

Area waters yield 20 percent of trophies



Record-Eagle/Gordon Charles

By GORDON CHARLES
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If it's big, trophy fish you want to catch, the Grand Traverse region and nearby areas are hard to beat. That is the conclusion to be drawn from the official list of Master Angler Awards made by the Department of Natural Resources for fish caught in 1986.

Walleyes led all entries, with 120 gaining official recognition. Of these, none was in the top five but 19 were landed locally, mostly from Manistee Lake or the Manistee River and one from Lake Bellaire. Fish in this category ranged from 13 pounds, 8 ounces, down to an even 9 pounds.

Second most popular was the yellow perch division with 56 entries, weighing from 2 pounds, 7 ounces on down to 1 pound, 12 ounces. Three came from Grand Traverse Bay, including a 2-pound, 5-ounce caught March 1, 1986 by John Semeyn of Traverse City and good enough for second place. Fourth place finisher was a 2-pound, 1-ounce perch from Portage Lake by Jeff Good of Illinois. Greg Bielski of Williamsburg and Richard Vandepels of Traverse City also had qualifying perch.

Largemouth bass was the third most popular fish with 52 entries, none from northwestern Lower Michigan. The buck-elmouths ranged from 10 pounds, 6 ounces down to 6 pounds, 8 ounces, with most coming from southern Michigan.

Lake trout attracted 49 entries for fourth place. Most were from Lake Superior, although there were eight award winners from Lake Michigan off Benzie and Manistee counties plus one from Crystal Lake and another from Torch Lake. The top Lake Superior laker scaled 30 pounds, ½ ounce while the lowest qualifier weighed 18 pounds, 2 ounces.

Fifth spot for entries, surprising enough, was for channel catfish with 47. Two, weighing 17-3 and 16-3, came from Elk Lake and were caught by Cliff Boyd of Traverse City. One was landed from Lake Michigan off Benzie County while the Manistee River and Manistee Lake accounted for three more. Top cat weighed 21-14 with the smallest 8-1.

Northern pike had 42 entries, good for sixth place in awards. Portage Lake yielded one to Eric Sullivan of Manistee with Candy Grossnickle of Kaleva taking another from the same lake. Their fish scaled 21-3 and 19-11, respectively. A 19-pounder came from Manistee Lake by Dave Szolow of Westland. Most of the really big pike were caught in the Upper Peninsula with a 28-pounder topping the list. The smallest qualifier was 18 pounds from a lake in Wayne County.

Steelhead or rainbow trout had 41 entries, good for seventh spot. Of these 23, or over half, came from northwestern Lower Michigan. The majority were caught from Lake Michigan by trollers off Benzie or Manistee counties, with the bulk landed by visiting anglers. St. Joseph charter captain

Skip Stafford caught a 23-pound, 15-ounce steelie off Berrien County to take first place in the awards. The smallest trout ranged down to 16 pounds.

Tying for seventh was the black crappie division with 41 entries running from 3 pounds, 3 ounces to 1-12. Lake Cadillac yielded one of 1-12½ to visitor Larry King of Wurtsmith Air Force Base for the only qualifier in this area.

Bluegills were eighth with 38 entries and area waters did much better, capturing 19 spots, including second, third and fourth places in the awards. Long Lake in Grand Traverse County and Lake Mitchell were the hot spots for big bluegills. The biggest scaled 2-1.44 with the smallest award winner only 1-0. Most were caught by visiting fishermen.

Smallmouth bass, ninth spot, had 37 entries. Of these, second, third and fifth-place award winners came from local waters. Intermediate Lake yielded one of 6 pounds, 7½ ounces for Dale DeKraaker of Holland while Scott Jason of Flint caught one 6-6 from Crystal Lake. Paula Milbert of Traverse City got one 6-1 from the Boardman River. Other smallmouth trophies came from Elk River, Platte Lake, Grand Traverse Bay and other parts of Lake Michigan, plus Torch, Benway and Chain-of-Lakes, Arcadia Lake and Lake Mitchell. Bass were topped by one 6-14 from Lake of the Clouds in the Porcupine Mountains and ran on down to ones of 5-0.

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Walleyes are becoming one of Michigan's top trophy fish. Last year saw 120 Master Angler Awards given for fish heavy enough to qualify.

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