

FISHING HOLE

MAYHEW LAKE

WHY GO: It's generally an easily accessible (depending on snow-fall) warm-and hard-water option for lake trout, with the possibility of picking up a brownie. Because access is limited, it's the type of lake you will generally have to yourself during the warm-water season. And above all else, while the lake is known more as a numbers lake, it has shown over time it's capable of producing some large lake trout.

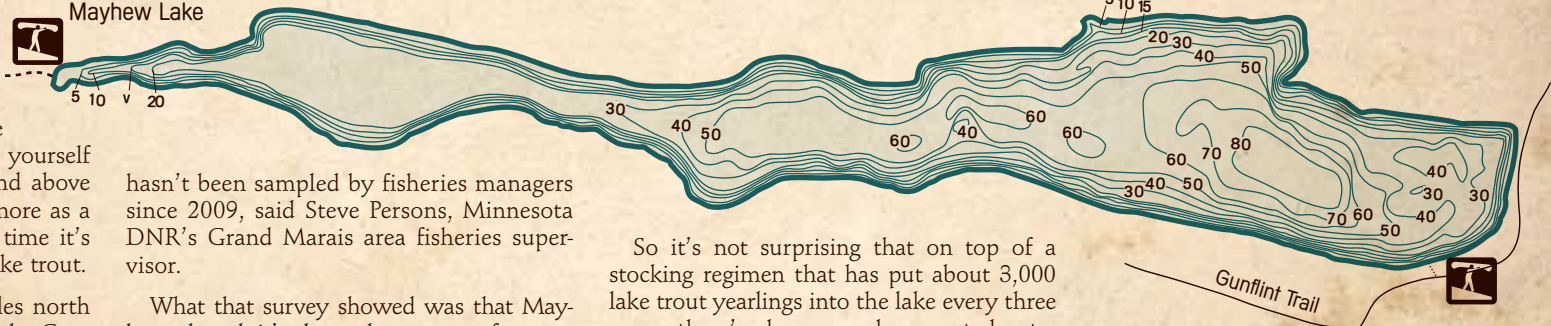
ACCESS: Mayhew, about 34 miles north of Grand Marais and just north of the Gunflint Trail, is accessible from Mayhew Lake Road on the east side of the lake. There's a dirt ramp, but it's basically a carry-in access. Don't try launching any larger vessels. Canoes and john boats small enough to carry are all you'll want to attempt.

VITALS: This 220-acre Cook County lake sits inside the Superior National Forest, a few miles west of Poplar Lake. It's a fairly clear lake, measured at 18 feet by Minnesota DNR. And it's pretty deep, with a maximum depth of 84 feet, and a mean depth of 32.5 feet.

FISH SPECIES PRESENT: Lake trout, brown trout, northern pike, bluegill, green sunfish, yellow perch, white sucker, blacknose shiner, creek chub, fathead minnow, northern pearl dace and spottail shiner.

LAKER EBBS AND FLOWS: Mayhew

Portage to Little
Mayhew Lake



hasn't been sampled by fisheries managers since 2009, said Steve Persons, Minnesota DNR's Grand Marais area fisheries supervisor.

What that survey showed was that Mayhew, though it's always been more of a numbers lake for lake trout, can also produce a few big fish. That year, three lakera in the 25- to 29-inch range were sampled, as well as one fish between 30 and 34 inches.

This, despite a forage base lacking in the fatty, high-calorie ciscoes that are typically present when lake trout are able to grow big. These lake trout have to subsist largely on bugs, though there are species such as yellow perch, white sucker and other minnows species present. It's believed that lake trout would have been present in the lake originally, though it was reclaimed in the 1960s.

"As early as 1938, we had survey crews saying that trout were among the most abundant fish species there," Persons said. "They weren't stocked before 1940s, so they were probably native."

So it's not surprising that on top of a stocking regimen that has put about 3,000 lake trout yearlings into the lake every three years, there's also some documented natural reproduction that has persisted in the lake. DNR was considering scaling back lake trout stockings as a result, but northern pike got into the lake after a fish barrier between Loon and Little Mayhew lakes failed. That has been replaced.

"Northern pike can be big consumers of trout," Persons said, noting that such concerns have caused DNR to hold off on scaling back trout stocking.

IF IT'S BROWN: DNR also stocks Mayhew with brown trout yearlings every other year. That fishery isn't doing bad, either.

"There are actually some nice browns in there, and people do catch them," Persons said.

But most of the browns that are caught typically bite in the warm-weather months, whereas most of ice fishing effort involves

lake trout. That 2009 survey turned up three brown trout between 20 and 24 inches.

"They were stocked to provide a bonus fishery, a species not confined to deep water," Persons said of the European trout species known for being more tolerant to warmer water, meaning they can be found in more shallow water during warmer months.

PIKE GOT IN: Only one northern pike turned up in that 2009 survey, and most of the pike in Mayhew are not going to be very big.

"People occasionally catch a nice one," Persons said.—*Javier Serna*