

INSTITUTE FOR FISHERIES RESEARCH
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CREEL CENSUS ON OTSEGO LAKE, WINTER OF 1934-35

The creel census on Otsego Lake did not cover the entire winter fishing period, nor did it cover all fishing for the two months, January and February, during which the census was taken. Otsego Lake is a large one and is in a region of unusually cold winter weather; obviously a complete census could have been obtained only with difficulty and only with a relatively large crew.

There has been considerable controversy between local residents and resorters regarding the winter fishing on Otsego Lake. Although records of the total winter fishing are not available, enough data are available to give a fair indication of the winter fishing on this lake.

The creel census data were obtained from two sources: some were collected by Conservation officer Thomas Marlatt, others by the Otsego Lake side-camp of Camp Hartwick Pines.

The data do not represent a full day's fishing; the census generally began at about daylight and ended at about dark; on the average, the fishermen were contacted when they had half completed their day's fishing. The percentage of fishermen contacted cannot be estimated; it is obvious, however, that fishing on Otsego Lake was relatively intensive.

Data obtained by Officer Marlatt

Mr. Marlatt contacted 123 fishermen. These had fished for a total of 575 hours or an average of 4.7 hours. They had caught 190 fish, all northern pike, at the average rate of one fish per 3 hours of fishing (.33 per hour). The fish

had an average length of 20.3 inches. Officer Marlatt's data indicate better fishing and larger average fish than the data collected by the camp. It is probable that he visited the lake on days when fishing was better than average.

Data obtained by Camp Hartwick Pines

The C.C.C. men contacted 504 fishermen. These had fished for a total of 2,508.75 hours and had caught a total of 676 fish at an average rate of .27 fish per hour. The fish had an average length of 18.6 inches. Three of the fishermen line-fished as well as speared. The lines produced one pike in a total of 6 1/2 hours.

General Discussion

1. Only one species of fish, northern pike, was taken.
2. Over 99% of the fishing was with spear; all of those contacted used spears, 3 used lines and spears.
3. The average fishing day on Otsego Lake was about 8 or 9 hours, much longer than the average for winter fishing.
4. The fish had a small average size. A report previously submitted indicates that the northern pike in Otsego Lake have a relatively fast growth rate, that there is no evidence of stunted growth. It must be assumed that the fish taken were relatively young. Many of them may not have had an opportunity to spawn even once.
5. Although the sheets fail to indicate the residence of the fishermen, personal observation by the writer has indicated that almost all of the fishermen are from Gaylord or from the immediate vicinity of the lake. The winter fishing obviously provides very little revenue to the merchants and others financially interested in the lake while the summer fishing attracts many non-resident fishermen to the vicinity. The lake has extensive resort development, together with several public parks and is undoubtedly of considerable economic importance

to Otsego County.

6. Each winter fisherman removes from the lake, on the average, between 2 and 3 northern pike. There are a relatively large number of winter fishermen. It must be concluded that winter fishing on this lake affects the summer fishing. If summer fishing is primarily for northern pike, winter fishing affects the summer fishing adversely; if pike are relatively undesirable to the summer fisherman the winter fishing probably has a desirable effect on the summer fishing.

Because of the relatively large number of fish taken in winter and because of their small average size, it appears that further restrictions might well be placed on the winter fishing unless there is reason to believe that northern pike are not desired by the average summer fisherman.

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