

February 13, 1935

REPORT 271

CREEL CENSUS FOR WINTER OF 1933-34

The five lakes on which this report is based are: Bear Lake, Otsego County; Clear Lake, Ogemaw County; Budd Lake, Clare County; and Muscallonge Lake and Clear Lake, Montmorency County.

Creel census work in all five lakes was conducted by M.E.C.W. camps in the vicinity of the lakes. These particular lakes were chosen because of proximity to one or the other of the camps. In all cases the camps were either located on the lakes or were within easy walking distance.

It was evident, before the creel census began, that winter fishing on these lakes was not heavy. It was considered desirable, nevertheless, to have a creel census conducted to substantiate reports that winter fishing was meager and to compare fishing on these lakes with fishing on Fife Lake and Hess Lake, where ice-fishing was carried on to a much greater extent.

One man each day was able to conduct the census on each lake. Consequently the costs of the census were not large.

The men in charge were reminded of the fact that the census, to be of value, needed to be carried out in a thorough and careful manner and that their work was of value even if they found very few fishermen using the lakes. It is significant to know definitely that a lake is not being fished in winter.

The data obtained in all five cases are considered reliable. Few if any fishermen escaped the attention of the census takers. The brief discussion below, on each lake, shows clearly that winter fishing in all instances was too meager to noticeably influence summer fishing on these lakes.

The census covers a period from mid-December 1933, to early April, 1934. This included all, or virtually all, of the ice fishing period.

Areas (except for Bear Lake) were taken from the "Michigan Lakes and Streams Directory" and must be regarded as approximate rather than exact.

Bear Lake (Otsego County)

Bear Lake, with an area of about 350 acres, is located in the eastern part of the county southeast of Johannesburg. The lake was accessible during the entire winter. Camp Johannesburg, located on the shore of Bear Lake, conducted the census. The lake contains perch and bluegill, but is reported to have no northern pike.

Statistics of census: Bear Lake was fished by one man in December and by five in January. It was not fished during February and March. The six men fished with one line each for a total of 9 hours. They caught 2 fish, both undersized perch which were returned to the lake. All six men were enrolled at Camp Johannesburg. Had the camp not been located here there would have been no fishing. No fish were removed from the lake.

Clear Lake (Ogemaw County)

Clear Lake, located in the Ogemaw State Forest, has an area of 380 acres, has extensive resort development, and contains both perch and northern pike. It was accessible during the entire winter. The census was conducted by Camp Ogemaw.

Statistics of census:

	<u>Line fishing</u>	<u>Spearing</u>	<u>Total or average.</u>
Fisherman days	20	43	63
Number of lines	30	...	30
Average number of lines	1.5	...	1.5
Hours fished	81.75	155.75	237.5
Hours per fisherman	4.1	3.6	3.8
Fish caught	98	10	108
Fish per hour	1.2	.06	.45
Fish per fisherman	4.9	.2	1.7

Two species were taken: perch by line fishing and northern pike by spearing. Ninety-seven of the perch averaged 8 inches while one was 14 inches long. The 10 northern pike had an average length of 26.2 inches.

Only a half dozen individuals fished the lake during the winter and of these only two, a man and his wife, fished it consistently.

Four undersized perch, taken by line and returned to the lake were not included in the above calculations.

Budd Lake (Clare County)

Budd Lake is located in the village of Harrison, on U.S. 27, has extensive resort development and is fished heavily during the summer. It has an area of 150 acres. Budd Lake was accessible during the entire winter. It contains perch and bluegills but, according to local residents, it has no northern pike. The census was conducted by Camp Harrison.

Not a single fisherman was seen by the creel census takers.

Muscallonge Lake (Montmorency County)

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Muscallonge Lake has an area of 90 acres, has slight resort development, and contains both perch and northern pike. It was accessible during most of the winter. Census on this lake and on the following one was conducted by Presque Isle Camp. Both this lake and Clear Lake are in the Presque Isle State Forest.

Statistics of census:

	<u>Line fishing</u>	<u>Spearing</u>	<u>Total or average.</u>
Fisherman days	42	5	47
Number of lines	109	...	109
Average number of lines	2.2	...	2.2
Hours per fisherman	4.9	3.6	4.7
Hours fished	205	18	223
Fish caught	38	3	41
Fish per hour	.19	.17	.18
Fish per fisherman	.9	.6	.9

Twenty-eight perch (average length 7.5 inches) and 10 northern pike (average length 19.8 inches) were taken by line fishing. Two northern pike (average length 23 inches) and one 17 inch sucker were taken by spearing.

Clear Lake (Montmorency County)

Clear Lake has an area of 160 acres, has slight resort development, contains perch but not northern pike. It was accessible during the entire winter.

Statistics of census: Fishing was all line fishing. Bait was largely pieces of beef. A total of 28 fishermen fished with a total of 45 lines for a total of 113 hours. They took 164 perch of an average size of 7.4 inches and caught and returned 74 undersized perch. One twenty inch brown trout was also taken. An average of 6 fish per fisherman were taken at the average rate of about 1.5 fish per hour. The undersized fish are not included in these figures.

Conclusions on Winter Fishing

Winter fishing has been discussed, pro and con, for a long time but actual facts have, in the past, been few. It is evident that winter fishing probably provided very little revenue, for the localities where this fishing goes on, compared with summer fishing. Should winter fishing seriously influence summer fishing, in an adverse way, it would probably reduce the extent of tourist and resort trade in some areas. The census indicates plainly that on the seven lakes (Hess and Fife included), all located near or north of Town Line 12, for which creel census data are available, fishing during the winter of 1933 to 1934 was too meager to noticeably affect the catch the following summer. This applies for both line fishing and spearing.

Whether or not winter fishing on the seven lakes was a fair example of winter fishing on lakes in general and for winters in general cannot be determined. It is believed, however, that to date those lakes on which winter fishing creates a serious problem are decidedly in a minority, and are therefore exceptional cases. Fish shanties, or men standing on the ice, are conspicuous and the presence of a number of shanties, or

a number of line fishermen might give the impression that the fish supply is being greatly reduced. Actual figures have, for the seven lakes mentioned, failed to indicate that there has been any serious reduction in the fish population by the ice fishermen.

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