

# FISHING HOLE

## HOLLY LAKE

BY JOE SHEAD

**WHY GO:** Holly Lake has pretty decent fishing for walleyes and northern pike. It's a shallow lake that is relatively easy to fish, eliminating a lot of the learning curve. Plus, although it's easy to get to, due to its small size and shallowness, you're not likely to encounter many other anglers.

**ACCESS:** From Lutsen, head east up Highway 61 for a half mile or so and turn left onto Cook County Highway 4 (Caribou Trail). Drive about 10 miles up the Caribou Trail and the Holly Lake access is on your left. You'll only be on a gravel road for about three miles. There's a small parking lot with room for about four trucks and trailers, although you'll probably have the lot to yourself. There's a Forest Service outhouse there and a very flat gravel ramp suited to canoes and small boats.

**VITALS:** Holly Lake is a small, shallow lake at 75 acres with a maximum depth of six feet. There are rocks present, so navigate carefully and slowly. It's a pretty little lake with only one cabin. If you take a canoe, you can bust through a small log jam on the south end and get into Mistletoe Lake, which offers a similar fishery. Obviously, there's less fishing pressure on Mistletoe, which is also very shallow.

**FISH SPECIES PRESENT:** Walleye, northern pike, yellow perch, and pumpkinseed sunfish.

**WALLEYE:** Walleyes are the main draw on Holly Lake. They are present in good numbers, and most of the fish you'll catch are solid eaters, with a chance at a fish over 20 inches. Walleyes were formerly stocked, but the lake has consistent natural reproduction, so stocking was discontinued. If you tie into a walleye on Holly, it will probably be a keeper.

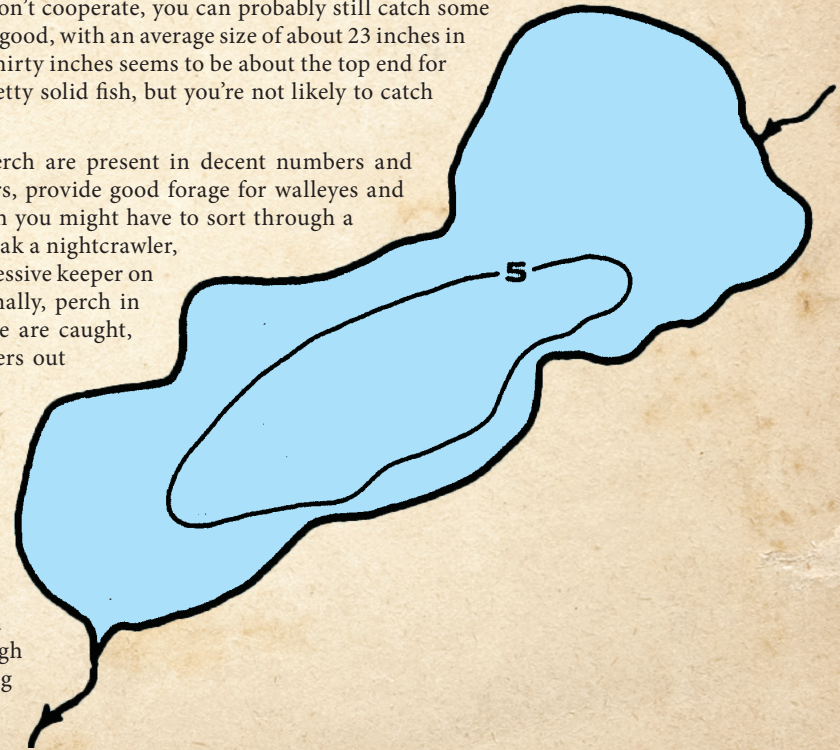
**NORTHERN PIKE:** Pike do well in the lake's shallow, weedy waters. Although pike numbers dipped a decade or so ago, they have rebounded nice-

ly, and if the walleyes won't cooperate, you can probably still catch some northerns. Size is pretty good, with an average size of about 23 inches in the 2023 DNR survey. Thirty inches seems to be about the top end for Holly's pike. That's a pretty solid fish, but you're not likely to catch anything bigger.

**YELLOW PERCH:** Perch are present in decent numbers and along with white suckers, provide good forage for walleyes and northern pike. Although you might have to sort through a lot of small fish if you soak a nightcrawler, you might catch an aggressive keeper on a walleye lure. Occasionally, perch in the 10- or 11-inch range are caught, so there are some keepers out there.

### PUMPKINSEED

**SUNFISH:** You don't find a lot of sunfish in Cook County, but there are fair numbers of these colorful little fish in Holly Lake. You'd be hard-pressed to catch one big enough to fillet, with fish topping out at about six inches, but if you soak a worm for perch, don't be surprised to tie into some of these pretty little fish.



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