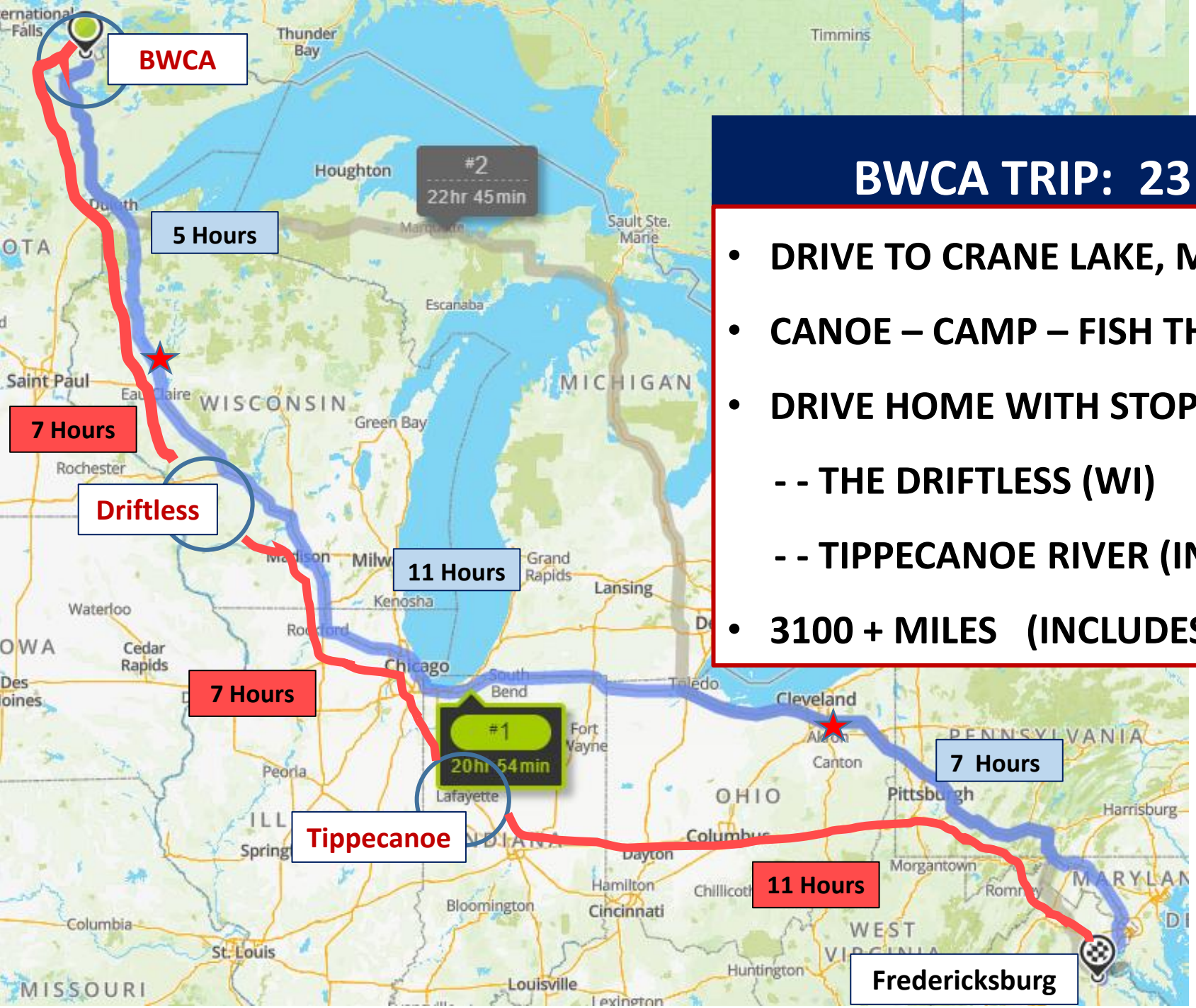
2021 Trip Report
Boundary Waters Canoe Area

