



2025 SPRING FISHERIES SURVEY SUMMARY

WINDFALL LAKE, SAWYER COUNTY

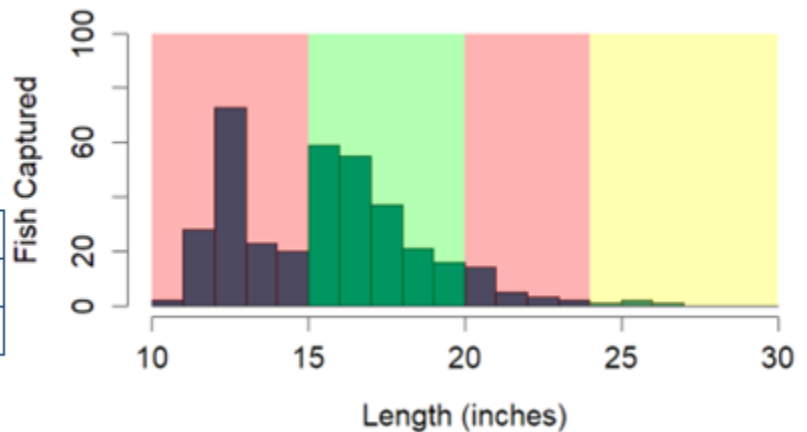
Report by Max Wolter

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Hayward Fisheries Management Team conducted a fyke netting survey on Windfall Lake from April 4-8, 2025. The primary targets were walleye and northern pike, but useful data were also collected on black crappie. Up to six nets were set overnight for five nights which resulted in 30 net-nights of effort. An electrofishing survey was conducted on May 14, 2025 to target largemouth bass and bluegill and included 1.6 miles of shoreline (total shoreline for the lake). Quality, preferred and memorable sizes referenced in this summary are based on standard proportions of world record lengths developed for each species by the American Fisheries Society.

WALLEYE



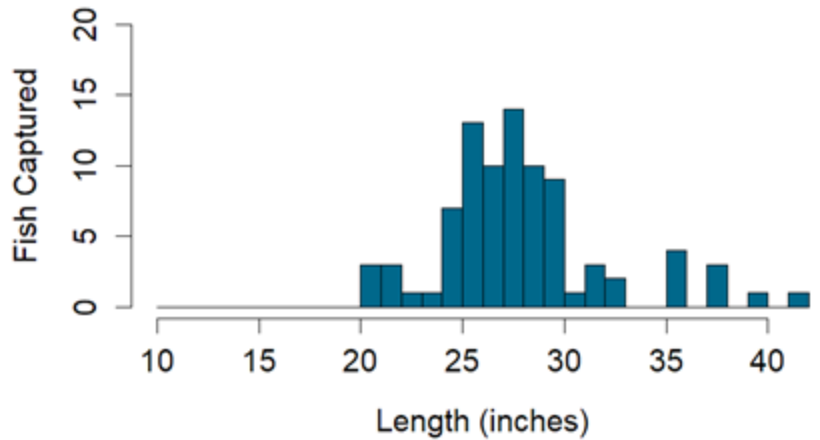
Captured 12 per net-night \geq 10 inches	
Quality Size \geq 15"	57%
Preferred Size \geq 20"	6%



NORTHERN PIKE



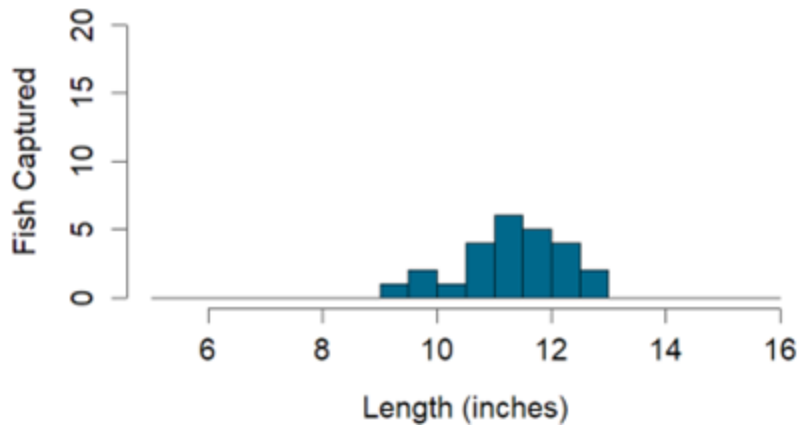
Captured 3 per net-night \geq 14 inches	
Quality Size \geq 21"	97%
Preferred Size \geq 28"	40%



