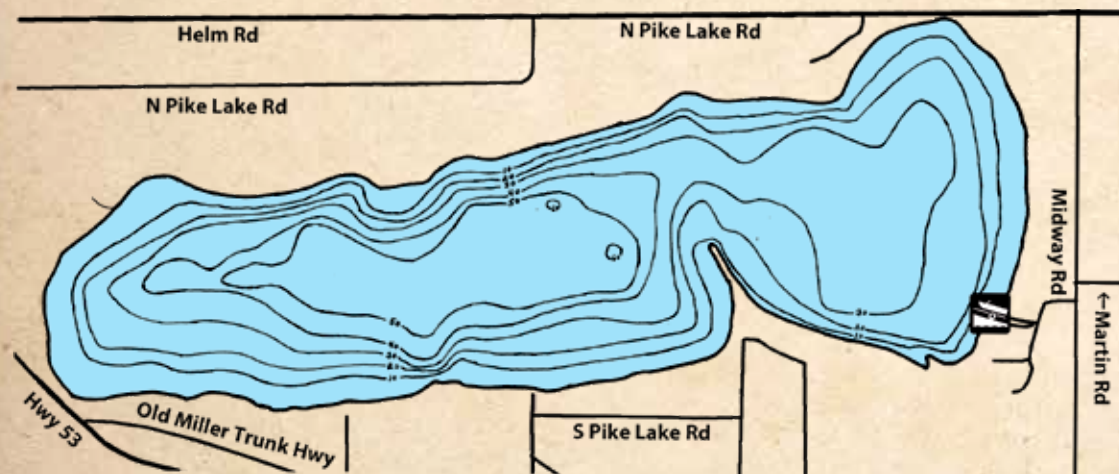


FISHING HOLE



BY JOE SHEAD

WHY GO: Pike Lake, located just a short distance from Duluth, has good numbers of walleyes, some good-sized crappies and bass, and there's always the possibility of tangling with some better-than-average northern pike.

ACCESS: Pike Lake is just a short drive from Duluth. From the mall area, drive 6.6 miles up Highway 53 to the stoplight at Midway Road. (Fisherman's Corner is just a couple of buildings from the inter-

section if you need bait). Turn right onto Midway Road and proceed 0.87 miles to the stop sign. Turn left onto Carmen's Way and you'll be in the parking lot for the boat launch. The launch has a paved ramp with a dock and parking for a dozen trailers.

VITALS: Pike Lake is a 488-acre lake with a maximum depth of 60 feet. The water is very clear, with an average water clarity of 17 feet, in part due to the presence of zebra mussels. The lakeshore is heavily developed

PIKE LAKE

and is popular with boaters. Despite that, Pike Lake still offers pretty good fishing.

GAME SPECIES PRESENT: Walleye, northern pike, black crappie, largemouth bass, yellow perch, and bluegill.

WALLEYE: Walleyes are present in high numbers and the population is almost entirely sustained through biannual fry stocking. Walleye size has varied over the years. At times, the lake seems to be full of 12-inchers, but the

latest DNR survey in 2019 found an average walleye length of over 16 inches. That survey also found more than 15 walleyes per gillnet lift, which is well above average for similar lakes, but pretty typical of Pike Lake. Despite its name, Pike Lake is definitely a walleye lake.

NORTHERN PIKE: Not to be outdone are the lake's northern pike. Although you won't find them in high numbers, their size more than makes up for their scarcity. The

2019 survey turned up nine pike over 30 inches, with an average length of 30 inches. Fish hitting the magic 40-inch mark are definitely possible.

BLACK CRAPPIE: DNR numbers don't reveal many crappies, but they are probably more prevalent than the surveys show. When you catch them, they are typically large. Foot-long specimens are pretty common. They are frequently caught by ice anglers near the big point, which receives heavy ice fishing pressure.

LARGEMOUTH BASS: Pike Lake is probably an underrated largemouth bass lake. Bass do well in the lake's clear waters, which sustain good weed growth. Plus, there are plenty of docks to hide under. Fish in the upper teens are possible.

YELLOW PERCH: Perch numbers seem to be in decline in recent years. The last two lake surveys in 2014 and 2019 found perch numbers far lower than the 2009 survey. Small perch can be an annoyance while angling for walleyes, but you may catch an occasional keeper.

BLUEGILL: Few anglers target Pike Lake's bluegills specifically. Bluegill abundance is decent, and although there are keepers to be had, you'll likely have to sort through a lot of smaller fish to find them.

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