With the Driftless Region of Wisconsin & the Tippecanoe River of Indiana Bonus

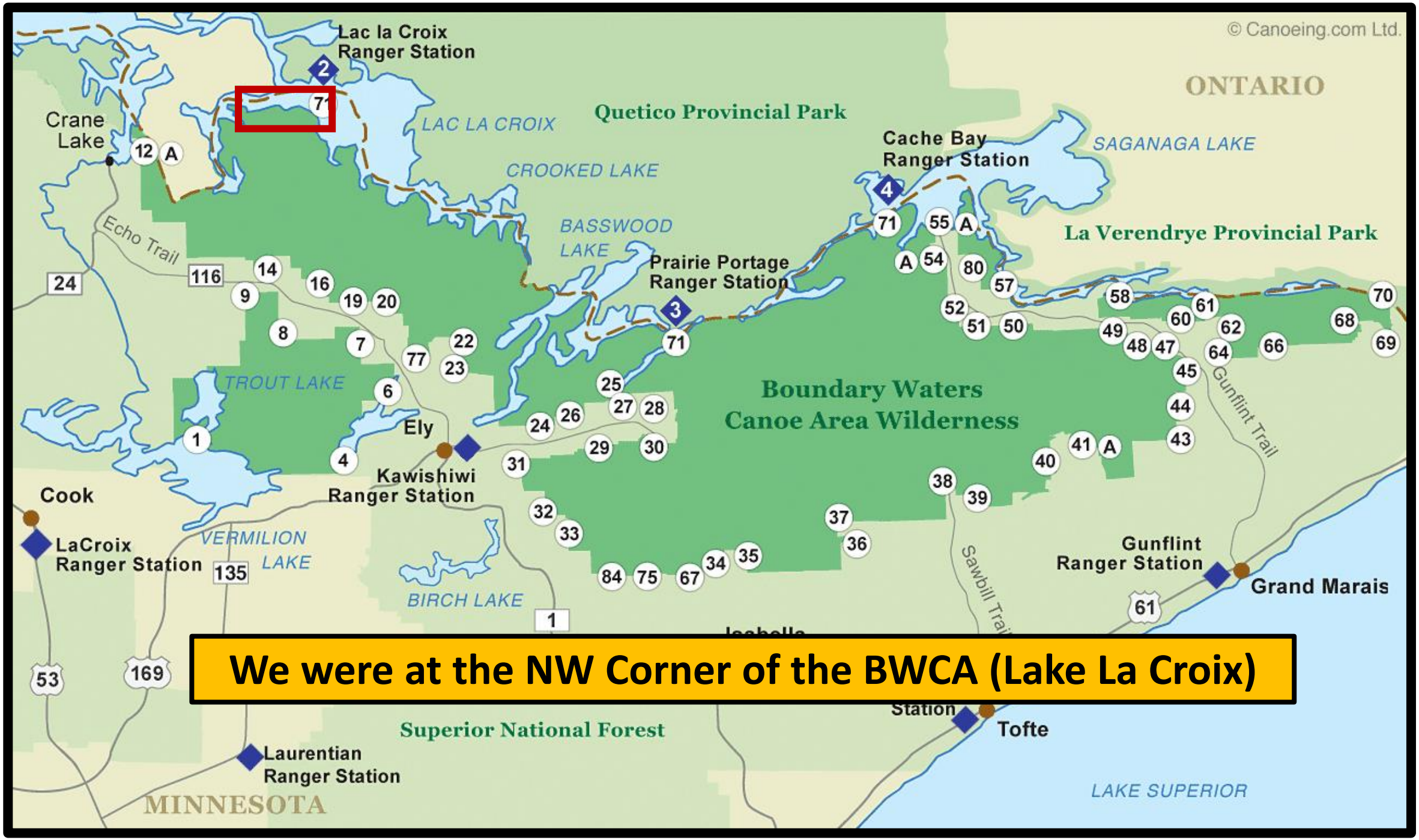


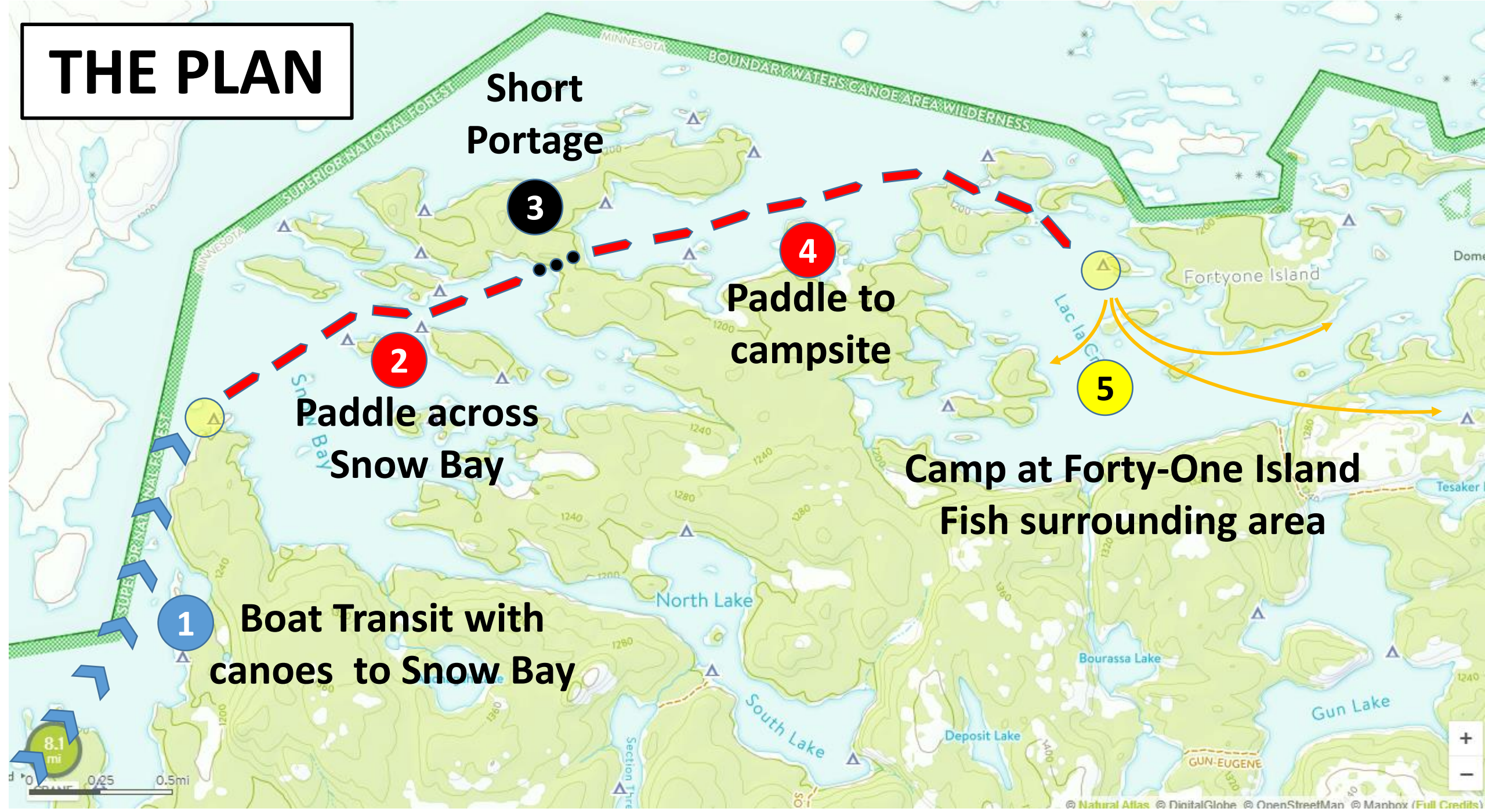
BWCA TRIP: 23 May – 5 June, 2021

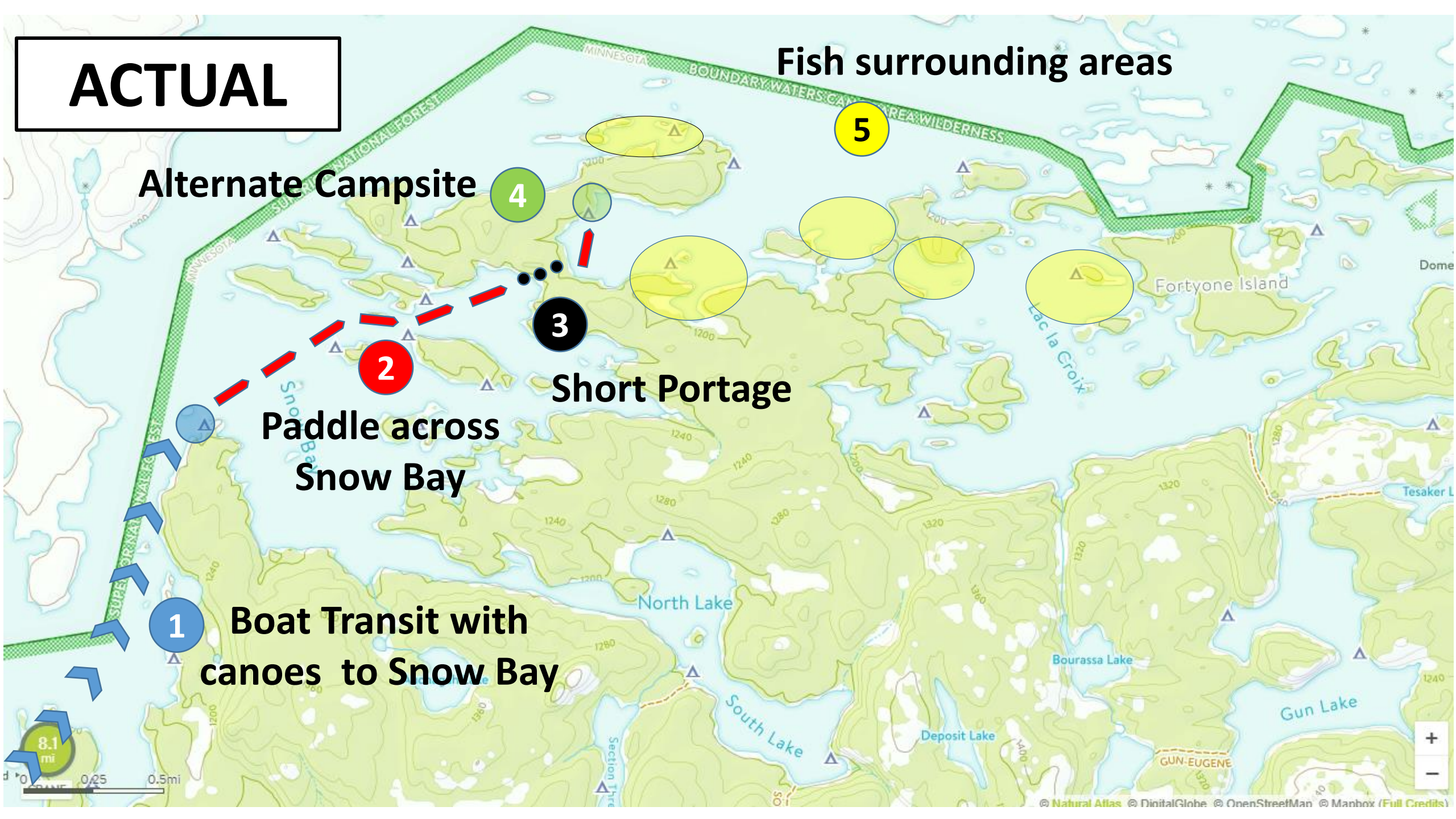
- DRIVE TO CRANE LAKE, MINNESOTA (2.5 DAYS)
- CANOE – CAMP – FISH THE BOUNDARY WATERS (6 DAYS)
- DRIVE HOME WITH STOPS TO FISH
  - - THE DRIFTLESS (WI)
  - - TIPPECANOE RIVER (IN)
- 3100 + MILES (INCLUDES 100 + MISGUIDED MILES)

Boundary Waters Canoe Area (BWCA)

- NE Minnesota
- 1,000,000 acres / 2000 lakes
- Canoe / Camping Area:
  - 1500 miles of canoe routes
  - 1000 lakes / streams
