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# Hook, Line, and Sinker

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New Ulm Area Sport Fishermen • P.O. Box 294 • New Ulm, MN 56073    Web Site: [newulmsportfish.org](http://newulmsportfish.org).

## SUPER SMALLMOUTH WATERS (PART 1)

By Tim Holschlag

Courtesy of [www.gameandfishimag.com](http://www.gameandfishimag.com)

It's that time again. Every spring I offer Minnesota Sportsman readers 10 great smallmouth waters to try. The trouble is, with Minnesota's multitude of blue-ribbon smallie destinations, I always have trouble narrowing it down to just 10.

Wild northwoods lakes, close-to-home haunts, big rivers, scenic streams – our state has so many excellent bronzeback locations. Of course, part of the problem is the fact that I never met a smallmouth lake or stream I didn't like. Put a smallie in a body of water and I'm interested, real interested. Even if it requires hard paddling or a long hike through the woods, I want to try it.

And I'm not alone. Thirty years ago, my passion for smallmouths made me an odd duck in the land of walleyes. Nowadays, I have plenty of company, with more and more people loving the power-packed smallmouths. It goes to show that today's anglers know a good thing when they hook it. And no matter whether you're a veteran or a rookie smallmouth angler, these waters offer something for everyone.

### LAKE VERMILION

For many smallmouth fans, piscatorial paradise means the deep blue lakes of northeast Minnesota. One of these north-country gems is Lake Vermilion in St Louis County.

A sprawling 40,000 acres, with dozens of islands and miles of shoreline, Vermilion affords anglers plenty of room to roam. Long a popular walleye destination, and more recently famous as a muskie hotspot, this lake also has good smallies. But Lake Vermillion smallmouthing is often overlooked, leaving plenty of water and fish for the serious smallmouth fan. And right now bronzeback populations in Vermilion are looking good. Excellent reproduction in the mid- and late-1990s means

plenty of hard-fighting midsize models – 12- to 16-inchers – in the lake along with some 4- to 5-pound lunkers.

Because Vermilion is so large, with two distinct basins – separated by Oak Narrows – it's best for newcomers to concentrate on a single section of the lake. In the west basin, one area definitely worth trying is Wakemup Bay, especially the bay's many reefs and rock humps. On the east side near Tower, the islands between Stuntz Bay and Armstrong Bay are good. Even Vermilion's growing number of docks hold nice smallies. Jigheads dressed with 4-inch plastic worms are consistent producers during the spring and summer seasons.

Numerous resorts and guides operate on this big lake. For lodging assistance, call the Lake Vermilion Resort Association at 1-800-648-5897. For general information, go to [www.lakevermilion.com](http://www.lakevermilion.com)

The author loves fly-fishing for smallmouth bass, especially hard-fighting 20-inchers like this one on Lake Vermilion. Photo courtesy of Tim Holschlag

### LAKE KABETOGAMA

Another famous north-country walleye destination, Lake Kabetogama offers much more than just plenty of walleyes.

Almost surrounded by Voyageurs National Park, "Kab" offers over 25,000 acres of beautiful wilderness water, plus dandy smallmouth fishing. And like many waters in our land of walleye mania, only a small core of anglers seriously pursue Kab's bronzebacks. Instead most anglers inadvertently catch the occasional smallmouth while targeting walleyes. But serious smallmouthing will pay off on Kabetogama. Last year's Department of Natural Resources survey found robust populations of the species, and Kab smallmouther Don Stevens says he consistently lands hefty bronzebacks up to nearly 5 pounds.

In the spring and early summer, Stevens targets spawning fish in gravel/rubble bays on the east side of the lake. In late June, Stevens moves to midlake islands and humps with rubble/sand

substrates. He says the western end of the lake has a lot of clay bottom areas that hold more pike than smallmouths. But the humps around Sugarbush, Cutover and other islands are consistent smallmouth locations. In the summer, these shallow areas often develop weed growth. Stevens recommends working the weeds with topwaters and shallow runners early in the day, then moving deeper with deep-diving crankbaits as the day progresses.

