

Minnesota Fishing Report

Fishing slowed a bit during the coldest days in January, but action continues to heat up and should continually improve during the month of February. Please note that recent unseasonably warm temperatures throughout the state have caused ice conditions to change in some areas. It is extremely important to use caution when heading out!

Anyone considering a trip out onto the ice must first check with local bait shops and resorts for the most current ice conditions. Anglers venturing out are asked to carry ice claws and a long rope, wear a floatation device, and check ice depth often. Please stay informed and brush up on Minnesota DNR Ice Safety Tips before heading out. The most current Minnesota DNR Conservation Officer Reports may also be useful.

The fishing season for walleye, sauger, northern pike, largemouth and smallmouth bass in most Minnesota waters remains open through Feb. 26. Smallmouth bass, however, are catch-and-release only through Feb. 26. The winter season for lake trout within and outside of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area runs through Mar. 31. The winter season for stream trout in southern Minnesota is catch-and-release only and runs through Mar. 31.

Minnesota fishing opener dates for the 2012/2013 fishing season for most inland waters are as follows: walleye, sauger, northern pike, and lake trout, May 12; largemouth and smallmouth bass, May 26; muskie, June 2. The fishing season for crappies, sunnies, perch, and catfish is continuous.

The fishing season for stream trout in streams is catch-and-release only April 1-13; the regular season begins April 14. Please note that seasons and regulations vary for certain boundary waters and some individual lakes and rivers – please check out the Minnesota DNR Fishing Seasons and Minnesota DNR Fishing Regulations webpages to learn more.

Northeast Minnesota

Ely

Trout fishing has dominated the scene lately, with good numbers of lake trout coming out of area trout lakes. Roughly half are coming in on ciscoes, and the remainder are being taken on jigging-type lures such as airplane jigs, bionic bucktails, and chubby darters. Rainbow trout action has been excellent early in the day, with fish measuring up to 22 inches.

For the most fish, use a darker colored small jig tipped with a waxworm or dead crap-

pie minnow fished in waters less than 10 feet deep. A few splake weighing up to 7 pounds were recently taken from roughly 20 feet of water during the day. Walleye are being taken by anglers that stay on the move, working depths of 6-30 feet at the structure, such as weed edges and reef tops. For the most fish, use a northland buckshot jigging spoon, small chubby darter, or small lindy darter.

Cook County

The trout action on Gunflint Trail lakes has been great. On Kemo Lake, outside of Grand Marais, lake trout are attacking minnows, jigs, and spoons worked in 20-30 foot depths. On Clearwater Lake, midway up the trail, large lake trout are being pulled through the holes, with many weighing 4-5 pounds. At the end of the trail, on Saganaga Lake, lake trout are coming from deeper waters on jigs and spoons tipped with minnows and ciscoes.

Just north of Grand Marais, the splake are hitting ice jigs and waxworms worked in 8-18 feet of water on Pine Mountain and Mink lakes. Northern pike action remains consistently strong on East Twin, Pike, and Devil

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Track lakes, as well as on Caribou Lake just north of Lutsen – just drop a sucker minnow through a hole in 6-18 feet of water and you'll likely get a fish!

Northwest Minnesota

Baudette - Lake of the Woods

Fishing remains great on Lake of the Woods. Anglers have had to be a bit more skilled and patient since fish can be seen on the electronics, but they need to be coaxed before they'll bite! The best approach seems to be either a plain hook and minnow or a favorite jigging spoon worked in 32 feet of water.

A good share of the walleye have been suspended, with many of these fish measuring roughly 26 inches. Anglers looking for a trophy are encouraged to use their electronics, hitting depths of 16-18 feet early in the morning and late in the evening. Ice is averaging over two feet thick. Up at the North West Angle, depths of 17-21 feet have been best during early morning and late evening hours, with 27-29 foot depths being best during midday hours.

Walker - Leech Lake

Leech Lake is more accessible this year

than it has been in a long time due to a lack of snow and slush, with access to nearly all hot spots on the lake. Overall, the ice is averaging 18-21 inches thick. Still, anglers are asked to remain very vigilant about safety, watching for ice heaves and open cracks on the larger lakes and staying away from areas where rivers or streams run in to or out of the lake.

Most anglers continue to catch plenty of fish, including walleye, perch, northern pike, crappies, and sunnies. Lots of eating-sized walleye measuring 12-18 inches are being reported. In Walker Bay, anglers report lots of nice-sized perch and an occasional walleye coming from 11-14 foot depths.

Central Minnesota

Brainerd Lakes Area

Glow jigs and minnows are producing crappies in 20-30 feet of water on Hay and Round lakes. Cullen and Nisswa lakes are producing sunfish in depths of 10-15 feet. Look for walleye using shiner minnows, rainbows, or small spoons in 16-30 feet on Gull, North Long, and Round lakes.

Northern pike continue to hit shiners and sucker minnows in depths of 10-15 feet on Gull and Edward lakes. Closer to Crosby, the walleye reports have slowed, but a few

nice fish continue to be taken during evening hours in 28-32 feet of water on Nokay Lake.

Lake Mille Lacs

On the east side of Lake Mille Lacs, snowmobiles and ATVs are now able to travel to the main-lake flats and reefs where walleye and perch are biting in 25-plus feet of water. The 15 to 18 foot shoreline breaks and deeper gravel areas are also producing walleye, mainly during low-light periods.

Northern pike continue to hit sucker minnows worked in 10-15 feet of water in Isle, Wahkon, and Cove bays. On the west side of Lake Mille Lacs, walleye and perch continue to be pulled from 15-20 foot depths in St. Alban's Bay.

White Bear Area Lakes

White Bear Lake has 13-15 inches of ice on average. The area near the VFW is giving up quite a few crappies and walleye. On Bald Eagle Lake, crappie anglers are taking fish by the island, and walleye are coming through the holes at Rock Point. Please note that Bald Eagle Lake has been closed to all vehicle travel – anglers venture out by foot.

Report provided courtesy of Explore Minnesota Tourism (abridged). For a full report, visit them at www.exploreminnesota.com.



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