  - 2200 campsites


© Canoeing.com Ltd.
ONTARIO
Lac la Croix Ranger Station
Crane Lake
LAC LA CROIX
Quetico Provincial Park
CROOKED LAKE
Cache Bay Ranger Station
SAGANAGA LAKE
BASSWOOD LAKE
La Verendrye Provincial Park
Prairie Portage Ranger Station
Echo Trail
TROUT LAKE
Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness
Ely
Kawishiwi Ranger Station
Gunflint Trail
Cook
LaCroix Ranger Station
VERMILION LAKE
BIRCH LAKE
Sawbill Trail
Gunflint Ranger Station
Grand Marais
Superior National Forest
Laurentian Ranger Station
Tofte
LAKE SUPERIOR
MINNESOTA
We were at the NW Corner of the BWCA (Lake La Croix)


THE PLAN
Short Portage
3
4
Paddle to campsite
2
Paddle across Snow Bay
5
Camp at Forty-One Island
Fish surrounding area
1
Boat Transit with canoes to Snow Bay
BOUNDARY WATERS CANOE AREA WILDERNESS
SUPERIOR NATIONAL FOREST
MINNESOTA
Fortyone Island
North Lake
South Lake
Bourassa Lake
Deposit Lake
Gun Lake
GUN-EUGENE
Tesaker
8.1 mi
0.25
0.5mi


ACTUAL
Fish surrounding areas
5
Alternate Campsite
4
3
Short Portage
2
Paddle across
Snow Bay
1
Boat Transit with
canoes to Snow Bay
BOUNDARY WATERS CANOE AREA WILDERNESS
Fortyone Island
Lac la Croix
North Lake
South Lake
Bourassa Lake
Deposit Lake
Gun Lake
Tesaker L
8.1 mi
0.25
0.5mi

