



# The lure of fishing is strong in our neck of the woods

By SALLY D. KETCHUM

Special to the Record-Eagle

When folks gather early mornings in northern Michigan's small town coffee shops, eventually, the talk seems to turn to fishing, night crawler harnesses, copper spoons and certain conditions of the Boardman River.

While their discussions might include some slightly exaggerated statistics of weight and length, one thing is sure: Michigan is a fisherman's paradise. The state has 3,000 miles of Great Lakes shoreline, over 11,000 inland lakes and 36,350 miles of rivers and fishing streams. If one is after trout, there are 12,600 miles of trout waters, and 1,000 miles of those are fine blue ribbon trout streams. A slogan for Michigan just might say, "Got trout?"

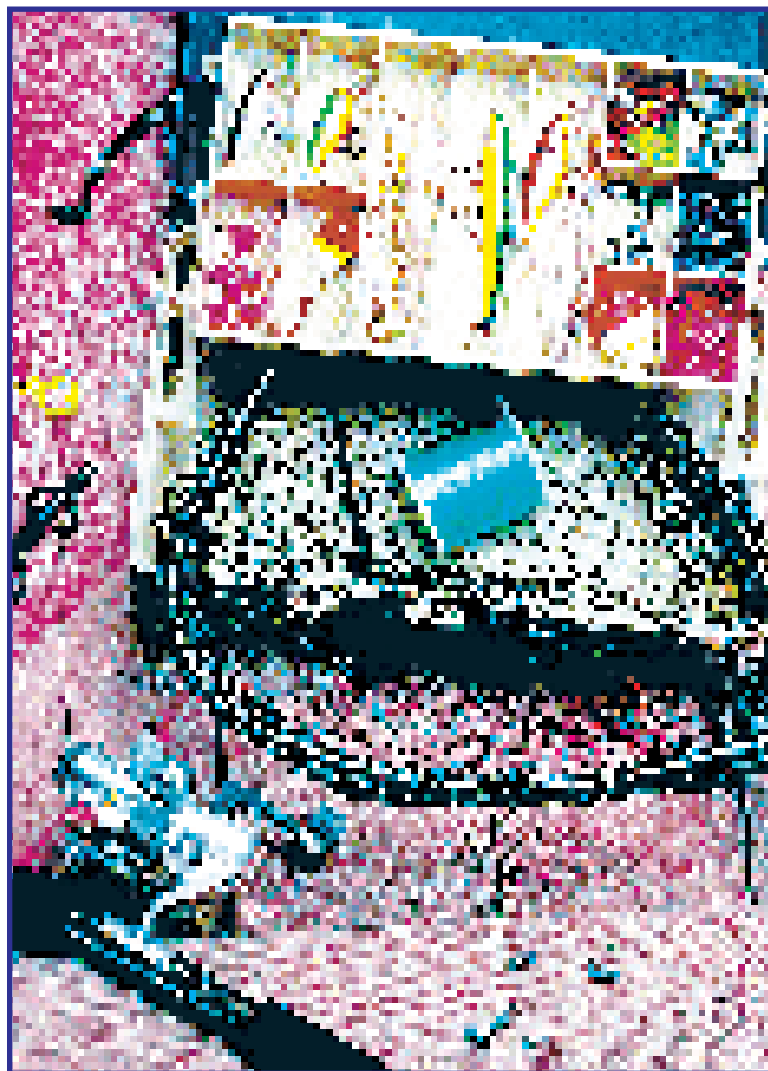
Certain spots, the end of a lake, a cove with a view of sunrise, or the secluded bend in a river are favored by fishermen for different reasons. These might be the bottom conditions like rock or vegetation or sunken logs which provide great hiding places for fish.

Locals say that Lake Skegemog is home for small-mouth bass, Great Lake muskie and yellow-bellied perch. Manistee Lake is known for walleye, crappie, bluegill and perch, and Big Guernsey Lake, about seven miles west of Kalkaska, for rainbow trout, big bluegills and largemouth bass.

Then there are northern Michigan's rivers. Bob Asch of Jack's Sport Shop in Kalkaska, likes the Rapid River. He says it is a "super stream for rainbows, browns and brookies."

He also said that the Manistee River is excellent, having "a hex hatch in July, and being easily fished, wading or from canoes."

Second only to their favorite fishing holes are local bait and tackle shops which carry arrays of supplies to furnish



both equipment and ideas — complete rod and reel combinations for most every type of fishing along with new innovations with fishing equipment and lures. Asch said that select colors of Shubert's tube baits and Kalin Grubs, an Jack's Sports Shop exclusive, are favorites.

Natural bait popular with area fishermen includes spawn sacs and wigglers in the spring for steelhead, leeches for bluegills and bass, and worms and crawlers for trout.

Old favorites that are standbys for fishermen include Crazy Crawlers, Psycho Scouts for bass, Fire Plugs for Lake trout, Ping-A-T's for Salmon,

and Daredevils for pike.

Fishermen who eat their catch might do well to take time to read the DNR's information on suggested size and frequency of portions of Michigan lake fish. The health guides are provided with fishing licenses. Some national authorities think Michigan's guidelines are too lenient, but as with all such matters, common sense is best. Check the 2002 Michigan Fishing Guide for rules effective April 1.

Introducing children to fishing is easier now than ever. Asch suggests bring children to the Trout Pond during the National Trout Festival. He also suggests chartered boat

fishing trips and even organizing fishing trips as school outings. A boat charter will usually run in the approximate range of \$100 or more per adult.

Michigan's DNR encourages folks to learn to fish, especially children. "Michigan's Free Fishing Weekend Celebration, June 8 and 9, 2002, is a perfect chance to "pass on Michigan's fishing traditions to a new generation of anglers," according to DNR literature. There will also be an ice fishing celebration next Feb. 15 and 16.

Although fishing regulations will still apply, all fishing license fees will be waived for the event on both inland and Great Lakes waters. The celebration will include many special events, including Free Fishing Weekend clinics. Perhaps at summer's end, kids

who have fished will return to school with an increased love of the outdoors, a new pastime, and knowledge that Michigan's state fish is the brook trout.

So it is that early mornings over a cup of coffee, area fishermen share their fish stories. Asch says his best is that "while trolling Torch Lake for Atlantic Salmon, Nick Klein of Kalkaska hooked onto a 42 inch, 25 1/2 lb. Lake trout, the largest to be recorded from Torch Lake."

That's a fish big enough to tear even young video game addicts away from their computers to head for the lakes.

Asch's idea of his personal perfect day is to "get on a small stream away from the crowds and catch a few brookies."

Sally D. Ketchum is a local freelance writer.



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