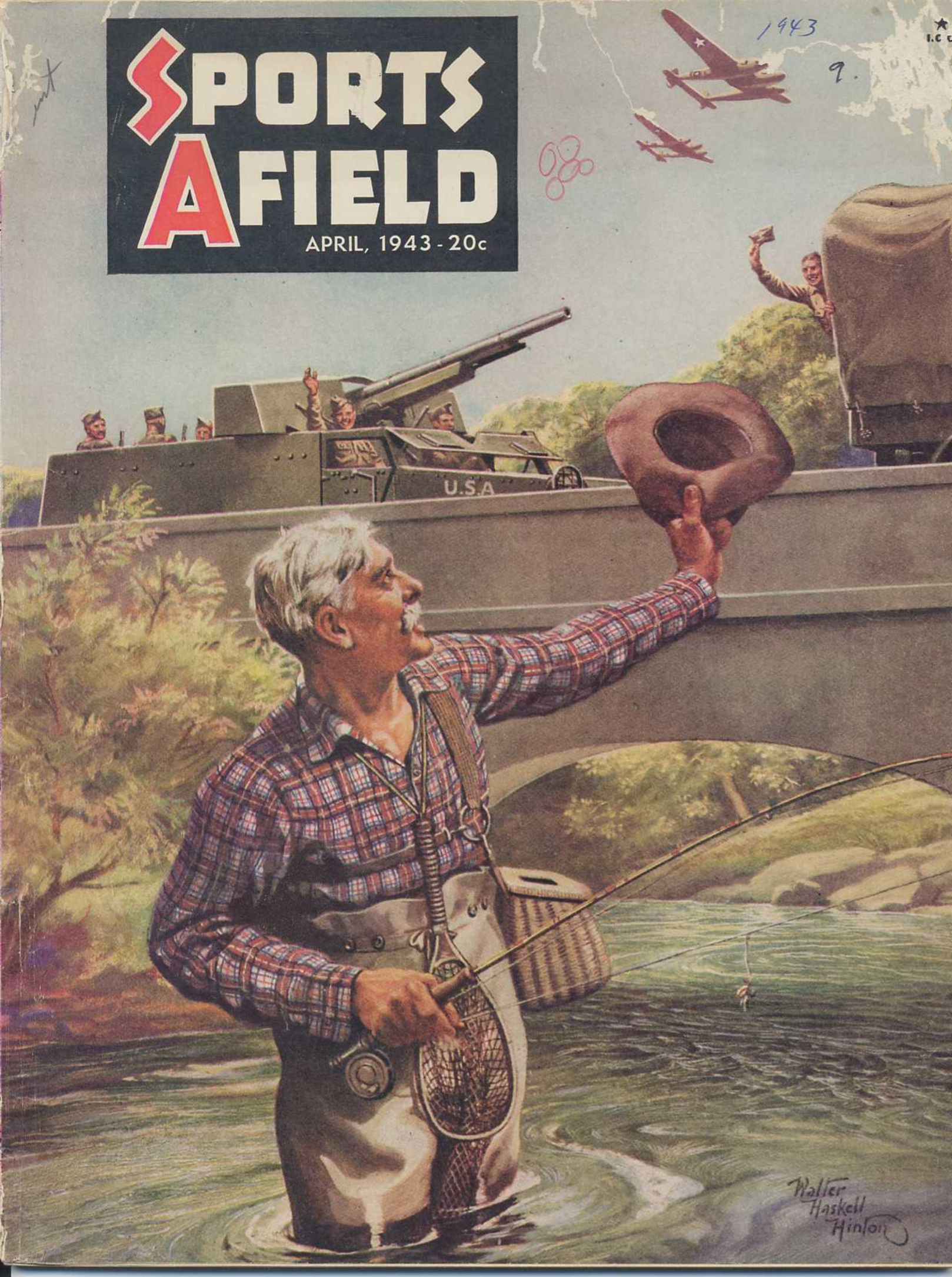


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APRIL, 1943 - 20c



Walter
Haskell
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A WALLEYE BY ANY OTHER NAME

A walleye by any other name would taste as sweet as a mountain trout. Fun on the rod and fine in the pan, he's a popular fish in any language.