To obtain a map and camping information on Kabetogama and Voyageurs National Park, go to [www.nps.gov.voya](http://www.nps.gov.voya). For local businesses, go to [www.kabetogama.com](http://www.kabetogama.com) or call the International Falls Chamber of Commerce at 1-800-325-5766.

### TROUT LAKE

Here's a third north-country beauty where smallies get overshadowed by a more glamorous species.

As its name implies, this is a trout lake – lake trout to be exact. One of several Minnesota lakes named Trout, this 1,900-acre jewel is in Itasca County, two miles east of Highway 38 and near Wabana Lake. Though it's locally famous for its deep-water lakers, Trout Lake also has some fine smallies swimming along its shorelines and around shallow midlake humps. And good fishing isn't this lake's only attribute. In fact, Trout's smallmouth populations aren't as high as in some northeast waters, but its beauty and tranquility compares favorably to Minnesota's most remote lakes. In the heart of Chippewa National Forest, Trout Lake is clear, quiet and forest-fringed with little development.


## Club Calendar

June 29th ..... NUASF Club Meeting  
July 13th..... NUASF Social Night at Club House  
July 27th..... NUASF Club Meeting

August 10th ..... NUASF Social Night at Club House  
August 16th.....NUASF Kids Fishing Contest Riverside Park  
August 31st ..... NUASF Club Meeting



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## From the President.....

By Jason Kuester

**Summer has finally arrived!** Now is a great time to take advantage of the local lakes and rivers in our area. We have some of the best fishing within 30 minutes of New Ulm. Take some time to fish the Minnesota River, Clear Lake, Hanska, Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Lake Crystal, Loon, High Island, Marion, and Sleepy Eye just to name a few. When you are out fishing with your wife and kids or a friend, take a few pictures of your catch. We are looking at updating the pictures at the club and always need great pictures for the newsletter. Always remember to practice safety and be courteous to other fisherman. If you don’t have a boat the club has 2 great fishing boats parked at the club, your club key will unlock them. The boats are first come first serve, all we ask is that you leave them full of fuel and that you clean them up when you’re done.

**Pork chops** will be available for your enjoyment at the next meeting. The meal will be served before the meeting at **6:30pm**. Please make a donation to the club in memory of Elmer Epke! I could use a hand grilling at 5:45-6:30 if you can help!!

Please bring a dish to pass.

Summer is here and what a great time to bring our friends and family to the New Ulm Area Sport Fisherman Club. We are always looking for new members to join. If you know of someone bring them along and show them how much fun we have at our club. As always, bring a friend and each of you will receive a free refreshment of your choice!

**Hope to see you at the next meeting!!**

*Continued from page 1*

To find Trout Lake’s smallmouths, focus on the 10- to 20-foot depths and skip the 80 percent of the lake that’s deeper. Besides staying in the shallower zones, it’s also critical to target wood cover or rubble, as in fist- to football-sized rocks. Covering water quickly with deep-diving crankbaits is a good way to find productive locations. Working that spot with a tube jig is a way to coax an extra fish or two from that location.

For local services and information, contact the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce at [www.grandmn.com](http://www.grandmn.com) and Ben’s Bait and Tackle in Grand Rapids at (218) 326-8281.

### BIG FORK RIVER

While many smallmouth fans have their favorite

northwoods lake destinations, few realize that northern Minnesota also has some fine bronzeback rivers. The Big Fork, hidden in the vast flat forests of Koochiching County, is one of these little-known hotspots. Flowing north to its terminus with the Rainy River, the lower 50 miles of the Big Fork holds big smallmouths, muskies and other species. Seven canoe/ small boat accesses scattered along this 50-mile section of river allow for day floats of varying distances. Just make sure you start any trips below Grand Falls in the town of Big Falls. Downstream of this tumultuous cascade there are no dangerous rapids.

I’ve released smallies up to 20 inches in the Big Fork and heard of guys landing

muskies over 44 inches. To find the smallmouths, skip the areas with clay or sand bottoms and concentrate on rocky head-of-pool areas and eddies below islands. Due the to the fine-particle clay soils of the area, the Big Fork can run very turbid after a rain. Fishing is best if it’s been dry for at least a week.

