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OCT 6 1933

FISH DIVISION

Report 220

October 5, 1933

EDIBILITY OF WALL-EYED PIKE FROM SAUX HEAD LAKE,

MARQUETTE COUNTY

Two large wall-eyed pike, iced, were received September 27 from Mr. Stanley Schust of the Thompson Hatchery accompanied by the following letter:

We are shipping you by express today one grass pike and one walleye pike (iced) caught in Saux Head Lake, Marquette County by Mr. Frank Klepack of Burch Station, Michigan.

Some doctors from Chicago reported these fish not good to eat. Mr. Frank Klepack would like to know what is the matter with these fish as reports that they are not good to eat hurts his resort business. I would like to have a copy of your findings.

(The "grass pike" mentioned in the letter was not received).

Both of the wall-eyed pike were adult males. Lengths and weights were as follows:

Total length mm. & inches	Standard length mm. & inches	Weight
529 mm. 20.83 in.	440 mm. 17.32 in.	2 lb. 5 oz.
515 mm. 20.28 in.	435 mm. 17.13 in.	2 lb. 4 oz.

Both fish were thin. Unfortunately, there seems to be no published information available as to the average weights of wall-eyed pike at various lengths. Several persons familiar with wall-eyed pike, including Dr. Hubbs and Mr. H. J. Deason (who is making a study of wall-eyed pike for the U. S. Bureau of Fisheries) agreed that the fish were unusually thin.

The specimens were examined for marks of injury, or disease, and no evidences of these were apparent. The alimentary tracts did not show heavy infestation with parasites. The stomach of one of the fish contained a large horned dace, while the other was empty.

The fish were fresh and a piece of each fish was cooked and eaten. The flesh was distinctly edible, being without objectionable flavor. However, both fish were tough-skinned and rather fibrous, as might be expected from the thin condition.

Both of these fish showed seven winter marks on the scales. According to findings of Juday and Schneeberger in Wisconsin lakes, wall-eyed pike of eight summers (seven winters) averaged 19.25 inches (extremes 14.25 inches to 29.25 inches). Averaging 20.5 inches, the two fish from Saux Head Lake fall within the variation noted for Wisconsin wall-eyed pike.

On the basis of the specimens examined, there seems no justification for saying that the wall-eyed pike from this lake are "not good to eat". The flesh of the two specimens was wholesome, but did not contain much fat.

Some questions which should be investigated if this matter is to be pursued further are (1) what percentage of the wall-eyes in the lake are thinner than normal (2) what are the food conditions in relation to the number of pike present. If the thin condition is general among the larger fish, it may be due to shortage of forage fish. Information on the history of wall-eyed pike fishing in this lake would be of value.