By **ROB F. SANDERSON**

NIPIGON BAY was liquid smooth in the northern dusk. The water mirrored softly the evening skies of short Canadian summer. The first lights weakly starred the sleepy village on the distant west shore, and the quiet air carried but faintly the far-away-across-the-water sound of occasional shouts from young Finnish youths welcoming nightfall to hide their nude aquatic antics from passers by and sternly modest old folk.

The smooth surface parted in slender ripples past the bow of our canoe. Water dripped off the paddle blade with each deft stroke powered from the shoulders of Tipperary Fred, who kneeled expertly in the stern.

"Now," said Tipperary Fred. "Any place along here."

"What will we catch?" I queried. That summer evening was but few hours after my first arrival to the Nipigon of fame and legend and I was burning to wet a line.

"Pickerel. There are many pickerel here at night."

Pickerel? I reflected: well, I can catch pickerel at home but this is my first night and I can't be too choosy. Perhaps tomorrow we can go out and catch walleye or trout.

My red and white plug slapped the water. The light line brushed the surface gently as I retrieved.

"You sure there are pickerel way out here in the center of the bay?" I probed, having had all previous pick-

erel luck in other locales by shore-casting.

"Sure. Go 'head."

I cast the other side without success. My third cast lined straight out from the bow. I was retrieving lazily when SOCK! A night raider had grabbed my plug and sounded.

My bamboo throbbed. I feared for my light line. Under my thumb I felt the reel unwind. Tip intuitively paddled ahead and I gained back some of the lost line. Under the boat and away off to one side the fish darted and tugged. Finally I surfaced him and maneuvered him past the stern. The landing net swished and in a moment my opponent was threshing air. Spotting my handy pocket flash on our catch I gasped.

"Pickerel?" I caught my breath. "That's no pickerel. That's a wall-eyed pike if I ever saw one!"

"Him pickerel," insisted Tipperary Fred, much disgruntled at my refusal to accept his identification, and I could hardly squeeze another word out of him all evening. I was elated, because I would much rather have one of Fred's "pickerels" than one of my own brand. Luck continued and I scored with black and white wobblers, slow bright spoons, and a big flanged



Walleyes in canoe country are caught by trolling with a June bug spinner and pork rind. For best results add a trailer hook, as walleyes often strike short. This walleye is good sized, quite a strain on net.



Left—By following fillet method outlined in this article, you'll finish with boneless fillets such as this angler has, and in less time than would be required for usual method.



Walleyes and a northern caught by trolling from a canoe. Although walleyes bite best on cloudy days when water is ruffled, these were taken in bright sunlight in 12 feet of water.

spinner, as well as with the original red and white. By eleven o'clock I had five of the largest fish saved on a stringer and I judged Tipperary was ready to go in as he was tipping the canoe dangerously at times.

NEXT morning when I gave two of the fish to Indians camped nearby, the old buck said, "Thank you for pickee-rel."

I swallowed. Well, if these natives wanted to call a walleye a pickerel, it was all right with me. I wasn't going to be technical about labels when good fishing was at hand, and my resolution to be broadminded about the names used by local ichthy-usiasts has stood me in good stead for this was not the end of many and confusing encounters with the walleyed pike's long list of alias names.

It is to be blessed that appropriate fishing methods for the walleye are not as fickle or as regionally ephemeral as his name. This became evident beyond doubt the following summer when my brother Thomas and I roved the Lake of the Woods country. One evening after a campfire dinner we sizzled the frypan into the lake, put out in our canoe to cast and troll the waters near Snake Narrows with light surface plugs.

In 40 minutes we hooked five fish and landed four; all firm bellied and meaty with white flesh. Then the moon came up round behind the silent pines, and with the white light upon the water the fish seemed to submerge and our luck fell off.