BLACK CRAPPIE



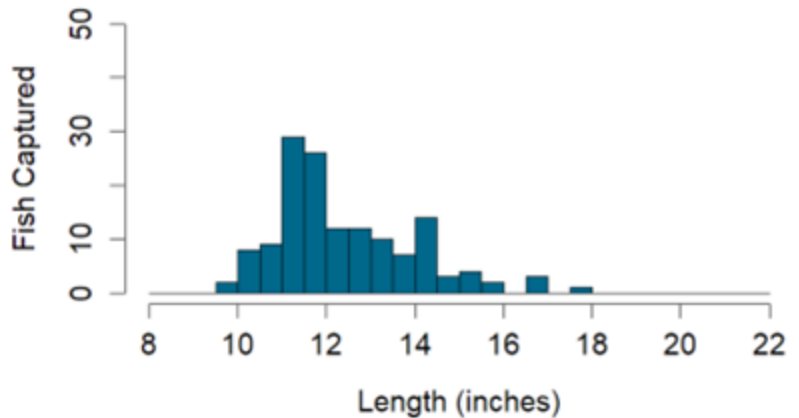
Captured 1 per net-night \geq 5 inches	
Quality Size \geq 8"	100%
Preferred Size \geq 10"	88%



LARGEMOUTH BASS



Captured 89 per mile \geq 8 inches	
Quality Size \geq 12"	48%
Preferred Size \geq 15"	7%



SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Windfall Lake (104 acres) is a unique, small, seepage lake in south central Sawyer County. The lake has relatively clear water and predominantly sand and gravel shorelines with some fallen wood. Nearshore aquatic plants are sparse. Windfall Lake is classified as a "complex warm clear" lake by the DNR Fisheries lake classification

system. Comparisons are made to other lakes in the same class throughout this report.

WALLEYE

There is really nothing about Windfall that would indicate it is a high-quality walleye lake. It is small, warm and clear, a habitat combination that most often favors species like bass and panfish. However, Windfall has a history of being an excellent walleye fishery, somewhat against the odds. This survey found that Windfall's run of producing quality walleye fishing opportunities continues. Catch rates for adult walleye were decent, with many legal-sized fish in the 15-20 inch range. A mark-recapture population estimate conducted as a part of this survey found 4.2 adult walleye per acre, which is a very solid population. This lake offers a lot of appeal to those seeking walleye. There is a 15 inch minimum length limit, no harvest of walleye between 20-24 inches, and only 1 walleye over 24 inches may be harvested as a part of a 3-fish daily bag limit (colors in the figure above correspond to regulations, green = harvest up to 3, yellow = harvest no more than 1, red = no harvest).

NORTHERN PIKE

Northern pike were another bright spot in this survey. Pike catch rates were not exceptionally high (around the 75th percentile compared to similar lakes), but this may be one of the keys to the excellent size structure in this population. Almost all pike captured were "quality size" (over 21 inches). An astonishing 40% of the pike captured were over 28 inches, with the largest being 41 inches. Windfall represents an excellent opportunity for anglers to find big pike without having to search huge waterbodies. There is no minimum size limit and a 5-fish daily bag limit for northern pike in Windfall Lake.

BLACK CRAPPIE

Crappie were the most prominent panfish species in our survey, although some bluegill and yellow perch were also captured. Crappie catch was low (around the 25th percentile compared to similar lakes), but size was very good. Most crappie captured were over 10 inches. Crappie represent a low-density but high-quality angling opportunity. There is a 25-fish daily bag limit for panfish in Windfall Lake.

LARGEMOUTH BASS

Our electrofishing survey produced a very high catch rate for largemouth bass (>90th percentile compared to similar lakes). Unsurprisingly, the size was relatively poor in this abundant population and just 7% of bass were over 15 inches. The high

abundance of bass is something we will keep an eye on. There is currently a 14-inch minimum length limit and 5-fish daily bag limit for bass in Windfall Lake.

OTHER SPECIES

Bluegill were a target in our electrofishing survey on Windfall Lake, but capture rates were extremely low. This comes after credible reports of a winter kill in 2024-2025. The bluegill population appears to be at a low point for abundance, but bluegill are still present in the lake. Investigations in fall showed that bluegill reproduced successfully in 2025, putting the population back on track for recovery. We will continue to monitor these developments. Yellow perch appear to be moderately abundant in Windfall Lake, but most were too small to be captured in survey nets. White sucker are also a species of significance in the lake. Suckers are moderately abundant and have good size. Suckers are a likely food source for northern pike and may be an important reason for the excellent pike size structure.

Survey Crew: Max Wolter, Scott Braden, and Dan Nelson

Special thanks to volunteer Chance Brown

Reviewed and approved by Aaron Cole