

THE
I WANNA
FISH FOR...
SERIES

The Purrfect Choice

Fishing Wisconsin catfish: Is it for you?

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THE WISCONSIN FISHING REPORT

Spring 2012

An annual publication of the Fisheries Management program

fishingwisconsin.org

WISCONSIN'S NATURAL WATERPARKS

Where the only lines are the ones in the water.
(No wristband required)



WISCONSIN FISHING By The Numbers

- 15,000 lakes
- 42,000 miles of streams and rivers
- 1.4 million anglers
- 88 million fish caught by anglers
- \$2.75 billion in economic activity
- \$200 million in tax revenues for local and state governments
- 30,000+ jobs
- 21 million days that anglers fished
- 12 million fish stocked

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service, American Sportfishing Association, 2008



Dear
**WISCONSIN
ANGLER**

Welcome to Wisconsin – home of the best and most diverse fishing in the country. We offer more waters than dedicated anglers could fish in several lifetimes...an incredible array of fish to catch...and some rare ones just to appreciate. Fishing is a cornerstone of Wisconsin's culture and economy. We rank second in the country in the number of days nonresidents spend fishing here, and if we had Florida's weather and year-round open water, we'd probably be number one.

The 2012 Wisconsin Fishing Report can only hint at the great fishing opportunities awaiting you in the state. I hope the forecasts provided by many of our biologists help you understand how your favorite fishing spot is faring, based on the fish surveys and management actions we're taking to make your fishing better.

The fishing licenses and stamps you buy, your vocal and financial support of our program, and your time and labor are critical to conserving and enhancing Wisconsin fish populations and fishing opportunities for now and in the future. So sit back, read up, and then hit the water to enjoy great fishing and the memories of a lifetime. And while you're at it, save some time to take someone fishing who's never been before, or hasn't been in a long time. The memories will last a lifetime for you and them, and you can feel good that you'll be investing in the future of Wisconsin's fishing.

See you on the water!

Michael Stapp
Director, Fisheries Management

A Lake Winnebago success story

"Cleaner and clearer", the lake is becoming a walleye factory.

OSHKOSH. — Twenty years ago walleye fishing on Lake Winnebago stunk. Literally.

Scant rain and snow in the late 1980s dried up walleye reproduction and the fishing with it while goosing the growth of smelly algae blooms, recalls Mike Arrowood, a 40-year resident of Fond du



Ideal conditions on Lake Winnebago led to the 5th largest hatch of walleye on record in 2011. DNR photo.

Lac. "My kids used to call it Winnesepitic," he says.

What a difference 20 years makes. Today, the state's largest inland lake is significantly cleaner and clearer and fishing for ol' marble eyes on the Winnebago chain of lakes is "superb," says Arrowood, chairman of the board of directors of Walleye for Tomorrow. "Most anybody can fish on Winnebago now and catch walleye."

Natural reproduction of this frying pan favorite in the past decade overall has been the best it's been in a generation, pro-

viding fishing opportunities for local residents, destination fishing for out-of-state aficionados, and an annual \$234 million economic boost for the five counties surrounding Lake Winnebago and the other lakes in the Winnebago chain -- Butte des Morts, Winneconne, and Poygan.

The secrets of that success? Arrowood and state fisheries biologists point to three main factors:

- 1) DNR, local governments and citizen groups have successfully implemented the lion's share of a 1989 comprehensive management plan aimed at improving fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, and user issues in the system.
- 2) Citizen groups like Walleyes for Tomorrow, Shadows on the Wolf, and a host of others have stepped up in a big way, most importantly to protect, create and restore habitat. They've poured in hundreds of thousands of hours of labor, donated millions of dollars for equipment and supplies or secured such at a reduced cost, and jawboned local officials, private property owners and industry to take measures benefitting walleye production.
- 3) DNR and partner groups have pursued an aggressive research program to unlock the secrets of walleye in a vast, ever-changing system, to apply that knowledge, and to be committed to it over the long-term.

"One of the things I tell the public is, keep your eyes on the prize," Arrowood says. "The other thing I tell the public is, if you put a quarter-inch fry in the lake, it's going to be a while before it's in your frying pan."

— Lisa Gaumnitz, public affairs manager, DNR



The Fish are Waiting

Wisconsin Anglers --- Plan those special days on the water with the 2012 A Year of Fish calendar.



Calendar includes:
Important fishing dates, moon phases, game fish identification, monthly forecasts, and resources to keep you in touch with Wisconsin fishing.

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Find links to fishing licenses, season dates, regulations, where to fish and more at: fishingwisconsin.org



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Fabulous Fisheries Projects

Fish gotta swim

PARK FALLS — The culmination of many years of negotiations between Flambeau Hydro, DNR, and USDA Forest Service has led to the construction of a nature-like fishway at the Winter Hydroelectric Project. The fishway will eliminate the only obstacle to free fish movement in the East Fork Chippewa River and opens up 85 miles of high-quality habitat in a wild and undeveloped river corridor. It will reconnect fragmented habitat and populations and provide upstream and downstream passage for the entire fish community and other aquatic species.



Early stages of fishway construction at Winter Hydroelectric Project, East Fork Chippewa River, September 2011. Photo: Kendal Liebszeit

The fishway is a careful placement of boulders, rock, and stone to create a stair-step series of 14 pools and v-shaped weirs (each gaining ~ 6 inches elevation). It was completed under bitter, snow-covered conditions in December 2011. Migrating sturgeon, suckers, walleye, and four redhorse species, should ascend the fishway next spring to spawn. We expect young-of-the-year fish to move downstream in summer and fall. Minnows, darters, smallmouth bass, sunfishes, and other riverine species should use the fishway throughout the year.



McGee Lake brook trout captured during an October 2008 survey. Photo: Dave Siebel

Brook trout back in control

ANTIGO — McGee Lake opened to fishing in 2011 for the first time since the 23-acre spring pond was renovated in fall 2006. Renovation was necessary to remove an invasive largemouth bass population that had the native brook trout teetering on the edge of elimination. The bass were eating every trout naturally reproduced and most of those being stocked in an attempt to maintain a trout fishery. The renovation was successful at completely removing all the predatory bass. Native brook trout rescued from the pond prior to the renovation and transferred from the connecting trout stream downriver have repopulated the lake. They are successfully spawning and reproducing once again and are growing at tremendous rates providing anglers with good action, big fish, and the chance for a memorable fishing experience!

Get the lead out!
Use non-lead tackle.

dnr.wi.gov/fish/
for more information



Many hands create pride of a community

FITCHBURG — Lake Bellevue, a widening of the Sugar River in southern Dane County was restored in fall, 2010 through summer 2011. The lake underwent a gambit of dredging, re-introduction of native fishes, native plant reseeding, and installation of water control devices to recreate an off-channel 'oxbow' environment characterized by clear water, a healthy littoral zone and a diverse fishery.



Newly filled Lake Bellevue from the air, Summer 2011. Photo: Kurt Welke

This project illustrates an integrated approach to re-establishing all elements of a healthy lake including its' shorelines, plants, fishery and aesthetics. This was a cooperative effort between The Village of Bellevue, Town of Montrose, the Upper Sugar river Watershed association, Dane County, NRCS, private consultants Underwater Habitat Investigations LLC and Agrecol, and DNR. We expect a ecologically balanced and healthy oxbow lake as a community asset. The lake will provide opportunities for water based recreation and enjoyment of natural scenic beauty.

New fishing opportunity for Marathon County

WAUSAU — Over the past two years, Marathon County Parks has been working in partnership with the DNR to develop an accessible access for a popular fishing and swimming lake. The site is at the Sunnyvale Park Lake in Marathon County. When completed, the project will have an accessible parking area with an asphalt walkway leading to a new fishing pier. The new pier will provide access to a newly renovated fishing location that has been dredged and improved with fish cribs. In addition to these exciting improvements, the DNR will stock catchable size rainbow trout in the spring that will be available for the fishing opener. The project has been funded mostly with a County Conservation Aid Grant, with some services provided and funded through the DNR fisheries.



Fish from Milwaukee River enter at downstream reach of the fishway (background), and exit through millrace gate (foreground). Photo: William Wawrzyn

More fish gotta swim

MILWAUKEE — A 1000-foot fish passage around the Mequon-Thiensville Dam on the Milwaukee River was completed in 2011 allowing fish from the lower 20 miles of the Milwaukee River to migrate around this dam and access at least another 12 miles



Existing concrete lined channel on the Menomonee River, Milwaukee County. Photo: Will Wawrzyn



Artist rendering of proposed channel design of the same section of the Menomonee River. Tom Sear, SEH Consultants for Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District.

Barriers down, fishing up

MILWAUKEE — Both fish from Lake Michigan and anglers will benefit from removal of a barrier to fish passage along the Menomonee River in Milwaukee County. A 1000-foot section of a concrete lined stream reach, constructed in 1964 for flood control purposes, will be removed and replaced with an enhanced channel in 2013 enabling fish to move over 20-miles upstream to the Lepper Dam in Menomonee Falls, Waukesha County. The enhancement will enable fish to access historical spawning habitat and provide unique fishing opportunities and eliminate a navigation and safety hazard.

The \$4-million project is being managed by the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District with funding assistance by the USEPA Great Lakes Office and US Fish and Wildlife Service. DNR fishery staff and Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission staff provided technical planning and design assistance. Construction will be completed in time for the spring of 2013 season.

of river. The fishway was designed to pass northern pike up a series of nine, 0.8-foot steps but many other species will also use the fishway to navigate around this dam including smallmouth bass, redhorse, walleye, sunfish, shiners, lake sturgeon and trout and salmon.

Many fishways around the country and world have been completed in recent years but the evaluation of how effective they are in passing targeted fish is very limited. In 2011, the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, NOAA, Ozaukee County Fish Passage Program, the Village of Thiensville, UW-Milwaukee WATER Institute and minor cooperation from the DNR installed a camera system to monitor the up and downstream migration of fish.

This project was a collaboration of various federal, state and local agencies including the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Ozaukee County Fish Passage Program, Village of Thiensville, UW-Milwaukee WATER Institute and DNR

2012 SEASON DATES

Early Inland Trout
March 3 (5 a.m.) to April 29

General Hook and Line Inland
May 5 to March 3, 2013

General Inland Trout
May 5 (5 a.m.) to Sept. 30

Large and Smallmouth Bass
Northern Zone Catch-and-Release
May 5 to June 15

Large and Smallmouth Bass
Northern Zone Harvest
June 16 to March 3, 2013

Large and Smallmouth Bass
Southern Zone
May 5 to March 3, 2013

Musky – Northern Zone
May 26 to Nov. 30

Musky – Southern Zone
May 5 to Dec. 31

Northern Pike
May 5 to March 3, 2013

Walleye
May 5 to March 3, 2013

Lake Sturgeon (hook and line)
Sept. 1 to Sept. 30

Free Fishing Weekend
June 2 - 3, 2012



Eighth Annual Kids' Fishing Day - Third grade students from Park Falls and Butternut elementary schools enjoy the day at Coolidge Springs Trout Ranch near Fifield WI. The event generates enthusiasm and, hopefully, a life-long interest in fishing. Photo: Dan Michels

The fishway was completed in early 2011 and the camera system was installed for testing in time for the fall spawning migration run of salmonids. The system has detected a variety of fish movement through the fishway including northern pike, channel catfish, smallmouth bass, redhorse, steelhead, brown trout, coho and Chinook salmon.

Future plans call for the camera to live stream to the internet so that this project can be used as an educational tool for the public. The camera and PIT tag system was removed for the winter and will be re-installed with improvements in time for the spring 2012 spawning run.



Brown trout captured by the camera system swimming upstream through the fishway



The Purrfect Choice

by Bradd Sims, fisheries biologist
Dodgeville

While many anglers throughout Wisconsin will be fishing for “trendy” species like trout, walleye, salmon, bass, or musky there are a select few anglers that will search out one of Wisconsin’s best kept secrets.....catfish. That’s right, catfish. If you are one of those anglers that scoff when you hear that word you may want to read on. Wisconsin supports great catfish fisheries that can provide many fish, large fish, and good eating fish all in the same day.

Wisconsin is home to 8 species of catfish, although two of these species are the primary focus of catfish anglers — the channel and flathead catfish. Like many anglers throughout the United States, the majority of Wisconsin catfish anglers prefer the channel catfish. Why? For the most part, channel catfish are widespread, obtain a large size and are easily caught. Flathead catfish are more elusive, take more effort to locate, are more difficult to catch, and are usually caught in smaller numbers.

Channel and flathead catfish are considered riverine species, but are found in a variety of waters. The channel catfish is most wide spread, found in all sizes of rivers and flowages throughout the state. Flathead catfish are associated with large riverine systems, but can also be found in flowages and small rivers which are associated with large rivers.



Channel catfish, *Ictalurus punctatus*
State record: 44 pounds 0 ounces, Wisconsin River, 1962

Channel catfish are considered to be opportunistic feeders eating just about anything. This is a quality that makes fishing for them successful. Flathead catfish are predators in the true sense. Early in life, a flathead’s diet will consist of a variety of prey such as insects, crayfish and other fish. Adult flathead catfish are almost 100% piscivorous, which means they eat other fish.

Both species are migratory and it can vary by season or even weeks where anglers may find them. Usually, a catfish population will overwinter in deep pools associated with slower current. In the spring when the water temperature rises near the mid 50’s, the catfish will move in search of spawning areas, where they will stay for most of the summer. As fall approaches, they will move back to the overwintering areas. Catfish do move, and learning where they are during any given season or time period will help increase your odds of having a successful trip.

GEAR TO USE

With the variety of rigs, techniques, baits, and specific on-the-water locations, studying the basics of catfishing can be overwhelming. Keeping it simple is the way to go. All you will need in your tackle box are hooks, inline weights, and swivels. The inline weights can be egg shaped or flat. Slide the weight up the line then tie the swivel on preventing the weight from sliding off. Regular barrel swivels are preferred as large catfish can sometimes pull out snap swivels. Next, tie a 6- to 12-inch monofilament leader to your hook, then tie it to the swivel. Depending on the type of knots used, anglers may need to tie the leader and hook to the swivel then tie swivel, leader, and hook to the main line. You can make the leader by cutting off 6 to 12 inches of line from your reel or make up leaders ready to go from a spool at home. Hook size should be matched to the size of catfish you are after. You may want to consider circle hooks. Circle hooks are fish friendly and after hook up rarely come out. When using circle hooks, you don’t need to set the hook. Let the catfish swim and hook itself. Leave the rod in the rod holder or hold the rod steady until the fish is hooked.

HOW TO USE IT

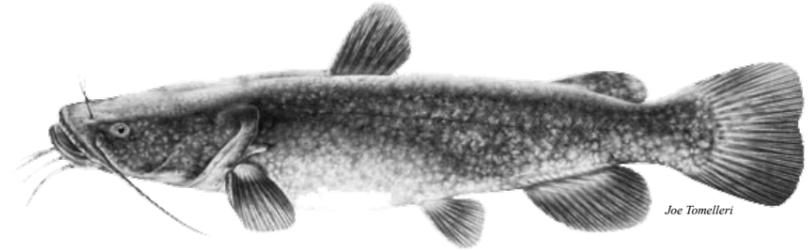
There are many different baits anglers can use to catch channel catfish: chicken livers, night crawlers, dip baits, minnows, cut bait, crayfish, catalpa worms, grasshoppers, and shrimp just to name a few. Dip baits and cut bait are the baits of choice for most channel catfish anglers. Cut bait is just bite size pieces of fish cut from smaller fish. The best source of cut bait is panfish caught from the same waterbody in which you are fishing. If panfish are not readily available then large suckers purchased from your local bait store will work well also. Dip baits usually have the consistency of peanut butter and come in a variety of flavors and smells. They come in small plastic tubs or jars and can be purchased at most bait shops and retailers where fishing tackle is sold. To fish dip baits you will have to purchase dip bait worms or sponges to apply the dip bait to. Dip bait worms typically come in a package of two or three. They can be found near the dip baits and normally come with hooks and monofilament leaders. Apply the dip bait on the dip worm by submersing the worm in the tub of bait using a small stick or paint stirrer. Reapply as needed.

Due to the flatheads piscivorous nature, a live fish is the bait of choice when targeting flathead catfish. Panfish or bullheads are preferred, but flatheads are not picky when it comes to eating other fish. Drum, carp, and others work just as well. Fish used as live bait can be purchased from a bait dealer or caught with hook and line as part of your legal daily bag on the water in which you are fishing. Hook the live fish either through the tail or upper lip. Near the tail is preferred. When fishing for flatheads you can get away without a leader if your live bait is strong enough to create

a little distance from the weight. Eliminating the leader makes things simple and reduces the number of knots that could fail. Make sure your weight is large enough to keep your bait from taking your line into snags that may be near by. There are a few rules you will need to remember when pursuing flatheads. It is illegal to fish with a minnow 8 inches or longer unless you are using a quick-strike rig or a non-offset circle hook. Minnows include: suckers, mud minnow, madtoms, stonecat, killifish, stickleback, trout perch, darters, sculpins, and all species in the minnow family (except goldfish and carp). Goldfish are not legal to use. It is illegal to move live fish away from water, except minnows that were purchased from a bait dealer. It is illegal to release unused bait into Wisconsin’s lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams.

HOW TO FIND THEM

Both species relate well to woody debris. What’s woody debris? Woody debris is a natural collection of whole trees or tree parts that have accumulated in the water. In rivers or streams, start your search by fishing near woody debris located near deep runs or pools. Deep will be relative to the water you are fishing. Start by fishing directly above the woody debris and continue down the side ending just below. Try to maintain a quiet boat or walk softly if shore fishing as you ease downstream. More



Flathead catfish, *Pylodictis olivaris*
State record: 74 pounds 5 ounces, Mississippi River, 2001

woody debris will increase your opportunity for success. If you find yourself in a river without woody debris, focus on deep holes and current breaks. Catfish relate to structure similar to other fish species. Finding catfish in lakes and flowages is no different than when searching for other species. Shallow flats located near deep water and creek/river mouths are good areas to focus your efforts.

WHEN TO FIND THEM

Channel catfish can be caught in good numbers during the day while flathead anglers will find their best success from dusk through dawn. Channel catfish and flathead catfish anglers report having the best success during the pre-spawn (April – June) and post spawn (August – October) periods. Anglers often report slow fishing during the spawn. Catfish spawning activity can be from early July through mid August depending on location and water temperatures. If you can’t get enough channel catfishing during the summer months, try ice fishing for them. Anglers have found that channel catfish can be caught while ice fishing. Fishing tip ups or a jig and minnow under bait fish schools have been productive for catching winter channel catfish.

WHERE TO FIND THEM

Wisconsin has numerous waters supporting channel catfish populations. Try the Fox River in Racine county, Silver Lake in Kenosha county, Lake Poygan in Winnebago county, Beaver Dam Lake and Beaver Dam River in Dodge county, Rock River in Jefferson and Rock counties, Chippewa River in Dunn, Pepin, Eau Claire and Chippewa counties, Lake Holcombe, Lake Wissota, and Dells Pond in Eau Claire and Chippewa counties, Wolf and Fox River systems associated with Lake Winnebago, Lake Mendota in Dane county, Lower Sugar River in Dane and Green counties, Yellowstone Lake in Lafayette county, Pecatonica River in Iowa, Lafayette, and Green counties, Lower Red Cedar River from the Lake Menomomie dam in Menomomie to the Chippewa River, Lower St Croix River from St. Croix downstream the Mississippi River, Wisconsin River from Merrill downstream to the Mississippi River and the Mississippi River.

Anglers looking for flatheads should find success on the Mississippi River, the Chippewa River and flowages, Lower St. Croix River, Lower Red Cedar River, Rock River between Lake Koshkonong and Fort Atkinson, Wolf and Fox River systems associated with Lake Winnebago, and the Lower Wisconsin River from the Dells to the Mississippi River.

Catfish can be filleted like most other species. The days of using the skinning pliers are long gone. If you like going old school and fry your catfish up whole, then skinning pliers will be needed. Catfish fillets can be grilled with the skin left on. The skin peels off easily after cooking. For those who take pride in the culinary skill of smoking fish, catfish taste great smoked.

Like other outdoor activities Wisconsin has to offer, catfishing has something for everyone. Try something different this year and go catfishing. It’s the perfect choice. You might just catch the largest fish of your life.



What about the blue catfish? Blue catfish are another catfish species located in the United States but not here. Every year there are debates on web-based fishing forums on whether someone is catching blue cats in Wisconsin. Locally, some anglers may call channel catfish “blue” catfish because they may have a blue hue. The fact is there are no naturally reproducing populations of blue catfish in Wisconsin. There may be a stray that migrates up the Mississippi River every now and then, but there are no fishable populations. So if Uncle Ned talks about the blue catfish he caught on the Fox River, he is talking about channel catfish. The closest populations of blue cats are located on the Mississippi River below Keokuk, Iowa. Wisconsin catfish anglers looking to add blue cats to their species list will have to travel south.

