

FISHING HOLE

DEVILFISH LAKE

BY JOE SHEAD

WHY GO: Devilfish Lake has decent walleye fishing in a remote, undeveloped setting, with camping available on site.

ACCESS: Devilfish is often overshadowed by its close neighbor, Greenwood Lake. Although you'll find some fair fishing pressure on Greenwood, Devilfish is comparatively quiet. Greenwood draws lake trout anglers, and in fact, Devilfish once harbored lakers, but they are long gone. Now Devilfish anglers are in search of walleyes and smallmouth bass. From Hovland, travel up the Arrowhead Trail (Cook Co. Hwy. 16) for 11.5 miles. Turn left on Esther Lake Road and proceed west for 5 miles. Then turn right onto the short road down to the campground and lake.

VITALS: Devilfish Lake is 404 acres in size with a maximum depth of 40 feet and a mean depth of 13 feet. The lake has only one house on it but does feature a five-unit primitive campsite at the boat ramp. These sites are available on a first-come, first-served basis. The boat launch has a concrete ramp, an outhouse, and parking for about nine trailers.

GAME SPECIES PRESENT: Walleye and smallmouth bass.

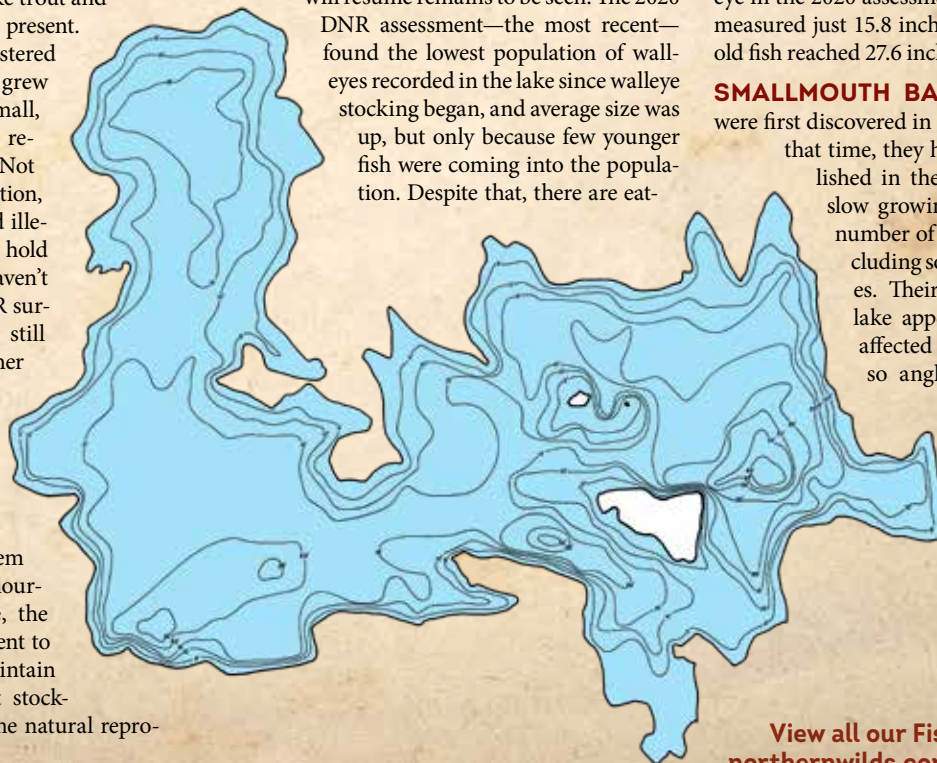
WALLEYE: Walleyes have had an interesting history in Devilfish Lake. They were first stocked in 1981, at a time when lake trout and rainbow smelt were still present.

Initially they thrived, bolstered by regular stocking. They grew slowly and tended to be small, yet abundant. They also reproduced successfully. Not long after their introduction, yellow perch were stocked illegally, but they never took hold in great numbers and haven't been found in recent DNR surveys, so if they are even still present, they present neither forage nor competition for walleyes. The introduction of smallmouth bass, however, seems to have hurt the walleye population. Since the DNR first discovered them in 2008, smallies have flourished. At the same time, the DNR decided to experiment to see if walleyes could maintain their population without stocking. However, despite some natural repro-

duction, it doesn't seem to be enough to maintain the population. Whether or not stocking will resume remains to be seen. The 2020 DNR assessment—the most recent—found the lowest population of walleyes recorded in the lake since walleye stocking began, and average size was up, but only because few younger fish were coming into the population. Despite that, there are eat-

er-sized fish out there, with the chance at a memorable fish over 25 inches. The oldest walleye in the 2020 assessment was 19 years old but measured just 15.8 inches. However, a 16-year-old fish reached 27.6 inches.

SMALLMOUTH BASS: Smallmouth bass were first discovered in Devilfish in 2008. Since that time, they have become well established in the lake. They tend to be slow growing, but there are a fair number of bass over 12 inches, including some up to about 16 inches. Their introduction into the lake appears to have negatively affected the walleye population, so anglers are encouraged to take their limit of bass to help thin out their numbers.



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