

Return to the Fox River

Walleye Run on the Fox Provides Opportunity For Big Fish

From the middle of March to the middle of April, anglers flock to various river systems around the state seeking out our state's most sought after fish, the walleye. The appeal is obvious; more than at any time of year, walleye are congregated into relatively small locations and in relatively shallow water while they make their spawning runs up the rivers.

The Fox River near Green Bay has become possibly the top destination in the state for those fishing walleye runs. The reason is simple; it offers a legitimate shot to catch a fish approaching 10 pounds. With that knowledge, I traveled recently to the Fox River as I did last year with my friends Doug Kloet and Bill Pocius to fish this exceptional walleye run.

Bill Pocius holding a nice walleye caught and released on the Fox River



This year we were greeted with cooler, but somewhat better weather than last year when clouds, drizzle and scattered showers ruled the day. We only hoped that the fishing would be as good considering we had caught a lot of walleye with the average size fish being twenty inches in length.

It seems like we were not the only ones who decided to fish that day. There was a long line of boats waiting to launch when we arrived, so we decided to head downriver and launch where the river meets the bay. Launching was certainly much quicker at that site, but it also meant a cold ride several miles up the river in thirty degree temperatures leaving us with watering eyes and rosy faces.

When we arrived at our planned fishing area, which extended from the dam in De Pere down the

Highway 172 bridge, we found the river busy with boats; probably twice as many than the previous year. Doug slowly weaved us through the boat jungle to a shallow flat just down from the dam. We rigged up with jigs and fathead minnows and started the process of casting and jigging while the boat drifted down the river.

We had floated a bit of a distance before we finally caught our first fish. Doug reeled in a nice twenty inch female and led it into the net I was holding. She was quickly released and we got back to trying to catch another. About twenty minutes later I connected with a fish that I knew was big. It was fighting hard and easily pulling my eight pound test line. When it finally wallowed near the surface, we could see it was a nice walleye that exceeded twenty six inches in length. Unfortunately, before I could lead it into the net, it rolled over and it got its freedom earlier than I planned.

“That was your Sunday Fish,” said Bill, referring to our agreement that whoever caught the largest fish that day would get a hot fudge sundae.

It was apparent within an hour that the fast action we had the previous year was not repeating itself. In 2007, we were catching walleye consistently often landing multiple fish at a time during the first few hours of fishing. One improvement was we were catching more females than the previous year, resulting in heavier fish and slightly longer lengths.

Around noon, two anglers in a boat passed us going up the river. The angler in the front of the boat was fighting a large fish that he apparently was unable to control. Faced with so many boats and the accompanying tangle of anchor and fishing lines, they chose to follow the fish around the river hoping to tire it out before it got tangled up. We watched them go up the river, across it several times then back down the river over the course of thirty minutes; it was like a scene from a cartoon where a large fish tows a boat around. We assume this angler had latched into a big sturgeon or a very large carp. We later heard he lost the fish.

Like others that day, we found ourselves catching a number of catfish, especially as we drifted close to the 172 bridge. Most of the cats were five pounds or less, but Bill did manage to land one that was a bit larger. It did not come close to the twenty plus pound cat that he caught the year before, but by landing the largest catfish of the day, he retained the nickname of Whiskers that he earned the year before.

Late in the day, Doug moved us further into the shallows that were not much more than two feet deep. We immediately started contacting fish that had apparently moved up into the shallows to feed. While most of the other anglers were working the river channel, we successfully worked this area until the bite slowed.

Until we fished that area, I was in the lead for the Sunday Fish and almost tasting the victory when Doug landed a walleye measuring just under twenty-three inches. Just when it appeared he would be the one slamming down fudge covered ice cream, Bill landed a heavy female measuring almost twenty-four inches in length. It appears, ‘ol Whiskers Pocius knows how to catch large walleye as well.

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