Plan to soak a line in 2012? Check out these options

Regional fishing forecasts

Northern Wisconsin



■ Lake Superior

Lake trout angling, the most popular sport fishery in Wisconsin waters of Lake Superior, occurs primarily in two distinct portions of the lake, the Apostle Islands region and the western arm. The Apostle Islands region supports healthy populations of naturally reproducing lake trout, while the western end still needs stocking to maintain high catch rates. Lake trout are stocked in the western end each year but they still only make up 20 to 30 percent of angler catch. No matter where you are fishing, June and July are great months to target lake trout with September a close second. The average lake trout caught throughout the year is about 22 inches, but fish exceeding 35 inches are caught each year and fish over 40 inches do show up in surveys demonstrating true trophy potential. These large fish show the population is healthy with lake trout often living to be over 30 years old. Conservative fishing regulations, closed areas, and sea lamprey control have been and continue to be critical to maintaining healthy lake trout populations. In addition to lake trout, trolling in the western arm of Lake Superior produces coho salmon, Chinook salmon, and walleye.

St. Louis River — The lower portion of the river is highly developed but the habitat in the upper river is pristine and supports a diverse mix of species including walleye, northern pike, musky, smallmouth bass and panfish. Improved water quality and restrictive fishing regulations have created a prosperous sport fishery. Documented natural reproduction and the 50-inch minimum length limit for musky, should contribute to a healthy fishery with future trophy opportunities. The walleye fishery also looks healthy with recent surveys finding 33 percent of the adult walleye between 20 and 25 inches and fish over 30 inches not uncommon.

Chequamegon Bay remains a terrific year-round destination for anglers seeking a variety of high-quality, multi-species fishing opportunities. May and June are excellent months to target trophy smallmouth bass in the shallow waters of the sloughs and bays. Spring surveys have shown an average length of 17 inches and a diversity of age classes indicative of a healthy fishery. May and June are excellent months for walleye, too. The Bay continues to support a low density but trophy-sized walleye population. The average length of walleye caught continues to hover around 22 inches. In recent years, the proportion of walleyes less than 20 inches has declined. However, stocking of fingerlings and extended growth fingerlings, some of nearly legal size, starting in 2009 will continue to improve the number of smaller walleye available to anglers. In the spring, look for fish in shallow weeds. As the water temperature rises, the walleyes tend to spread throughout Chequamegon Bay and can be harder to catch.

Brown trout and splake are also stocked in Chequamegon Bay to add diversity to the

fishery. The survival of stocked fish has gradually declined over the last 20 years due to the resurgence of many native species. However, DNR staff has continued to stock salmonids offshore with small boats. Stocking fish into deeper water and spreading them in a variety of habitats appears to improve their survival and angler catch rates. Next year, offshore stocking from the R/V Hack Noyes will resume after the vessel was out of service this year for a well-earned re-fit. Following the successful completion of the re-fit, the workhorse of the Lake Superior fisheries program should be ready for another 60 years of service.

Fisheries management in Lake Superior has been gradually shifting away from stocking, to improving natural reproduction of trout and salmon through tributary habitat reclamation. This represents a low-cost, environmentally-friendly way to replace expensive hatchery-raised fish, whose survival has been steadily declining, with free naturally-reproduced fish better adapted to their envi-



Two sizable smallmouth bass captured during a survey in Chequamegon Bay, handled by fisheries technician Scott Sapper, Bayfield. Photo: Randy Besonen

ronment. Habitat crews and volunteers from local angler groups have successfully exposed valuable spawning substrates in over 20 miles on the Lake Superior tributaries using a technique that flushes trapped sand and sediments. On the Bois Brule, the most well known of the tributaries, about 11,000 trout and salmon returned to the stream to spawn last season. Besides fishing for trout and salmon in the tributaries, wading from shore or fishing from boats near the river mouths and marinas in the spring and fall can also provide ample angling prospects.

The habitat work not only benefits the in-stream fisheries in the tributaries but also contributes to the open lake fishery. Naturally produced brown trout, steelhead, and coho and Chinook salmon are provided to Lake Superior from the tributaries every year. Trolling near the river mouths in Iron, Ashland, Bayfield and Douglas counties is a dependable tactic for catching trout and salmon in the spring and fall seasons. Coho salmon returning to spawn in the streams are most commonly caught and average about 19 to 22 inches. About 180,000 brown trout and splake are also stocked each year to enhance the shallow water fishery.

Conditions anywhere on Lake Superior can change rapidly, so anglers are encouraged to check weather conditions and forecasts. Anglers should also be on the look out for tagged fish. The DNR tags nearly all game species with colored and numbered tags inserted near the fish's dorsal (top) fin. If anglers catch a fish with colored tags, they are encouraged to report the fish's length, tag color and number, and capture location to

the local DNR office. In exchange, anglers will receive information on previous dates and locations this fish has been captured and reported. If the fish is released please leave the tag in the fish for future recapture. The information gathered from tag recaptures is invaluable to fisheries biologists and is greatly appreciated. - Peter M. Stevens, Fisheries Supervisor, Bayfield

■ BARRON COUNTY

Granite Lake — Anglers looking for walleye action without all the pressure of the bigger lakes should look at Granite Lake. Located in the Northwest corner of Barron County, the 154-acre lake has great potential to be a great sleeper walleye lake. Survey results in 2011 reveal that 54 percent of all walleyes surveyed were of legal size and the majority were between 15 to 18 inches. The fishery in Granite Lake also includes a low density largemouth bass population, but with larger fish present (85 percent over 14 inches). Panfish numbers were generally low, but with some good sizes. Bluegills ranged from 3 to 8.5 inches and black crappies and yellow perch were in the 3- to 11-inch size range.

Poskin Lake — If you are looking for a lake that has a little bit of everything, then the 150 acre Poskin Lake is the place to go. Survey results from 2010 show that northern pike and largemouth bass numbers are very strong. Many pike were in the 24- to 30-inch range and were in great condition. The largemouth bass population is abundant but with large fish being common. There are a lot of bass in the 14- to 18-inch range with a few 20-inch fish collected during the survey. A respectable bluegill and black crappie fishery is present. Walleyes are also present, but in lower numbers. Many of the walleyes surveyed were in that mid 20-inch range. If your lucky maybe you can set your hook into to the one musky that was seen during the survey. The lake is not managed for musky but there is a rogue fish or two roaming the waters.

Brill River — Located in the Northeast corner of Barron County, the Brill River has a moderate brown trout population and a low density brook trout population. With water temperatures being marginal, trout are located from the Barron/Washburn county line down to 26th Ave. There are good numbers of brown trout in the 8- to 12-inch range with occasional fish reaching 18 inches. The Brill River offers opportunities for anglers who like easy wading and the chance to fly fish. This section of river is wide, shallow and open, great for dropping a fly along the grass river banks. - Mark Stanley, Fisheries Technician, Barron

■ BAYFIELD COUNTY

Upper Eau Claire Lake — Anglers looking for a quality fishing experience for musky, walleye and smallmouth bass will find Upper Eau Claire Lake to their liking. Survey results from 2011 show walleye up to 28 inches and musky and smallmouth bass up to 48 and 19 inches, respectively. Although numbers of these gamefish are generally lower than other area lakes the quality fishing opportunity is second to none. Bluegill, black crappie and yellow perch make up the panfish community and have average to above average size. - Scott Toshner, fisheries biologist, Brule

■ BURNETT COUNTY

New for 2012, the 14-inch minimum length limit for largemouth and smallmouth bass has been replaced with a no minimum length

limit for most waters in Burnett County. Surveys of Burnett county lakes conducted since 2008 found catches of largemouth bass greater than 12 inches exceeded state-wide averages 95% of the time. These high density fisheries should provide ample opportunity for anglers seeking largemouth bass to eat.

Clam Lake — A booming common carp population should provide excellent bowfishing on Upper and Lower Clam Lake. Unfortunately, the high density carp population has caused serious impacts to the fish community and aquatic vegetation, particularly wild rice. A 2011 survey captured 3.5 largemouth bass per mile of shoreline compared to 5.6 per mile in 2004. Also, bluegill catch per mile decreased from 262 in 1995 to 8 in 2011. Channel catfish numbers appear to have increased, with large numbers of fish present in the spring. DNR crews installed a fishing pier at the Highway 70 boat landing that provides a very good shore fishing opportunity.

Round Lake — A 2011 survey of Round Lake in southwest Burnett County found largemouth bass as the dominant gamefish, with many bass in the 14- to 16-inch range and a few bass in the 18- to 20-inch range. Common carp are also present, providing another bowfishing opportunity.

Sand Creek — Located in southeast Burnett County, Sand Creek offers trout anglers excellent access through the Sand Creek Fishery Area and a high density brown trout population. 2011 survey results indicated good numbers of 6- to 10-inch brown trout throughout the fishery area. The best access is on the western border of the fishery area by taking 330th or 340th Ave. to the parking areas provided.

Wood Lake — Largemouth bass densities on Wood Lake are very high. A 2011 survey captured 27 fish greater than 12 inches per mile of shoreline. This catch rate exceeded 93 percent of surveys on similar waterbodies in Wisconsin. Bluegills were of moderate density, with many fish between 6 and 7 inches. - Jamison Wendel, Fisheries Biologist, Burnett County

■ DOUGLAS COUNTY

Upper St. Croix Lake and Lake Nebagamon — Wood will be more prevalent in both Upper St. Croix Lake and Lake Nebagamon due to the efforts of local citizens and lake groups starting in 2012. A project that increases the amount of wood in the water will use whole trees from upland sources to replicate wood that falls into the water on its own. Much of the historic wood in our nearshore areas has been removed over time due to logging and cabin development. Restoring this woody habitat helps not only fish but wildlife and water quality as well. - Scott Toshner, fisheries biologist, Brule



Fisheries biologist, Scott Toshner, cradles an exceptional Upper Eau Claire musky. Photo: Paul Riordan



■ FLORENCE COUNTY

Spread Eagle Chain of Lakes (SECL) —

The SECL is located in Northeast Florence County between the cities of Florence and Iron Mountain, MI. Consisting of 9 lakes covering 548 acres, it is one of the largest bodies of water in Florence County. The chain of lakes has almost 15 miles of shoreline providing lots of fishable structure for anglers. If you enjoy catching largemouth bass, look no further than the Spread Eagle Chain. Surveys conducted in 2011 estimated the adult largemouth bass population to be 4,061 fish (7.41/acre). The most common sizes captured were 10 to 15 inches, but trophy-sized fish were captured during our survey with the largest bass being 21.4 inches. The SECL is a popular pan fishing destination. The panfish population is comprised mostly of bluegill, with approximately 74% larger than 6 inches. Other game fish species present in the chain include small populations of walleye, smallmouth bass, northern pike and muskellunge.



County forest administrator, Pat Smith, with a trophy largemouth bass from the Spread Eagle Chain of Lakes. Photo: Brad Shucha

Patten Lake — For trophy bass fishing there may be no better place to go in Northeast Wisconsin than Patten Lake. This 255-acre lake in central Florence County has a relatively low abundance of largemouth and smallmouth bass. The low density has allowed them to grow very large. During the 2011 survey 22% of the largemouth captured and 23% of smallmouth bass were over 18 inches. On Patten Lake bass don't stop growing at 18 inches; approximately 4 percent of all bass captured in 2011 were over 20 inches. Patten Lake largemouth bass are impressively robust; making it one of the only places in the area that you have a legitimate chance of catching a 7-pound largemouth bass. Patten Lake also has an abundant northern pike population, estimated at 6.5 adults/acre in 2011. The average size of northern pike in Patten Lake is very good, with reports of trophy fish up to 40 inches being caught annually. The walleye population is currently at its lowest level since the walleye population was established in 1974. Last year, DNR and the Patten Lake Association began a bullhead removal project in the hope of increasing the walleye population. Preliminary surveys show the bullhead population has been reduced to near historic levels. Only time will tell how the bullhead removal will affect walleye and other game fish populations in Patten Lake, but the future is definitely looking brighter. - Greg Matzke, fisheries biologist, Florence

■ FOREST COUNTY

Silver Lake — This 320-acre lake, located just west of the town of Laona, was surveyed in 2011. The most abundant game fish species in Silver Lake are northern pike. While they provide an excellent opportunity for some action they run very small with fish over 22 inches being surprisingly rare. There is a moderate abundance of largemouth bass that tend to be concentrated for most of the year near the few areas with submerged timber. Smallmouth bass are less abundant than largemouth bass but have a very good size structure with most fish between 14 and 18 inches. Stocking of muskellunge has

produced a fairly abundant population with a good size structure. Nearly 30 percent of the muskellunge sampled in 2011 were 40 inches or larger, with the largest musky being 46.8 inches.

Trump Lake — There may be no easier place to catch a largemouth bass in Forest County than Trump Lake near Wabeno. The bass population was estimated at an incredible 13.64 adults per acre in 2011. Due to the high abundance of bass the majority are small in size, ranging from 8 to 14 inches. Trump Lake does have an 18-inch length limit with a bag limit of 1 fish, so plan on releasing nearly every bass you catch. With a good chance of constant action this would be a great place to take kids or inexperienced anglers fishing.

Butternut Lake — Butternut Lake, in northwestern Forest County, continues to be one of the best walleye lakes in the area. The fishery is maintained by natural reproduction, producing an abundant adult population. Yearly population estimates routinely find 4 to 6 adult walleye per acre, providing a good fishing opportunity for walleye anglers. Smallmouth bass fishing has been exceptional on Butternut Lake. There are plenty of good-sized bass that are typically found near the many rocky breaks and deep reed edges on the lake. - Greg Matzke, fisheries biologist, Florence

■ IRON COUNTY

Turtle-Flambeau Flowage — Anglers seeking a quality walleye fishing experience, in a beautiful wilderness setting, should consider taking a trip to the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage (TFF). With adult densities consistently over 4 adults per acre, and typical young-of-the-year recruitment estimates several times regional averages, walleye are the dominant gamefish species in this dark-stained flowage. The TFF is known for good numbers of "eater-size" walleye, and during a recent 2011 spring netting survey, 54% of the walleye sampled were 15 inches or greater. Due to low water clarity, and the abundance of rock and wood habitat, anglers should consider altering their techniques when pursuing TFF walleye. For example, walleye can be found in very shallow water during many parts of the day, which is uncharacteristic of walleye in more traditional, clear-water systems. With over 60 state-maintained campsites scattered throughout the flowage, along with a number of privately-owned resorts, visitors will find accommodations to suit their needs.



Lara Eslinger with a nice catch from the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage. Photo: Lawrence Eslinger

Gile Flowage — This 3,000+ acre flowage near Hurley, WI, offers anglers some of the best smallmouth bass fishing in the northern part of the state. A 2011 electrofishing survey found relatively high numbers of smallmouth bass, with the catch rate of smallmouth 12 inches and greater being in the top 1 percent of lakes statewide. In addition, 88

of the 187 (47 percent) fish sampled were at least 14 inches. The aggressive nature of this species, along with the added protection of a 14 to 18 inch no-harvest slot, ensures quality smallmouth bass action for years to come.

Tyler Forks River and Erickson Creek —

Trout anglers seeking solitude and opportunities at legal-sized fish, should consider exploring the Tyler Forks River area including some of its smaller coldwater tributaries. 2011 surveys on the Tyler Forks River and Erickson Creek found good natural reproduction of brook trout along with decent numbers of fish over 7 inches in the deeper water areas. Thousands of acres of surrounding Iron County Forest land provide access to many miles of stream. - Lawrence Eslinger, fisheries biologist, Mercer

■ LANGLADE COUNTY

East Branch Eau Clair River — Brook trout numbers are 138 percent above the long-term average and in 2011, were the second highest all time based on 26 years of surveys, including the last 23 consecutive. In the better sections, there is one yearling or older trout for every 11.5 inches of stream bottom (5,500 per mile)! Of course trout are not lined up nose to tail. They are in their usual lairs: woody cover, undercut banks, under overhanging brush and grasses, rocky runs, and riffles.

Evergreen River — The crystal clear, numbing cold waters of the Evergreen River are home to quality naturally reproducing populations of brook and brown trout. Since 2009, a habitat improvement project has been ongoing between the old railroad bridge and the Menominee County line in southeastern Langlade County. Upon completion, almost 2 miles of trout habitat will have been improved benefiting generations of trout and anglers alike. The work, funded by trout stamp dollars and donations from regional Trout Unlimited chapters, is about three-quarters complete and the trout are responding well to their new homes. Brook trout typically make up between 50 to 75 percent of the total trout population with fish up to 10 inches common and a few reaching 13 to 14 inches. Brown trout are common up to 14 to 15 inches with some occasionally pushing the 20-inch mark.

Wolf River below Post Lake Dam — This is a superb shore fishing site with easy access, ample parking, a good boat ramp, bathrooms, a new fishing platform and a picnic area. A variety of species, including quality specimens, can be caught right from shore. Who needs a boat to experience quality fishing?! Walleye, smallmouth bass, northern pike, muskellunge, largemouth bass, rock bass, crappie, perch and bullhead are all common in the river below the dam and provide anglers with good action. Be aware that gamefish seasons apply on this part of the Wolf River. Also, there is a fish refuge to protect spawning walleye, muskellunge, and bass from April 1 through May 31. No fishing is allowed in the refuge which runs from the dam downstream 75 feet to the bottom of the first rapids. There is considerable shore fishing opportunity, including the fishing platform, downstream from the refuge so that shouldn't stop anglers from coming in April and May. - Dave Seibel, fisheries biologist, Antigo

■ LINCOLN COUNTY

Prairie River — 2011 trout numbers increased 12 percent from 2010 to approximately 4,900 per mile (4 inches and larger). This density of trout is the sixth highest in 21 consecutive years of surveys and is 118 percent of the long-term average. Brook trout numbers were up and brown trout numbers were down, but keep in mind that browns only make up about 6 percent of the trout population in this section of the Prairie (Gleason School Forest). About 20 percent of the brook trout are over the legal length limit of 8 inches and 5 percent are over 10 inches.

Lake Alexander — This 677-acre impoundment on the Wisconsin River near Merrill is a great fishing destination. Whether it's

gamefish the likes of walleye, smallmouth bass, northern pike, the ever elusive but highly prized state fish the muskellunge, or panfish you seek, Alexander has something for everyone. Walleye lead the way in numbers present and popularity among anglers. A 2011 survey revealed that the current walleye regulations are working as intended. Based on our spring netting survey, 59 percent of walleye were over the 15-inch minimum length limit and 31 percent were over 18 inches. There are some quality eater-size fish for anglers out there! Within the protected slot (20 to 28 inches) there is a growing number of bigger fish providing quality catch and release action for better than average-size walleye. Twenty-six percent were over 20 inches, 6 percent were over 25 inches, and 2 percent were over 28 inches. Northern pike are presently very high in numbers and could use some thinning out to improve their growth. Most are in the 15- to 25-inch range but there are some dandy fish up to 35 inches and beyond. Musky are naturally reproducing and are in balance with the rest of the fishery; not too high density but not too low to provide good fishing. They are in tremendous body condition and are heavy for their length. Fish approaching 50 inches are present. Smallmouth bass in the 14- to 20-inch range are common and ready for feisty battles with anglers. Panfish are present in lower densities but have high size quality; a near perfect scenario. Pumpkinseed sunfish lead the way with bluegill a close second. They are followed by the "yellows", perch and bullhead, and black crappie. - Dave Seibel, fisheries biologist, Antigo



Fisheries biologist, John Kubisiak holds a 36" female northern pike from the Rhinelander Flowage. Photo: Steve Timler.

■ ONEIDA COUNTY

Boom — Rhinelander Chain — A spring survey started on the Wisconsin River below the Rainbow Flowage dam and followed ice-out downstream. We found that the vast majority of walleye in this system migrate into the Wisconsin River to spawn. We estimated a spawning population of 1,950 adult walleye in the river, with most fish running 13 to 18 inches. Smallmouth bass appear to overwinter in the flowage area, and smallmouth up to 19 inches were found migrating to up-river areas as the walleye catch was winding down. Good numbers of largemouth with size centered on 14 inches were found in the more vegetated sections. We saw abundant northern pike, with an average size of 17.8 inches, but good numbers up to 29 inches. We captured low numbers of muskellunge with very few juveniles, so a stocking quota was requested for 2012. The 50 muskellunge captured averaged 39.5 inches, with 40 percent over 40 inches and 10 percent over 45 inches. True to the flowage's reputation, we handled a large number of bowfin (or dogfish), including some 30-inch fish. Panfish abundance was moderate, with a mixed catch of perch, bluegill, pumpkinseed and black crappie. Size potential was moderate to good, with some large panfish hiding out in the stump fields. Backwater bays like Bass Lake and Peggy Slough produced high catches of good-sized yellow bullheads.

