

FISHING HOLE

DEER YARD LAKE

WHY GO: Deer Yard Lake has an abundant population of small walleyes, making it one of the more reliable places for catching a meal of walleyes.

ACCESS: There's an access requiring a 125-foot carry on the south shore of the southwest end of the lake. That is reached from a small parking area at the end of Deer Yard Lake Road, which is accessed from Ward Lake Road.

VITALS: This 342-acre lake sits in Cook County near Lutsen. It has a maximum depth of 20 feet.

FISH SPECIES PRESENT: Walleye and white sucker.

ABUNDANT WALLEYES: Steve Persons, DNR's Grand Marais area fisheries supervisor, said Deer Yard Lake has a reputation for having lots of walleyes. Few are particularly large, but there are many small fish, making it a consistent place to catch a limit of smaller, eater walleyes. A 2013 survey of the lake turned up 66 walleyes between 9 and 11 inches, 22 walleyes between 12 and 14 inches, and 8 walleyes in the 15 to 19-inch range. Only one walleye was collected that was 25 inches or longer. "It's a pretty solid lake for people who don't mind catching mostly small walleyes," Persons said.

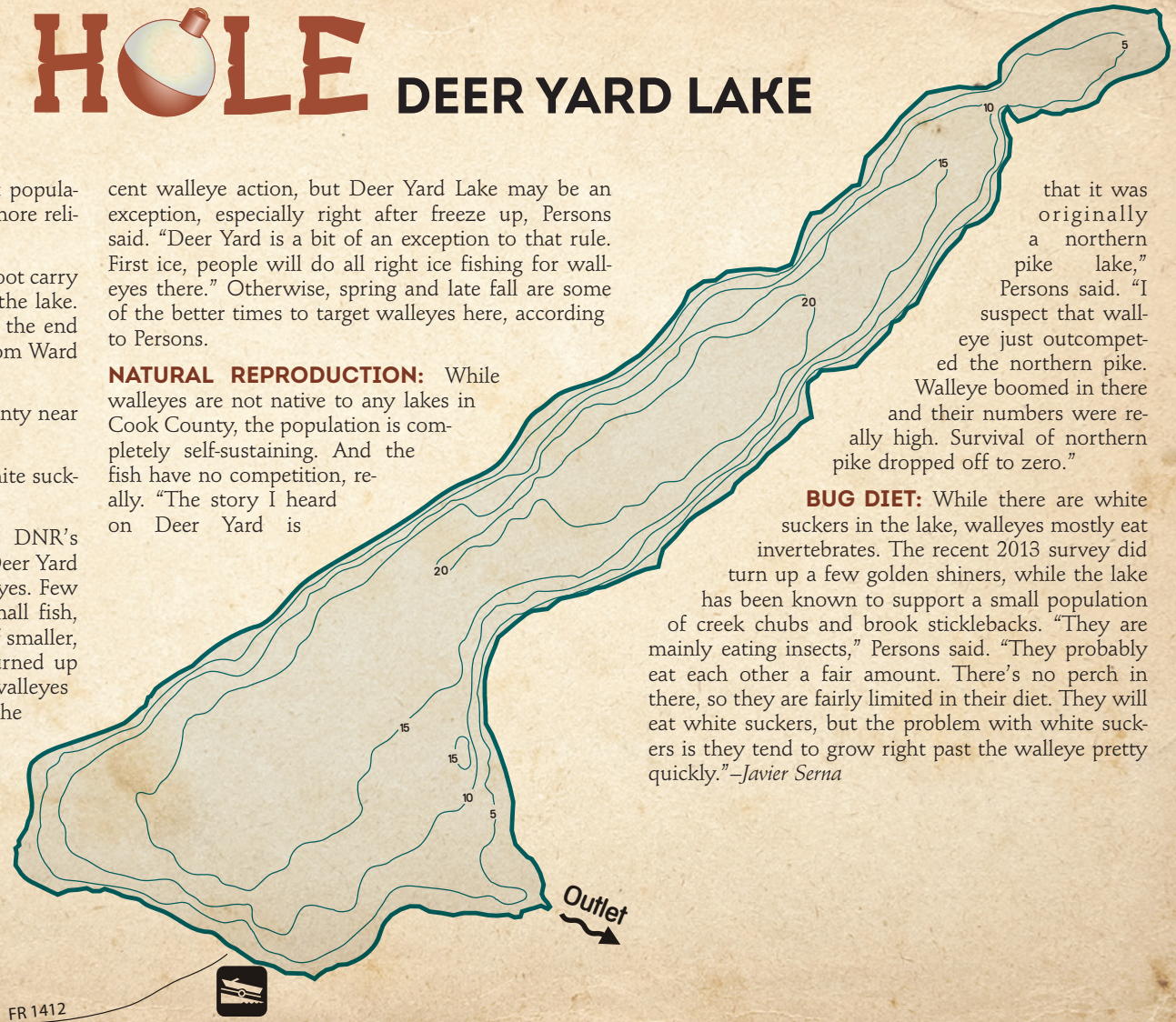
WINTER BITE: Cook County walleye lakes are generally not known for any de-

cent walleye action, but Deer Yard Lake may be an exception, especially right after freeze up, Persons said. "Deer Yard is a bit of an exception to that rule. First ice, people will do all right ice fishing for walleyes there." Otherwise, spring and late fall are some of the better times to target walleyes here, according to Persons.

NATURAL REPRODUCTION: While walleyes are not native to any lakes in Cook County, the population is completely self-sustaining. And the fish have no competition, really. "The story I heard on Deer Yard is

that it was originally a northern pike lake," Persons said. "I suspect that walleye just outcompeted the northern pike. Walleye boomed in there and their numbers were really high. Survival of northern pike dropped off to zero."

BUG DIET: While there are white suckers in the lake, walleyes mostly eat invertebrates. The recent 2013 survey did turn up a few golden shiners, while the lake has been known to support a small population of creek chubs and brook sticklebacks. "They are mainly eating insects," Persons said. "They probably eat each other a fair amount. There's no perch in there, so they are fairly limited in their diet. They will eat white suckers, but the problem with white suckers is they tend to grow right past the walleye pretty quickly."—Javier Serna



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