Herewith let me ascribe credit to Lake of the Woods natives for calling a walleye a walleye. The vagaries of fishing confuse me quite amply without having natives change the fishes' names on me everywhere I go; nonetheless it was a relief to find the same methods working with the same success despite change in moniker and locale.

Often since on starry nights have I fished successfully for walleyes on the surface. Shallower reefs near deep cool holes furnish excellent surface fishing, for here the predatory pike-perch come with predatory instincts to the habitat of the lesser fry

which they find to be savory morsels. Daytimes the surface fisherman may get true-blue pickerel, but he won't get Tipperary Fred's brand of pickerel. If you are a fisherman of the sun-peeled nose variety, sample this night fishing. Surfacing walleyes take slowly moving baits with avidity.

SEVERAL years later I was fishing the White River in Arkansas. The beautiful White heads in pure limestone country and winds clear waters through wooded hill country and sheer rock gorges.

"Caught any good jack-salmon, mister?" I was accosted, my first morning out.

"Why, uh, don't guess I have," I replied, somewhat bewildered by his nomenclature. "Er . . . what is a jack-salmon?"

"Jack-salmon?" My acquaintance was taken aback. "Why, them's the best fishing fish that man ever et outa this here whole river. Set here in my boat and I'll take you up above Plum Creek. They's a good deep hole off a lime bluff there."

Under Plum Bluff we paused. "A bit bright today, but she may cloud up more afore long. Jack-salmon bites best at night or on a dark clouded day," my informant explained.

We waited with a couple of hooked minnows almost on bottom. By lowering my rod tip I felt slack line as my sinker touched. The depth was at least 15 feet. The southeast wind blew the clouds in thicker and ruffled the water. I felt a nibble. I jerked to set the hook.

"Nope, that hain't the way," corrected the riverman. "Wait until they's got the bait good. Give 'em a good chaw. Then (Continued on page 52)



If you fish for fillets as well as fun, use a landing net—you won't lose one lightly hooked.

The picture below shows how walleyes look when being filleted. Note how the skin is loosened from the flesh, both sides, after the double incision along the backbone. The fillets can then be easily cut off and the rest of the carcass discarded in one piece.



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well when drifting but is also successful when straight bottom fishing in fair to strong currents.

The off bottom rig is very awkward to handle. Rather than attempt to cast it, I always swing or sling it clear of the boat. But whether you sling or drop it overboard you should grasp the hook of the upper leader with one hand while you manage the rod with the other. Failure to do this can result in a beautiful tangle. Manage to get it overboard so the bottom rig and sinker strike the water before the upper leader has a chance to get twisted around the line. It's not at all difficult.

And how successful! You fellows who go fishing in September and October, especially off-shore drifting, shouldn't overlook its possibilities. It works just as well in spring and all through the summer; whenever the weaks or croakers are around.

Croakers. These are the poor man's fish, always present and always willing to be caught. You can't miss them whether fishing for kings, flounders, weaks or what-have-you. Their only trouble is that while firmer fleshed than weakfish they have little flavor. They're edible, in a tasteless sort of way, and readily digestible and they fight like blazes but both you and the croaker will be happier if you toss him overboard. Large croakers are awful suckers for whole squid heads.

Kingfish and flounders. I'm lumping them together because at the moment I am influenced by epicurean ideals. Both are delicious and neither are particularly hard to catch . . . once you learn the ropes. A No. 6 hook will do for either and the size is important because both fish have small mouths.

Kings are vigorous, energetic biters. One or two nervous little jerks, usually two, you hold tight for a second then strike—and the battle is on, with darn little chance for the kingie, for game as he is he seldom weighs more than two or three pounds, and his average is less. It's an unequal battle and this delectable little sunnavigun is equal to mountain trout served hot, equal to crab served cold. What chance has he? Nobody ever throws a kingfish back.

