

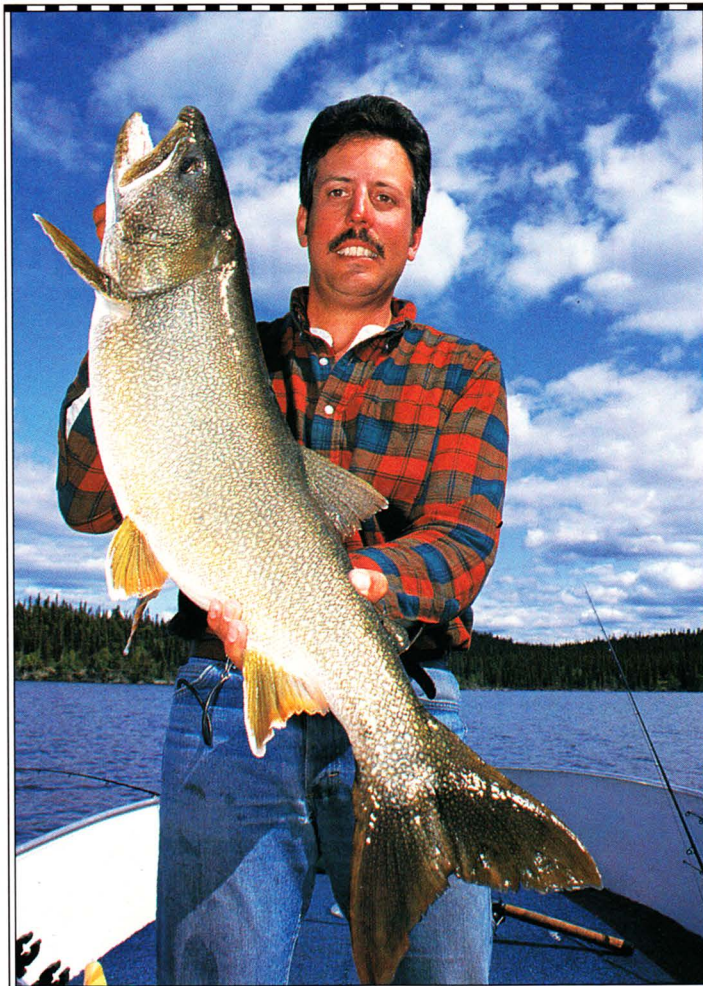
ALL ABOUT LAKERS

Lakers eat any fish dead or alive that will fit in their cavernous gape but mainly other lakers, whitefish, suckers, grayling and pike. A laker often stuns an intended meal with a swimming blow of its closed jaws, then, as the prey pauses or sinks, the trout engulfs it headfirst.

Lakers inhabit rivers, flowages and lakes. Waters with strong current don't thermocline, so big fish just follow the forage and can be caught throughout the various depths. As the early summer sun heats the northern lakes, there is a movement of lakers from the shallows to the dark depths. The fish typically leave expansive shallower areas when the surface is around 60 degrees Fahrenheit and consolidate in holes or basins to seek a layer of 48 to 52 degree water. They'll descend in stages over several weeks to spend the short summer at 80 to 150 feet. Use sonar to locate bait or suspended schools of lakers, then present large lures on bottom under them and hang on.

USE THE BIG STUFF

Experienced anglers have found that there isn't a lure on the market that's too big for a twenty pound laker. If you're fishing shallow for lakers, trolling large spoons like a Lucky Strike "Half Wave," a Daredevele or a Len Thompson on medium heavy baitcasting tackle is hard to beat. Plugs such as Kwikfish or Believers that have a lot of action will also produce well in the shallows. In fact the best time to catch lakers in the north is in the spring when they frequent shallow shoreline structures. When the trout are a little deeper one of the most effective methods is jigging in a fashion similar to walleye fishing. Bucktail or maribou jigs in the 1/2 to 1 1/2 ounce size range are often tipped with Berkley Power Grubs and retrieved near or right on bottom. A spoon trolled on



Canada's denizen of the far north is noted for its beauty, fight and huge size.

John L. Field, Nuelin Lake, Manitoba

a three-way swivel with a drop sinker on monofilament will also work down to about 40 feet. Wire line or sinkers from 3 to 10 ounces are more practical if you must go from 40 to 120 feet.

Live or dead baits used from a drifting boat or while stillfishing from shore also take quite a few lakers. There's even a very effective west coast salmon rig manufactured by Rhys Davis known as the "herring system." It's designed for both shallow and deep trolling and combines the best features of dead baits and lures.

LAKER HEAVEN LIES NORTH

Lakers can be found in almost every cold body of water in Canada, but habitat degeneration has knocked down their top end size in south central and eastern Canada. Today twenty pounders are unusual there. The adage, "If you can drive

to a body of water it doesn't have trophy lakers left," applies in most cases. These vulnerable fish only grow from a quarter to one pound annually depending on the latitude, therefore they can't take much harvest pressure. Today one must fly to Saskatchewan, Northern Manitoba, and the Northwest Territories to find concentrations of twenty to forty pound lakers.

These northern Canadian wilderness regions have some of the most pristine and splendid country on earth. Open water lasts for about twelve weeks while some areas never fully thaw at all. The land and water area are almost equal in many cases. Gently rolling rock and sand eskers rise over peat bog drainages that stain the bays of clear lakes. Stunted firs and birches are the dominant vegetation below the tree line, above it moss and lichen. On the western shore of Hudson Bay the tree line intersects the 60th parallel, and to the west it slants well into the

Arctic circle. The extended dusk and dawn of the midnight sun sheds a divinely warm lighting that makes for excellent photographs.

Word of mouth is the best way to find a far northern trip worth taking. Most fly-in lodges provide transportation from a major city, food and lodging, guides, boats with accessories and some even provide tackle. Everything a camp uses must be delivered by air, so few things are overabundant. Accommodations in this region vary from tent camps and spartan cabins to luxury lodges. Some offer a variety of choices so anglers can stay at outposts to experience totally untapped fishing. There are camps that sell unguided packages for the adventurous. Day trip fly-outs are common to bring fishermen to remote waters for even more exceptional angling. Most packages consist of stays of a week (from Saturday to Saturday). Most anglers find it hard to leave after so short a time. It's that good!

