

FISHING HOLE PICKEREL LAKE

BY JOE SHEAD

WHY GO: Pickerel Lake lies on the northern edge of Quetico Provincial Park. It offers breathtaking scenery, dotted by islands, 200-year-old red pines and even gorgeous beaches. Plus, the fishing in this unspoiled wilderness setting is equally impressive.

ACCESS: There are two ways to access Pickerel Lake: the Stanton Bay access on the north-central part of the lake and the Dawson Trail Campground access on French Lake, just east of Pickerel Lake. To access Pickerel Lake via the Dawson Trail Campground access, drive west from Thunder Bay on Highway 11/17 and then merge onto Highway 11 at Shabaqua. From Shabaqua, travel west on Highway 11 for 98 kilometers (61 miles) and turn left into the Dawson Trail Campground to access Pickerel Lake via French Lake. Park permits and maps are available at the Ontario Parks office at the Dawson Trail Campground. Alternatively, keep traveling west beyond the Dawson Trail Campground entrance on Highway 11 for another 18 kilometers to the Stanton Bay Road and head south on this logging road until you reach the Stanton Bay access point.

VITALS: Pickerel Lake is a sprawling 12,750-acre lake located within Ontario's Quetico Provincial Park. The lake is dotted with is-

lands, plus numerous wilderness campsites. You can portage onto other lakes from Pickerel, or canoe camp all over the lake without portaging. A number of restrictions apply to Pickerel Lake including no motorized vessels, barbless hook requirements and no organic bait (no live bait). Park permits are required by residents and non-residents. Pickerel Lake is a multi-species angler's paradise. The lake offers amazing fishing of a variety of species.

GAME SPECIES PRESENT: Walleye, northern pike, smallmouth bass and lake trout.

LAKE TROUT: Fishing for lake trout is best in May and early June before trout seek out colder, more-oxygenated water in the deeper

basins. You can catch mackinaws by casting or trolling with a Williams Whitefish C70 or a Williams Wabler W60. Casting or jigging with a 3.5-inch white swimbait or a 4-inch Softplastic Minnow on a jig is also very effective.

WALLEYE: Walleyes are plentiful along windswept shorelines, rocky points, rock piles, weedlines and mid-lake reefs. The aforementioned swimbait and Softplastic minnow are equally deadly on walleyes.

NORTHERN PIKE: If you see shallow boulders with a touch of vegetation, you're sure to find northern pike. Pike will attack most anything, including spoons, spinners and crankbaits. They can be caught while casting or even while trolling as you paddle

to your next campsite.

SMALLMOUTH BASS: Smallmouth bass can be found anywhere there are rocks, often in the company of walleyes. Pickerel has some amazing smallie fishing. These powerful fighters can be taken on a variety of baits. Some good ones to try are a No. 7 Rapala Skitter Pop, a 4-inch Senko, a Blue Fox Vibrax spinner or a Ned Rig dragged behind the canoe.

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