Best baits are small pieces of shedder, bloodworm and mossbunker, but will also take squid, clam and shrimp.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

A Walleye by Any Other Name

(Continued from page 31)

hook 'em."

My customer returned in a few minutes and I patiently heeded this recent advice. Then I set the hook. I felt the savage tug as he rushed out toward stream center. Line rolled off the reel. My rod bent into a supple arch. Gradually the reel regained line.

"These jack-salmon sure can fight!" I exclaimed from between clenched teeth. "Don't tangle the anchor rope," the warning came in the nick of time. Though I checked the rush partially, the fish managed to get under the boat. I handed the rod back to my nimble friend to pass expertly over the stern. Soon the fighting shadow appeared and before he had time to make off again the riverman swung him into the boat where the fish shook

Filet of sole! Flounders to you and me. Winter flounders if they're small, probably summer flounders if they're large or served in cut portions. Golly! You can hardly call them fish, they're that good. The winter flounder is a hard hitting, hard fighting little cuss, affording a riot of fun to the fisherman who is hardy enough to venture out into the sweeping winds of late winter and early spring. None but a sissy can resist the first experience. Once a winter flounder fisherman, always a winter flounder fisherman. To attract these fish use a long pole or a heavy sinker to stir the mud up from the bottom. It works!

The summer flounder or fluke is something else again. This guy is just about as toothsome as his smaller cousin, but somehow or other he has more brains. He is, I believe, the smartest fish that swims. He can be as wicked and slashing as a barracuda, but generally he's sly as a fox. He's the greatest bait stealer of them all. Only the fellow who knows how to bump bottom with his sinker, two to four times per minute, does very well against Mr. Fluke.

As to bait, either of the flounders will take anything, provided it's fresh: shedder crabs, bloodworms, clam, shrimp, squid and mossbunker, but minnows and especially *spearing*—the secret is out!—are the *piece de resistance* for fluke. *Spearing*, thank goodness, can be bought only from the fellows who operate the bait boats which huckster their wares and visit you out on the bay. They're expensive, thank goodness, and you might not buy any, thank goodness, because you will have plenty of other baits bought ashore just in case the bait boat should fail to come along.

Candor compels the parting admission that when the fish are *really* hitting one bait is as good as another. Frozen shrimp, especially the tails, are as good as shedder or spearing. And that goes for weaks, kings and croakers as well as for flounders.

* * *

In Peter Schwab's "Sporty Salt Water Rods" in *Sports Afield's* 1943 Fishing Annual, now on the newsstands, he discusses surf-fishing rods and methods. That article teams well with "Salt Water Bottom Fishing."—Editors.

the hook and flopped wildly. I gaped with both plates showing widely. It was . . .

You guessed right. A walleyed pike! "Derned nice jack-salmon," appraised the sage of the Ozarks. "Take a good look." Then, as an afterthought, he cornered me out of his eye and said, "Fer a fellow who ain't done much fishing, you done all right." I did not take issue.

By now I am well accustomed to local tobacco-chewers switching names on me as fast they can shift their chaw. Should someone come by and comment on my walleye string with, "Nice string of blue snappers," I would simply nod in assent without so much as slipping my lower plate.

This complacency I arrived at only after the terms "blue pike," "glass-eye," "pike-

perch," and even "yellow pike" had been digested without qualm as bona fide local appellations.

Why I should be so fond of a fish that has tried to confuse me so, I'm sure I don't know, as I am a frank and impatient man. Reflection hints that I should have tired of his game long ago were it not for his combination of vigorous rod action and firm sweet meat. On canoeing ventures into the land of Northern Lights and stark green pines I have filleted many tens of pounds of his flaky white meat, and the utilitarian function of catching my supper has never dulled the anticipation or actual sport of combat.

THE country over, I suspect that more walleyes are caught on minnows than in any other fashion. Still fishing, drifting, and slow minnow trolling with a small spinner have filled thousands of frypans with thick fillets. One summer on Lac la Croix, before that fair lake harbored resort accommodations, on our last day when we were fishing to take out, three of us caught 30 good sized walleyes in 42 minutes. Unfortunately this spot was near a now well travelled portage and years later when Thomas and I returned we hooked not a single fish on those premises.

