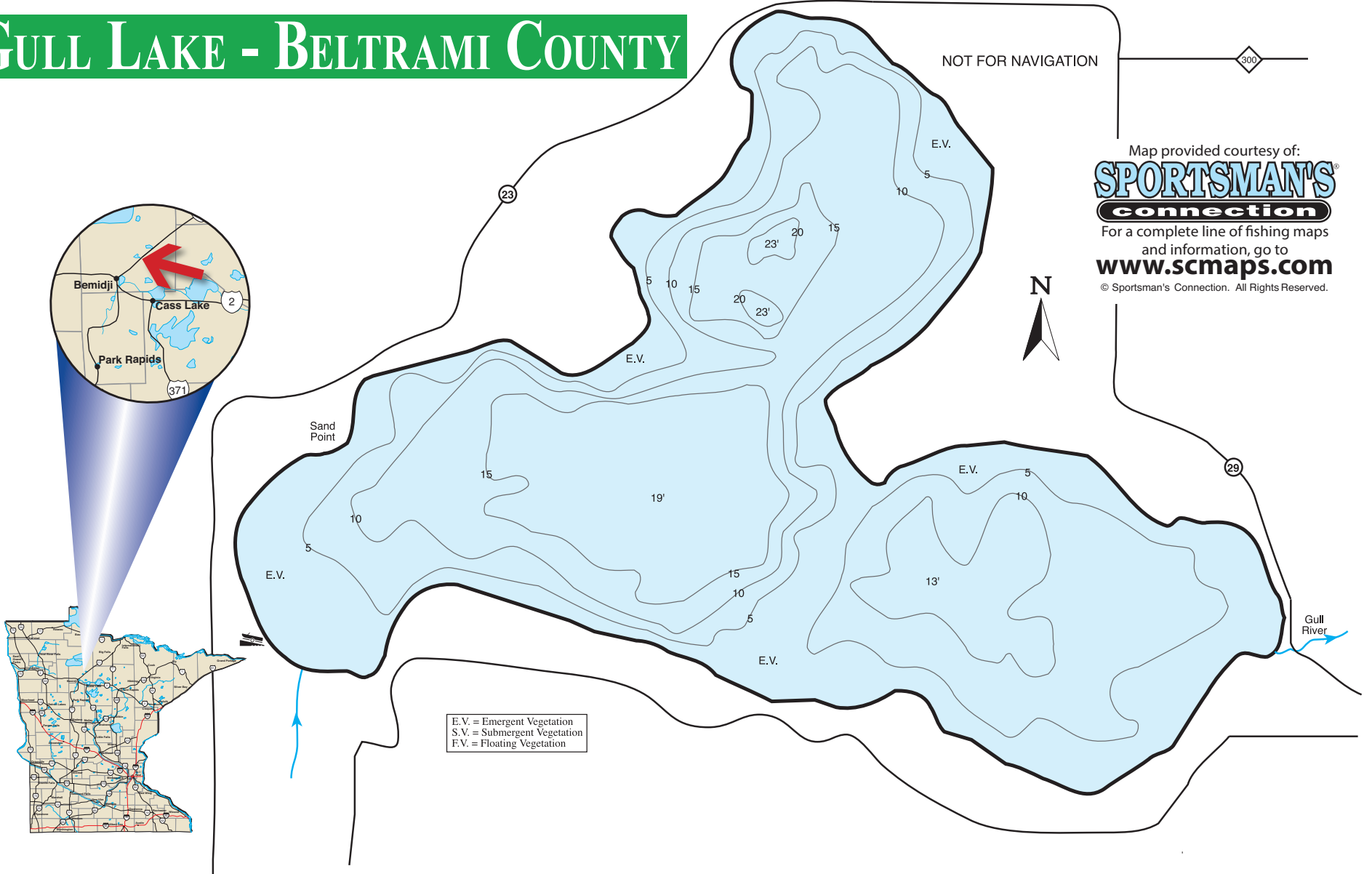


Lake Profile

GULL LAKE - BELTRAMI COUNTY



There's rarely a panfish angling lull on Beltrami's Gull

By Glen Schmitt
 Staff Writer

At more than 2,200 acres, Beltrami County's Gull Lake is a relatively good-sized body of water. But from an angling point of view, it's really not so intimidating because most of the lake is less than 15 feet deep.

