

FISHING HOLE

WINDY LAKE

WHY GO: This solid fishing lake in the Superior National Forest is known for its walleyes and northern pike. It is easy to reach, yet fairly remote. There are campsites on the lake, including several accessible only by boat.

ACCESS: There is a boat ramp on the northwest end of the lake. The ramp is off a spur road on C.R. 7/Windy Lake Road. From Tofte on Hwy. 61, take F.R. 343 inland at Temperance River State Park for 4.5 miles. Take a left on F.R. 166 for five miles. Turn right on C.R. 7 for nine miles until it runs into F.R. 369. While 369 is straight ahead, follow C.R. 7 to the right, at which point C.R.

7 becomes Windy Lake Road. From here, it is three miles to the access road.

VITALS: Windy Lake is 456 acres, with a maximum depth of 39 feet. It sits in Lake County, just west of the Cook County border, northeast of Isabella.

GAME SPECIES PRESENT: Walleye, northern pike, lake whitefish and yellow perch.

WALLEYE: DNR ceased stocking walleye in 2003, after realizing the lake was quite productive on its own, according to Dick Stern, a fisheries technician out of DNR's Finland fisheries office. The lake has some rocky reefs that provide good spawning areas for walleyes, as well as lake whitefish.

Some large walleyes have been observed in the lake. "The biggest walleye that I have seen in my career was 13 and a quarter pounds," Stern said of a fish that was around 34 inches long when it was sampled in the 1990s.

NORTHERNS: Stern said the lake is known for having a few big northern pike

swimming around, which are a favored target during the winter months. "You don't get a lot of northerns, but there is a handful of big ones out there," he said.

WHITEFISH: Windy isn't open to whitefish netting, but it does have some bigger lake whitefish in it, according to Stern. While Windy isn't that deep of a lake, it does have the rocky, rubble reefs that whitefish use to spawn.

STRUCTURE: Stern noted that the lake has a lot of rocky structure, which, along with some weeds, are a good place to target fish. But be careful while navigating the lake. "There are boulders that come out of nowhere," Stern said.

CAMPING OPTIONS: Superior National Forest has a single, car-accessible rustic campsite on the lake and three backcountry campsites accessible by boat on the lake. There's no fee to camp at any of the first-come, first-serve sites and all four campsites have a nine-person limit each. The car-campsite has a vault-style outhouse, while the other sites have latrines. For more information, call the Tofte Ranger District at (218) 663-8060.—*Javier Serna*