Muskellunge Lake — We estimated 1.5 adult walleye per acre during our spring survey of Muskellunge Lake, with about 84 percent of the fish 14 inches or larger. We

estimated 2.4 largemouth bass per acre, with about a third of the bass over 14 inches. Very few of the 144 northern pike captured exceeded 23 inches, although the largest was 32.2 inches. We captured 29 adult muskellunge, with 35 percent of muskies over 40 inches and the largest 47.5 inches. Nine juvenile muskellunge less than 25 inches provide evidence of recent recruitment. Muskellunge Lake has a decent fishery for yellow perch and crappie, while the bluegill and pumpkinseed tend to run small.

Pelican Lake — We found a nice mix of species in Pelican Lake. The walleye population was estimated at 2.4 adults per acre, and 86 percent of the fish were 15 inches or longer. We estimated 1.5 northern pike per acre with an average length of 20.4 inches. Pelican has a 50-inch minimum length limit on muskellunge and we had a moderate muskie catch of 86 adults, but excellent size with 48 percent at least 40 inches and the two largest fish 49.5 inches. We also picked up a good number of naturally-reproduced juvenile muskies. We handled 176 largemouth bass with size centered on 15 inches. Perch and bluegill size and numbers were quite good, although we did not see the 8-plus inch bluegill that were present in a 2005 survey. Pelican is the only area lake with a white bass population, and we saw a moderate number, running 12 to 15 inches.

Trout waters — Look for stocked brown trout in Dorothy Lake and Bearskin River; rainbows are planned for Perch, Hawk and Little Bass lakes, and brook trout for Mercer Springs. Electrofishing surveys on Noisy Creek found high numbers of wild brook trout under 7.5 inches, with low to moderate numbers of larger fish. The largest trout captured was 11.9 inches. Bear Creek had low to moderate numbers of brook trout under 8 inches, and the largest trout was 11.3 inches. For anglers who find the 7.68-ounce state record golden shiner to be too high a hurdle, Bear Creek boasts good numbers of central mudminnow with state record potential. - *John Kubisiak, Senior Fisheries biologist, Rhineland*

■ POLK COUNTY

Big Butternut — Located in the village of Luck, in Polk County, Big Butternut has great fishing opportunities. With a nice boat ramp with a large fishing pier that extends out into the lake, along with ample shoreline fishing areas, there is plenty of opportunity to catch fish. Survey results from 2011 show the adult walleye population is on the rise, with the estimate at 1048 adult walleyes in the lake or 2.8 fish per acre. Compared to 2003 when the survey results revealed 388 adult walleyes in the lake or 1.0 fish per acre, walleyes are on a steady increase the last 8 years. Most of the walleyes surveyed were in the 16- to 22-inch



Fisheries biologist Jeff Scheirer and Fisheries technician Kendal Liebzzeit holding largemouth bass from Murphy Flowage, Rusk County. Photo: Greg Rublee

range with a few in the upper 20s. There is an 18-inch length limit on walleyes in this lake. Another fishing regulation on Big Butternut is a bag limit of 5 and no length limit on largemouth bass. Bass are very abundant with the majority being smaller fish 8 to 12 inches. This regulation encourages anglers to harvest abundant small bass to help try to increase the size structure in the population. Panfish numbers are moderate with bluegills

and yellow perch being the most dominant species. The size structure is on the low end with bluegills in the 4- to 8-inch range and yellow perch in the 5- to 9-inch range.

Wolf Creek — Is located on the very west edge of Polk County and flows into the St. Croix River. The lower section of Wolf Creek around County Highway G supports a nice brown trout fishery. Annual surveys over the last few years show good numbers of brown trout 8 to 12 inches with the occasional 18 incher. The brown trout are in very good condition and very plump. You might even want to adventure to the mouth of Wolf Creek where it dumps into the St. Croix River, you could have a chance at catching a trophy brown trout. - *Mark Stanley, fisheries technician, Barron*

■ PRICE COUNTY

Upper Flambeau River Flowages — Our 2010-2011 surveys revealed lots of hefty smallmouth bass closely associated with submerged trees and stumps still useful as habitat over 100 years after construction of dams that formed Upper, Lower, Pixley, and Crowley flowages on the North Fork Flambeau River near Park Falls. Smallmouth bass were noticeably plump for their length, and one- to two-thirds were at least 14 inches. The coincidence of excellent smallmouth bass populations and excellent habitat conditions emphasizes the importance of near-shore woody structure to healthy ecosystems and good fishing. In each flowage we found walleye of all sizes in low to moderate numbers, but our spring samples may not reflect their true population status if adults move to spawn elsewhere in this river system. Results suggest that walleye population density and size structure were most favorable in Pixley and Crowley flowages. Natural reproduction and anglers' strong catch-and-release ethic sustain "quality" musky fishing with opportunities to catch some bruisers over 45 inches. Northern pike were most abundant in Upper Flowage where seventeen percent were 21 to 32 inches. Crappies 10 to 12 inches are currently available in moderate numbers, but crappie fishing may soon decline until the 2009 year class reaches desirable size. Bluegill and pumpkinseeds up to 6 inches and yellow perch up to 8 inches were plentiful, but we found few larger ones. Families can use fishing piers, campgrounds, trails, playgrounds, pavilions, and a swimming beach at Smith Lake County Park and Hines Park.

Bass Lake (near Timm's Hill County Park)

— Families visiting Wisconsin's highest point can entertain young children with fast-action fishing for small panfish at the pier on the north shore of this 20-acre lake located about 5 miles east of Ogema. We captured 408 bluegills and 104 pumpkinseeds per mile in spring 2011, but none were longer than 6 inches. Largemouth bass and northern pike were far fewer than expected, despite habitat from submerged woody structure. We suspect that low nutrient levels responsible for excellent water clarity also limit algae and plankton production, which in turn limits growth potential of the fish community. Abundant, slow-growing panfish compete for scarce food and simply do not live long enough to attain desirable size. - *Jeff Scheirer, fisheries biologist, Park Falls*

■ RUSK COUNTY

Bass Lake — If size is unimportant, anglers should enjoy action and variety in 88-acre Bass Lake, located 3½ miles west of Weyerhaeuser, where clear, infertile water limits productivity and growth potential. We captured many largemouth bass 11 to 13 inches in 2011 surveys, but none was longer than 14 inches. Anglers may encounter several predators stocked to improve the size of stunted bluegills, including bowfin, northern pike, and most recently walleye. Most bluegills were 6 to 7.5 inches with a few reaching 9.5 inches. Brown trout and rainbow trout, planted in late fall as surplus brood stock from WDNR hatcheries, provide bonus opportunities. If fish aren't biting, take a swim at the beach along Old 14 Road.

Amacoy Lake — Recent surveys yielded mixed reviews of fishing prospects in 278-acre Amacoy Lake, located 5 miles south of Bruce, WI. Muskellunge stocked as 12-inch fingerlings grew to provide fast fishing action for adults up to 43 inches. A low-density population of older walleye 18 to 29 inches with no evidence of smaller, younger ones suggests that predation by many largemouth bass limits the contribution of small walleye fingerlings stocked biennially. Eleven percent of bass exceeded the 14-inch minimum length limit. The size structure of panfish populations would disappoint most anglers. Bluegill and yellow perch 5 to 7 inches were plentiful, but almost none were longer than 8 inches. Crappies averaged 8.2 inches, and in early spring twelve percent were 10 inches or longer.

Murphy Flowage — Murphy Flowage, a 171-acre impoundment on Hemlock Creek in the scenic Blue Hills, offers diverse opportunities for outdoor recreation in a quiet, remote setting. Electrofishing capture rates in spring 2011 indicated largemouth bass and bluegill populations in moderate to high abundance. Among bass 8 inches and longer, nearly thirty percent were 15 to 19.5 inches. Bluegills had mediocre size—twenty-eight percent were at least six inches, but only four percent were 7 inches or longer. Consult the fishing regulations pamphlet for special harvest restrictions on panfish, bass, and pike. Anyone planning a relaxing picnic or family gathering will enjoy the new day-use shelter and campground. - *Jeff Scheirer and Kendal Liebzzeit, Park Falls Fisheries Team*



Fisheries biologist Joe Krahn with a pair of nice walleyes from Teal Lake, Sawyer County. Photo: Dave Neuswanger

■ SAWYER COUNTY

Namekagon River — This Federally designated Wild and Scenic River is one of Wisconsin's largest trout streams. After several years of good spawning success, the Namekagon River from Hayward upstream to Telemark has far more wild brown trout than meet the eye. One in five browns exceeds 15 inches. Angling pressure makes these big trout wary, so be prepared to fish during low light periods and test your fly fishing skills by matching the hatch. Anglers are encouraged to fish for brown trout early and late in the season when water temperatures are less than 70F in order to increase the odds of successful live release. Anglers should be aware that special regulations (including artificial lures only) apply from Hospital Road (near Lake Hayward) upstream to Pacwawong Dam, so please check the trout regulations booklet and signs posted at points of access for reach-specific information. Downstream of Lake Hayward, the Namekagon is primarily a warm-water stream with excellent float fishing for smallmouth bass and muskellunge. Keep an eye out for the occasional lake sturgeon which DNR has been stocking in an attempt to restore this magnificent beast to its Ojibwe namesake river, the Place of Sturgeon. Brook trout are abundant only in some of the smaller, colder streams that feed the Namekagon. Anglers are asked to voluntarily release all brook trout caught in the Namekagon itself, as biologists strive to improve habitat to keep these speckled beauties in a system that is becoming too warm for them.

Sand Lake, Grindstone Lake, Round Lake, Lac Courte Oreilles, and Windfall Lake

— These clear-water lakes are among the best bets for walleye in Sawyer County. The bigger lakes also have extraordinary fisheries for big smallmouth bass and rock bass. Because of high water clarity, walleye fishing in these lakes is most productive at low-light periods within 30 minutes of dawn and dusk; but great action for smallmouth bass (and rock bass for the kids) can pick up the slack during daylight hours. Smallmouth bass are compatible with walleye in these lakes, so anglers are encouraged to voluntarily release even legal-size smallmouth bass over 14 inches. If your goal is a fish fry, try keeping some 8- to 10-inch rock bass, which are just as tasty as bluegills when cared for properly (chilled quickly).

Largemouth bass, which prey upon young walleyes and compete with walleyes for food, are increasing in abundance in weedy areas of Lac Courte Oreilles. Anglers are encouraged to harvest legal-size largemouth bass in order to maintain dominance by walleyes. Ice fishing for walleyes is popular on Grindstone Lake. Anglers there are asked to voluntarily restrict their ice fishing effort to water less than 30 feet deep. Changes in pressure for fish caught at greater depths can cause "the bends" and result in death, which defeats the purpose of releasing abundant walleyes in the 14-to-18-inch protected slot at Grindstone. Big northern pike are a fine bonus for ice anglers who fish in and around the shallow bars that support weeds during the summer in these clear-water lakes.

Nelson Lake, Sissabagama Lake, Whitefish Lake

— These very different waters all share one thing in common: formerly excellent walleye fisheries have been displaced in recent years by excessive numbers of largemouth bass. This species of bass is known to prey upon young walleyes and compete with adult walleyes for available food. As a result, natural reproduction and stocking of small walleyes (1-2") have failed in these lakes. DNR biologists have teamed up with lake associations and Walleyes for Northwest Wisconsin to aggressively stock "extended-growth" walleye fingerlings that are big enough (6-8") to avoid being eaten by most largemouth bass. The minimum length limit on walleye was increased to 18 inches on these three lakes in 2011 in the hope that increased numbers of walleye will eat enough small bass and panfish to establish a desired state of balance. There is no longer a minimum length limit on bass in these lakes. In 2012 anglers are encouraged to harvest largemouth bass of all sizes starting the first weekend in May in Sissabagama Lake (Southern Bass Zone) and the third weekend in June in Nelson and Whitefish lakes (Northern Bass Zone). An overwinter "fish sticks" project planned for Nelson Lake may make largemouth bass easier to find and catch next to trees placed in shallow water. Weedless plastic baits are effective here throughout the summer. Anglers are encouraged to voluntarily release all smallmouth bass in order to shift the bass fishery to one that is more compatible with walleyes.

Chippewa Flowage — Winter fishing and panfish harvest regulations were simplified on the Chippewa Flowage in 2011. Ice fishing is now legal under statewide rules for all species except walleye, which may not be harvested over the winter. The statewide daily bag limit of 25 panfish (all species combined, including crappie) now applies to the Chippewa Flowage. In 2012, anglers will find high numbers of 7- to 9-inch bluegills and 9- to 11-inch crappies, so the "Big Chip" will be a great place for family fishing trips. Yellow perch are more abundant than in times past, but perch are valuable as food for sport fish and as predators on abundant young bluegills. Anglers are encouraged to voluntarily release yellow perch and to keep bluegills, pumpkinseeds, crappies and rock bass for the frying pan. DNR started an experiment in 2011 to allow and encourage harvest of largemouth bass of any size starting the third Saturday in June while maintaining a 14" minimum length limit for smallmouth bass. Anglers were encouraged to voluntarily release all smallmouth bass, regardless of size. Flyers printed and posted by the Lake Chippewa Flowage Resort

Association helped anglers identify differences between the two bass species. DNR survey clerks documented no cases of mistaken identity in angler creels during 2011. Anglers are asked again in 2012 to harvest legal limits of largemouth bass but release their smallmouth bass to fight again another day. The smallmouth bass fishery is beginning to rival some of the best in northern Wisconsin, with good numbers of fish 12 to 18 inches. It is too soon to know if the 2011 harvest of largemouth bass was sufficient to increase the odds of survival for young walleyes, but a fall 2011 survey revealed the highest number of naturally produced young walleyes since 2006. The Chippewa Flowage property and resort owners associations raised enough money at the Big Chip Fish Fest in June of 2011 to purchase and stock another 20,000 large (6 to 10 inches) walleye fingerlings in fall of 2011. Combined with naturally produced fish and 8,559 large walleye fingerlings stocked by the Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe, the 2011 year class should help jump-start the walleye fishery in a couple years. The Chippewa Flowage now boasts excellent fishing for northern pike, many 24 to 30 inches. These fish are especially fun and easy to catch in developing weedbeds in late spring, but they are now legal to pursue through the ice as well. With a relatively new 50-inch length limit and less severe winter drawdowns, the adult muskellunge population continues to improve. There are more trophy-size fish than ever in the Chippewa Flowage, but for natural reproduction to continue, northern pike and largemouth bass (both predators on young muskellunge) must be harvested liberally.

Spider Chain, Tiger Cat Chain, Moose Lake, Teal and Lost Land lakes — These waters in northern Sawyer County are loaded with muskellunge and should provide excellent opportunities for action in 2012. The Spider and Tiger Cat chains have the most fish and are great places for novice anglers to seek their first musky. Most muskellunge in these two chains are slow-growing males 26 to 32 inches, but recent DNR surveys have revealed that a few faster-growing females have survived to reach the 40- to 48-inch range. Moose and the “Quiet Lakes” (Teal and Lost Land; slow, no-wake speed) continue to have more than the average number of mid-size muskies 36 to 42 inches, and Lost Land seems to be the best bet among these lakes for fish approaching 50 inches.

■ TAYLOR COUNTY

Rib River — Anglers should find trout fishing opportunities and convenient public access to the Big Rib River within DNR’s Rib

River Fishery Area, located about 10 miles southeast of Rib Lake, WI. Anglers can fish from shore on several state-owned parcels or from the right-of-way along River Road. Aside from several deep pools, wading was easy in mid summer. Fly anglers will enjoy the wide, open channel with little encroachment from tag alder. In our August 2011 surveys at River Road and Hetland Drive we captured brook trout and brown trout, including young of the year, juveniles and adults, to confirm that the fishery continues to be sustained by natural reproduction under current harvest regulations that allow anglers to keep 3 trout at least 9 inches daily. Our capture rates of 228 to 278 brook trout and 64 to 92 brown trout per mile indicate a moderate adult abundance for both populations. The “Big Rib” offers a chance to catch legal brook trout as well as brown trout of memorable and trophy size.

Wellington Lake — Surveys in spring 2011 revealed a high-density largemouth bass population that offers an “action fishery” in 43-acre Wellington Lake, located about 2 miles southwest of Rib Lake, WI. Along with fast fishing action, anglers have opportunity to land some larger bass—nineteen percent were 15 to 18 inches. Investments from local groups who raised and stocked large walleye fingerlings are working to establish a bonus fishery and to maintain satisfactory panfish abundance and size structure. We found walleye of all sizes in moderate density with sixteen percent 20 inches or longer. Bluegills 6 to 7 inches were moderately abundant. Our samples suggest that black crappie and yellow perch were too small to draw anglers’ attention. - *Jeff Scheirer, fisheries biologist, Park Falls*

■ VILAS COUNTY

Escanaba Lake — If you are looking for a wilderness fishing experience without having to go too far off the beaten path then you may want to visit Escanaba Lake. This 293-acre lake located near Boulder Junction is part of the Northern Highland Fishery Research Area. A free permit must be obtained at the research station located at the landing before you can fish any of the lakes in the research area. The lake has a long history as an excellent walleye fishery. A 28-inch minimum length limit and a bag limit of one walleye has been in place on Escanaba Lake since 2003. This regulation has resulted in a high density (2011 = 12.9/acre) fishery with high catch rates. Fish over the length limit are scarce but it provides a good action fishery. In addition to the walleye the lake provides a good muskellunge fishery and opportunities for smallmouth bass and northern pike.

Lac Vieux Desert — This 4300-acre lake located 3 miles east of the town of Land O Lakes is the largest lake in Vilas County. Lac Vieux Desert (LVD) has several public access sites located on both the Michigan and Wisconsin sides of the lake. As a boundary water with Michigan the fishing regulations and opens seasons for some species differ slightly from those of other inland Wisconsin waters. Walleye and muskellunge are the primary game fish species in LVD. Local, state, and tribal efforts to manage walleye has resulted in a relatively stable population. Stocking of muskellunge and a 40-inch length limit for many years has resulted in abundant and quality fishery. Panfish are a big attraction on LVD. Good populations of black crappie, bluegill, and yellow perch are present. Smallmouth and largemouth populations are low but quality-size fish of both species are present in our surveys.

Presque Isle Lake Chain — This three-lake chain (Presque Isle, Averill, and Van Vliet) covers 1,571 acres, provides a wide range of fishing opportunities and is located just south west of the town of Presque Isle. The chain is currently managed as a quality walleye, muskellunge, and smallmouth bass fishery. The walleye population is maintained through natural recruitment and muskellunge are stocked to supplement their numbers. The smallmouth bass population density in recent years has been low. The lake does have an abundant rusty crayfish population and this food source has produced a few larger fish. In 2009, an 18-inch minimum length limit and one fish bag limit were placed on the bass population of the Presque Isle Chain. The goal of this regulation is to improve bass catch rates, produce more quality size fish and reduce the rusty crayfish population. - *Steve Gilbert, fisheries biologist, Woodruff*

■ WASHBURN COUNTY

New for 2012, the 14-inch minimum length limit for largemouth and smallmouth bass has been replaced with a no minimum length limit for most Washburn county waters. Surveys of Washburn county lakes conducted since 2008 found catches of largemouth bass greater than 12 inches exceeded statewide averages 87 percent of the time. These high density fisheries should provide ample opportunity for anglers seeking largemouth bass to eat.

Big Devil Lake — Anglers looking to avoid heavy boat traffic days on Long Lake may want to try Big Devil Lake. A 2011 survey on this 162-acre lake just west of Long Lake indicated a very high density largemouth bass population. Catch rates of largemouth bass greater than 12 inches were greater

than 90 percent of similar waterbodies in Wisconsin. The lake also offers low-density but quality-size smallmouth bass potential for anglers. Black crappies, bluegills, and rock bass provide good panfish opportunities as well.

Namekagon River — With numerous access points and very scenic waters, the Namekagon River between the Hayward Dam and Trego offers quality canoe trips and fishing opportunities. In addition to very good smallmouth bass numbers, the river also contains walleye, muskellunge, and northern



Recently stocked lake sturgeon in the Namekagon River. Photo: Jamison Wendel

pike in this stretch. Look closely in shallow areas and you may spot one of the young lake sturgeon that has been re-introduced into this stretch of river in recent years.

Sawyer Creek — Sawyer Creek is a small, coldwater stream located near Shell Lake. A 2011 survey found brook trout in the upper reaches and brown trout in lower sections of the stream. The brown trout population was moderate density but with large fish present, up to 18 inches. Anglers can find numerous access points through the Sawyer Creek Fishery Area.

