

THE BIG SIX CHAIN OF LAKES

Chetek, the City of Lakes, is located in northwestern Wisconsin on the Big Six Chain of Lakes. These six lakes - Chetek, Prairie, Pokegama, Moose Ear, Ten Mile and Ojaski - cover 3,800 surface acres with the smallest, Moose Ear Lake, covering 33.6 surface acres. Lake Chetek, which appears to be the largest, covers just 683 surface acres, while Prairie Lake has 1,545 surface acres. Lake Chetek is the deepest lake, with a maximum depth of 22 feet.

The fish population in these lakes includes Northern Pike, Walleye, Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass, Bluegills, Black Crappies, Pumpkinseeds, Perch, Bullheads, Rock Bass and White Suckers. Several hundred of these fish have been marked with \$25, \$50, \$100 and \$500 tags for Chetek's popular Fish-O-Rama program, which is now in its 12th year. This unique program provides cash rewards for those lucky enough to haul in one of these tagged fish.

MOOSE EAR LAKE

On the lower part of Moose Ear Creek, this lake has 33.6 surface acres with a maximum depth of just 6 feet, and has a warm water fish population. An intermittent stream from Couderay Lake and a spring feeder from a pond also supply water to the stream. A 150 acre wetland adjoining the stream near Moose Ear Lake provides habitat for muskrats and nesting puddle ducks.

LAKE CHETEK

With a maximum depth of 22 feet, Lake Chetek has a total of 683 surface acres. It is a recreational lake and is surrounded on most of its shoreline by permanent residences, summer homes, resorts, and the City of Chetek. The city operates a public swimming beach during the summer months and a large public boat landing is located near the city Airport on Lakeview Drive. Lake Chetek is also the site of the Hydroflites Water Ski Show Team's shows. These shows are held throughout the summer offshore from their property, which is adjacent to the boat landing on Lakeview Drive.

TEN MILE LAKE

This lake at the southernmost point of the Chain has a depth of 10 feet and an area of 393 surface acres. This lake is also a soft water drainage impoundment in the Chetek Lake Chain. Muskrats, nesting mallards and wood ducks abound in the 27 acres of lake edge wetlands.

OJASKI LAKE

Located in the Town of Chetek, Ojaski Lake (also known as Mud Lake) covers 567 surface acres and has a maximum depth of 15 feet. Pokegama Creek, which flows into Ojaski Lake from the north, provides a spawning area for Northern Pike and Walleye. Located in a farming area, the lake is surrounded by upland hardwoods, white pine and cultivated farmland. About three acres of marsh wetlands on the northeast shore provide habitat for muskrats, nesting mallards, teal and wood ducks.

POKEGEMA LAKE

With 494 surface acres and a maximum depth of 19 feet, Pokegama Lake is a very popular fishing lake. A soft water drainage lake in the Chetek Chain between Ojaski Lake and Lake Chetek, the immediate lakeshore vegetation is pine and hardwood with the exception of several marsh-edged bays. These marshes are home to many muskrats and puddle ducks. Keep your eyes peeled when cruising along the shorelines, as the lake is a popular watering hole for deer and other wildlife. Another sight becoming more common each year are Bald Eagles soaring above the lakes, catching fish to feed themselves and their young.

PRAIRIE LAKE

With a maximum depth of 16 feet, Prairie Lake is the largest lake in the Chetek Chain with 1,545 surface acres. A soft water drainage lake, the lake level is maintained by the water control structure on Lake Chetek, and the fish species consist of all those named previously. The lakeshore is predominantly upland hardwood and pine, and three acres of marsh edge along the lake provide habitat for muskrats, nesting puddle ducks and mergansers. Coot and Canada geese also visit the lake during spring and fall migratory periods. The haunting call of the loon can be heard also during the early and late migration times. The lake runs from the north side of Chetek northward, almost to Cameron and Highway 8. While much of the shoreline is developed with residential homes, cabins and resorts, there is still a large portion of the lake that remains wild, offering natural settings for fishing along the banks of the lake. It is in these waters that the famous floating island originated, moving from time to time to different locations.

LOOKING FOR MUSKIES? TRY POTATO LAKE

For those looking for the side-trip that can produce a real "wallhanger" type fish, a jaunt down the road to Potato Lake just might be the ticket. The lake itself is close to Chetek - just a dozen or so miles east on County Trunk D, located in the southwestern part of Rusk County. While the lake isn't an actual part of the Chetek Chain of Lakes, some of the resorts on the lake maintain memberships in the Chetek Resort Owners Association.

Potato Lake's musky fishing can only be called "top notch." Extensive state stocking along with good natural reproduction have produced above average numbers of legal sized fish. Muskies in the 40 to 50 inch range are caught each year.