglers will likely venture out to Silver Island to pursue crappies once the ice breaks up.

"There are some nice fish," he said, noting that the last time the lake was surveyed in 2012, trap-netted crappies averaged 0.85 pounds per fish. "There's a lot of minnows for them to eat out there in the lake," he said, listing off several present in the lake, including spottail shiners, darters and log perch, among others, that likely make up a bit of the crappie diet.

For panfish, the lake also has a few other species, such as rock bass, pumpkinseed and yellow perch, but crappie are tops. Yellow perch do reach that desirable eating size in the lake, Stern said, but not enough for many to target the fish.

WALLEYE: Because of the darker water, Stern said, Silver Island is one of the better places to fish walleye during the day. "It's

that brown bog stain," he said. While a few walleyes do reach nicer lengths, the lake is known more for quantity than quality. "There's some here and there," he said, noting that the longest to turn up in the most recent survey was 24 inches. "When they get big enough, they can feed on lake whitefish," he said. Most anglers use live bait and either drift or troll, and a jig and minnow is also popular early in the season.

WHITEFISH: Despite being fairly shallow, the lake does have a lake whitefish population, though numbers in the latest survey were below average for the lake class. It's one of only two lakes in the area with a whitefish-netting season.

CAMPING: The U.S. Forest Service has eight rustic camp sites at its campground and three backcountry campsites on its shores (one of them is on an island), which are accessible by boat only. The sites cannot be reserved and there is no fee, but there is no potable water available and visitors must pack out their trash.—*Javier Serna*