Trego Flowage — This 451-acre impoundment on the Namekagon River offers diverse fishing opportunities. The abundant submerged wood on the Trego Flowage provides excellent smallmouth bass habitat, with fish up to 19 inches captured in a 2011 survey. Moderate density muskellunge and walleye populations are also present. - *Jamison Wendel, fisheries biologist, Washburn County*



Northeastern Wisconsin



■ BROWN COUNTY

Fox River and lower Green Bay — The outlook for the southern Green Bay/lower Fox River walleye fishery should be very promising for anglers in 2012. Good walleye year classes have been measured the past three falls during electrofishing surveys. In 2012, the 2008 and 2009 year classes will recruit to the fishery and increase the abundance of catchable size fish. However, there will be a noticeable shift downward in the population size structure as the 2003 year class continues to be reduced in abundance through

harvest and as the younger and smaller 2008 and 2009 year class fish take their place. The population of adult Great Lakes strain muskellunge in Green Bay waters is increasing. This is likely in response to the increases in stocking and hatchery production in the early 2000’s. The resumption of stocking in 2010, after several years of no stocking, should begin to increase the number of desirable size musky over the course of the next several years. Recent stockings have been in the Fox River, Little Sturgeon Bay and the Menominee River. Anglers have found success fishing the rivers in spring and the bay and the Fox River in late fall for large musky. - *Steve Hogler, fisheries biologist, Green Bay*

■ CALUMET COUNTY

The eastern half of Calumet County has several lakes and streams that are popular with anglers. Lake fishing will be slow the next several years as fish populations are rebuilt following winterkills. Bass, northern pike and rock bass fishing can be very good during summer months in the Chilton Millpond, the South Branch of the Manitowoc River and the Killsnake River. In the Manitowoc River near Potter, many anglers success-

fully target northern pike in the spring and bullhead during the summer months. When fishing the Killsnake or Manitowoc Rivers anglers either fish from shore near road crossings or from canoes. - *Steve Hogler, fisheries biologist, Green Bay*

■ DOOR COUNTY

Inland Lakes — Door County lakes can provide high quality fishing opportunities for anglers. Recent surveys on Kangaroo and Clark lakes indicate that they have good populations of fish. Anglers target smallmouth bass, walleye and panfish when fishing these lakes however, a lack of structure can make finding fish a bit difficult. The panfish population on Kangaroo Lake is dominated by yellow perch and rock bass while bluegill are more common in Clark Lake. Ice fishing enthusiasts like to target northern pike and yellow perch on Kangaroo Lake. In the Forestville Flowage, largemouth bass and black crappie are targeted by anglers using small boats. Anglers wishing for solitude while fishing should give Europe Lake a try. Fishing may be a little slow but with a little effort very nice smallmouth bass or panfish may be caught. - *Steve Hogler, fisheries biologist, Green Bay*

Tributary Streams — Tributary streams in Door County are very scenic and provide anglers with a good small-stream fishing experience. A number of streams including Stony, Heins, Hibbards and Whitefish Bay Creeks are stocked annually with steelhead. Increasing Lake Michigan water levels the past several years have greatly increased the number of steelhead and other fish that can be found in these streams during spring runs. Fall fishing in these streams is much slower with only small numbers of returning Chinook salmon in them - *Steve Hogler, fisheries biologist, Green Bay*

■ FOND DU LAC COUNTY

Long Lake — Long Lake is a 417-acre hard-water drainage lake in eastern Fond du Lac County. The lake has a maximum depth of 47 feet and 6.9 miles of shoreline. Much of the west shore and some of the far northeast shore of the lake is developed with seasonal and year-around homes. The remaining shoreline is primarily undisturbed except for an area on the east shore where the Long Lake State Recreational Area is found. During a comprehensive survey of Long Lake in 2009, 161 northern pike were captured with fyke nets. The average length was



Mark Kordus caught and released (after much debate!) this 46-inch, 25 lb. northern pike in Green Bay. Photo: Mark Kordus

20.4 inches with a range of 6.9-29.7 inches. There is no minimum length limit on northern pike and a daily bag of 5 making it an attractive angling opportunity during summer months and through the ice. Few walleye were caught during the 2009 survey indicating no natural reproduction has occurred in recent history and that stocking success has been extremely poor. Cooperative efforts by the DNR and Long Lake Fishing Club are working to restore a once thriving walleye fishery. Long Lake also offers healthy, well balanced populations of largemouth bass and bluegill, popular targets of local anglers. A public boat launch is located on the east shore in the Long Lake State Recreational Area.

Parsons Creek – Trout anglers in Fond du Lac County looking for brook trout have a unique opportunity close to home. Flowing through 60 acres of county park land just 3 miles south of the city of Fond du Lac is Parsons Creek. A naturally reproducing population of brook trout resides in Hobbs Woods County Park, a scenic wooded area devoted to hiking and nature study. Stream surveys from 2011 showed impressive catch rates and a few fish greater than 9 inches. Hobbs Woods County Park is located on Hickory Road just south of County Road B in Fond du Lac County. - *Travis Motl, Fisheries Biologist, Plymouth*

■ GREEN BAY (MARINETTE, OCONTO, BROWN, KEWAUNEE, AND DOOR COUNTIES)

Green Bay and West Shore Tributaries— The 2010 year class of yellow perch was the third largest in 30 years of surveys. The majority of those fish should be at a harvestable size in 2012. This, along with several years of good year classes since 2003, is good news for anglers looking for perch of all sizes. The 2011 ice fishing season harvest (62,829) was nearly twice that of winter 2010. Interest has been growing in the winter whitefish fishery along the west shore, with many successful trips reported from Marinette to Oconto. In summer and fall 2011, perch fishing throughout the bay was good and many large perch over 10 inches were reported. Fall 2011 surveys in the lower Menominee River indicated improved numbers of brown and rainbow trout compared to recent years. The majority of fish averaged 23 inches at age-2, suggesting good survival of yearlings stocked in 2010. Large numbers of whitefish were observed in the Menominee River during November sampling. Spring walleye fishing in the Menominee, Peshtigo and Oconto rivers has been spectacular. Walleye catches in the surrounding areas of Green Bay have been exceptional for the past several summers. This trend should continue, with several year classes of younger fish up and coming. Anglers have been successful both through

the ice and open water fishing for northern pike, which grow quickly in productive waters of Green Bay. The DNR continues annual stocking of brown and rainbow trout, and Chinook salmon in Green Bay. These fish will provide future opportunities for stream angling and trolling. - *Tammi Paoli, fisheries biologist, Peshtigo*

■ LAKE MICHIGAN AND GREEN BAY (DOOR, MANITOWOC, AND KEWAUNEE COUNTIES)

The sheer size of Chinook salmon justifies its name “King”, and the average size in Lake Michigan continued a strong rebound in 2011 as stocking reductions complemented by an abundance of alewives resulted in a substantial increase in size of fish harvested. However, the abundant alewives also likely contributed to somewhat lower overall Chinook catch rates than had been experienced over the previous several years. The increased size of Chinooks in the harvest was evident as one local tournament boasted a 12-fold increase in fish registered that were 20 lbs and larger. There were several reports of fish caught in the area that were greater than 30 lbs. Results from the fourth year of a five year marking study designed to estimate the level of natural reproduction of Chinooks once again indicated a substantial contribution of naturally recruited fish to the Lake Michigan population with approximately 55% of all jack (age 1+) Chinook salmon being wild fish in 2010. The improved condition of salmon will help to increase survival suggesting a healthy lake-wide population of Chinooks will be available to anglers for harvest in 2012.

The lake whitefish ice fishery in Green Bay that emerged over the last several years continued to provide great action for ice anglers by making a strong showing in 2011. Barring any change in lake whitefish feeding and/or distribution patterns in Green Bay, the 2012 ice fishery should once again be very good. Much of the action takes place in various locations along the east shore between Dyckesville and Sturgeon Bay. Ice anglers are reminded this winter to keep an eye out for tagged whitefish from the approximately 2,500 fish that were tagged in the Menominee River in 2010. Population index surveys completed in 2011 suggest the whitefish spawning stock(s) in the area continue to be robust though local population young of year indices were down. Spring juvenile surveys in 2011 indicate that several fairly strong year classes are present and should contribute to the fishery for the next several years. The large 2009 year class in particular continues to be well represented in the summer trawling index surveys.

The smallmouth bass fishery continues to be exceptional along portions of Door County’s shoreline and the trend is expected to continue in 2012. Smallmouth size at age has been steadily increasing within the past decade and the size of the fish in the harvest continues to impress. Fish in excess of 7 pounds have been reported from tournaments in recent years so the chance to catch a true trophy in these waters exists. Future smallmouth fishing opportunities continue to look optimistic as sub-adult fish are well represented in the population and continue to be reported by anglers.

Although the 2011 creel estimates are not yet available, walleye fishing in the area is expected to have been good in Green Bay waters along Door and Kewaunee counties. This is still largely due to recent outstanding walleye natural reproduction in southern and western portions of Green Bay. A recent population survey indicates the local population that is supported by stocking in the Sturgeon and Little Sturgeon Bay areas is in very good condition in both numbers and size at age. This should support a good early open water fishery in this area in 2012. The 2003 year class still has a strong presence in the area both from stocked and naturally recruited fish and most of these fish are well into the mid-20 inch range. Walleye fingerlings were stocked in Sturgeon Bay in 2011. Recent young-of-the-year surveys indicate some local natural reproduction may be supporting the population as well. All this

indicates the forecast for walleye fishing in this area looks very good over the next few years - *Scott Hansen, fisheries biologist, Sturgeon Bay*

■ LAKE MICHIGAN (MANITOWOC AND KEWAUNEE COUNTIES)

The Lake Michigan fishery offers abundant fishing opportunities for all anglers who can choose to fish from piers, the shore, small or large boats or from charter boats in the major ports of Manitowoc, Two Rivers, Kewaunee or Algoma. During April and May anglers target brown trout and steelhead that are in shallow nearshore waters. Summer months find anglers targeting Chinook and coho salmon and brown trout within several miles of the shore and steelhead farther offshore. During the warm summer months when favorable wind conditions push warm surface water offshore and bring cold water nearshore, fishing from the piers and breakwalls can be fantastic with lucky anglers landing a mixed bag of salmon and trout. Summer fishing for yellow perch in Hika Bay off of Cleveland also can be very good. As the weather cools in fall, most anglers target Chinook salmon that begin to stage near river mouths for their annual fall run. Some anglers however continue to fish further offshore for steelhead and immature salmon until weather conditions on the lake prevents safe fishing. During mild winters brown trout fishing can be good from the shore or from piers. Excellent fall fishing in 2011 is an indication that in 2012 anglers may see good fishing as well. - *Steve Hogler, fisheries biologist, Green Bay*

■ GREEN LAKE COUNTY

Lake Puckaway — This wide, shallow, productive, slightly impounded portion of the Fox River, continues to produce year round activity for walleye and northern pike. Spring fyke net catches were once again high for walleye. Northern pike continue to display a good average size. Gizzard shad numbers, one of the lakes primary forage, appear to be down and may mean good fishing for pike and walleye in the coming year. Panfish, although present in low densities, do exhibit good growth rates and often produce good catches of above average sizes.

Big Green Lake — Lake trout should continue to provide action as this lake’s most important coldwater species. This stocked fishery continues to be made up of fish mainly in the 20-inch range, although trophy fish over 30 inches are present. Gill net catches from a 2011 Fall survey showed good numbers of legal-size fish (17 inches). High catch rates reported in 2011 should continue into this year. Seeforellen brown trout are still present in low numbers and do have the potential to grow to trophy size. Domestic brown trout are still being stocked and add another component to this cold-water fishery. The inland cisco population appears to be stable and continues to be a popular addition to this cold water fishery.

The warm water component of Wisconsin’s deepest inland lake, although often overlooked, contains native populations of large and smallmouth bass, northern pike and walleye. Smallmouth bass continue to thrive in this lake filled with rocky shoreline habitat. Northern pike, largemouth bass and walleye seem to be responding well to habitat improvements and their populations are doing well. All of the gamefish species in this lake exhibit good growth rates and “trophy” sized fish of all species are present. A small number of muskies are stocked annually and these fish have begun showing up in surveys and in angler’s catches. Musky are being managed as a low density, trophy fishery. Panfish species, particularly bluegill, have also responded well to habitat improvements and have provided outstanding action the last few years. This should continue as water quality and habitat improvements continue on this lake.

Fox River — This large, productive river system contains walleye, small and largemouth bass, northern pike and panfish. Channel and flathead catfish populations

continue to thrive with both species being very popular with local and visiting anglers. Channel catfish populations are high, can be caught at most times of the open water year and remain one of the most sought after fish on the river. Flathead management over the last few years has proven to be effective in protecting this species with new regulations helping to improve size and increased numbers. - *Dave Bartz, fisheries biologist, Wautoma*



A smorgasbord of fish await Fox River anglers. Photo: Contributed

■ KEWAUNEE COUNTY

Inland Lakes and Streams — Lakes in Kewaunee County are small in size and are dominated by bass and panfish. East Alaska, West Alaska, Heidemann, Krohns, and Shea lakes all have public access and can be fished from small boats. Panfish are abundant in these lakes so the fishing action can be very good. However, large panfish may be hard to find. Most lakes have fair to good largemouth bass fishing. Krohns Lake, located southwest of Algoma, is stocked with rainbow trout and is an excellent place to take a kid fishing. Several streams, including Scarboro and Little Scarboro Creeks and the upper East Twin River, have either stocked brown trout or native brook trout in them that provide anglers with trout fishing opportunities. These streams are small, receive very little fishing pressure and are scenic as they flow through the rural landscape of Kewaunee County. - *Steve Hogler, fisheries biologist, Green Bay*

Tributary Streams — Fishing in tributary streams is open year round, but most of the fishing occurs between mid March and the end of November. Following the spring melt, anglers target migrating steelhead in the Kewaunee and Ahnapee Rivers through late April. While many anglers focus on fishing the large streams, anglers should not overlook the opportunities in small streams such as Silver and Stony Creeks. Anglers fishing the tributary streams during summer can catch a variety of fish. Smallmouth bass fishing should be very good in lower sections of the Kewaunee River. Those seeking catfish, bullhead, panfish or a few yellow perch should try fishing the Algoma or Kewaunee harbors. The fall run of salmon begins in mid-September when Chinook salmon return to local streams. Most anglers use spawn sacs or spinners. Return rates are good and if stream flows are good, fishing should be excellent in most large tributary streams. The Chinook salmon run is followed by the coho salmon run, then by brown trout and steelhead until the rivers freeze in December. Most of the late fall fishing activity is on the Kewaunee River. - *Steve Hogler, fisheries biologist, Green Bay*

■ MANITOWOC COUNTY

Inland lakes — Inland lakes in Manitowoc County offer many fishing opportunities for both experienced anglers and for families. Lakes are small and easy to fish with small boats under most weather conditions. Larger lakes (maximum size of 140 acres) such as Long, Cedar, Pigeon and Wilke Lakes have bass populations that feature a mixture of sizes that will provide anglers good angling action. Bass are also present in the smaller



lakes but in lower number. Walleye are stocked in several lakes including Bullhead, Pigeon, Silver and Harpts Lakes for additional local fishing opportunities but walleye fishing is only fair. Northern pike fishing is good in several lakes including Silver, Cedar and Long Lakes. Panfish, mainly bluegill, yellow perch and rock bass are popular with local anglers. Most lakes have abundant panfish although in some lakes they average less than 6 inches. - *Steve Hogler, fisheries biologist, Green Bay*

Tributary Streams — Fishing in Lake Michigan tributary streams starts early each year. Following the spring melt, anglers can hook steelhead, brown trout or northern pike in the Manitowoc, Branch, East Twin and West Twin Rivers. Although the best fishing is in late March through April, it can continue through mid-May if water levels remain high. While many anglers focus on fishing the large streams, anglers should not overlook the opportunities in small streams such as Silver and Fischer Creeks and the Little Manitowoc River. Summer fishing in tributary streams offers many opportunities for anglers whether casting for bass or using a bobber for panfish. Smallmouth bass fishing should be very good in lower sections of the Manitowoc and Branch Rivers. Those seeking catfish, bullhead, panfish or a few yellow perch should try fishing the piers and the shoreline in the Manitowoc and Two Rivers harbors. By mid-September, salmon spawning migrations begin again and if stream flows are good, fishing should be excellent. The salmon run is followed by brown trout and steelhead until the rivers freeze in December. Anglers looking for ice fishing opportunities for steelhead and brown trout should try fishing the lower reaches of the Manitowoc Rivers. - *Steve Hogler, fisheries biologist, Green Bay*

■ MARINETTE COUNTY

Bagley Flowage is a 281-acre impoundment on the Peshtigo River that has a natural, undeveloped shoreline mostly within state forest boundaries. Averaging only 7 feet deep, there is a lot of shallow water with abundant vegetation. Bluegill over 8 inches are common and crappie averaged almost 9 inches during the last survey which make this a popular destination not only in the spring but for ice anglers as well. Largemouth bass averaged 16 inches and were found more in the lower stretches of the flowage while smallmouth bass were more abundant in the 20-plus river miles above the flowage until early fall when they move back down into the flowage. Good numbers of northern pike and walleye were also present. A DNR boat ramp is located on Bagley Road and anglers will find good shore-fishing access along the dam.

Trout streams traverse the Marinette County landscape. In 2011, several streams were surveyed but the North Branch Beaver Creek looks to be a promising destination for anglers wanting the opportunity to target either brook or brown trout. Both populations are sustained by natural reproduction and according to local reports, have produced fairly consistent fishing the last few years. The North Branch Beaver Creek is a Category 4 trout stream (8-inch minimum for brookies and a 12-inch minimum for browns; 3 fish per day limit). In 2011, 60 percent of the brook trout and 45 percent of the brown trout collected were greater than their respective minimum length limits. The largest brook trout collected was 14 inches and the largest brown was 22.9 inches. The North Branch Beaver Creek Fishery Area provides good access and is located 2 miles northwest of Pound in the Town of Beaver - *Chip Long, fisheries biologist, Peshtigo*.

Menominee River — In 2011, DNR conducted comprehensive fisheries surveys on two flowages on the Menominee River. These flowages are located within 5 miles from the City of Marinette. The flowages are commonly known as Lower and Upper Scott. The 2011 surveys revealed diverse fisheries composed of pike, bass, and walleye for predators and variety of panfish including bluegill, pumpkinseed, black crappie and yellow perch. On Lower Scott, the panfish size structure or numbers of creel sized fish was average. In contrast, the pan-

fish size structure on Upper Scott was very good. More than 20% of the bluegill, rock bass and yellow perch were greater than 8



Fox Valley Technical College student volunteer, Shawn Chapin, holding a large musky captured in Shawano Lake. Photo: Al Niebur.

inches and 25 percent of the crappie were greater than 10 inches. On both flowages, a good size distribution of northern pike was present including adequate numbers of juvenile sized fish and several adults greater than 26 inches. We believe the walleye populations are better than revealed in the surveys since most of the captured walleye were less than 12 inches. Finally, the smallmouth bass fisheries are comparable with similar excellent bass fisheries on the other flowages of the Menominee River. Bass greater than 15 inches were very common. Lake Sturgeon surveys yielded several adult fish but few over the 60-inch minimum length limit for the fall hook and line season. Anglers will have good success practicing catch and release of sturgeon on the river. The best advice is to find a deeper hole and soak a nightcrawler. - *Mike Donofrio, fisheries biologist, Peshtigo*

■ MARQUETTE/WAUSHARA COUNTIES

This portion of the state contains many small "pothole" lakes with excellent access. Most of these lakes are highly developed and experience heavy recreational use in the summer months. Their fisheries consist of mainly largemouth bass and panfish. Most lakes also have low density populations of northern pike. High density bass populations are present on a number of these lakes and can provide for some excellent catch rates. A couple of these lakes; Little Hills and Witters, have no length limit on largemouth bass in an attempt to reduce density and improve size structure. These lakes provide an opportunity to harvest small abundant bass. Most of these lakes also contain some quality-size bluegills. Most are very popular particularly during the spawning period. Potential for overharvest does exist on many of these lakes because of water clarity and generally small size - please be self regulating. Stocking efforts by local clubs and the DNR provide some walleye fishing. Walleye numbers are low in these lakes with most populations less than one adult per acre. Trophy potential does exist with some fish in the 10+ pound range being sampled in recent surveys. A handful of these lakes also contain two story coldwater fisheries due to annual trout stocking efforts. Their season coincides with the normal statewide gamefish season.

These two adjoining counties also provide some of the best trout fishing anywhere. Healthy populations of native brown, brook and rainbow trout combined with specific regulations for streams provide for a variety of trout fishing opportunities. The Mecan, Chaffee, Wedde, Willow and Pine are very popular streams during the "Hex" hatch. Large tracts of state ownership along with an on going trout habitat improvement program has helped to protect and maintain these top-notch trout streams. Most have good access, with abundant acres of state ownership, but always ask permission to access through private land. - *Dave Bartz, fisheries biologist, Wautoma*

■ OCONTO COUNTY

Archibald Lake is located in scenic northern Oconto County. At 393 acres, anglers

can target a variety of species. Walleye and muskellunge offer the best fishing opportunities and are probably the most heavily targeted species. A fisheries survey conducted in 2011 revealed a healthy walleye population with a density of 1.2 fish per acre (over 15 inches). A walleye spawning reef was installed a few years ago and as a result, natural reproduction has improved. Muskies are more abundant in this lake than any other lake in the immediate area. Several fish over 40 inches were collected off of the most pronounced main-lake points. All panfish species were collected in respectable numbers. Bluegill and yellow perch were most abundant but only averaged 6 and 8 inches, respectively. A fair number of black crappie were collected and averaged almost 9 inches long and the biggest measured almost 13 inches. In 2009, 100 large trees were placed at 46 locations around the lake to improve fish habitat. These "tree drops" definitely hold fish and would be a good starting point for anyone who has not fished this lake before.