Gull also holds an abundance of established weed flats and weedlines. On paper, Gull looks like it sets up well for panfish, so it's no surprise that those fish do tend to provide most of this lake's better fish-catching opportunities.

There's a lengthy history of excellent bluegill and crappie fishing on Gull. Tales of

2-pound bluegills being caught from the lake in the 1980s and 1990s continue to be told.

Although less numerous and more cyclical in numbers, its crappies are worth talking about. Crappies in the 12- to 14-inch class are expected to be caught here; they always have been.

What might be most impressive is that while both bluegills and crappies species receive heavy fishing pressure, the lake seems to have the right ingredients to keep kicking out quality fish.

"For sheer numbers and size, Gull is the best bluegill fishery within an hour of

this area," said Jon Ross, of Timberline Sports and Tackle in Blackduck. "Crappie numbers go up and down, but Gull has nice fish in it. It's more quality than quantity with its crappies."

According to Edie Evarts, DNR Fisheries supervisor in Bemidji, Gull has always been, by its nature, a bluegill lake. That's because of the aforementioned habitat and, to an extent, the genetics of its bluegill population.

But when those rumored 2-pounders were being caught several decades ago, anglers came from near and far, and most hit paydirt when fishing for the big bluegills.

It was a year-round affair as well. So in 2006, the DNR implemented a five-fish bluegill bag limit, which continues today. Its intent was to maintain the quality of these prized fish.

"They're holding their own. We still see plenty of fish from 8 to 10 inches, and you still have the chance at a bluegill over 10 inches from Gull," Evarts said. "With the crappies, it's a real low-density population, but we know that when anglers find them, they are quality fish."

While the lake's panfish are its bread and butter, Gull is a pretty good walleye fishery as well. Annual walleye fry stocking seems to provide consistent recruitment, and noticeable gaps in year-classes is usually limited.

The DNR surveyed Gull in 2020, and gill nets averaged close to five walleyes per lift. A total of 12 year-class were sampled, and they averaged 16 inches in length. That seems to be the norm on Gull, according to Ross.

"I think there's a pretty good return on the walleyes the state stocks and most (that are caught) are eaters – under 20 inches," he said. "There's been some good walleye fishing out there the last three years."

Evarts added that while the number of walleyes sampled in 2020 was good, it might not reflect just how strong walleye fishing can be on Gull. It's worth noting that 60% of the walleyes in the 2020 survey were 4-year-olds or younger, which demonstrates strong recruitment.

"I think it's one of the better walleye lakes in the area," she said. "There's no gaps, good size distribution, and they grow well."

Northern pike are quite abundant in Gull, although you won't find much in the way of size. The lake's largemouth bass population consists of low numbers, but a better caliber of fish.

Neither of those species gets much attention from anglers, which is something that seems to be common in the area.

"Everyone fishes for walleyes or panfish around here," Ross said. "Gull has some nice bass in it, but not many people fish for them."



Lake Profile
Gull Lake

Nearest town.....Blackduck
 Surface area.....2,255 acres
 Maximum depth.....23 feet
 Shore length.....13 miles
 Water clarity.....9 feet

Fish species present:
 Bluegill, black crappie, walleye, pumpkinseed, northern pike, largemouth bass, hybrid sunfish, yellow perch, bullhead, rock bass, white sucker.

For information:
 DNR area fisheries office (218) 308-2330, the DNR website <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/lakefind> or Timberline Sports and Tackle (218) 835-4636.