

FISHING HOLE

WHY GO: It's a nice little lake tucked away in the Superior National Forest, with a solid population of walleyes and muskies. There are also a pair of campsites accessible only by boat.

ACCESS: There is a concrete ramp on the southwest corner of the lake, off F.S. 172, where the Forest Service also has a dock for loading a floatplane that is also used as a fishing pier.

VITALS: This 406.1-acre lake is entirely in the Superior National Forest and Lake County. It has a maximum depth of 40 feet, and, according to DNR, has water clarity down to 9 feet.

GAME SPECIES PRESENT: Walleye, muskie, smallmouth bass, yellow perch, and rock bass.

COME FOR THE WALLEYES: Dean Paron, DNR's Finland area fisheries supervisor, said Dumbbell is a great place to target walleyes, and while fish in the 13- to 17-inch range are the norm, there are even some nice fish up to 28 inches likely swimming in the lake. "People have been catching walleyes and doing good, getting limits of smaller fish," Paron said.

Why has the walleye population done so well?

The lake gets stocked by the DNR with walleye fry two years in a row, then is skipped for two years, most recently re-

ceiving 500,000 fry in 2012 after the same amount in 2011. So, it will next receive fish in 2015 and 2016. This is how biologists know there is some natural reproduction occurring in the lake, since young-of-the-year walleye have been collected on years when the DNR did not stock the lake, according to Brian Borkholder, inland fisheries biologist with the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, which conducts fall surveys on the lake.

It's still unclear how much those naturally produced walleyes are contributing to the lake's overall walleye population, Borkholder said.

"Hopefully, some of them are becoming adults, but it's not as simple as that," Borkholder said. "There are processes we are trying to figure out."

Borkholder said there are plans to work with the DNR to combine his fall surveys with the DNR's gillnet data, to hopefully get a better picture of what is going on in the lake. Paron said DNR is next scheduled to survey the lake in 2017.

STAY FOR THE MUSKIES: The lake hasn't been stocked with muskies for years, but it's one of the better—and only—muskie lakes in this part of the state. Because these fish are of the slow-growing Shoepack strain, they generally aren't very big. The last survey DNR conducted, in 2009, did turn up 10 muskies of at least

30 inches though.

"The genetics don't allow them to grow to trophy levels," Paron said. "But it's not unheard of for anglers to catch 12, even 14 muskies in a single outing."

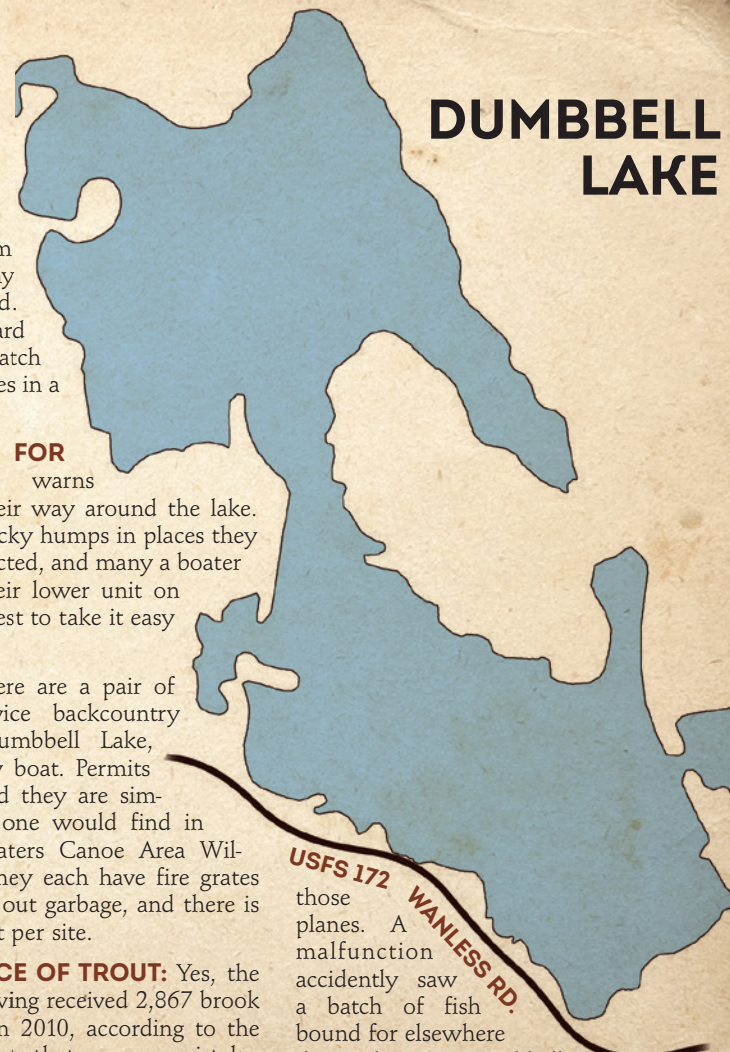
WATCH OUT FOR ROCKS:

Paron warns boaters to feel their way around the lake. There are some rocky humps in places they might not be expected, and many a boater have damaged their lower unit on this lake. So it's best to take it easy on this lake.

CAMP OUT: There are a pair of U.S. Forest Service backcountry campsites on Dumbbell Lake, accessible only by boat. Permits aren't needed, and they are similar to sites that one would find in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, in that they each have fire grates and latrines. Pack out garbage, and there is a nine-person limit per site.

HARDLY A TRACE OF TROUT: Yes, the lake is listed as having received 2,867 brook trout fingerlings in 2010, according to the DNR website. But that was a mistake. Brook trout lakes are stocked via float plane, and Dumbbell is used as a take-off point for

DUMBELL LAKE



USFS 172 WANLESS RD.

those planes. A malfunction accidentally saw a batch of fish bound for elsewhere dumped into Dumbbell. "They essentially became muskie food in very short order," Paron said.—Javier Serna