Boulder Lake, located on the Oconto-Langlade County Line, is 362 acres. The average depth is 7 feet with the deepest spot being only 11 feet deep. Water clarity is good and, as its name suggests, the lake is littered with large boulders. The fishery consists primarily of largemouth bass and bluegill. A majority of the largemouth are at, or just below the 14-inch minimum length limit but the chance to catch a big bass (>20 inches) is possible. Sparse vegetation and woody debris is scattered around the shoreline offering good cover for bluegill and yellow perch. There are definitely some dandy panfish for the taking including rock bass. Anglers may



Citizen volunteer, Jeremy Van Ert, holding a northern pike captured during Shawano Lake fyke net survey. Photo: Al Niebur.

also catch the occasional smallmouth bass however, largemouth are considerably more abundant.

Bear and Munger Lakes are located in northern Oconto County and combined total 175 acres of water. These lakes can be accessed from the public boat ramp on the east side of Munger Lake and support a well-rounded fishery. The most recent survey resulted in the catch of just over 4,000 fish. Black crappie was the most abundant panfish species with fish over 12 inches collected. Bluegill and yellow perch numbers were good as well. Largemouth bass and northern pike were also collected in respectable numbers. The northern pike population is healthy with fish between 17 and 22 inches. Locals have been stocking walleye for the past several years and their efforts to establish a walleye fishery are ongoing. Walleye up to 25 inches were collected but the overall density was low at 1.2 walleye per acre. Even though muskies have not been stocked in this chain of lakes since the late 1970's, a remnant population exists with 7 fish ranging from 39.0 to 47.5 inches collected during the last survey.

South Branch Oconto River is a popular destination for trout anglers in Oconto County. With access to the river at County Highways W, T, AA and State Highway 32, finding a secluded spot to fish shouldn't be difficult.

The most recent survey of the South Branch turned up several brown trout over 20 inches. Compared to other streams in the region, the South Branch supports quite a few brook trout between 10 and 12 inches. - *Chip Long, fisheries biologist, Peshtigo*

■ SHAWANO COUNTY

Shawano Lake — A spring survey conducted on Shawano Lake in 2011 showed an exciting outlook for fish populations. Musky numbers are now at moderate levels. About 102 muskies were captured with over 34 percent over 40 inches. The largest musky sampled was a 49.5 inch fish that weighed in at almost 40 pounds. Largemouth bass were the most abundant gamefish with some of the largest fish approaching 20 inches. Northern pike were found in lower numbers but are now showing good size with some pike up to 34 inches. Surveys also indicated a strong year class of black crappie in the 9-to 11-inch range and moderate numbers of 7- to 7.5-inch bluegill. Walleye populations are at low density due to low reproduction in recent years; however, the DNR stocked over 10,000 large fingerling walleye this past fall to help bolster this fishery. All stocked walleyes were marked with a right ventral fin clip so DNR fish survey crews can track survival and growth.

Trout streams — Surveys on several Shawano County streams indicate trout populations at moderate density and size. Surveys conducted on the North Branch Embarrass River, Comet Creek, and Mill Creek show good numbers of brook trout in the 9- to 10- inch range. Often overlooked streams are the smaller headwater tributary streams where trout densities can be much higher than the larger trout waters. Anglers can expect to catch many trout but the average size will tend to be smaller.

Smallmouth Bass Rivers — Anglers looking for good smallmouth bass action and a scenic float trip should consider trying the lower Red River or Embarrass River. Recent surveys of the Red River indicate moderate densities of smallmouth bass with some bass up to 18 inches. Red River canoe/kayak accesses are found at the Weed Dam near Gresham or County Land off Butternut Rd. with takeouts at downstream road crossings. If floating the river, be cautious of several rapids which should be portaged around. A good section of the Embarrass River to float includes the section from Pella Dam downstream to Embarrass. -- *Al Niebur, fisheries biologist, Shawano*

■ WAUPACA COUNTY

Waupaca Chain of Lakes — Anglers looking for diverse fishing opportunities may want to try the Waupaca Chain of Lakes. Largemouth bass is the primary gamefish and are found at high densities with respectable size. Spring surveys conducted on the Waupaca Chain showed 25 percent of the largemouth bass over 14 inches and several bass up to 19 inches. Bluegill and black crappie are found at moderate densities but size and growth tend to be slightly low. The Waupaca Chain is also one of only a few inland lakes in Wisconsin that support a natural population of brown trout. Past surveys have shown these fish can range in size from 7 to 27 inches and are found in all the deeper lakes of the Chain. Walleye populations in the Chain are primarily maintained through periodic stockings and are found at low density. This past fall, the DNR stocked 6,000 large fingerling walleye.

Hartman Creek State Park (Allen, Mid and Hartman Lakes) — Families looking for good shore fishing opportunities should try the lakes at Hartman Creek State Park. Spring surveys showed good numbers of largemouth bass with some bass up to 20 inches. Bluegill and pumpkinseed are the primary panfish found in all lakes and should provide excellent action. A floating fish dock is located on Allen Lake and a walking trail follows most of the shoreline along Hartman and Mid lakes. Remember to obtain a state park sticker or daily pass when entering the park.

Trout (Nace) Creek — Habitat work completed on Trout Creek will help maintain this quality fishery. Trout population surveys indicate trout relative abundance at 1,568 per mile with over 20 percent of the trout larger than nine inches (the legal minimum length). Trout Creek has multiple areas for anglers to access the stream.

Waupaca River — Novice trout anglers may want to try the Waupaca River within the Waupaca city limits and downstream. This section of the river is managed as a put-and-take fishery and is annually stocked with 3,000 yearling rainbow or brown trout. Good shore access is located at Riverview and Riverside parks and much of the water is easily wadeable. At Riverview park the DNR has recently completed a demonstration trout habitat project that should hold many fish. In addition, a shore fishing trail for challenged anglers is located near the Water Street Bridge. In the special regulation section of the Waupaca River, recent surveys indicate trout populations have been holding steady. Anglers fishing this section of water have a very good chance of catching a trophy-sized brown trout. — *Al Niebur, fisheries biologist, Shawano*

WINNEBAGO SYSTEM (WOLF AND UPPER FOX RIVER, LAKES WINNEBAGO, BUTTE DES MORTS, WINNECONNE, AND POYGAN)

Why do we doubt her? Time and again she has shown she ultimately knows what's best. After two years of low spring water levels and below average walleye hatches, Mother Nature opened her heavenly valves more this past year, resulting in above average water levels on the walleye spawning marshes of the Winnebago system in April of 2011. And there were plenty of medium-sized walleye up the rivers to take advantage. Fisheries crews were able to tag just over 12,000 walleye in April 2011, roughly 11,000 males and 1,000 females. The average size of the fish tagged off the Wolf River this year was similar to 2010. Males averaged 16.8 inches and 1.74 pounds while

females were 21.5 inches and weighted 4.23 pounds. (Keep in mind that these are spawning condition weights, not summer weights.) Males ranged from 12 to 22 inches, with the vast majority (56 percent) in the 14.5- to 16-inch range. These are likely fish from the huge 2008 yearclass that grew well due to abundant forage in 2009 and are the staple of the spring fishery. Females had a broader length range, running from 15.5 to 27.9 inches. The majority (70.7 percent) was composed of younger females, in the 19.5- to 23-inch range. These are mostly females from the strong 2003 to 2005 yearclasses. Large numbers of females from the 2008 yearclass won't be up spawning until 2014.

These walleye took advantage of those good water levels and thanked Mother Nature by pulling off another big yearclass. Trawling surveys on Lake Winnebago showed an average catch of 10.44 walleye fingerlings per trawl for the combined 3 rounds of trawling. This is the 5th largest hatch we've measured by our standardized surveys. Assuming average survival, this yearclass will provide good fishing and more importantly large numbers of spawning females beginning in the latter half of this decade and into the next. As always, please promptly report any tagged fish that you catch on the system to the Oshkosh DNR office.

Speaking of big yearclasses, trawling also showed that white bass pulled off the second largest hatch that we've ever measured and the largest since 1996. That's great news for those of us who like fast, hard hitting action and lots of it. These fish will become a dominant force in 3 to 4 years. Yellow perch also pulled off a very large hatch in 2011, on par with those from 2005 to 2007. Trawling numbers were down for drum, trout perch and especially gizzard shad, all important forage species. This was most likely the result of the unseasonably cool water temperatures that we experienced through May and June last year. The cooler spring also likely played a part in bluegill and black crappie hatches returning to much lower levels than in 2010.

Anglers could experience some very good river walleye fishing this spring. Last fall, even into late November, there were LOTS

of smaller walleye in the lower Wolf. Anglers were reporting catches of up to 50 fish a day! These were likely smaller males from the 2008 and even 2009 yearclasses that had already begun moving up for their first year of spawning. They will likely remain there all winter and add thousands of tasty smaller males to the spawning migration this spring.

For the bass angler, the "status quo" should continue. Expect to find good numbers of small to medium-sized fish and catch rates similar to the last few years. Most fish will range from 12 to 16 inches, but the occasionally fish in the 18-plus inch range will show up. Catch rates for bass tournaments held in 2011 were 0.32 bass per hour. Smallmouth numbers in Lake Winnebago continue to increase. Anglers should cast crank baits or work a jig tipped with a leech or plastic twister on the numerous off-shore reefs of the big lake or on the edges of rock/gravel bars on the rivers. Largemouth have greatly benefited from the increase in rooted vegetation in the bays and near-shore areas. Work plastics or surface lures in the vegetated quiet water of bays, channels and back waters around the system. You may also tie into an occasional walleye or northern pike in these areas.

Angling reports indicate that the improving panfish catches from 2010 continued into 2011. Good catches of bluegill and perch were reported from the southern half of the lake throughout last summer, with some bluegills in the 9-plus inch range. Yellow perch were caught in good numbers but anglers had to sort through numerous smaller ones to get a meal of 9- to 11-inch fish. Panfish numbers should continue to improve, especially crappie. The large 2010 hatch had excellent survival. There were 5 to 6-inch crappie in nearly every trawl that we reeled on board anywhere on the lake. If all goes well and anglers are willing to exercise restraint, there should be some excellent crappie fishing in another year or two. If anglers are willing to look for them, move around and use different baits and tactics they should be able to avoid being skunked. Consistent success for panfish requires anglers to stay on top of them. Anglers should check with the sport shops around the lake

when getting their bait for the most current panfish information.

Finally, for those seeking "toothier" quarry, there is a small but self-sustaining and even growing population of musky in the system, primarily in the upper lakes of Poygan, Winneconne and Butte des Morts. Spotted musky were stocked in these lakes from 2002 through 2007 until VHS-related concerns put a hold on the availability of fish. Stocking included fry, small and large fingerlings and yearlings. The last time that we saw some of these fish was during a large-scale seining in 2008. 40 musky were captured. At that time, they ranged in size from 26.6 to 46 inches, and averaged 40.2 inches and 18 pounds. Since that time, there have been reliable reports of fish being caught in the upper 40 and even 50-inch range. These fish are mature and should have been spawning for several years now and hopefully will sustain their own numbers. Anglers should realize that these musky in the system are a "bonus" trophy fish and treat them accordingly. Along with the musky, there is also a healthy northern pike population of nice-size fish that offers anglers good year-round action.

River or lake, big water or sheltered, from shore or in a boat? Walleye, bass, musky or panfish? However you like to fish, whatever type of water you like or whatever you want to fish for, you can likely find it somewhere on the Winnebago system! Its size, complexity and diversity have something to offer anglers of any age, ability or desire. Come for the fishing, but get out and have some fun again. Your most memorable catch may just be good time spent on the water with family and friends.

Good luck, good fishing, respect the resource and your fellow angler, and always be safe. — *Kendall Kamke, fisheries biologist, Oshkosh*



Southeastern Wisconsin



KENOSHA COUNTY

Camp Lake — Camp Lake is a 461-acre lake located in southern Kenosha County. 2011 fish surveys showed good numbers of legal size bass (14 inches and larger). Northern pike are common and this lake is a good one for those who like plenty of action catching and releasing them. Walleyes are stocked and there are walleyes up to 23 inches in the lake. A town owned public boat launch is located on the deeper north end of the lake, and a renovated DNR boat launch is located on the shallower south end of the lake.

Silver Lake — Fish surveys in 2011 produced a wide variety of species including largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, northern pike, muskellunge, walleye, bluegill, black crappie, rock bass, pumpkinseed, yellow perch, and warmouth. The adult bass population is estimated at 5 per acre and there are bass up to 20 inches long in this lake. Smallmouth bass are not as abundant as largemouth but there are some 21-inch

smallmouth in the lake. The population estimate for adult northern pike is 1 per acre and for walleye is .6 per acre. Walleyes and muskellunge are stocked by the DNR. Our fish surveys turned up 24-inch walleyes and 45-inch muskellunge. Free public boat access is located off Hwy B on the west side of the lake. — *Doug Welch, fisheries biologist, Sturtevant*

SOUTHERN LAKE MICHIGAN (SHEBOYGAN, OZAUKEE, MILWAUKEE, RACINE, AND KENOSH COUNTIES)

Chinook salmon harvest rates in Lake Michigan in recent years have been below the record-setting years of 2003 to 2007. In 2011, the Chinook harvest picked up later in the summer. Chinooks were larger than recent years, with reports of more fish over 25 pounds being caught. The 2010 year-class of alewives was strong, which provided ample food for the salmon. Larger Chinooks in the harvest should continue into 2012, provided the forage base remains strong.

In addition to the roughly 1 million Chinooks stocked annually in Wisconsin, our fishery is enhanced by the natural reproduction of Chinooks in Michigan streams. Since 2006, Wisconsin has participated in a lakewide Chinook study, and the first few years have shown that about 55 percent of all age 1-plus Chinooks caught in the lake were naturally reproduced in Michigan streams. This bodes well for Wisconsin anglers, provided Michigan streams continue to contribute.

Spring coho fishing can be some of the fastest salmon action on Lake Michigan, with

multiple strikes common. Wisconsin's Lake Michigan coho fishery begins in the south (Kenosha and Racine) in April and May. The coho fishing gradually moves north as water temperatures rise, typically reaching Milwaukee in May and Port Washington and Sheboygan by June.

In 2011, coho salmon fishing was outstanding. They were abundant in Lake Michigan waters in southeastern Wisconsin and grew to quality size throughout the summer. In fact, the coho fishery was probably stronger and longer lasting than we have seen on Lake Michigan in the past 20 years. Coho over 10 pounds were common in Fall 2011 at our spawning facility on the Root River in Racine. Coho fishing in 2012 should remain strong, as stocking numbers have been stable the past couple of years.

Steelhead catches in recent years have been average with about 45,000 harvested annually. The Chambers Creek and Ganaraska strains provide action for shore and tributary anglers in late winter and early spring. The Arlee strain of rainbow trout has contributed to the nearshore fishery in recent years. They quickly reach catchable size, as reported by the Lake Michigan creel survey, and DNR will continue to stock approximately 60,000 per year. It is hoped that this strain of rainbow trout will continue to augment the nearshore fishery in coming years.

Brown trout provide a consistent nearshore fishery during the cold months, especially at warm water discharges and near river mouths. Diet studies in the Milwaukee Harbor show that brown trout are feeding on round gobies, and the browns stay in the harbor for an extended period of time. This continues to draw good numbers of both

shore and boat anglers who target brown trout throughout the year. However, brown trout fishing in southern Lake Michigan was poor in 2011 compared to the recent past.

Numbers of yellow perch in Lake Michigan are slowly showing signs of improvement, but overall the population is still low. The 2003, 2005, 2006 and 2007 year-classes contribute most significantly to the sport harvest, and the 2005 year-class is dominant in annual DNR surveys. The 2005 year-class of perch averages over 10 inches and should contribute significantly to the 2012 sport catch. Perch fishing remains closed from May 1 through June 15 to protect mature females before spawning, and the daily bag limit remains at five fish.

For up-to-date fishing information, call the Southern Lake Michigan Fishing Hotline at 414-382-7920. — *Pradeep Hirethota and Cheryl Masterson, Southern Lake Michigan fisheries, Milwaukee*

RACINE COUNTY

Eagle Lake — Anglers looking for good northern pike and largemouth bass action will want to give Eagle Lake a try. Eagle Lake was chemically treated in 2008 and re-stocked with fish through 2011. Aquatic plant management has resulted in improved water quality and native plant growth. DNR fish surveys in 2011 on this shallow 515-acre lake north of Kansasville revealed an abundant northern pike population and good numbers of largemouth bass. Northern pike lengths ranged between 13 and 29 inches; most pike were 16 to 18 inches long. The adult bass population was estimated at 4.4 per acre with many fish between 10 and 17

inches. Six to eight-inch yellow perch were recently stocked and should provide good fishing in the future. Public boat access is available on the north side of the lake in Eagle Lake County Park and on the west end of the lake off Minnetonka Drive.

Wind Lake — A fish survey in 2011 produced good numbers of nice size largemouth bass with 60 percent of the sample consisting of fish 14 inches or larger. Some bass were over 19 inches. The lake is stocked with walleye and the fish survey turned up fish up to 19.5 inches. Anglers after panfish do well on bluegill and crappie in May and early June. Public boat access to this 936-acre lake is available at the DNR boat launch on the west side of the lake.

Waubesa Lake — This lake is located just west of Wind Lake and is much smaller at 129 acres. Common gamefish in the lake are northern pike and largemouth bass. All the northern pike sampled in the 2011 fish survey were less than 26 inches. Most of the bass were 14 inches; some were 17 inches. Walleyes are stocked and the largest walleye in the sample was 16.5 inches. This lake also supports bluegill, rock bass, warmouth, and yellow perch. Brown trout are also stocked. The boat launch is located on a channel off of West View Drive.

Browns Lake — Largemouth bass anglers know this lake is a good bet. The special minimum length limit of 16 inches helps produce larger bass when compared to other lakes in the area. Sixty-four percent of the bass sampled during a 2011 fish survey were 14 inches or larger, and 14 percent were legal size (16 inches or larger). Northern pike are common and most are between 19 and 23 inches. Walleyes are stocked and fish up to 24 inches inhabit this lake. Bluegill are common and size is improving with 7- to 8-inch fish showing up in the fish survey. Smallmouth bass, rock bass, yellow perch, and big bullheads round out the fishery. Boat access is available at the county park off Highway 11 on the south side of the lake. - Doug Welch, fisheries biologist, Sturtevant

SHEBOYGAN COUNTY

Big Elkhart Lake — Anglers in Sheboygan County may be surprised to find the third deepest natural lake in Wisconsin close to home. Big Elkhart Lake is a 286-acre spring-fed lake with depths reaching 119 feet, and offers a number of challenging angling opportunities. A healthy cisco population provides an excellent forage base for gamefish species. During 2011 spring fyke net and electrofishing surveys, 203 walleye with an average size of 24 inches were caught and released. Thirty-seven musky were surveyed with an average size of 36 inches. A 50-inch length limit on musky in Big Elkhart Lake will be in effect for the 2012 fishing season. Since 2009, the DNR has stocked the "Great Lakes Spotted" (GLS) musky strain into the lake. The goal of the 50-inch length limit and stocking is to

develop a population of adult fish that can be spawned to aid in the restoration of GLS musky into Green Bay and Lake Michigan. Elkhart Lake was selected as a brood water because of its nearness to Wild Rose State Fish Hatchery and the lakes' proven ability to grow large muskies. Big Elkhart Lake also offers very nice panfish, smallmouth bass, and northern pike fisheries. A public fishing pier can be found at the state owned boat launch located on County Road P.

Nichols Creek — If you are looking to get your boots wet in Sheboygan County the Nichols Creek Wildlife Area offers 612 acres of rolling uplands with restored prairies, cool-season grasses, and northern hardwood stands to explore. Nichols Creek itself is a Class I Trout Stream where anglers can expect to find naturally reproducing brook and brown trout. Stream surveys from 2011 showed outstanding catch rates and a few fish above the 9-inch mark. A parking area is located on County Hwy N and additional stream access can be found on Cedar Lane, on the eastern edge of the property. - Travis Motl, fisheries biologist, Plymouth

WALWORTH COUNTY

Geneva Lake — Anglers who enjoy the challenge of fishing on larger lakes should head for Geneva Lake in Walworth County. This lake is 5,262 acres of clear water, rock/rubble, sand and gravel substrates, deep weed lines, and steep drop offs. Anglers can find largemouth and smallmouth bass, northern pike, walleye, lake trout, brown trout, bluegill, crappie, rock bass, and yellow perch. Fish surveys in 2010 and 2011 sampled largemouth bass between 10 and 20 inches and over 5 pounds, smallmouth bass up to 16.5 inches and 2.8 pounds, with good numbers of young smallmouth bass. Walleye up to 23.4 inches and 6.3 pounds and lake trout up to 31.5 inches were also sampled. Recent catches of brown trout up to 31 inches and 16 pounds have been reported by anglers. The 2011 fish survey showed many young yellow perch that should provide some good fishing three to four years down the road. Muskellunge were stocked for the first time in 2010. Several of these fish showed up in the 2011 fish survey and had grown an average of 7.5 inches in one year. Public boating access is located at municipally owned facilities in Fontana, Lake Geneva, Williams Bay, and Linn Township.

