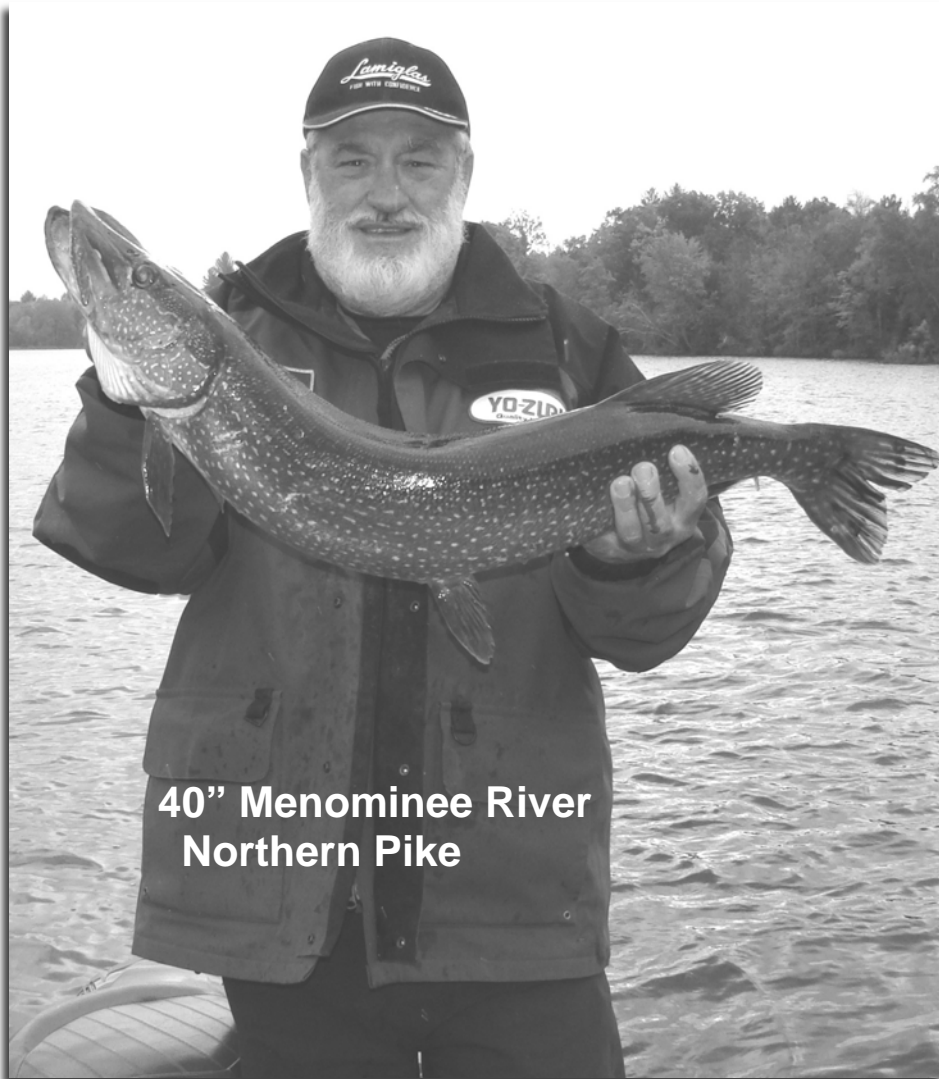


Northwoods Outdoors



Get Ready For Spring !



**40" Menominee River
Northern Pike**

2009 was an excellent year on the water. The cooler than normal weather turned out to be very conducive to productive fishing. Although I have had years when I've caught more fish and years when big fish seemed to pop up almost everywhere, 2009 had the perfect balance. My clients caught quality fish each time we hit the water. Over the years I have come to the conclusion that the average angler would rather catch a good number of quality fish as opposed to lots of small fish or one or two big fish.

Don't get me wrong, fishing last year was far from easy. The cold spring put the ecosystem way behind normal and things just were just not like they should have been. Spawning was erratic, and forage was at a premium. It was one of those years when you had to forget about last year and even what had happened the day before. You had to approach each day with an open mind and go with the flow. These are the tricks of the trade that take years to refine.

While much of my summer, fall and late spring is in pursuit of big

smallmouth bass, in late April and early May I spend considerable time chasing walleye, crappie and perch. Last May was one of the best years for walleye fishing on High Falls Flowage I have seen in years. Here again, we did not catch large numbers of walleyes but the quality was excellent. Each time I went on the water I was able to catch walleyes in the 17-20 inch class. The good news was that for each walleye over the legal 15-inch mark I caught 3 fish just under 15-inches. This means excellent walleye fishing in the future.

