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LAKE OF THE WEEK

Southwest Minnesota Lake Holds Huge Numbers of White Crappies

By Tim Lesmeister

There is nothing better than sitting in your boat and filling up a fish basket with sunfish and crappies, especially after spending the last few months being limited to an eight inch hole in the ice.

If you're one of those anglers that just can't wait to get into some of this action, consider Mountain Lake, northwest of Mountain Lake, Minn., in southwestern Minnesota's Cottonwood County.

There are two reasons that make Mountain Lake a good candidate for early open water fishing. One is that the ice goes out fairly early, compared to most lakes in the state, and two is that the lake has

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MOUNTAIN LAKE

(Cottonwood County)



THERE IS nothing better than sitting in your boat and filling up a fish basket with sunfish and crappies, especially after spending the last few months being limited to an eight inch hole in the ice. If you're one of those anglers that just can't wait to get into some of this action, consider Mountain Lake, on the north-west edge of Mountain Lake, Minn., in Cottonwood County. It has a surface area of 320 acres, and a maximum depth of eight feet. There is a city owned public access on the east side, plenty of panfish, and due to the lake's shallow depths, and the fact that it's aerated, the ice will be gone much sooner than lakes further north in the state.

Each week Outdoor News publishes a DNR lake contour map. Over 4,000 full-size maps (without the fish symbols) are available from the Minnesota Documents Division, 117 University Ave., St. Paul, Minn. 55155 at \$3.00 each, plus sales tax. Add \$1.50 handling charge per order. Phone: 612/297-3000; Toll Free - Minn. 1-800/652-9747.

This map was prepared by the Division of Fish and Wildlife, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. It is designed to provide basic information for scientific fish and wildlife management when used with biological, physical and chemical survey data. It is not intended to be used as a navigational aid and all hazards are not mapped - Minnesota DNR.

managed by the DNR for warm water gamefish, and is stocked every third year with walleyes. The shoal water soil percentages are five percent boulder, 45 percent sand, and 50 percent muck. There is good weed growth, and the water is relatively clear.

There is a good city owned public access on the east side of Mountain Lake, which is capable of handling small to medium sized boats.

For more information regarding Mountain Lake, call Todd's Amoco at 507/427-2842.

MOUNTAIN LAKE

LOCATION: Mountain Lake is on the north-west edge of Mountain Lake, Minn., in Cottonwood County.

SIZE: 320 acres.

DEPTH: Maximum depth is eight feet.

ACCESS: The city owned public access is located on the east side of the lake.

MANAGEMENT: The DNR manages the lake for warm water gamefish and stocks walleyes every third year.

Mountain Lake... (From Page 1)

unbelievable populations of panfish, which are the bulk of the species legal to take this time of year.

According to Todd Sorensen of Todd's Amoco, the bait store in Mountain Lake, because of the lake's shallow depths, only eight feet maximum, and the fact that it is aerated — the ice goes out quite early.

According to Peter Jacobson, DNR Area Fisheries Supervisor in the Windom office, Mountain Lake went through a reclamation project in 1958, where all the existing fish were removed by chemically treating the water. It was then restocked with walleye, bluegill, crappie, northern pike, largemouth bass, perch, and fathead minnows.

After reclamation, Mountain Lake went through a series of winterkills until 1983, when the local sportsman's club installed an aeration system. Since that time, additional stocking and good weed growth have made Mountain Lake, as Jacobson says, "One of those special lakes that produces well for all species."

Jacobson's statement is supported by the large populations of fish surveyed in the lake. White crappies are present at a phenomenal 77

times the regional average, and bluegill are 20 times higher than the average. The northern pike average is seven times that of the region, and walleye are maintaining at slightly higher than the state average.

With numbers this high, one might think that the fish are all stunted. This is hardly the case, with crappies averaging one third to one half pound, and according to Sorensen, "The guys that know where to catch them can get one pounders." Bluegills are also coming in nice at a quarter pound apiece.

Northern pike are also big in Mountain Lake, with the average size slightly over three pounds. One fish that was caught in the test nets was over ten pounds, but according to Jacobson, "The majority of the pike caught are between two and five pounds."

Largemouth bass are also present in Mountain Lake, and while they are still relatively small, these fish are doing quite well. According to Jacobson, seven pair of brood stock fish were put in the lake in 1986. He says, "They have really reproduced well, and now we have a good bass population."

Mountain Lake's 320 acres is

MOUNTAIN LAKE AREA SPORTSMANS CLUB

MOUNTAIN LAKE SPORSTMANS CLUB IS TRYING TO USE OUR AERATION SYSTEM FOR NORMAL WINTER AERATION AND LAKE RESTORATION. WE DECIDED TO PURCHASE A CLEAN-FLOW SYSTEM TO FILL THIS NEED. OUR FIRST UNIT INCLUDED TWO COMPRESSORS WITH FOUR HEADS AND A CABINET FOR THEM. ON 8-18-86 WE INSTALLED THE SECOND SYSTEM KEEPING IT IN THE SAME AREA AS THE FIRST SO WE WOULD ONLY HAVE ONE OPEN HOLE DURING THE WINTER.

SO FAR WE HAVE NOT HAD A REAL TEST ON KEEPING OUR LAKE FROM WINTERKILL, BUT IN THE WINTER OF 85-86 SOME AREA LAKES DID HAVE PROBLEMS AND OUR OXYGEN LEVEL STAYED UP VERY WELL.

THE RESTORATION PART OF OUR PROGRAM HAS SHOWED SOME GOOD RESULTS. THE WEED PRESSURE WE NORMALLY HAVE WAS NOT AS BAD IN THE AREA WE ARE RUNNING IN. THE FAR END OF THE LAKE STILL HAS GOOD WEEDS TO PROMOTE THE FISH DEVELOPMENT.

WE HAVE BEEN RUNNING THIS SYSTEM FOR 17 MONTHS, SHUTTING IT DOWN FOR A TOTAL OF 7 WEEKS DURING FREEZE-UP IN THE LAST TWO FALLS.

THE FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF THE COSTS WHICH WE HAVE HAD USING THE CLEAN-FLOW SYSTEM.

OPERATING COSTS		
1 UNIT	10-22-85 THRU 8-18-86	\$348.50
2 UNITS	8-18-86 THRU 3-10-87	\$457.50
	MISC. EXP.	<u>\$30.00</u>
	TOTAL OPERATING COST	
	17 MONTHS	\$836.00

COST FOR RUNNING BOTH UNITS		
	COST/DAY	\$2.28
	COST/MONTH	\$68.52
	COST 11 MONTHS	\$753.67

WE COMPARED THIS SYSTEM TO OTHERS ON THE MARKET. OTHERS USING A 10 HORSE MOTOR DRAWING 35 AMPS AT 230 VOLTS AND \$.05/KW.

	COST/DAY	\$9.66
	COST/ MONTH	\$289.80
	COST 3 MONTHS	\$869.40