The DNR offers a handy map of the Big Fork and the other rivers highlighted in this article, because they are also designated – though seldom used – canoe routes. These river maps are available through most local DNR offices and from the central office in St. Paul (1-888-646-6367). For the Big Fork, the closest sizeable town is International Falls. For more info, call 1-800-325-5766.

*To be continued next month...*



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**Hook, Line,  
and Sinker**

*The Hook Line and Sinker* is published monthly by Joyce Reese graphic design for New Ulm Area Sport Fishermen. The opinions expressed in this newsletter are solely those of respective writers and not to be construed as the opinion of the NUASF or its members. Send all correspondence and submissions to **New Ulm Area Sport Fishermen, P.O. Box 294, New Ulm, MN 56073.**

**The NUASF Board**  
President - Jason Kuester 507-381-2041; Vice-President - Gary Sprenger 507-359-9358; Secretary - Ross Nelson 507-766-0765; Treasurer - Jen Kuester 507-766-0143; Board Members: Mike Buechner 507-354-2739, Wyman Forbrook 507-420-5828, Mike Stuttmann 507-995-3074.

**NUASF Monthly Meeting** May 25, 2017 Members Present: 30+

### I. Secretary Report

**A.** Motion made by Jim Liebl and seconded by Dave Mecklenberg to except report as read. Passed unanimously.

### II. Treasury Report

**A.** Motion made by Jim Liebl and seconded by Ken Sutherland to except report as read. Passed unanimously.

### III. Old Business

**A.** Membership update

1. 163 Members w/ 29 Due

**B.** Area Lakes and Rivers Report.

**C.** Club House and Grounds Update.

1. Keith Rolloff and Tony Miller said they would do all the mowing this year.
2. Snapper mower is in rough shape. Will need to look into getting a new mower very soon.
3. Jim Hulke sold the old club generator. Donated cash back to the club.
4. Canoe River access is on hold will know if it gets approved by our next meeting.
5. More driveway wash out issues from up above our club grounds. Jason K said he will take care of the problem at his cost. Motion made by Mark Dauer and seconded by Scott Sparlin to have Jason take care the driveway issues. Pass Unanimously.
6. Tony Miller – Looked at the cost of new lawn mowers from Runnings. Andy Renner said his Grandmother has a used X-Mark that is in very good condition and it’s possible she would donate to the club. Tabled till next meeting.

### IV. Other Old Business

**A.** None

### V. New Business

**A.** Stone Award plaque will be presented next month to Wyman Forbrook.

**B.** Fishing 1,2,3 – Dates set June 13, 20, 22

**C.** Kids Fishing Contest – Date set Aug 16th

**D.** Tickets for the Ice Castle fish house will be ready by next meeting.

**E.** Pork Chop feed next meeting in memory of Elmer Epke. Will be eating before the meeting, bring a dish to pass.

### VI. Other New Business

**A.** EE Mecklenberg Scholarship Funds were awarded to the following individuals.

1. Desirae Hertling – NU Public, Claire Dobie – NU Public, Caleb Sandquist – Belvidere N Caleb Berg – Sleepy Eye St Mary’s, Sean Salfer – Sleepy Eye St Mary’s, Emma Jo Elder – GFW, Colton Gemmiller – Sleepy Eye Public, Alexander Lund – NU Public. Additional funds were awarded to past recipients – Briana Burke & Aaron Pietsch.
3. Motion was made by Ken S. & seconded by Jim L. to give to the EE Mecklenberg Scholarship Fund. Passed U.

**B.** Motion was made by Dick Petermann and seconded by Wes Ludewig to give to “Let’s Go Fishing” Passed U.

**C.** June 24-25th Auto Fest – We will donate some club T-Shirts and the use of our popcorn machine this year.

**D.** Tony Miller is gathering all the old club newsletters he has and bring them back out to the club house.

**VII. Adjourn @ 8:45 PM**

Page 3

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