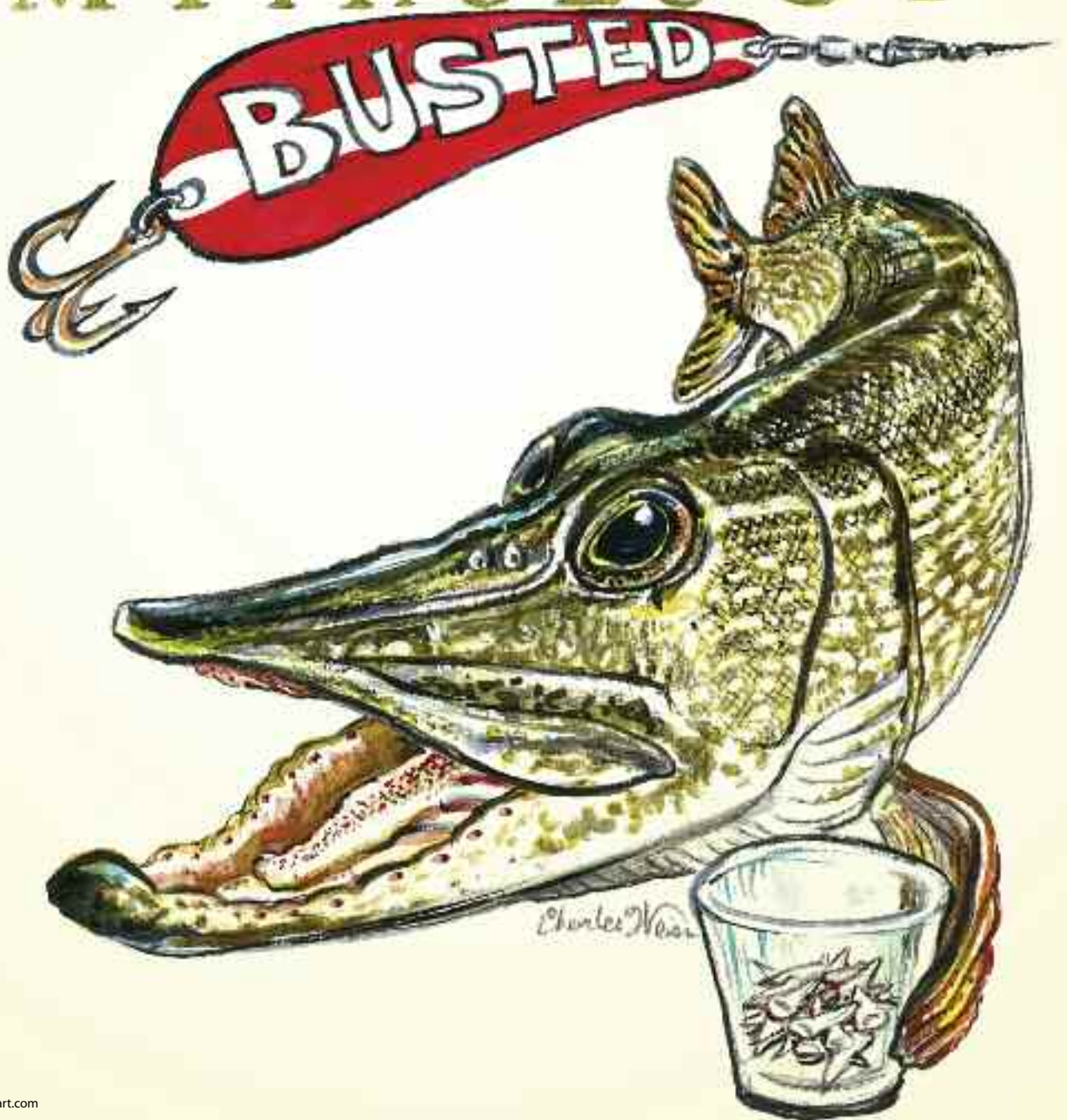


Northern
P I L K E
MYTHOLOGY



10 NORTHERN PIKE MYTHS - BUSTED

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Myths die hard. Bigfoot roams the north woods. Britney Spears is sweet and innocent. Giant northern pike lose their teeth in summer. Well, I'm no expert on the first two, but I'll shed some light on the pike losing their teeth thing and then take a hammer to a few more northern pike misconceptions. It's time to update your strategies, fishing folks. My research has revealed some rock-solid truths about pike fishing that will dispel the trail of rubble that many fishers once believed to be true about the northern pike.

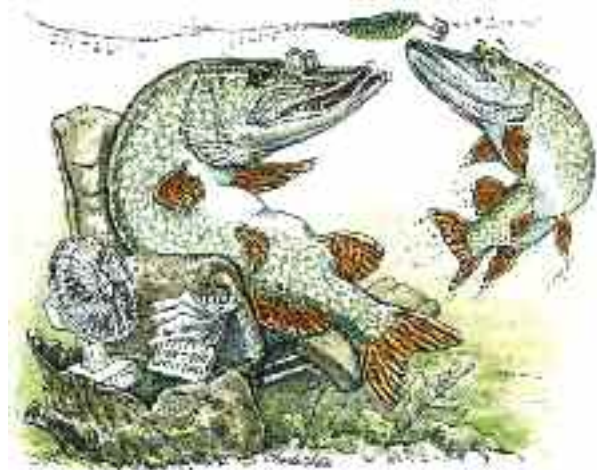
MYTH 1: Pike Lose Their Teeth In The Summer

This is basically a ridiculous premise. The truth is, pike lose and replace their teeth all year 'round. It's true that pike feed very little in shallow areas once the surface temperature rises above 65°F, but this has nothing to do with their teeth. In late spring or early summer big pike make a seasonal migration from shallow spawning areas to the deepest edges of rock/weed structure. This is why you don't find them in the shallow areas that were full of fish earlier in the year. Try jigging these deeper areas with large, ½ to one-ounce jigs. Fan-cast these deep spots and vary your retrieve while trying to keep

in touch with bottom. At twilight, try casting spoons, spinners or crankbaits near these same spots. When you land your first big northern, take a look into its mouth and you'll see row upon row of sharp, healthy pearly whites.

