

FISHING HOLE

BY JOE SHEAD

WHY GO: Salo Lake has a diverse fishery, with both largemouth and smallmouth present, which is unusual in the area. The lake also produces better-than-average-sized northern pike. You'll also find good bluegill and crappie populations and a few walleyes.

ACCESS: Salo Lake lies north of the tiny burg of Rollins. To reach the lake from Two Harbors, head north on Lake Co. Hwy. 2 for 11 miles. Turn left on Wales Road, which turns into Two Harbors – Brimson Road as you enter St. Louis County. Follow this road for about 10 miles until you come to a T intersection with St. Louis Co. Hwy. 44. Turn right onto County 44 and proceed north for 5 miles. Turn right onto Township Road 6210 (Salo Lake Road) and proceed about .75-mile, then turn right toward the boat launch and picnic area.

VITALS: Salo Lake encompasses 140 acres and has a maximum depth of 20 feet. It's a quiet lake with only a few cabins. The day-use area has two picnic tables, a grill, a vault toilet, a dock and a concrete boat ramp. No camping is permitted.

GAME SPECIES PRESENT: Northern pike, largemouth bass, black crappie, bluegill, walleye, smallmouth bass, and yellow perch.

NORTHERN PIKE: You might find something a little larger than hammer handles if you try pike fishing in Salo Lake. "Fifty percent of the fish sampled were 24 inches plus," said Alisha Hallam, assistant area fisheries supervisor in Duluth, about the last DNR survey conducted in 2020. She noted that the largest pike in the survey was 36 inches, but seven fish topped the 30-inch mark.

LARGEMOUTH BASS: Salo has quality fisheries for both largemouth and smallmouth bass, although largemouths are more numerous. No electrofishing was done during 2020 because of the pandemic, but the 2014 assessment turned up 18 largemouths per hour of electrofishing. Hallam noted bass exhibit average growth rates and over half of the ones surveyed by electrofishing were 14 inches or greater, with the largest measuring 19 inches. Bass, as well as panfish, benefitted from a habitat project conducted in 2014 when trees were felled and bundled together to create, "large woody debris hab-

itat to increase habitat complexity along the shoreline," Hallam said. Bass can also be found lurking in the lake's ribbon leaf pondweed and watershield.

BLACK CRAPPIE: Black crappies exhibit consistent natural reproduction in Salo Lake, which is somewhat unusual because usually crappie year-class success is more sporadic. They are somewhat slow growing, but keepers are out there.

BLUEGILL: Bluegill numbers are pretty good. Average size is about 6 inches, but few top the 8-inch mark. You'll likely encounter a lot of borderline keepers.

WALLEYE: The lake is managed for walleyes, although walleye numbers aren't robust. Fingerlings are stocked every other year. The walleye population is largely dependent on stocking, although some natural reproduction has been documented. If you find a walleye, it's usually of good size.

SMALLMOUTH BASS: Smallmouth bass aren't as abundant as largemouths in Salo, and there aren't a lot of smallmouth lakes in the area. Electrofishing in 2014 produced two smallies per hour. Still, they're out there and they tend to be of decent size.

YELLOW PERCH: Perch are present, but don't grow very large. They're more suited as prey for pike than for anglers.



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