

FISHING HOLE

TROUT LAKE

WHY GO: While there are few larger lake trout swimming in Trout Lake, it does have a wild population that is made up of quite a few smaller fish. It also is stocked with rainbow trout, giving trout-minded anglers more than one option. The presence of brook trout gives anglers the chance for a triple trout challenge.

ACCESS: There is a carry-down access to the northwest corner of the lake off F.S. 308. Turn right onto Trout Lake Road (F.S. 140) about 12 miles from Grand Marais on the Gunflint Trail, and then turn left onto 308. The friendly folks at Trout Lake Resort (218-387-1330) also rent boats and motors.

VITALS: Trout Lake sits inside the Superior National Forest and Cook County. It's a deep 257-acre lake with a pair of 70-foot-deep basins.

SPECIES PRESENT: Lake trout, rainbow trout, brook trout, yellow perch, rainbow smelt, creek chub, golden shiner.

LAKERS HANGING ON: There aren't a lot of larger lake trout in the lake, but, as the wall hangers inside Trout Lake Resort suggest, the lake is capable of producing some nicer fish, and has done so over the years. The presence of rainbow smelt has given the lakers an oily, fatty option on their menu, though it appears the lake's cisco population has faded.

"The forage base is there," Steve Persons, Grand Marais area fisheries supervisor, said. "Occasionally, we'll see some fish that grow faster than others. Next thing you know, you have some five- to 10-pound lake trout, and there are some of that size."

But the most recent assessment of the lake, conducted in 2011, turned up mostly smaller fish, with the majority in the 15- to 19-inch range, with many smaller than that, and only two that fell between 20-24 inches.

Persons stressed that anglers should shift gears after catching their two trout and not cull fish, since lake trout are considerably vulnerable to dying from the stress of being caught, especially as the things warm up in the summer.

OVER TO THE RAINBOWS: Though few showed up in DNR's most recent survey in the lake, there is a rainbow trout population supplemented annually with stockings.

In spring time, the rainbow trout can be found cruising the surface waters, Persons said.

"They are active this time of year," he said.

DNR stocked the lake with both fingerlings and the larger yearlings in each of the last three years, with 4,000 yearlings stocked last year, in addition to 5,650 fingerlings.

PERCH ACTION: In the 2011 survey, yellow perch were abundant, though small,

which is typical for the lake. That survey did turn up a few handfuls of perch that were nine inches long or slightly greater.

OF NOTE: Though biologists did not collect any northern cisco during the 2011 survey, a small remnant population is still possible, though increasingly unlikely. While the invasive spiny water flea was not detected during the last survey, it has since been discovered in the lake, unfortunately. Be sure to carefully drain and clean your boat before departing. —*Javier Serna*

