



## Leech Lake Update, October 2012

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Greetings!

This update is part of a series of reports the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is sending to Leech Lake area resorts, businesses and others interested in DNR activities on Leech Lake. The goal of these messages is to keep you up to date with our findings and current activities on the lake. Earlier updates are available by visiting <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/areas/fisheries/walker/index.html>. Feel free to contact our office if you have any questions or comments, would like copies of previous updates not posted on the website, or if you would like to be added to the mailing list.

### 2012 survey work completed and to be completed on Leech Lake

- Double-crested cormorant management continued under the supervision of the Division of Resource Management, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe. Spring and fall cormorant counts were similar to those observed throughout 2011, peaking at 2,338 and 660, respectively. During 2012, 1,684 cormorants were removed to meet the management goal of 500 nesting pairs.
- From August 13-24, twenty trawls were conducted at the three standard locations. The number of young-of-year walleye sampled per hour (148) was slightly higher than the long-term average (137). The number of young-of-year yellow perch sampled per hour (704) was substantially lower than the long-term average (9,417).
- From September 3-14, the annual gill netting survey was completed at 36 locations around the lake. Walleye catch rates increased in 2012 (9.42 fish/net) and were above the management goal of 8.5 fish/net. The assessment indicated good numbers of fish produced during 2010 and 2011. These fish are currently between 9 and 14 inches, some of which will be large enough for harvest as early as this winter. Additionally, 35% of walleye sampled were within the protected slot and will continue to provide anglers an opportunity to catch a larger fish (Figure 1). Other game fish species targeted with test nets include yellow perch, and northern pike. Yellow perch abundance declined for the fifth consecutive year, while northern pike abundance continues to remain stable.
- From September 9-13, eleven night time electrofishing stations were sampled for young-of-year walleye. The number of young-of-year walleye sampled per hour (237) was substantially higher than the long-term average (99) and the highest catch rate observed since this gear type began being used in 2005. The average length of these fish was 6.1 inches; larger size in the fall usually results in higher winter survival. The warmer summer likely contributed to above average young-of-year walleye growth rates.
- Monthly zooplankton sampling at five locations lakewide has been completed from mid-May through mid-September (Photo 1), with only the mid-October sample remaining at this time. The mid-October sample will conclude all sampling on Leech Lake for the year.
- Two minor fish kills were reported on Leech Lake this summer, one in early-July and the other in mid-August. Both kills were associated with water temperatures that exceeded 80 degrees for over a week. Oxygen profiles around the lake during the kills showed sufficient oxygen was present, meaning kills were solely a result of high temperatures. The only fish species observed dead was cisco. September test netting indicated adequate numbers continue to be present.

- If you would like to volunteer next year to assist with any of the assessments just described, or if you have questions, comments, or requests please contact: Matt Ward ([matt.ward@state.mn.us](mailto:matt.ward@state.mn.us)) Large Lake Specialist at 218-547-1683, or Doug Schultz ([doug.w.schultz@state.mn.us](mailto:doug.w.schultz@state.mn.us)) Walker Area Fisheries Supervisor

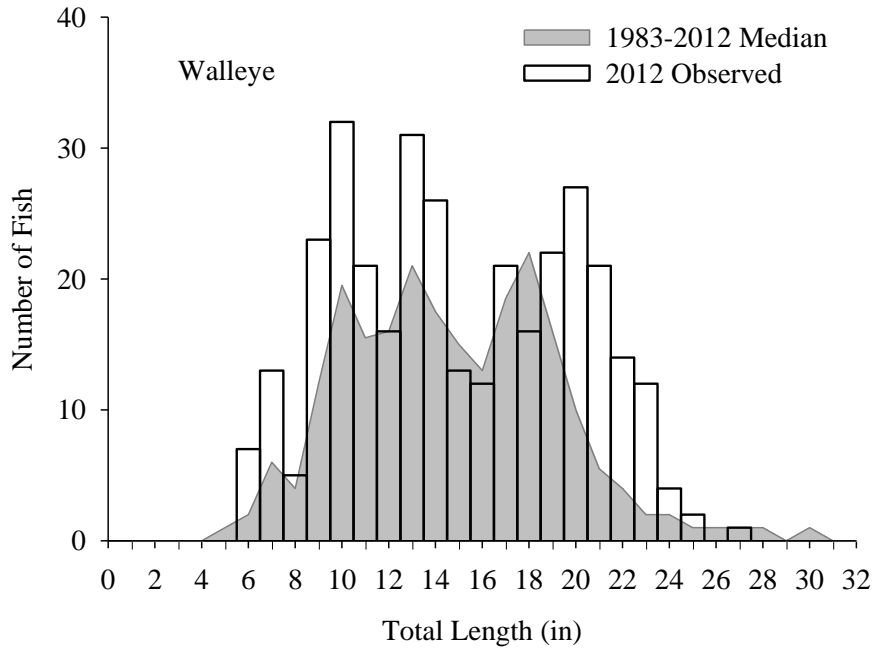


Figure 1. Length-frequency distribution of Leech Lake walleye sampled with experimental gillnets, 2012.



Photo 1. Walker Area fisheries intern, Ethan Karppinen, sampling zooplankton on Leech Lake in August, 2012.