

February 01, 2010
Hayward Lakes Area Outdoor Report
Steve Suman

Winter activities are going full force in the north woods. Ice fishing and snowmobiling conditions are excellent, and the calendar is packed with outstanding events for both participants and spectators.

Cable Rod and Gun Club's 20th annual ice fishing contest on Lake Namakagon is this Saturday, February 6. The Loon Saloon on Hwy D is contest headquarters. The entry fee is \$5. Contest hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., though anglers can start fishing at 8 a.m. There are raffles, door prizes, and food and beverages will be available. Cash prizes are awarded for the biggest walleye, northern, crappie, bluegill, and perch, and a special cash raffle will pay out \$1500. For more information, visit www.cablerodandgunclub.com or call (715) 798-4459.

Walleyes for Northwest Wisconsin's 14th annual Family Ice Fishing Event on Lac Courte Oreilles is Saturday Feb. 13. Event buttons (adults \$5; youth 13-17 \$1) are available at Pastika's, Hayward Bait, Hayward Power Sports, Outdoor Creations, Stone Lake Bait, AAA Sports in Spooner, and Sportsman's Headquarters in Minong. Children 12 years of age and younger get free admission and fishing tackle thanks to Slumberland's sponsorship. Raffle tickets (thousands of dollars in prizes) cost \$1/each or six/\$5, and winners need not be present. For information, visit www.wfnw.org or call Hayward Bait (715) 634-2921.

The 37th annual American Birkebeiner is February 25-28. This is America's largest cross-country ski race, attracting more than 9,000 cross-country skiers from around the world. For information, visit American Birkebeiner or call (715) 634-5025.

The Hayward 300 Snocross National is March 5-7 at LCO Casino Lodge and Convention Center. The intent is to make this the largest "ride-to" event in the United States. With more than 600 miles of groomed trails, Sawyer County and the surrounding area is known for some of the best snowmobiling in the country, and the Sawyer County Snowmobile and ATV Alliance is the worlds largest single owner of grooming equipment. For ticket information, visit Hayward 300 ISOC Snocross Nationals or call (715) 634-8662.

Virgin Timber Resort reports snowmobile trail conditions are good to excellent and the scenery is incredible, but cautions branches holding heavy snow are hanging over the trails in some areas. Lakewoods reports trails are groomed and in wonderful riding condition. Hayward Power Sports trail report says the trails are providing great riding.

Groomers have compacted the snow into a hard base that should withstand any warm-ups for the remainder of the season. The Cable Area Snowmobile Trail Report says the entire trail system is in excellent condition and groomers will continue to groom. Slushy spots on Lake Namakagon are now frozen, the stick trail is smooth, and the trails are groomed and in terrific shape, according to the Namakagon Trails Report.

Walleye:

Walleye fishing is fair (typical for this time of year), but there is a good bite in very early morning and in late afternoon until after dark. The bite windows are short, however, and you have to be there when they are open. Concentrate on water 8-30 feet or deeper (8-12 feet during low light conditions) on mid-lake humps and points. Walleye suckers and shiners on tip-ups, and jigging spoons tipped with fatheads or shiners, continue to the baits of choice.

Northern:

Northern pike are providing some good, though somewhat inconsistent action, with most anglers having their best success in late afternoon. Target weeds in 4-18 feet of water, and a bit deeper for bigger pike. Favored baits continue to be northern suckers and shiners on tip-ups, and shiners on jigs.

Crappie:

You might have to keep on the move to find feeding crappies, but anglers are finding some good bites at various times, especially in late afternoon. Depths (here's the kicker) range from 5-40 feet. Fish can be suspended over deeper water (check the entire water column) but will also be found in and over weeds. The good news is crappie minnows, rosy reds, waxies, spikes, and plastics are all catching fish. If action is slow, try downsizing line and equipment. Plastics can be the most effective bait on days with tough bites.

Bluegill:

Bluegill action is inconsistent, but anglers are making good catches on some days. Fish shallower weeds in 4-20 feet of water (bigger 'gills are deeper) with waxies, spikes, and plastics on plain hooks, teardrops, or small jigs.

Perch:

Perch fishing is picking up and on some lakes is the best panfish action. Crappie minnows, walleye suckers, fatheads, rosy reds, sliver wigglers, waxies, spikes, and plastics will all work for perch. Depths vary from 15-30 (more or less) and work your baits on soft bottoms where the perch are feeding.

Upcoming Events

Jan. 31: Seasons Closed: Squirrel; Ruffed grouse (Zone A.)

Feb. 6: Cable Rod & Gun Club ice fishing tourney - Loon Saloon, Lake Namakagon (715-798-4459.)

Feb. 13: WFNW ice fishing event on Lac Courte Oreilles.

Feb. 13: 1st Annual Radar Run - Nelson Lake Landing (715-634-4175.)

Feb. 13: Lake Winnebago Sturgeon Spearing Season opens.

Feb. 15: Seasons Close: Coyote trapping; Raccoon trapping/hunting; Red and gray fox gun/trapping.

Feb. 25-28: American Birkebeiner (715-634-5025.)

Feb. 28: Seasons Close: Cottontail rabbit; Mink trapping.

March 6-7: Hayward 300 Snocross National

April 10-11: Youth spring turkey hunt.

April 14-May 23: Spring turkey season.