

FISHING HOLE

WHY GO: This multi-species fishery is so close, yet so far away, keeping pressure down and allowing several highly sought-after species to grow big and abundant.

ACCESS: The easiest way to get to Northern Light Lake is to hop on Hwy. 588, either straight out of Thunder Bay, or from Hwy. 593, for those travelling from the border crossing at Pigeon River. It's about 90 miles west of Thunder Bay, and about a three-hour drive from Grand Marais. Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) maps suggest there are four public ramps on the east side of the lake, but locals say there are only a few public ramps on the east side of the lake, though two resorts, Red Pine Outfitters and Northern Light Resort also give access to their customers. The lake can also be reached via portage from Saginaga Lake (a Remote Area Border Crossing permit would be required), and portage wheels are allowed on the old railroad portage from the northeast corner of Sag. But, as fishing guide Mike Berg puts it, "If you don't know your way on Sag or Northern Light, you're not going to find that portage. It's way on the far end of Sag." Berg noted there is another way to portage in to the lake from Curran Bay to Wantelto Lake to Northern Light. "It's an excellent river system," he said.

VITALS: Berg, of the Seagull Fishing Camp near the end of the Gunflint Trail, said he had no idea how many acres the lake is. He'd never seen an acreage published. Ac-

ording to the MNR, the lake has a surface area of 6,989.8 hectares, which converts to about 16,000 acres. It is just north of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and east of Quetico Provincial Park.

GAME SPECIES PRESENT: MNR lists walleye, smallmouth bass, northern pike, lake trout, burbot, cisco, lake whitefish, white sucker and yellow perch.

'EYE SEE YOU: Walleyes top the list of targets on Northern Light. Berg noted that while Sag is smaller, it is the deeper of the two lakes, meaning Northern Light is shallower.

Berg said spring walleye fishing is done mainly in the lake's expansive bays.

"Northern Light has more bays than Sag, and every bay is three to four times the size of the bays on Sag," he said. "There's lots more shallow spring fishing on Northern Light."

Northern Light pumps out consistently better year classes of walleyes.

The lake is a paradise for those who like to fish dramatic and dynamic structure, Berg said, noting that there are more incredible fishing spots on Northern Light than even a full-time fishing guide can fish in a season, and those are just the spots he knows.

He suggests hitting the resorts and talking to the locals.

"There are spots where there are obvi-

NORTHERN LIGHT LAKE

ously fish being caught, but there are countless spots on the lake where you won't see a soul," he said, noting that the lake is a good one to hunt down a 10-pounder. "There are plenty of big walleyes in the lake."

SEEKING NORTHERNS: Allana Miller of Red Pine Outfitters said her family's business has many customers that come just to target giant pike.

How big is the biggest?

"Dad would say 30 pounds," she said, referring to her dad, Bob Miller, who has run the place since 1992.

Added Berg, "If there was ever a place to go after a 30-plus pound northern, that would be the lake to hunt them down."

THE REST: The lake is also known for its lake trout, smallmouth bass and lake whitefish.



"There are some huge lake trout that come out of there every year," Berg said. "There is a ton of big bass."

And those with the knowledge and desire to target lake whitefish have a great place to do that at Northern Light, he said.

"When you get on the whitefish, there is a lot of them," Berg said.—*Javier Serna*

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