Delavan Lake — This lake is 2,072 acres and supports good populations of largemouth bass, northern pike, walleye, bluegill and crappie. Fish surveys in 2010 and 2011 sampled good numbers of largemouth bass between 15 and 18 inches and some were over 20 inches and 5 pounds. Many walleyes between 17 and 20 inches were collected with the largest at 27 inches. Northern pike of 24 inches are common and pike between 30 and 35 inches are well represented in the creel. Most of the bluegills were between 6 and 7 inches with a few up to 8 inches. Yellow perch of eleven inches and 13-inch

crappies were also sampled. Smallmouth bass and muskellunge are also present. Public boat access is provided at the Town of Delavan launch ramp off Highway 50.

Potters Lake — This 162-acre lake with a free DNR launch facility off County Highway L is a good bet for largemouth bass. The 2011 fish survey turned up plenty of bass over the minimum length limit of 14 inches.

Tripp Lake — This lake is located within the city of Whitewater. A fish survey in 2011 showed good numbers of legal size bass (14 inches or larger). Big bass up to 21 inches are present in this lake. The public boat launch site is located in Tripp Lake Park off Coburn Lane.

Lake Beulah — This is a good lake to try for largemouth bass, northern pike, bluegill, and black crappie. The protected slot length limit of 12 to 16 inches on bass has worked to create decent numbers of larger fish for the angler. Northern pike grow to over 40 inches in this lake. Bluegill up to 8 inches and black crappie up to a foot long are present. DNR stocks walleye and brown trout. Walleye abundance is improving and 30-plus inch brown trout are available. There is a public boat launch ramp on the southwest end of this 834 acre lake. - Doug Welch, fisheries biologist, Sturtevant

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Pike Lake — Pike Lake is a 522-acre drainage lake with a maximum depth of 45 feet located in central Washington County. It has long been known as the premier walleye resource in Washington and surrounding counties. The lake has not been stocked with walleye from an outside source since 1961. Natural reproduction of walleye has been sufficient to produce a high quality fishery in the lake. The most recent comprehensive survey of the adult walleye population of Pike Lake was in 2008. During the survey, 382 adult walleye, at an impressive rate of 63.7 adult walleye/net night, were caught and released. The adult walleye ranged in length from 13 to 25 inches with most (primarily males) in the 17-inch length group.



An exceptional northern pike was collected in a recent fish survey on Nagawicka Lake. Photo: Ben Heussner

A public launch is located on the west side of the lake opposite Pike Lake State Park, there are no special regulations but motor trolling is permitted. - Travis Motl, Fisheries Biologist, Plymouth

WAUKESHA COUNTY

The northern pike forecast looks great for 2012 as a result of WDNR stocking efforts in recent years. Over 100,000 large fingerling northern pike averaging 9 inches were stocked in 18 different waters throughout Waukesha County. Stocked waters that received the large fingerlings included Ashipun, Big Muskego, Eagle Spring, Lac LaBelle, Keesus, Denoon, Little Muskego, Lower Nemahbin, Middle Genesee, Nagawicka, Oconomowoc, Ottawa, Phantoms, Pine, School Section, Scuppernon Creek Pond, Upper Nemahbin and the Oconomowoc River. Spring and fall netting and electrofishing surveys have shown an increase in catch rates indicating these stocked fish are doing very well. With four summers of growth behind the 2008 year class, these fish are just starting to become a quality size for anglers to enjoy.

Trophy-size smallmouth bass were observed on Oconomowoc Lake during a fall 2011 electrofishing survey, with a number of fish over the 20 inch mark. Fall electrofishing surveys indicate naturally reproducing walleye populations are present on Pine, Nagawicka, LaBelle and Oconomowoc lakes. A Pewaukee Lake musky population estimate revealed an above average abundance with excellent trophy potential making it a premier musky fishing destination for the southeast metro area.

High minimum length limits and low daily bag limits on popular sport fish combined with habitat protection and enhancement on Big Muskego Lake continues to provide some of the best angling opportunity in the county. Bass, northern pike and bluegills are abundant in this shallow lake, with many of the bass in a trophy size range. Northern pike in the low to mid thirty-inch range are not uncommon and are a fun target when fishing this 2300-acre deep-water marsh. Bountiful wildlife can provide excellent viewing opportunities while casting for your favorite gamefish.

Naturally reproducing brown trout populations on Genesee Creek are doing very well as revealed by a 2011 stream survey. Twenty-six percent of the brown trout captured were over 9 inches and electrofishing survey catch rates were among the highest recorded in recent history. Paradise Springs, Funk Creek, McKewn Springs and Lower Genesee Lake will be stocked this spring with legal sized yearling brook trout. Lower Genesee, Fowler, Lower Nashotah and Ottawa Lakes will once again provide traditional rainbow trout angling opportunities. - Benjamin Heussner, fisheries biologist, Waukesha.

South Central Wisconsin



COLUMBIA COUNTY

Area Lakes — Several small lakes that were affected by winterkill or water level issues should be back to fishable populations. Tar-

rant Lake, Lake Wyona, and West Lake have all been stocked with largemouth bass, bluegills, black crappies, and northern pike. While the game fish may still be a little small, these lakes should all offer good action, and have good shore fishing opportunities.

Rowan Creek — Rowan Creek, which runs through the Village of Poynette, has an abundant population of brown trout and some catchable-sized stocked rainbows as well. A recent DNR trout habitat project, on the State Fishery Area on the east side of the village, means open space and a great place to introduce a beginner to trout fishing. As well as a lot of trout!

Lake Wisconsin (Sauk and Columbia Counties) — A favorite for walleye fishing, Lake Wisconsin should continue to provide an excellent opportunity for anglers to bring home some walleyes for the table as well as a good shot at some memorable big fish. A

fall electrofishing survey in 2011 showed a high number of walleyes in the 15- to 20-inch range, likely from a big 2009 year class. The catch of 15- to 20-inch walleyes during the 2011 survey was 11.5 per mile, compared to the long term average of 4.8 per mile. Several large muskies were reported being caught during the summer and fall of 2011, with multiple fish in the upper 40-inch range. An excellent forage base of gizzard shad, suckers, and rough fish keep these big predators well fed. DNR and private stocking means Lake Wisconsin will continue to be a local favorite for southern Wisconsin muskellunge anglers. - David Rowe, fisheries biologist, Poynette

DANE COUNTY

Some of Wisconsin's best fishing can be found a stones throw from the capital. The Madison lakes have the numbers and size

of fish anglers want. Additionally, abundant public property and access make fishing easy and satisfying for shore and boat anglers.

Lake Monona — In 2011, Lake Monona was surveyed revealing the obvious: this is a fine lake for musky! Crews caught over 500 fish. Monona fish are heavy for their length, and fish over 40 inches are not uncommon. Largemouth bass numbers are impressive with fish over 20 inches. Less visible are excellent walleye and smallmouth bass populations. Public parks provide beach access. Olin, Olbrich and Law park all put anglers in good habitat. Numerous north shore public accesses allow excellent early summer bluegill fishing as weedlines form. Wading with spinning gear or a flyrod is easy. Ice anglers can find consistently good crappie and panfish across the spans of Monona, Turville, and Squaw bays.

Lakes Mendota, Waubesa and Kegonsa consistently offer a wide variety of choic-

es. Several “sleeper” fisheries like channel catfish and summer white bass schools can make for a memorable day. Traditional pike, bass, bluegill, and walleye opportunities are numerous and supported by strong populations.

Trout streams - Trout anglers will be pleased to wade in newly revitalized Ver-



Handfuls of Lake Monona walleye are collected each year by DNR survey crews. Photo: Scott Harpold

mont and Garfoot creeks. Excellent harvestable-sized fish can be caught in Kittle-son, Elver, West branch Sugar river and the famous Black Earth Creek. DNR has teamed with Dane county to provide miles of fishable water where instream habitat and bank stabilization work have occurred. Excellent maps can be found at www.countyofdane.com/lwrparks/fishing.aspx and www.dnr.wi.gov/fish/faq/wheretofish.html. - Kurt Welke, fisheries biologist, Madison

■ DODGE COUNTY

Beaver Dam Lake — Beaver Dam Lake should continue to provide good fishing for walleye and crappie in 2012. Channel catfish over 20 inches should offer angling opportunities as well. While not managed as a musky lake, surveys have shown a low number of fish over 35 inches. In 2011, DNR hatcheries stocked 19,089 small fingerling (3-inch average length) northern pike and 111,214 small fingerling (1-inch average length) walleye into Beaver Dam Lake, and the Beaver Dam Lake Improvement Association stocked 18,000 yellow perch. Zebra mussels were found in the lake in 2011. Please take care to properly remove all exotics and invasives from your boat prior to leaving Beaver Dam Lake.

Fox Lake — Walleye catch rates for 2011 fall electrofishing were 116 per hour, compared to the high of 160/hour in 2010, 128/hour in 2009 and above the 10-year average of 77/hour. Walleye ranged in size from 7.0 to 25.6 inches, with the majority between 11 and 13 inches; 16 percent of the fish sampled were over the legal minimum of 18 inches. The number of young-of-the-year (YOY) walleye under 10 inches was 4/hour, down from 21/hour in 2010 and a record high of 78/hour in 2009. Largemouth bass catch rates were 67/hour, down from the high of 123/hour in 2010, 109/hour in 2009 and above the 10-year average of 46/hour. Largemouth bass ranged in size from 3.0 to 17.4 inches. In 2011, DNR hatcheries stocked 15,919 small fingerling (3-inch average length) northern pike and 47,250 small fingerling (1-inch average length) walleye into Fox Lake, and the Fox Lake Property Owners group stocked 100 (12 inch) muskellunge. Zebra mussels were found in the lake in 2010. Please take care to properly remove all exotics and invasives from your boat prior to leaving Fox Lake. - Laura Stremick-Thompson, fisheries biologist, Horicon

■ GRANT COUNTY

Borah Creek, Rogers Creek, Little Grant River, Grant River — Located within 10 minutes driving of Lancaster, WI all of these streams harbor good brown trout fisheries. Combined, there are 7 miles of public bank fishing easements available to anglers. All of these streams harbor brown trout populations near 300 adult trout per acre. Adult brown trout range from 7 to 21 inches. For those of us accustomed to the “good ole days” of many large trout within these systems, we will have to change the way we

view these trout fisheries. Gone are the days of stocking numerous large holdover trout and broodfish measuring 12 to 24 inches. The mainstay of these fisheries is the stocking of small fingerling feral brown trout. These fish have been shown to survive well in these systems while establishing natural reproduction. It is advantageous for trout living in these systems to have a smaller body size so many anglers will not see the 21- to 26-inch brown and rainbow trout of the past. Trophy fish in these systems will now be 16 to 18 inches. There are still a few fish over 20 inches, but anglers looking for these larger fish will have to look farther downstream on the Grant River.

Platte River — The lower portion of the Platte River offers good float fishing for smallmouth bass. Along with smallmouth bass, anglers can expect to catch an occasional walleye as well. As the river approaches the Mississippi River, the Platte River supports a stable channel catfish fishery. While there are no public easements, anglers can gain access via public roads and permission from private landowners. There is boat and trailer access located at the Banfield road crossing. The Banfield landing is approximately one mile downstream from the confluence of the Platte and Little Platte Rivers. Another favorite among anglers is to take float trips down the Platte and Little Platte Rivers. There is a canoe access located on the Platte River at Ellenboro. - Bradd Sims, fisheries biologist, Dodgeville

■ GREEN COUNTY

Fishing season in Green County often kicks off with walleye and northern pike fishing in the dam tailraces below the Albany and Brodhead dams. Elsewhere along the Sugar River, seasonal opportunities exist as migrating walleye, pike, catfish and bass move upstream. Lazy canoe fishing can be very pleasant through the public parcels like the Albany State Wildlife Area. Stream mouth confluences are also attractive fishing holes as fish seek these mixing zones and the deeper water often found in these locations. Trout fishing is making a resurgence as recent habitat work along the Little Sugar River (New Glarus Branch) produce quality fish. Story creek west of Brooklyn harbors beautiful fish for those willing to walk and wade. Young anglers will find good panfish action in Beckman Lake in the Browntown-Cadiz Springs State Recreation area. In Monticello, Lake Montesian has easy shore access and plentiful panfish to keep bobbers busy.

■ IOWA COUNTY

Gordon Creek — With just over 4 miles of public fishing easement, Gordon creek supports one of the better brown trout fisheries south of highway 18. With an estimated 330 brown trout per acre and fish over 20 inches present, Gordon creek offers anglers the opportunity to catch trophy-size brown trout. Catch and release as well as harvest areas are located on Gordon Creek. The regulation for the harvest area is a 12-inch minimum with a daily bag limit of 2 trout. With the support of the Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited, nearly one mile of additional habitat work has been completed. Fly and spin fisherman will find pastured vegetation to their liking in parts of the public fishing area. Gordon Creek is located on the eastern edge of Iowa County. - Bradd Sims, fisheries biologist, Dodgeville

Blackhawk Lake — The largemouth bass population of Blackhawk Lake has responded positively to the special “no length limit” regulation accompanied by a voluntary harvest slot of 9 to 12.9 inches. The overall population of bass has been reduced but the current population still consists of good numbers which are much heavier for their body length and there are more large fish. The bluegill and crappie populations remain in good shape for number and size distribution. A local fish farmer, local bait shop, anglers and a co-op DNR project has led to purchasing large young-of-year walleye for the lake. This effort has been successful in developing a decent bonus walleye fishery.

The length limit on walleye is 18 inches. A recently developed northern pike population with a significant number of large fish has provided a very heavily used ice fishery for the past couple of years, but the population has been heavily harvested and is not expected to continue its recent success in the upcoming years. Private purchase has led to the stocking of large fingerling pike each of the last 3 years in the lake. Their survival has been very good because of their large size at the time of stocking. The females from the first stocking should be reaching legal size by mid-summer. - Gene Van Dyck, fisheries biologist, Dodgeville

■ JEFFERSON COUNTY

Rock Lake — Largemouth bass catch rates for 2011 fall electrofishing were 50/hour compared to 51/hour in 2010 and the 10-year average of 30/hour. Largemouth bass were 2.2 to 16 inches with 11 percent over the legal minimum of 14 inches. Smallmouth bass catch rates were 55/hour, the highest since 2005 (50/hr) and 1998 (61/hr) and above the 10-year average of 30/hour. Walleye catch rates were low at 4/hour, compared to 1/hour in 2010 with fish ranging from 6.7 to 14.4 inches. In 2011, DNR stocked 68,550 small fingerling walleye into Rock Lake. Bluegill catch rates were 664/hour with fish ranging from 2.5 to 7.7 inches. Yellow perch catch rates were 46/hour with a size range of 2.8 to 8.8 inches.

Lake Ripley — Largemouth bass catch rates for 2011 fall electrofishing were 115/hour, up from 67/hour in 2010, with fish ranging from 2.1 to 18.5 inches. Smallmouth bass were present ranging from 3.1 to 14.9 inches. Bluegill catch rates were 120/hour, up from 36/hour in 2010 with fish ranging from 1.1 to 8.5 inches. Walleye catch rates were lower (8/hour) than in 2010 (15/hour) with fish ranging from 7.5 to 18.2 inches.

Rock River and Lake Koshkonong - Every day is opening day on the Rock River and Lake Koshkonong. Seasons are open year-round for all gamefish except muskellunge. The river system takes in tributaries such as the Bark and Crawfish Rivers. At ice out look for northern pike and walleye, with plenty of 12- and 13-inch walleye present, but legal fish are also available. Through the assistance of local cooperative groups, the Bark River Hatchery stocked 1-million northern pike fry into Lake Koshkonong, the first since 2007. Boat launches in Fort Atkinson and Jefferson and shore fishing spots in between offer good access to the Rock and Crawfish Rivers as white bass move upstream in early spring. The River systems support channel and flathead catfish, with flatheads over 40 inches. While fishing the river systems, look for tagged fish and report them to the address on the tag. Zebra

mussels were found in Lake Koshkonong in 2009. Please remember to properly remove all exotic and invasive species from your boat prior to leaving Lake Koshkonong. Motor trolling is allowed on Lake Koshkonong as far downstream as the Highway 59 bridge at Newville. - Laura Stremick-Thompson, fisheries biologist, Horicon

■ LAFAYETTE COUNTY

Yellowstone Lake — Yellowstone Lake has a stable fishery for bluegill, largemouth bass, walleye, crappie and channel catfish with a rising population of smallmouth bass. Anglers can expect good to excellent fishing for bluegill, walleye, channel catfish, largemouth bass, and smallmouth bass. Anglers will also see an increase in the crappies in 2012. Fall surveys revealed a large population of crappies in the 7.5- to 8.5-inch range. The musky population is considered a low-density, high-quality fishery. Musky up to 45 inches have been sampled with some anglers reporting catches near 50 inches. Yellowstone Lake is managed under special regulations so become familiar with them. Yellowstone Lake offers ample bank fishing opportunities on the north side of the lake with several accessible fishing pads available as well.

Steiner Branch — Anglers looking to add brook trout to their species list will find the Steiner Branch to their liking. Flowing through public lands just outside of Yellowstone Lake State Park, this small stream supports the only brook trout population located in Lafayette County. Once supporting no trout, this stream now produces a quality brook trout population with some brown trout present as well. Brook trout up to 12 inches were sampled in 2011. The current regulation is catch and release with artificial lures only.

Galena River — The Galena River is a productive smallmouth bass stream locally known as the Fever River. It contains just over 17 miles of public fishing easement in and around the Benton area. Bass over 8 inches are abundant with the opportunity to catch fish over 14 inches. Anglers will find ample bank fishing opportunities while searching for that trophy smallmouth. There is a accessible fishing pad located at County “W”.

Accessible shore fishing - Area clubs and communities along with the Lafayette County Sportsman Alliance have installed accessible bank fishing pads through out Lafayette County. For a general locations map of communities and parks offering accessible bank fishing visit: <http://www.lafayettecounty.org> and look under maps. Accessible bank fishing is available at Yellowstone Lake. - Bradd Sims, fisheries biologist, Dodgeville



DNR biologists hold a 65-pound flathead netted in the Lower Wisconsin River. Photo: Bradd Sims. See article on channel and flathead catfish fishing on page 3.

ROCK COUNTY

Rock River — Tailwater fisheries below Rock River dams provide most of the fishing action and opportunity for Rock County anglers. These dams are barriers that concentrate fish on their spring spawning runs. While walleye and pike are widely sought after, the pools below these dams are a grab bag of channel catfish, black crappie, white bass, bluegills and yellow perch. Anglers are cautioned when fishing these areas that anchors can become caught and effect boat stability. Heavy flows and wave action from the discharge require cautious boating. Anglers should wear pfd's and have the necessary safety gear handy. Boat launches are well distributed along the river corridor. Most communities along the river welcome anglers and provide an abundance of opportunities for shore fishing. Common carp are abundant. If you catch a carp and choose not to keep it, you may legally release it. Do not leave dead fish or fish parts in the water or on the banks of public waters and lands.

Turtle Creek — Northwest of Beloit is Turtle Creek, one of the areas most scenic and healthy streams. While generally shallow, canoe and wading anglers can find smallmouth bass, walleyes, catfish and northern pike in the woody habitat along deeper cut banks and below riffles. This stream offers excellent opportunities to see native biodi-

versity as many non-game fishes and mus- sel species are well represented in Turtle Creek.

Kiwanis Pond — Even city folks can enjoy trout fishing within the Janesville area. The Kiwanis pond is a 10-acre, two-story fish- ery of rainbow trout and bluegills and bass. Depths are up to 37 feet and the cold waters support an annual stocking of 3000 rainbow trout. A nice fishing pier and boat launch provides access. Only electric motors are allowed. - *Kurt Welke, fisheries biologist, Madison*

SAUK COUNTY

Devils Lake — One of the most popular fishing spots in Sauk County is Devils Lake. Surrounded entirely by the state park and beautiful scenery, Devils Lake is a great spot for a family fishing outing. In a 2011 fall survey, DNR fisheries staff observed some very large yellow perch and northern pike. The steep drop offs in the lake favor these fish that tend to live in deeper water and on the edges of the aquatic plants. The northern pike were especially impressive, and fish up to 40 inches and 18 pounds were captured. The department stocks catchable-size brown trout in Devils Lake and while the number of browns stocked has been reduced it still offers a good chance at 12- to 16-inch fish. The brown trout season stays open through

the winter on Devils Lake, offering a chance to ice fish for these beauties, but remember to purchase your inland trout stamp.