GETTING IN

Loading the Transit Boats

2 Canoes 6 Boundary Water Packs 1 Bear Barrel

Transit Boats To Lac La Croix

~ 75 minute trip

Fast Boat on Open Water

Rail Portage Over Land Bridges

Drop Off at Lake La Croix

Unload Canoes from Transit Boat

Canoes Away

First (and only) Portage

An Easy Walk in the Woods

Bear Barrel

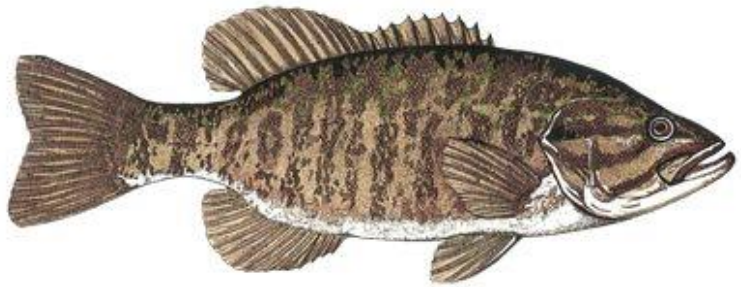
Canoes

BW Packs

And On To A Campsite
Anderson's
21

BWCA FISHING

The Fish



Smallmouth

15-16” w/ a few to 18” +

Pike

18-24” w/ a few to 24” +

The Flies

Poppers

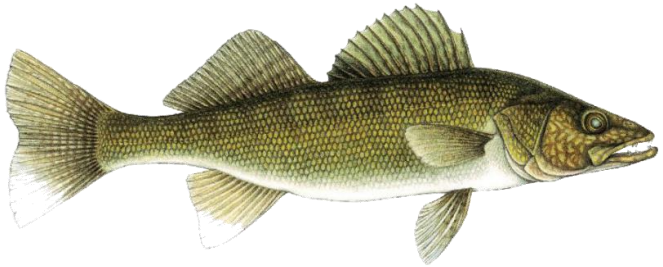
Streamers

Divers

And just about everything else

The BWCA has other fish . . .

