

FISHING HOLE MOOSE LAKE

BY JOE SHEAD

WHY GO: Moose Lake has a robust population of good-sized walleyes. It also has a native lake trout fishery, with some good-sized fish present.

ACCESS: Getting to Moose Lake is a challenge. The lake straddles the Minnesota/Ontario border. The Minnesota portion of the lake lies within the Boundary Waters and no motors are allowed. The Ontario portion lies within La Verendrye Provincial Park, but it has no motor restrictions. There are no houses on the lake. Access to the lake is via a 0.39-mile portage from North Fowl Lake, however, the portage trail is in Canada. North Fowl is accessible by car from Ontario, or by a long trail from Minnesota, off Cook County Road 16. Or you can take a series of portages from Mountain Lake.

VITALS: Moose Lake is 1,026 acres with a maximum depth of 113 feet. It's rocky and has good spawning habitat for lake trout and walleyes. There is very little weedy cover. Due to its difficult access, the lake hasn't been surveyed since 1998. Therefore, up-to-date information on fish populations is unavailable.

GAME SPECIES PRESENT: Lake trout,

walleye, smallmouth bass, eelpout, lake whitefish and cisco.

LAKE TROUT: Moose Lake is managed primarily for lake trout. Back in the 1970s, the laker population was high, with some quality-sized fish present. Subsequent surveys in the 1990s found a declining lake trout population. At the same time, walleye numbers were on the rise and smallmouth bass made it into the lake, which may be coincidence, or these species may be impacting the lake trout population. Anecdotally, anglers do still catch lake trout, primarily in the winter. The lake has a high population of small ciscoes, which provide excellent forage for lake trout.

WALLEYE: Walleyes showed up in Moose Lake in the 1970s. The last survey in 1998 found high walleye numbers and a very good average size. There are a lot of wall-

eyes in the 16- to 20-inch range. Walleyes grow quickly, thanks to a high cisco population.

SMALLMOUTH BASS: Like a lot of Cook County lakes, smallmouth bass are recent additions to Moose Lake, first discovered in the 1993 DNR survey. Little is known about the current population.

LAKE WHITEFISH: Traditionally, the lake whitefish population was quite healthy. The most recent surveys showed a declining population. However, there are still nice-sized whitefish, topping 20 inches. At the same time, the cisco population seems to be

increasing. Moose Lake ciscoes are generally less than 10 inches.

EELPOUT: Eelpout are present in very good numbers. However, they are generally small; usually less than 20 inches.

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