Lake Redstone — Lake Redstone by Reeds- burg was surveyed in 2010 and 2011 and is a great destination for walleye and muskel- lunge. The plentiful forage means these fish grow fast and are in excellent condition, but can make the fish tricky to catch. The DNR population estimate for muskies showed a little more than 1 fish for every 3 acres of water, a moderate density. The population estimate for walleye showed 4.3 fish per acre which is more than twice the average for a stocked water. This means walleye fishing should continue to be very good. Small- mouth bass are continuing to do well after being introduced in 1998 and 1999. Black crappies also are abundant with a good num- ber of fish in the 10- to 13-inch range. - *Dave Rowe, fisheries biologist, Poynette*

Lower Wisconsin River (Sauk, Dane, Richland, Iowa Crawford and Grant counties)

The overall fisheries of the lower Wisconsin River are in very good shape. The walleye population has seen a significant increase in the number of 15- to 18-inch fish. This increase is the result of the protection af- forded by the newly established 18-inch

length limit. Fair increase in the number of 19-inch and larger fish has also been noted in the surveys. In particular, according to anglers, the number of medium and to some extent larger walleye caught downstream has improved significantly since the 18-inch length limit went into effect. Channel cat- fish populations are currently in good shape and continue to be the most important fish- ery on the lower part of the lower Wisconsin River. The smallmouth bass population has a good number of fish with a number of me- dium and larger fish. Almost all of the bass anglers on the lower Wisconsin River prac- tice catch and release and the population is improving to reflect this practice. There are also decent populations of bluegills and crappie located in the quiet stillwater areas of the river. These are little utilized fisheries and would provide good fishing for persons wanting to specifically target these fishes. Northern pike are throughout the lower Wis- consin River and muskies in the uppermost part of the river provide pretty good action for anglers targeting these species. - *Gene Van Dyck, fisheries biologist, Dodgeville*



Kids won't remember their best day watching television.

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Getting Hooked on Wisconsin Fishing

Urban fishing program provides access to fishing fun!

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has placed an added emphasis on promoting urban fishing in recent years. We are trying to get more young people involved in the sport of fishing. There are currently about 60 ponds or lagoons classified as Urban Waters. These water bodies have special regulations geared towards improving the fishing experience for young anglers. If you live in Southeast Wisconsin, there is an Urban Fishing water near by, for a list of designated waters refer to the Guide to Wisconsin Hook and Line Fishing Regulations, 2012-2013. The DNR annually stocks thousands of rainbow trout in these waters. In addition, the Milwaukee County House of Correction Fish Hatchery stocks various species in the Urban Waters located in Milwaukee County.

The tradition of fishing is not being passed on from one generation to the next as readily as it once was. There are many parents that would like to take their kids fishing but don't really know how to get started. To accommodate those folks, the DNR works with volunteers from local fishing clubs to conduct instructional kids fishing clinics each winter and spring. Thanks to the tireless efforts of hundreds of volunteers, thousands of kids are taught the basics of fishing each year. I highly recommend the kids fishing clinics whether you are just getting started or have been at it for a few seasons. The clinics are free, highly informative and an all around good time. The volunteers teach the kids about fishing techniques, how to use the equipment, knot tying, safety, fish identification and much more.

The DNR also offers Angler Education instruction workshops. This program trains adult volunteers how to better incorporate fishing pro- grams in their community. Instructors are provided guidance and given ideas to help them introduce children to basic fishing skills and connect them with WI waters.

To accommodate teachers, scout leaders, church groups or anyone else that is interested in having a fishing outing with a bunch of kids, the DNR also runs a tackle loaner program. Rods, reels and terminal tackle are available free of charge at DNR outlets located throughout the state. It's now easier than ever to get kids started in fishing. Make it a family outing and have fun. - *Matt Coffaro, fisheries biologist, Milwaukee*

**For more information contact: Matt Coffaro Statewide Urban Fisheries Biologist 414-263-8614
Or visit: <http://dnr.wi.gov/fish/kidparents/urbanfishing.html>**



Two proud anglers display their catch. The urban fishing program provides great opportunities to take youngsters fishing. Take advantage of them. Photo: Travis Motl

URBAN FISHING WATERS

Urban fishing waters are small lakes and ponds under 25 acres that are cooperatively managed with a municipality. They are posted with signs, have special regulations, and their shoreline is accessible to the public.

Brown County: Manger Lagoon - city of Green Bay;

Langlade County: Remington Lake;

Lincoln County: Mirror Lake

Kenosha County: Anderson Park, Bong Children's Pond, Poerio Park;

Milwaukee County: Brown Deer Park, Dineen Park, Estabrook Park, Franklin High School, Greenfield Park, Holler Park, Humboldt Park, Jackson Park, Juneau Park, Kosciuszko Park, McCarty Park, McGovern Park, Miller Park, Mitchell Park, Oak Creek Parkway, Saveland Park, Shoetz Park, Scout Lake, Sheridan Park, Washington Park, Wilson Park;

Outagamie County: Appleton Memorial Pond;

Ozaukee County: Harrington Beach Quarry, Mequon Rotary Park East and West, Puckett's Pond, Schowalter Park, Willow Brooke Park;

Racine County: Gorney Park, Johnson Park, Lockwood Park, Pritchard Park, Quarry Lake, Reservoir Park;

Sheboygan County: Kohler-Andrae State Park Pond, Sheboygan Quarry, Memorial Park, River Park Lagoon;

Walworth County: Ceylon Lagoon, Congdon Park, Millpond Park Pond;

Washington County: Boot Lake, Hartford Millpond, Homestead Hollow Park, Kewas- kum Millpond, Regner Pond, Sandy Knoll Park, Wells Lake;

Waukesha County: Calhoun Park, Delafield Rearing Pond, Foxbrook Pond, Heyer Park North and South, Lepper Dam Millpond, Lions Park-Overland, Menomonee Park, Minooka Park, Muskego Park, Nixon Park, Regal Park, and Woodfield North and South



ENJOY YOUR CATCH



SAFE EATING GUIDELINES FOR MOST OF WISCONSIN'S INLAND WATERS

Women of childbearing years, nursing mothers, and all children under 15 years of age may eat:

1 meal per week - bluegill, crappie, yellow perch, sunfish, bullhead, inland trout, and

1 meal per month - walleye, pike, bass, catfish, and all other species

Do not eat - musky

Women beyond their childbearing years and men may eat:

Unrestricted - bluegill, crappie, yellow perch, sunfish, bullhead, inland trout:

1 meal per week - walleye, pike, bass, catfish, and all other species, and

1 meal per month - musky

There are 153 waters where exceptions to this advice apply, including the Great Lakes. More stringent consumption advice applies where fish have higher concentrations of mercury, PCBs or other chemicals. Go to dnr.wi.gov/fish/consumption for more information.

West Central Wisconsin



ADAMS COUNTY

Petenwell and Castle Rock Lakes is located under Juneau County.

A fall shocking survey was conducted on Lake Camelot in 2011. Largemouth bass were the dominant predator fish. Surveyed largemouth bass ranged from 5.7 to 17.3 inches. Panfish were plentiful with bluegill and yellow perch being the dominant species. Bluegill ranged from 2.8 to 6.8 inches and yellow perch ranged from 3.7 to 7.0 inches.

Beaver control measures were implemented with the removal of two dams on each of the Big Roche A Cri and Neenah Creek during 2011. Several locations along the Big Roche A Cri were sampled for trout during the summer of 2011. Surveys showed brook trout present at all locations and adults ranged from 5 to 17 inches with an average length of 7 inches. Good natural reproduction of the brook trout was observed with many fish in the 3-inch range. Brown trout were captured in very low numbers at only a couple of locations. Neenah Creek was surveyed in 2011 upstream from the confluence of Peppermill Creek. The survey captured 163 brown trout ranging from 4 to 15.4 inches with an average length of 8 inches. These results are similar to those found in the 2008 - 2010 surveys. The healthy population in this portion of the Neenah Creek is supported through natural reproduction and the habitat improvements that were done in 1983. A maintenance project is planned for 2012 to upgrade the 3,500 feet of improvements that were installed in 1983. - *Justine Hasz, fisheries biologist, Wisconsin Rapids*

BUFFALO COUNTY

Mississippi River — Whether you prefer soaking a worm for backwater bluegill, fishing a frog through lily pads for largemouth bass, or chunking a spinnerbait at a grass edge for northern pike, good fishing should continue for these species and others during 2012. Bluegill are an all-season target for Mississippi River anglers. Anglers generally harvest Mississippi River bluegill in the six- to eight-inch range, with a few exceeding nine inches. Although the river rarely produces ten-inch bluegill, fast growth and adequate habitat continues to produce healthy bluegill populations that satisfy anglers. Healthy largemouth bass populations also continue on the Mississippi River, with good numbers of largemouth both above and below the 14-inch length limit. Many largemouth in the 15- to 17-inch range are available, while tournaments have produced fish over 20 inches. Recent surveys have shown the largemouth bass hatch from 2011 to be near record levels. While these fish are not immediately available to the creel, it is exciting to think what the future holds for bass anglers. Larger northern pike are also available in good numbers, with some tapping near 40 inches.

2012 will be a great year to fish the Mississippi River. Don't forget your camera, as memory-making adventures will be found whether you're targeting your favorite species or fishing for "whatever's biting." To help ensure success when fishing the river, adapt to the changing conditions such as water level, water temperature, flow and forage location. And please use the fishery resource

wisely, follow advice about the number of fish meals you can safely enjoy, support conservation efforts and introduce fishing to someone you'd like to see enjoy fishing as much as you do. - *Brian Brecka, fisheries biologist, Alma*

Mississippi River backwaters — Mississippi River backwaters include all sloughs, lakes, ponds, and side channels in this river's floodplain. From Prescott, Wisconsin to Dubuque, Iowa, the Mississippi contains more than 131,000 acres of backwaters swimming with warmwater fish species including largemouth bass, crappie, bluegill, northern pike, pumpkinseed and yellow perch. The Mississippi offers the greatest variety of sport fish anywhere in Wisconsin and most fish have year-round open seasons.

Northern pike — After two excellent years of northern pike fishing, numbers of this aggressive predator appear to be returning to pre-2009 levels. Catches from our fall 2011 sampling efforts suggest abundance has dropped in half from the previous two years and are returning to levels seen prior to that. This drop is partly due to fewer large fish and not a reduction in recent reproduction. In the last two years, anglers targeting largemouth bass have complained about the large number of pike striking their lures. There are still adequate numbers of northern pike greater than 18 inches, with a few measuring greater than 40 inches. Overall, it is suspected that recent cooler summers during the late



Jake Schweitzer, DNR fisheries technician, with a big Mississippi River largemouth bass, fall 2011. DNR photo.

2000's have increased northern pike growth, survival and reproduction. Warmer than normal summers during the last two years may have affected recent reproduction. Typically, the heat of summer is the most stressful time period for these coolwater fish. Northerns can be found in shallow, weedy backwaters just after ice-out in early spring for about one month. During the heat of summer they are found in various locations, but prefer the coolest water available. Often they are found near cooler tributary mouths, deeper backwaters and under vegetation canopies. As with many other backwater fish, they congregate in backwater areas with no or little flow to overwinter. Typical open water baits include large spinners, spoons and casting plugs. Successful winter anglers often tip-up fish with large shiners.

Yellow perch — Look for yellow perch fishing to continue to be very good during 2012 and over the next few years. During 2009 sampling, we saw an eleven-fold increase in abundance of perch from previous years. Most of this increase was from small fish, although perch larger than seven inches increased as well. During the fall of 2010 and 2011, perch abundance was about half as much, but was still substantially higher than almost all years back to the early 1990s. The smaller perch seen during 2009 are now coming into the harvestable fishery. With the increasing number of harvestable fish, yellow perch fishing should be excellent in 2012 and for a few years beyond. Size struc-

ture will improve, with some fish reaching 15 inches. It is suspected that greatly increased water clarity over the last few years has favored perch growth and reproduction. The highest catch rates for perch over 8 inches per hour were found in the Big Lake area across the river from Wabasha, MN in Pool 4 (7), followed by the Goose Island and Stoddard area of Pool 8 (6.1), the Ambrough Slough area in Pool 10 near Prairie du Chien (3.8), the northeast portion of Pool 9 (2.7), the Harpers Slough area south of Harpers Ferry, IA in Pool 10 (0.9), and by the Weaver Bottoms area of Pool 5 (0.8). Perch can be found in various locations in the early spring. During April, soon after ice-out, look for them on their way to or near their spawning beds in shallow, weedy water. During summer, they frequent clear, weedy backwaters. As with many other backwater fish, perch congregate in backwater areas with no or little flow to overwinter. If your timing is just right, you can catch them in early spring downstream of dams. Typical baits include small minnows, worms, night crawlers and small artificial baits.

Largemouth bass — Bass anglers can look for continued good fishing on the Mississippi River. Catch rates from our surveys of both large and small fish have remained fairly steady over the last four years and have generally increased about five-fold over the last 11 years. The greatest catch per hour of fish over 3 inches during the fall of 2011 was in the Goose Island and Stoddard area of Pool 8 (65), followed by the northeast portion of Pool 9 (52), Big Lake area across the main channel from Wabasha, MN in Pool 4 (37), the Ambrough Slough area in Pool 10 near Prairie du Chien (33), the Weaver Bottoms area of Pool 5 (21) and by the Harpers Slough area south of Harpers Ferry, IA in Pool 10 (4). In these samples, largemouth bass were the second most abundant fish. Only bluegill was slightly more common. Largemouth bass can be caught in the spring in various locations including the main channel and in backwaters. During fall, these fish congregate into over-wintering areas with little or no current, and by ice-over can be caught on jigs and minnows using a pole or tip-up. Later in the winter, they can be more difficult to catch.

Bluegill- Mississippi River bluegill anglers can expect average fishing during 2012. From our fall sampling, the catch rate of fish over seven inches has stayed about the same over the last five years. The good news is that for bluegill of all sizes, catch rates have generally increased over the last 10 years. Fall surveys indicate average catch rates of bluegill over seven inches was greatest in the Ambrough Slough area in Pool 10 near Prairie du Chien (8.5), followed by the northeast portion of Pool 9 (4.0), the Harpers Slough area south of Harpers Ferry, IA in Pool 10 (3.5), the Big Lake area across the main channel from Wabasha, MN in Pool 4 (2.2), the Goose Island and Stoddard area of Pool 8 (1.9), and the Weaver Bottoms area of Pool 5 (0.4). Bluegill can be found in various locations in the early spring, after ice-out. During late May and early June, look for them on their spawning beds in backwater lakes. Local anglers often use a fly rod rigged with poppers to catch spawning fish. When the weather gets hot and spring flows subside, larger bluegill migrate to the main channel and side channels, and are often caught on wing dams and in woody snags in or near flowing water. As with largemouth bass, in the fall bluegill congregate in very large numbers into backwater areas with no or little flow to overwinter. Typical baits include worms, night crawlers, wax worms, small minnows and jigs.

Crappie- Mississippi River crappie anglers can expect below average fishing during 2012. The total number of crappie appears to have generally declined over the last 19 years. From the most recent 2011 fish surveys, catch rates of large crappie declined by 70 percent from 2007. Smaller crappie, between 3 and 10 inches, had a 69 percent decline. The greatest catch rates of large fish were found in the Ambrough Slough area in Pool 10 near Prairie du Chien (2.8), followed by the Harpers Slough area south



A happy young angler with a fine catch of bluegills, yellow perch and crappies from the Mississippi River, 2011. Photo by C. M. Skolaski.

of Harpers Ferry, IA in Pool 10 (1.6), the northeast portion of Pool 9 (0.9), the Goose Island and Stoddard area of Pool 8 (0.2), the Big Lake area across the main channel from Wabasha, MN in Pool 4 (0.2), followed by the Weaver Bottoms area of Pool 5 (0.0). Crappie can be found in various locations in the early spring. During May, look for them for a brief period on their spawning beds in shallow water. After spawning, crappie migrate to the main channel and side channels, and are often caught in woody snags in deep, flowing water. As with many other backwater fish, crappies congregate in backwater areas with no or little flow to overwinter. Typical baits include small minnows and jigs.

Channel catfish - Mississippi River catfish angling should be good again during 2012. Over the last five years, summer catfish surveys showed consistent numbers of channel catfish in Pool 8 near La Crosse. In the last 30 years, the only time channel catfish catch rates were higher were during the summers of 1993-1995. During 2011 we had the second largest average size of channel catfish recorded since routine surveys were started in 1982. The largest channel catfish on average were found the previous year in 2010. Channel catfish larger than 31 inches and flathead catfish larger than 43 inches lurk in the deep waters of the Mississippi River. Sometime in the next five years, we may see fewer large fish because of a recent decline in small fish. This decline may be due to extreme floods during the summers of 2007 and 2008 which may have disrupted spawning and rearing activities. Anglers can find channel catfish during the summer using worms, night crawlers, minnows and stink baits fished in deep, flowing water, often around snag piles in side channels. Flatheads, or mud cats, are frequently fished using large fish, often bluegills, at night just upstream of snag piles. During 2001, the state record 53-inch flathead catfish, weighing over 74 lbs. was caught in the Mississippi River.

Walleye and sauger - Mississippi River walleye and sauger fishing should be good in 2012. Fall catch rates of adult walleye in 2011 were about the same as the last few years in Pool 8 near La Crosse. The average size of walleye (13.9 inches) was a bit



dnr.wi.gov/fish/kidsparents/anglereducation



larger than 2010, but did not differ much from most previous years. Walleyes over 26 inches are seen every fall on the Mississippi River. During the fall of 2011, we also sampled in Pool 9, located downstream of Genoa, Wisconsin. Adult walleye catch rates were the same for the last eight years, but average length (12.6 inches) was about 2 inches less than the long term average measured over the last 12 years. Fall 2011 Pool 8 adult sauger catch rates were the same as previous years. Average size of sauger (11.1 inches) was slightly above the long term norm. In Pool 9, the fall 2011 catch rate was about the same as the long term average. Sauger were about an inch shorter (10.4) than the long term average for that pool. On the Mississippi River, sauger have been seen as large as 19 inches. Fall 2011 catch rates for both walleye and sauger born during the spring were below the long term average in Pool 8. Assuming normal survival to adulthood, abundance of these species in the harvestable fishery could decline over the next few years. The best walleye and sauger fishing is usually in the spring and fall. During the spring, fish congregate for a short period prior to spawning just downstream of many navigation dams on the river. During the late fall, fish will also congregate downstream of the dams just prior to freeze up. Most anglers will use a jig tipped with a rubber worm or live minnow. During the summer many anglers will use deep-diving plugs fished near or on the abundant rock wing dams.

- David Heath, Senior Fisheries Biologist, La Crosse

■ CHIPPEWA COUNTY

Lake Wissota — The adult walleye population was estimated at 6,437. This is down about 50% from 2006 when the walleye population was estimated at 13,017. The largest decrease in walleye abundance occurred for fish in the 12- to 15-inch range. It is likely a bad year class or two is the cause of the decrease in smaller walleye, however the DNR will be closely monitoring the fishery over the next several years to confirm this. There is still a good number of slot-sized walleye in the fishery at this time and will provide anglers a quality walleye angling experience. In addition, 2011 fall electrofishing surveys indicated that a good walleye hatch occurred this past year and those fish will be recruiting into the fishery over the next several years and should provide improved fishing for smaller walleye down the road. Northern pike numbers appear to be stronger than past surveys especially in the Yellow River and Little Lake Wissota areas. Many pike were in the 24- to 28-inch range and were in great condition. Smallmouth bass are more common than largemouth bass. However both species have larger fish present in the population. Panfish numbers were generally low but a good number of larger sized back crappie in the 10- to 12-inch range were collected. Both channel and flathead catfish are present in Lake Wissota and provide another quality angling opportunity. Lastly, muskellunge provide a trophy fishery in Lake Wissota. The largest fish captured in 2011 was just under 50 inches. In 2006, a 53-inch muskellunge was sampled in Lake Wissota. There are large fish present in Lake Wissota and anglers looking to land a 50-inch muskellunge should put Lake Wissota on their radar screen.

Chippewa Falls Flowage — This small flowage located downstream of Lake Wissota is many times overlooked by anglers however a respectable fishery is present and anglers with smaller boats or shore anglers may want to focus their efforts here. Walleye are common to abundant and a good spawning run is present below the Wissota Dam early in the angling season. Smallmouth bass and catfish are also common. Northern pike, muskellunge and panfish are also present in low numbers in this flowage and provide anglers with additional angling opportunities.