Lake Trout



Walleye

Brook Trout

. . . but we didn't catch any of those

Some Fish Pics

Just Jumping into the Canoe

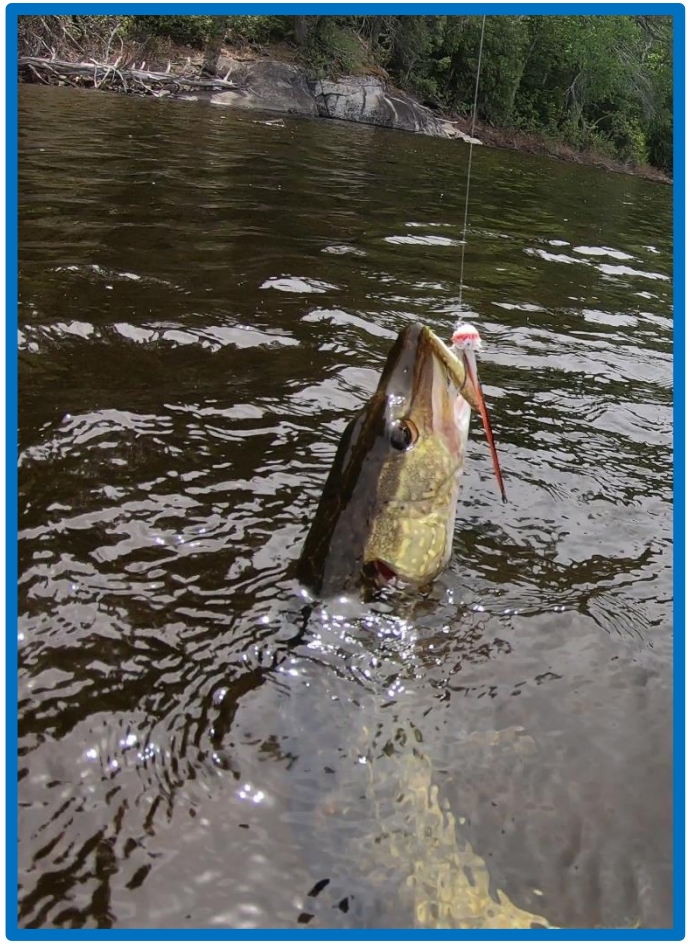
An Average Smallmouth

More Fish Pics

Another Nice Smallie

Some Fish Were Taken on the Wade

Some Toothy Fish Pics



Careful with the Toothy Critters

More Toothy Fish Pics

And More Pike Pics

CAMP LIFE
TIMBER TOP

BWCA Campsites

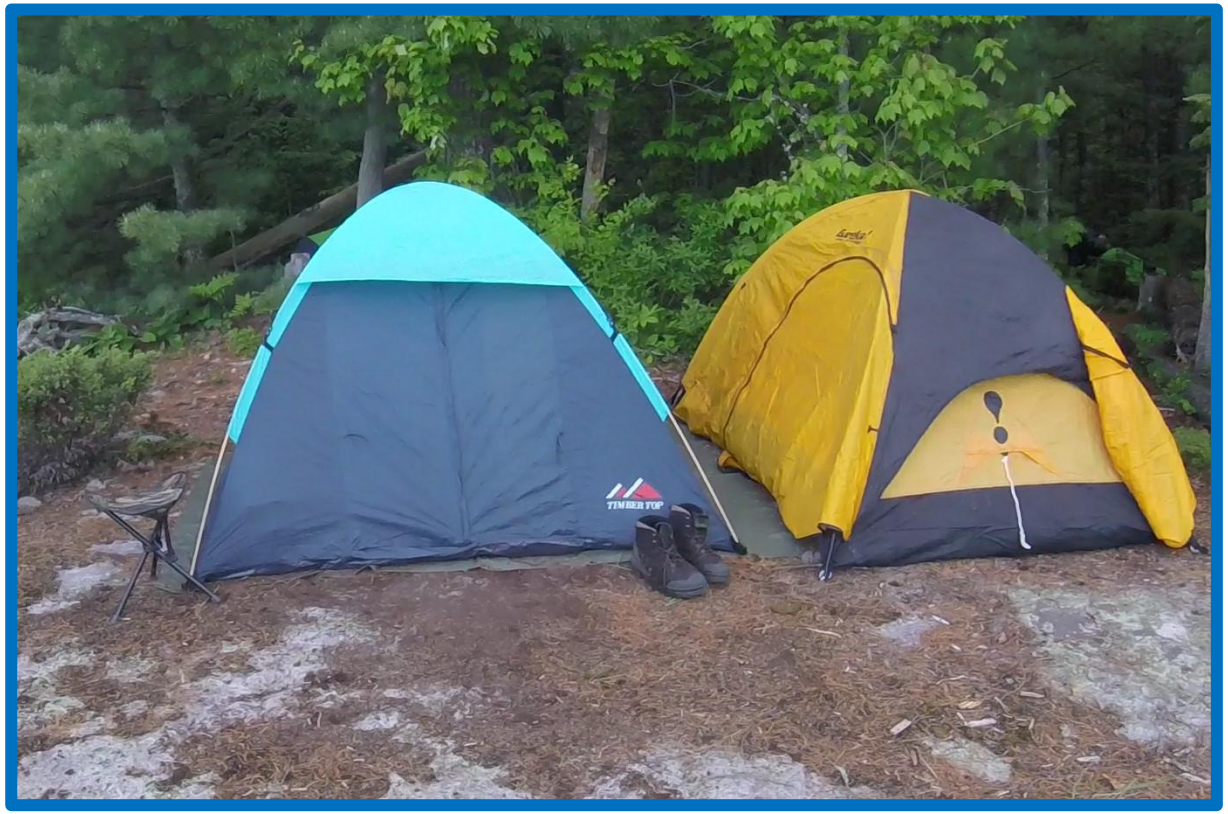
- Must Use USFS Established / Approved Sites
  - - Fire Pit and Pit Toilet
  - - No external markings (signs)
  - - Marked on maps, but approved sites rotate
- No Reserved Sites – First Come / First Serve
- Permit System Limits Number of Campers

Our Campsite

- **Not Our First Choice**
  - **Intended to go to 41 Island (6 km from portage)**
  - **Elected to stay near portage due to time**
  - **Selected site 400 meters from portage**
  - **Flat rock outcropping with overgrown forest**
  - **Worked out Exceptionally Well**

Camp Life

Small Tents in Woodline
Larger Tents on Rock Face



Camp Life

The Ultimate Bear Bag

Tarp Covered Storage Area

Camp Life

Fire Pit & Kitchen Station

And The Million Dollar View

Morning Mist on the Lake
Campsite in the Morning

BWCA SUPPORT

Permits, Canoes, BW Packs, Shuttle Service

Small tackle shop & convenience store

Bathroom and showers

Pine Ridge Hotel at Crane Lake

Across the street from Andersons

BWCA: First Timer Comments

Canoe Fishing

- Seated casting, odd angles challenging (different than kayak)
- The seat / seated posture: From uncomfortable to painful
- If not familiar – go out and practice