MYTH 2: Big Pike Won't Bite In Summer

You don't have to wait for the cooler waters of autumn to catch big pike. Summer pike fishing is different than spring fishing and you need to move away from the spots you were fishing in the spring. The big pike that are caught in the summer are usually caught near deeper water with cooler temperatures. Try downriggers for scattered, open-water roaming pike. Fish along outside weed edges or around open water structure like humps, ridges or shoals. You'll be covering water at a precise depth and keeping your lure in the deep strike zone at all times.



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Put on a good sized spoon, spinner or minnow-style crankbait. Keep your trolling speed at 1 ½ to 2-miles per hour and keep your eyes on your rod!

MYTH 3: Pike Are Dumber Than Dumb

I'm not saying that pike are smart but they

are not the most dim-witted of sport fish either. While it's no secret that pike in unpressured, fly-in or drive-to back country lakes will strike fiercely and rapidly, it's not because they're dumb. This is the same style of aggressive bite you would have from other sportfish in a similar environment. Have you ever fished bass in a pond where they haven't been fished in a few years? They bite with equal abandon and nobody calls them dumb.

Small, back country lakes can only support so many big fish and once they have been removed by anglers the population shifts. The lake becomes filled with small, stunted pike that bite aggressively and rapidly due to competition with each other for limited food resources. If the big pike were left in these lakes they would control the population of small ones and you'd see more big pike that would be harder to catch.

MYTH 4: Large Pike Will Eat All The Fish In The Lake

Some people think pike or muskies have extreme appetites and are always feeding on anything they can catch. The truth is, pike and muskies are solitary, top-of-the-food-chain predators and will only eat a certain amount of other game fish. They tend to eat larger fish too, not large numbers of small fish. A three-pound walleye, sucker, catfish or other prey species will sustain a big pike for several days so relatively few of them end up eaten. Compare that to a big school of perch or crappies diving into a group of walleye or bass fry and you tell me which

scenario is most responsible for reducing the population of other fish species.

MYTH 5: Pike That Are Suspended Just Beneath The Surface Are Sick

A northern pike found "sunning" itself is just fine. A reasonable explanation is that the fish is using the warm surface water temperature to speed up its digestion. A bright, sun-filled day with calm water or a very slight chop is the perfect time to see this phenomenon. These pike can sometimes be caught if you quietly float up to them and cast out a minnow imitating crankbait. Twitch it slowly by their nose and watch for a fast, vicious strike.

MYTH 6: Big Pike Are Loners

Their large size and voracious eating habits get a lot of imaginations thinking that only one big pike could be in a fishing spot. The fact is, they are usually gathered in loose groups in small pockets along deep weed edges or rocky shoals. Because large pike aren't easy to catch, fishermen seldom catch more than one from a spot. The exception to this is in the spring, when large numbers of spawning pike invade the shallows en masse.

MYTH 7: Pike Are Always Caught In The Weeds

Shallow weed lines are attractive ambush areas for small pike throughout the season. Large ones will be found in the same neighbourhood but generally just for a small amount of time in the spring. Warming summer water temperatures cause these bigger fish to swim out to much deeper water for most of each day. In lakes with smelts, whitefish or ciscoes, the largest pike will often move away from the weeds in favour of rocky, off-shore structure where they feed on these nutritious, pelagic baitfish.

MYTH 8: Pike Aren't Good To Eat

A pike's flesh is firm, white and mild tasting. They have a floating section of "Y" bones that

are easily cut out in single strip on each side above the ribs. In fact, some shore lunch aficionados prefer properly prepared pike to walleyes.

MYTH 9: Pike Will Attack Small Dogs And Children

While you do hear stories of pike attacking people and pets it is a very, very rare occurrence. Stories like this are "urban legends" and have only a small part in reality. These stories do, however, cause people to think of pike as an evil and undesirable fish. I've only heard of one verified and witnessed account of this kind of attack. It happened in August a few years ago, on Eagle Lake in northwestern Ontario at Vermilion Bay Lodge. A group of kids were playing and splashing in the knee-deep water when suddenly a pike darted out and bit one on of them on the leg. Just as suddenly the pike disappeared. The young fellow ended up with a small, U-shaped mark on his shin and a great story to tell his grandchildren one day!

MYTH 10: Large Lures Only Catch Large Fish

Small pike are well known for their tendency to impulsively try and eat lures as long as themselves and most pike anglers can recount stories of hammer-handles attacking oversized baits that they couldn't possibly eat. On the other hand, big pike will often shun large, fast moving baits in favour of smaller ones, as many bass and walleye anglers will attest to. In general, a lure's length can be important if it resembles the usual size of the prey a pike is eating. For example, if pike are keying on a school of five-inch long perch, consider using a lure in that size. The exception is during the late fall when larger baits become more attractive to big pike that are feeding heavily before winter sets in.

So there you have it folks, 10 famous northern pike myths, busted. Now that you know the truth behind these little gems you can start refining your approach to tough pike fishing situations and start catching the fish you've been missing. I sure hope you do because you just lost 10 great excuses for coming home empty-handed! 🐟

