

NEWS RELEASE

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Springtime in Brainerd is busy season for sportsmen

Fishing seasons open for all species, birding is at peak, turkey hunting is an option

BRAINERD, Minn. – Some sportsmen in the Brainerd Lakes Area are disappointed to see the snow leave and the lakes melt, but with springtime comes a whole new list of excellent sporting opportunities here.

Although you can't be too quick to put away those Pak Boots and snow pants, springtime in Brainerd normally brings with it mild temperatures for enthusiasts who enjoy great fishing, hunting and other recreational activities this area has to offer.

You can't talk about springtime recreation without talking about fishing, specifically, the walleye opener. No other state celebrates the walleye opener like Minnesota. Scheduled for May 9, the opener is a rite of passage for some and a tradition for many that can date back several generations, producing a lifetime of memories that are revisited and passed on year after year. In Minnesota, the opener might as well be a state holiday, and with 465 lakes within a 30-mile radius, the Brainerd Lakes Area is home to many of those annual trips.

Although walleye is king in many fishing circles, the Brainerd Lakes Area has the most diverse and healthy game fish population of anywhere in the state, according to the state Department of Natural Resources. Excellent water quality and chemistry in our hard-bottom lakes, mine pit lakes, the Mississippi River, and other rivers and streams help ensure strong fish populations across all species. Take your pick:

- **Bass** – The Brainerd Lakes Area has bass fishing that rivals anywhere in the country, according to angling legends Ron and Al Lindner. The season for largemouth and smallmouth bass opens May 23.
- **Pike and Musky** – Area lakes and rivers consistently produce trophy pike and musky, with 50-plus inch muskies caught on a regular basis. Northern pike opens May 9 and the musky season starts June 6.
- **Panfish** – Open year round, some of the best panfish angling happens right after the ice comes off the lakes. Crappies, especially, are very active and plentiful. Sunfish and blue gills populations are healthy as well.
- **Trout** – Trout Lake is the southernmost Minnesota lake that is stocked with lake trout, which can be fished after May 9. That's also the opener for rainbow, brook and brown trout that are stocked each year in six area lakes and 10 abandoned mine pits. The mine pits can be 400 feet deep and have crystal clear water that also supports large pike and panfish. Area trout streams are naturally populated with brook and brown trout, which can be fished after April 18.
- **Channel Catfish** – The Mississippi River produces channel cats that consistently run 5-15 pounds. The season is year round.

“Fishing is the number one recreational activity in the Brainerd Lakes Area because there are so many lakes and such healthy, active fish populations,” Tourism Director Gretchen Ennis said. “You can always catch something. And when you’re not on the lake, the local attractions, restaurants and lodging properties ensure that you’re always having a good time.”

Fishing isn’t the only game in town during the spring, even though it’s the most popular one. For those who are interested in something slightly different, the Brainerd Lakes Area also offers the following:

- **Birding** – Many bird species are migrating in early May, making for prime bird watching in the Lakes Area, which is one of the top birding destinations in the country. Home to 313 regular species of birds and six of the top 12 most coveted species by bird watchers, this area attracts bird watchers from throughout the world. It’s not unusual to identify 70-90 species in a day.
- **Beaver Trapping** – The beaver-trapping season ends May 15, but beaver are typically most active as soon as the ice goes out. That attracts a lot of trapping activity in an area that has a high beaver population.
- **Turkey Hunting** – The Brainerd area is home to a healthy and growing turkey population. The spring turkey season (toms only) is April 15 – May 28. Although the deadline for purchasing licenses has past, there are many opportunities to shadow area hunters.
- **Maple Syrup** – Making maple syrup is a popular pastime in the Brainerd area. March is the best time to collect sap from area maple trees. The production process is just as much of a social event as it is a manufacturing process. The sap is collected, boiled, filtered and then bottled. Next stop: A stack of flapjacks.

Join us to learn more about other outdoor opportunities

The Brainerd Lakes Area has a wealth of sporting and outdoor opportunities, and local guides who will help you enjoy the experience. Contact Gretchen Ennis at 1-800-450-2838 if you’d like to visit the area and experience the types of activities that get hearty Minnesotans through the winter. We’ll customize a Fam Tour for you, so you can get a taste of what we have to offer here. We can arrange for lodging and meals as well.

More information on the Brainerd Lakes Area is available by visiting the Brainerd Lakes Chamber Web site at www.explorebrainerdlakes.com.

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For more information or photos, contact PR Coordinator Geoff Gorvin at 218-821-9513.