Chotas / Wading Pants a Must

- In & Out of Canoe = In & Out of the Water
- Normal Water in canoe bottom

BWCA: First Timer Comments

Leave the Trout Gear at Home

- Not Rappahannock smallmouth: Bigger fish, Bigger flies
- 8 wt rod, 0-3X leader & tippet, bass / pike flies (hooks)

Pike

- Great fishing experience – Be Prepared
- Wire tippets, fish grip (& how to use)
- Loss of flies (had a 1:1 loss rate one day)

BWCA: First Timer Comments

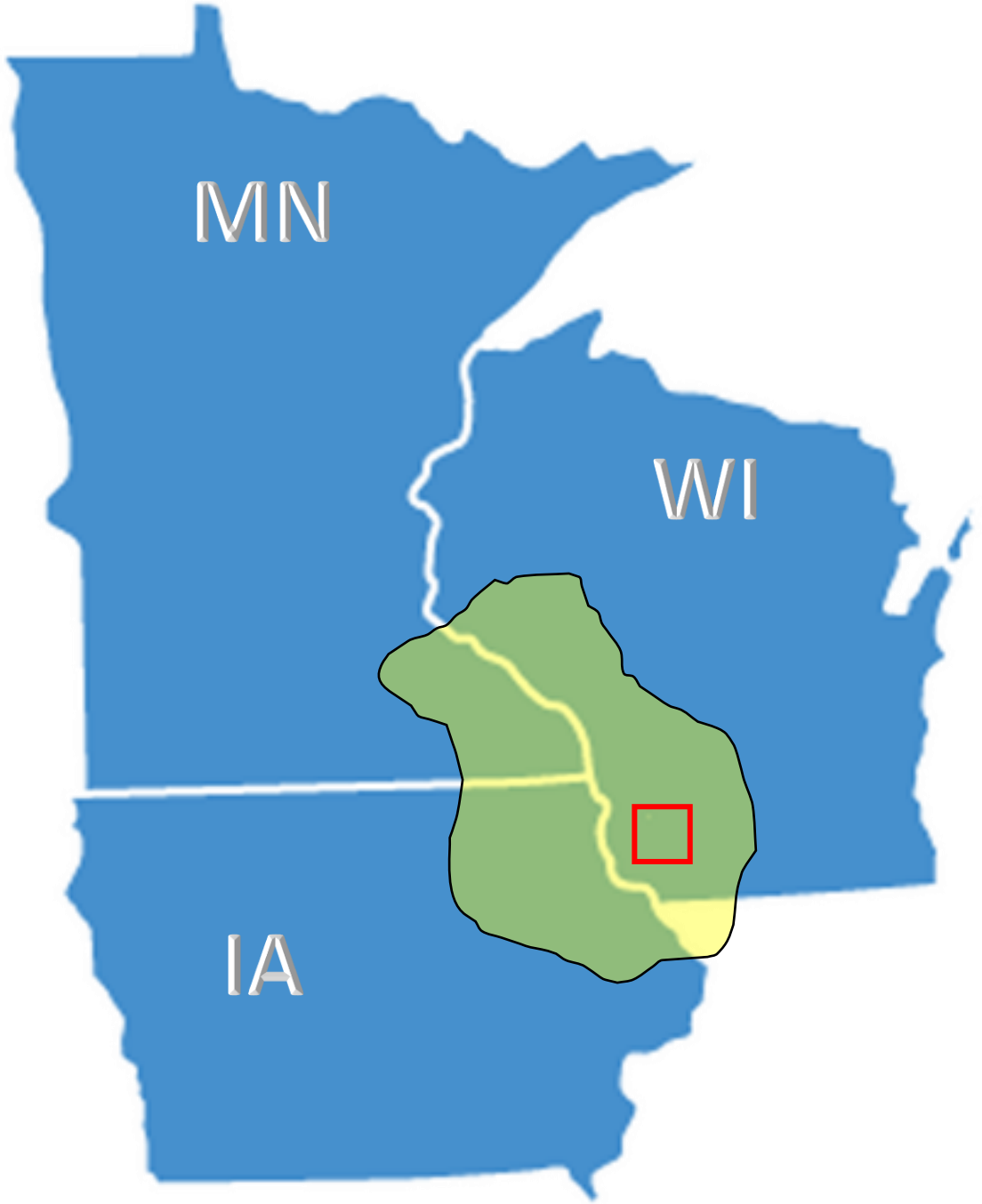
Water Seal / Plastic Bag Everything (heavy duty)