Dells Pond — Located in the City of Eau Claire, this almost 1000-acre flowage on the Chippewa River has many of the same characteristics of the Chippewa Falls Flowage and Lake Wissota. Of note is a good smallmouth bass fishery with 18-inch and larger fish sampled during our survey efforts. Panfish numbers were generally low, but some

larger black crappie are present. Muskellunge are stocked on an alternate year basis and a 50-inch fish could show up at anytime in Dells Pond.

Lake Como — Located in downtown Bloomer is recovering nicely from a draw-down and dam repair about a decade ago. Largemouth bass, black crappie and bluegill were common to abundant and northern pike were present in low numbers. Management efforts to reduce northern pike abundance appear to have been successful and a balanced sport fishery is currently present.

Elk Creek — Brook trout are present in moderate numbers in the upstream portion of the stream near HWY T. Downstream near HWY N the fishery is dominated by brown trout and densities are high and anglers are encouraged to harvest small brown trout. The portion of stream near HWY 29 recently had intensive habitat work completed over the past several years. A good number of slot-sized fish and some bigger are present in this portion of stream. A parking area on the north and east side of HWY 29 is available off HWY X (old 29) and stream is very fishable for anglers looking for open areas and limited brush. A pleasant surprise was downstream of Elk Creek Lake, a moderate density brown trout fishery was present with some larger fish available to anglers willing to spend some time learning this portion of stream. - Heath Benike, fisheries biologist, Eau Claire



Fisheries technician Troy Clemment with a Mississippi River flathead catfish, Aug. 2011. Photo: David Heath.

■ CRAWFORD/GRANT COUNTIES

Mississippi River, Pool 10 — Mississippi River backwater lakes are a great place to spend a day on the water. Backwaters provide year-round fishing opportunities for panfish, largemouth bass, northern pike, and walleye. One such productive Pool 10 backwater fishery is the Ambro Complex located north of Prairie du Chien. This complex is comprised of a series of lakes connected by sloughs that may be traversed from the Mississippi River's main channel. Big Missouri, Spring, Upper Doubles, Fish, Gremore and Tilmont are the largest lakes in the Ambro Complex. Recent electrofishing surveys of these lakes have shown good panfish and largemouth bass populations. At 360 fish per hour, bluegill numbers were excellent with most in the 4- to 8.5-inch range. Largemouth bass were also good with 190 fish per hour; many largemouth bass ranged from 12 to 19 inches. Black and white crappie were also prevalent, with many fish in the 8- to 12-inch range with some measuring over 15 inches. Yellow perch numbers also appear to be increasing with many in the 5- to 12-inch range. While the Ambro complex is best known for its panfish and largemouth bass, these lakes also offer anglers walleye, sauger, white bass, and trophy northern pike.

Mississippi River, Pool 11 — Anglers looking for a remote fishing experience will find just that in the Bertom McCartney backwater lake complex in lower Pool 11. Located south of Cassville, Bertom McCartney provides great year-round fishing opportunities for panfish, bass, catfish, and walleye. At 480 bluegill per hour, recent electrofishing

surveys have shown bluegill numbers to be excellent, with many fish in the 6- to 8-inch range. Good numbers of largemouth bass are also available, with catch rates reaching 233 fish per hour; many largemouth are in the 12- to 17-inch range. Bertom McCartney has also provided very good catch rates for black crappie, white crappie, and yellow perch. The Mississippi River near Prairie du Chien and Cassville provides great fish catching opportunities for both ice and open water anglers. Stable water levels throughout the ice-cover period maximizes habitat and allows ice anglers consistent success in the backwaters. Besides unique fishing opportunities and fast fishing action, ice angling the Mississippi River also brings great scenic beauty and wildlife viewing that may be unmatched in Wisconsin. As wonderful as the total experience may be, ice anglers need to be wary of ice conditions. Please take extra caution when crossing running sloughs and backwater lake entrances. Good luck this fishing season! - Patrick Short, fisheries biologist, Prairie du Chien

■ DUNN COUNTY

Lake Menomin — is a 1,405-acre, 34-foot deep, fertile impoundment located on the Red Cedar River within the city of Menomonie. It has a range of habitat and contains a large and diverse population of sport fish. Lake Menomin was surveyed during spring of 2011 using fyke nets and electrofishing gear to assess the health and status of the fishery. Northern pike are the most abundant game fish. The survey produced 619 northern pike ranging up to 38.3 inches. The most abundant size range was 15 to 19 inches with 15 percent of the population 22 inches or greater and 3 percent greater than 26 inches. Lake Menomin contains a remnant musky population, a by product of stocking upstream in the watershed. Don't be surprised if one over 40 inches shows up on the end of your line. We also sampled 440 walleye up to 27.2 inches with 12 to 20-inch fish common. One night of electrofishing produced 129 largemouth bass up to 19.7 inches. Smallmouth bass are also found in similar sizes and numbers. Bluegill, crappie and perch are common in Lake Menomin. Surveys produced 296 bluegill up to 9.7 inches with 59 percent over 7 inches, 292 yellow perch up to 12 inches with 22 percent over 9 inches and 209 black crappies, of which 14 percent were over 10 inches. White bass are also present with many around 10 to 11 inches. Due to the nature of this fertile flowage, summer algal blooms are common. Boat anglers are encouraged to get out early in the season. Early winter pan fishing is popular in Cemetery Bay and the Cut-Off Slough. There are four boat landings within the City of Menomonie (Point Comfort Park, Lakeside Park, Wakonda Park and LaPoint Park). There are two public access points located upstream of I-94, a carry in and winter access in the Cut-Off Slough and small boat landing located at Cedar Falls below the Lake Tainter Dam. Several of the city parks have shore fishing opportunities for anglers with disabilities. - Marty Engel, Senior Fisheries Biologist, Baldwin

■ EAU CLAIRE COUNTY

Half Moon Lake — Located in downtown Eau Claire, this small backwater oxbow lake receives a lot of fishing and recreational interest. The largemouth bass fishery is abundant but has a lot of small fish present. The DNR is considering removing the 14-inch minimum length limit and implementing a 14- to 18-inch protective slot limit with a one over 18-inch regulation. This regulation would encourage anglers to harvest abundant small bass in the 10- to 14-inch range but try and increase the number of larger bass in the population. Northern pike are present in low numbers. Based on this survey the DNR will be stocking a low number of northern pike in the lake starting in 2012. Panfish abundance is down but size is up when compared to past surveys. A respectable bluegill, crappie and perch fishery is present however, anglers should expect to catch lesser numbers of panfish, but the panfish they catch should be larger.

Otter Creek — Located in and south of Eau Claire historically has had a marginal trout fishery. However recent surveys the past two years have indicated that brown trout natural reproduction is occurring in portions of the creek and several years classes of trout are present. Densities are generally low, however some larger fish can be found for anglers willing to walk and beat the brush. - Heath Benike, fisheries biologist, Eau Claire

■ JACKSON COUNTY

Indian Creek Flowage and Potters Flowage — are located in eastern Jackson County. Fyke net surveys were conducted in spring 2011. Both flowages were last surveyed in spring 2007. Bluegill, black crappie, and largemouth bass were the predominant species in both flowages with muskellunge present in Potters. Most crappies captured in Indian Creek (74%) were 8 to 9 inches with 22% 10 inches or larger (largest fish in 13-inch range). The catch rate of 10-inch crappies in 2011 were double that of 2007. Most bluegills captured in Indian Creek (94%) were 6 to 7 inches with 54% 7 inches or larger (largest in 9-inch range). Largemouth bass do not net well, but fish captured in 2011 attained sizes of 16 to 20 inches, indicating growth potential for bass in the flowage.

For Potters Flowage, panfish were smaller than those captured in Indian Creek. Most black crappies captured (83%) were 6 to 8 inches with very few over 10 inches (largest crappies were in the 12-inch range). Most bluegills captured were 5 to 6 inches (94%) with very few bluegills captured larger than 6 inches (largest were in the 7-inch range). Largemouth bass attained sizes of 16 to 21 inches, indicating growth potential for bass. Potters has a low density muskellunge population, with individuals captured in 2011 ranging from 15 to 44 inches. Muskellunge are stocked on an alternate-year basis in Potters.

Trout streams (Jackson, Trempealeau, Buffalo counties) — 2010 was a good trout reproduction year in our area streams. Subsequently, 2011 surveys found more adult (brook and brown) trout in our area streams. Surveys conducted in 2010 found more 10- to 12-inch brook trout and this trend continued in 2011. Brown trout populations, which were generally declining in our area during the mid 2000's, showed a slight increase in natural reproduction and increases in adult and legal-size fish as well, in 2011. Based on these results, trout anglers should find plenty of fish in 2012. In addition, DNR and cooperative hatcheries will again stock approximately 35,000 brook, 37,000 brown and 15,000 rainbow trout to area waters prior to the 2012 season opener.

Black River (Clark, Jackson, Trempealeau, Monroe, La Crosse counties) — For the upper Black River (upstream of Black River Falls Dam) total catch rates (all sizes) for walleyes remained relatively stable, smallmouth bass and northern pike increased, and muskellunge decreased compared to fall 2009 surveys (due to high water levels, fall surveys for the Black River were not conducted in 2010). Walleye catch rates in 2009 were 17/mile and 16/mile in 2011. Smallmouth bass went from 83/mile in 2009 to 102/mile in 2011. Muskellunge went from 6/mile in 2009 to 2/mile in 2011. Catch rates for legal size walleyes (15 inches and larger) increased from 2/mile in 2009 to 4/mile in 2009. Legal smallmouth bass rates (14 inches and larger) increased slightly from 13/mile in 2009 to 14/mile in 2009. Northern Pike catch rates went from 1/mile in 2009 to 3/mile in 2011. Legal muskellunge and northern pike rates remained stable from 2009 to 2011. For the lower Black River (downstream of Black River Falls Dam) total catch rates for walleyes and smallmouth bass decreased, muskellunge remained stable, and northern pike increased. Walleyes went from 12/mile in 2009 to 11/mile in 2011. Smallmouth bass went from 8/mile in 2009 to 5/mile in 2011. Muskellunge catch rates in 2009 and 2011 were 1/mile. Northern pike went from 2/mile in 2009 to 4/mile in 2011. Catch rates for legal size walleyes increased slightly from 2/mile in 2009 to 3/mile in 2011. Catch rates for le-

gal size smallmouth bass, muskellunge, and northern pike remained stable from 2009 to 2011. A tagging study for walleyes in the lower Black River (initiated in 2008) continued in 2011 and will continue in 2012. So far, 1420 walleyes were tagged. Please report catching any tagged walleyes in the lower Black River or Mississippi River. More tag returns will improve results and guide future management of the lower Black River. - Dan Hatleli, fisheries biologist, Black River Falls

■ JUNEAU COUNTY

Petenwell and Castle Rock lakes bordered by Adams, Juneau and Wood Counties provide the angler with a wide choice of fishing opportunities. The most common game fish sought in these lakes are walleye, muskellunge, catfish and white bass. Black crappie and bluegill are the most common panfish species. In the spring of 2011, a netting and shocking survey was conducted on Petenwell Lake. A total of 523 walleye ranging in length from 10.8 to 28.3 inches were captured with an average length of 16.7 inches. Over 43% of the walleye surveyed were in the harvest slot length of 15 to 19.9 inches and 18.5% were over 20 inches. A total of 72 muskellunge were captured during the survey and ranged in length from 12.4 to 47.9 inches. Channel catfish and carp were the most numerous fish captured during the survey. The Petenwell and Castle Rock muskellunge fishery continues to grow stronger in numbers of fish and the number of anglers targeting them. Stocking of muskellunge continued in 2011 for Petenwell Lake with the addition of 10,403 large fingerling stocked from DNR hatcheries and an additional 330 from private sources. Castle Rock was stocked with 7,500 large fingerling muskellunge from DNR hatcheries during 2011 and an additional 300 were stocked from private sources. In the fall of 2011, week-long gill net surveys were conducted to assess the sturgeon in Petenwell and Castle Rock Lakes. In Petenwell, 37 sturgeon were captured ranging in length from 34.5 to 48.1 inches. In Castle Rock, 14 sturgeon were captured ranging in length from 32 to 52 inches. For the second year, sturgeon were stocked in Petenwell with 1,661 large fingerling (4- inch) fish raised



Jake Thompson, Wisconsin Rapids fisheries technician, with 46.2 inch muskellunge collected below the Nekoosa Dam. Photo: Justine Hasz

at the Wild Rose State Fish Hatchery. These sturgeon were raised from eggs gathered by DNR staff from sturgeon captured from the Wisconsin River below the Wisconsin Dells dam in the spring of 2011. - Justine Hasz, Senior Fisheries Biologist, Wisconsin Rapids.

■ MARATHON COUNTY

Wisconsin River (Portage County also) — The Wisconsin River from Wausau to Stevens Point consistently provides great year-round fishing opportunities. Summer river sampling is especially a good indicator of fishery quality for fish such as bass and catfish. Once again in 2011, the most abundant fish in the catch was the smallmouth bass making up 48 percent of the total catch, but this year they were followed by walleye at 24 percent and channel catfish at 12 percent. Largemouth bass were similar to 2010 at 8 percent of the catch, still a fraction larger than we have seen historically. Of particular importance for this year was the occurrence of young-of-year smallmouth bass in the catch. With the increase in summertime base river flow in both 2010 and 2011, it appears that recruitment has increased and this is good news for the future of the fishery. The fishery with the greatest abundance of smallmouth bass this year was the Whiting Flowage near Stevens Point, this flowage is popular with good numbers of fish available for catch and release, but has a high length limit of 18 inches. The largest smallmouth bass were from the Wisconsin River reach from Merrill to Wausau. Second in abundance overall, walleye were most abundant in the Stevens Point flowage survey and 63 percent of those caught were over 15 inches. Recent work with the walleye from the Wisconsin River indicates some positive changes in the fishery over the last 10 years. While the number of fish from 15 to 20 inches has remained relatively stable, we have seen a large increase in the number of walleye 20 inches and larger. This has occurred as a result of the slot regulation that was established in 2002. Anglers now have a population of harvestable fish similar to that prior to the slot limit, with the added benefit of greater numbers of 20 inch-plus fish available for catch-and-release, and a trophy option for fish greater than 28 inches. Overall the regulation appears popular with anglers and should result in a stable long-term walleye fishery. - Tom Meronek, fisheries biologist, Wausau

■ PEPIN COUNTY

Bear Creek — Trout fishing opportunities in Pepin County are mostly limited to a few small streams, however Bear Creek is an exception. During summer and fall of 2008-2011, DNR surveys revealed some exceptional results for both brook and brown trout. While overall trout densities are moderate to low (300-1,500 per mile), quality sized (8 to 12 inch) and trophy (>14 inch) brook trout were shown to be relatively common. This is some of the best brook trout water for larger fish seen in west central Wisconsin. In addition, recent stocking of Timber Coulee strain small fingerling brown trout has been highly successful, resulting in a major expansion in the brown trout population. The number of quality 12-to16-inch brown trout looks pretty darn good right

now. During 2007, a major effort began to improve trout habitat, trout densities and overall fishing in Bear Creek. DNR staff along with the Durand Sportsmen's Club, Trout Unlimited, local landowners, Pepin Land and Water Conservation Department and the Natural Resource Conservation Service formed a support group to begin habitat and watershed restoration. The first habitat restoration project was just completed this fall. In order to jump start the project, DNR modified stocking efforts to encourage restoration of natural reproducing trout populations. Today, Bear Creek receives 6,500 Timber Coulee wild strain small fingerling brown trout and an additional 1,000 legal size brook trout. The best water can be found from Dorwin Mill Road upstream to the Buffalo county line. Give Bear Creek a try this spring. - Marty Engel, fisheries biologist, Baldwin

■ PIERCE COUNTY

Area Trout Streams — Pierce County is known for its outstanding concentration of high quality, blue ribbon brook and brown trout streams. Despite heavy flood damage during August 2010, the 2011 season proved to be another great year for trout fishing. Long term trend surveys on our most popular trout waters in Pierce County reveal strong natural reproduction and adult densities. Some of the brown trout streams continue to show an increase in larger brown trout over 12 inches.

Headwater Secrets — Those up to a significant rocky challenge may want to try fishing Cave Creek upstream of STH 72. This is a small, limestone based stream with a series of pools and riffles. According to our most recent surveys, this stream holds a pleasant mix of quality size brook and brown trout. You will be surprised by the size of fish you'll find here. While Cady Creek is well known for being one of the best native brook trout streams in the state, few anglers fish the headwater regions near St. Croix County. Give 850th Avenue area a try. This is a very small stream and you will need to seek out the pools in a stalking fashion. Brook trout are extremely abundant here. Lastly, fish the South Fork of the Kinnickinnic River for native brook trout. Fish up or downstream from the DNR parking lot on STH 29. Fishing is best in the spring before the prairie grass and water cress beds develop.

Bush Wackers Delight — The Big River is a small, brushy creek with a lot of brown trout potential. Past surveys show this Class I brown trout stream has trout in every hole and on occasion, one over 20 inches too. Rumor also has it that the headwaters of the Trimbelle River (upstream of STH 65 and CTH W) hold a few nice brown trout. Recent DNR surveys confirm there is a low density but high quality population of brown trout in this part of the stream. The difficult part of course is finding the fishable water on these streams. Don't forget to fish the beaver ponds. - Marty Engel, fisheries biologist, Baldwin

■ PORTAGE COUNTY

Tomorrow River — The Tomorrow River has long been a popular trout stream and recently has been the recipient of some new habitat enhancements. In 2011, a new habitat project began on the Richard Hemp Fishery Area, located upstream of the confluence with Poncho Creek. The project is in the heart of the fishery area. When completed in 2012, it will offer an additional 4000 feet of habitat, but trout are likely already using newly installed lunger structures. Brown trout numbers within the fishery area have rebounded from about 230 to about 600 fish per mile with greater numbers at some locations; brook trout numbers have also increased from about 100 to 175 fish per mile. These numbers are more in line with historical trends. All of the trout streams in Portage County appear to have trout population numbers that have either held the same or increased with the stable rainfall received in the last 2 summers. Other popular trout streams including the Lower Tomorrow

River below Amherst, the Portage County Ditches, Flume Creek, Emmons Creek and the Little Plover River have all seen stable or increased trout abundance. Trout fishing in 2012 should be exceptional with many opportunities in all of the regulation categories. - Tom Meronek, fisheries biologist, Wausau

■ ST. CROIX COUNTY

Apple River — Trout, smallmouth bass and musky! The Apple River is a scenic, moderate sized river home to both warm and coldwater species. Within the village of Star Prairie, a series of coldwater springs enter, allowing trout to flourish. Each year DNR stocks 2,300 legal-size brown trout throughout the village's Island Park. The park provides a number of shore fishing stations and an accessible fishing platform. It's a great place to take a family fishing in the spring time. Overall, the Apple River is considered a warm water stream containing mostly smallmouth bass and to a lesser degree musky, northern pike and walleye. Our most recent survey last summer produced 140 smallmouth bass ranging up to 19.1 inches, 39 percent were 14 inches or larger, and 16 percent were 17 inches or larger. Currently, the Apple is listed as Class B musky water, meaning it provides good fishing but angler catch rates will be lower than prime waters. Our survey found a low density musky population. These fish averaged 39.5 inches and ranged up to 47 inches. Twenty-three northern pike were also captured ranging up to 35 inches. Walleye were scarce, but most captured were over 15 inches. I often enjoy two float trips on the Apple: Star Prairie to CTH C and CTH C to Riverdale Flowage. Each trip is about 4-5 miles long. Canoes or kayaks are recommended; small row boats will prove difficult to navigate rapids in the vicinity of CTH H. Carry in access is available in the Village of Star Prairie's Island Park, at CTH H/Old Mill Road County Boat Landing, CTH C Star Prairie Township Park and Riverdale Flowage's unimproved landing along CTH C. The Apple River is located in northwest St. Croix County near the Villages of Star Prairie and Somerset. While quality fishing opportunities in St. Croix County exist throughout the Apple River; limited access, commercial tubing operations and navigation can complicate trips downstream of Riverdale Flowage. Those that choose to fish these areas will need to do some serious planning and develop an exit strategy to avoid problems.

■ WOOD COUNTY

Information on Petenwell Lake is located under Juneau County.

A fall shocking survey was conducted on Centralia Flowage in the city of Wisconsin Rapids and captured a good variety of species. Walleye captured included adults as well as young showing good natural reproduction. Smallmouth bass were captured up to 18 inches. We also observed several larger muskellunge. This is a gem of a fishery located in the heart of Wisconsin Rapids. At 231 acres, it is a smaller impoundment of the Wisconsin River but for those who want to catch some nice size smallmouth bass, it is worth a try. There are many underwater hazards in this flowage so careful boating is required. There are also plenty of shore fishing opportunities along the flowage.

Ten Mile creek had two beaver dams removed during 2011. Stocking of brown trout continued in 2011 with a total of 827 being stocked into Ten Mile Creek during the spring with an average size of 9 inches. Justine Hasz, fisheries biologist, Wisconsin Rapids.

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