Most of the May walleyes were caught in 15 to 20 feet of water, holding tight to rock points and humps. The walleye were holding so tightly to the structure that they were tough to pick up with a locator. High Falls Flowage walleyes always hold tight to the bottom, but the continues cold fronts that were common last May pushed them even tighter to cover. A 1/8 ounce chartreuse lead head jig tipped with a large fathead minnow or a leech was the bait of choice. The trick was to cast the jig as

slowly as possible crawling the jig along the bottom. If you moved your jig too fast, guess what, no walleyes. Prime time to fish walleyes on High Falls Flowage is the first three weeks of May.

Last spring was also excellent on the upper Menominee River. While the Lower Menominee River and the bay of Green Bay offer World Class Walleye Fishing, I just cannot handle fishing in a crowd. I prefer to head north on the river and enjoy peace and quiet. You might have to fish a little harder and you might not catch a trophy walleye, but you will catch walleyes.

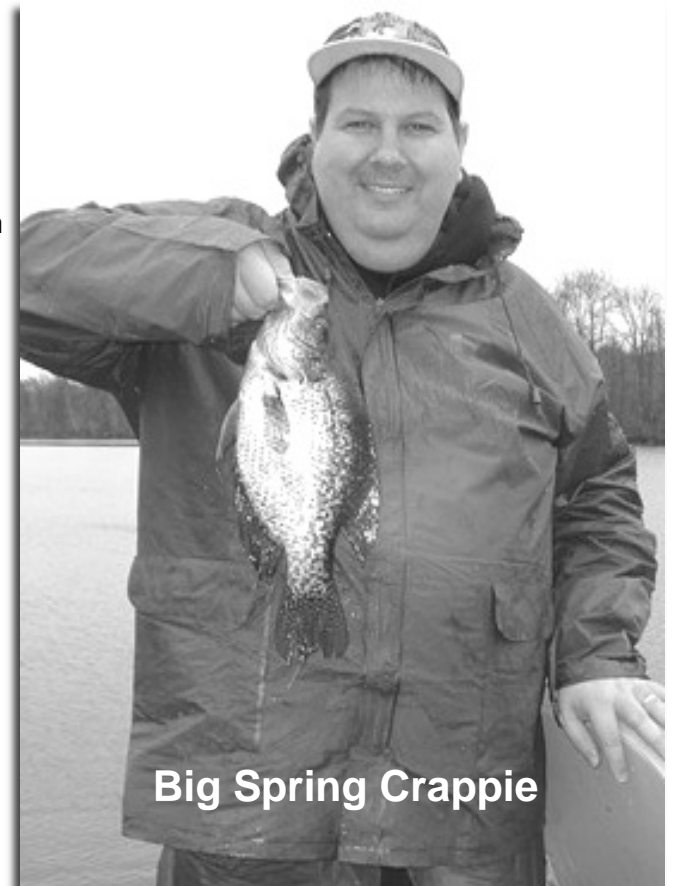
The typical spring pattern is to fish below one of the many dams on the Menominee River. With only a moderate amount of water flowing through the dam and minimal current, it was easy to get your presentation down to the walleyes. Slipping back and forth over a school of walleyes and vertical jigging, with a jig and minnow or jig and plastic trailer, was a steady walleye catcher.

Besides catching walleyes below the dams, secondary areas like creek channels, sloughs and current breaks were even more productive. Walleyes would spawn on the edge of the creek channels and sloughs and remain in the area to feed on a variety of baitfish. Along with the walleyes we were catching big perch and crappie. One day we caught several jumbo perch and crappies up to 14 inches on 1/16 ounce jigs tipped with fathead minnows. If the walleyes were not relating to the sloughs or creek channels they were holding tight to the first current break downstream from those areas.

The best time to get into the fantastic perch and crappie action on the Menominee River is the last two weeks of April and the first two weeks of May. After ice out I concentrate my efforts in the sloughs. These sloughs have a muck bottom and are loaded with downed trees and stumps which cause the water to warm very rapidly. Perch move into the sloughs under the ice and are very aggressive at ice out. Crappie move into the shallows long before spawning to avoid the current and they also are very aggressive. On occasion you can also catch a few scattered bluegills.

Once the season opens on May 1st you can also fish the sloughs for northern pike. Last May was also excellent for northern pike on the Menominee River. This is one of my best kept secrets so I won't reveal my prime fishing holes. However, during the first two weeks of May, large pike roam the sloughs and creek channels gorging themselves on perch, crappies and walleyes. This is as good a time as any to catch a big Menominee River Pike.

Now is the time to get ready for next spring. You can spend a day on the river and catch a combination of walleye, perch and crappie. If you are after northern pike, pencil in a day during the first two weeks of May. For more information or to book a trip go to, BigSmallmouthBass.com or call (715) 854-2055.



Big Spring Crappie