Hellgrammites, crawfish, frogs; all make good walleye appetizers. Fishing in a deep water hole is best in summer as here they congregate on a hard, cool bottom. A mixed rock-clay bottom is best. As a lad I found walleye water on my home river by walking along the stream until I came to where the river bent into a rocky hill. Here the bottom was glacial clay and rocks. Today I often let the anchor down in strange waters, gouge a piece of bottom for sample, staying on only if the sample is favorable.

In early summer before waters warm, walleyes are dispersed singly or in small groups. At these seasons trolling is favorable as it covers more water. Some of the best luck I ever experienced was in the west Temagami country. Easily reached waters didn't seem to produce, so we ran several portages back into Long Tom Lake and trolled a narrows. By the time shadows warned us off the lake we had 30 fine fish, 10 apiece, culled from many more. Similar success I recall in David's Lake, Ontario, trolling red and white wobblers in cloudy daylight off deadhead logs southeast of Tates Island. Any bright, deep-running lure is good, if it has a slow action. A couple of sinkers judiciously spaced will make it work just off the bottom.

A sure-catch bait, compact as convenient for use on canoe trips, is a June bug spinner and pork rind. This bait simulates a minnow and is inestimably more convenient than filtering the lake with a minnow-net to capture a few odd runty shiners. I add a trail hook behind the regular 3/0 spinner hook as walleyes are slow biters and June bugs often cause short strikes. This outfit runs deep without trouble, operates smoothly at slow speeds, and proves extremely suitable for walleyes.

Much of my fastest fishing I have sampled at the foot of swift rivers or falls feeding into lakes. Fish here are exceptionally active and sweet meated.

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One day south of James Bay when our recent lack of success was embarrassing our digestions, we set out about mid-afternoon for a deep hole at the base of a swift cascade which spilled into the next lake, about 11 miles distant.

We cast light colored surface plugs from the canoe. Between six-thirty and nine o'clock we caught forty-odd walleyes and assorted pike and bass. While we

COMING
**Northernmost Muskies
 In the United States**

A Lake of the Woods Story
 By HERB MUELLER

saved but several for the larder, I have reason to believe that very few if any were recatches. Well I remember that northern evening. Three otter swam up to our canoe at dusk, scenting our fish. And after dark as we fished below the hushed sound of falling water I caught a treble hook just above my right eyelid.

Inasmuch as walleyes are enthusiastic biters, it is well their numbers are quickly replaced. Spawning is in early spring on hard-bottomed shoal water. By the end of the first year the little fellows often measure from nine inches to a foot long, with favorable growing conditions. Its habits are adapted to varied types of waters. In the northern ranges, extending well into Canada, walleyes are lake fish principally; while in the southern range as far south as Alabama and Georgia, it is known as a stream fish.

When your stringer gets a comfortable heft, a sharp knife will soon extract two fillets per fish. Hold the fish rightside up on a board. Cut vertical slits on each side of the backbone, down to the ribs, all the way from neck to tail. Intersect these by a right angle cut on each side behind the gill cover. Once loosened the skin peels off like friction tape, being easily freed with the thumbs. When skins on both sides are freed, slice down along the ribs from the backbone, following down until the fillet is severed from the ribs. The carcass is still intact, neither skin nor entrails being separated from the body, and the meaty fillets are simply lifted out. A sharp slender knife in a practised hand will provide two fillets in a few seconds.

For a hard-pulling, easy-eating fish, hook me a walleye every time. Those sweet, white boneless fillets are an epicurean delight my memory cannot dismiss. Blue pike, jacksalmon, pike-perch, yellow pike or glass eye, they all taste and fight the same.

We will confess, though, we were taken a bit unawares when a seedy individual passed by, lifted up our string of jacksalmon and commented, "Nice river trout, mister."

We give up on that one!

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