- Anything in the canoe gets soaked

Crocs type shoes proved very useful in camp

- Easy on / off at night

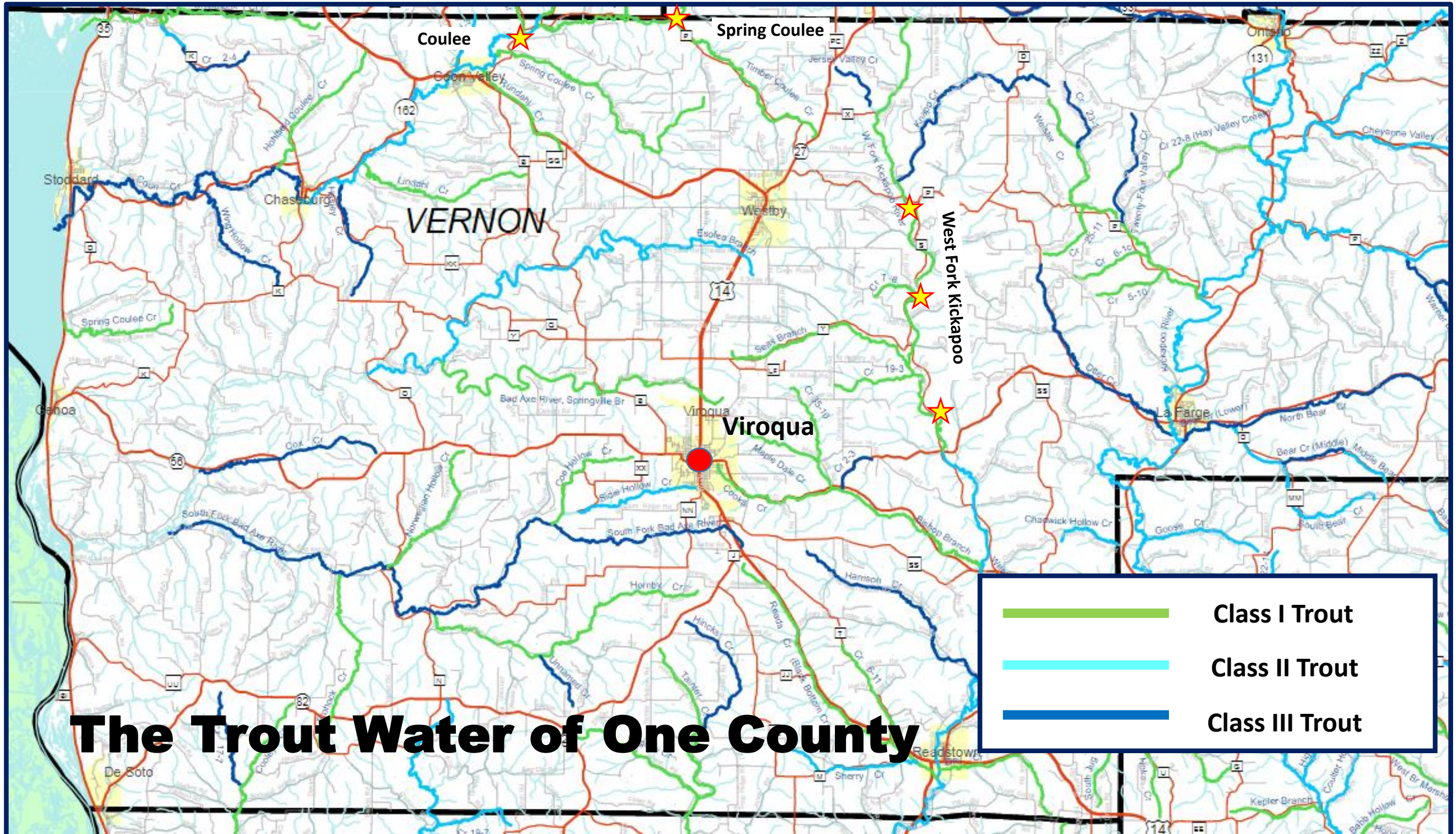
Fishing Stop-Overs on Way Home
The Driftless Region of Wisconsin
&
The Tippecanoe River of Indiana



The Driftless

- Parts of WI, MN, IA
- 24k square miles
- Lack of Glacial Deposits (drift)
- Spring fed streams

- SW Wisconsin (Viroqua, Westby)
  - 250 miles of trout water
  - 63 spring creeks


Coulee
Spring Coulee
West Fork Kickapoo
Viroqua
VERNON
Class I Trout
Class II Trout
Class III Trout
The Trout Water of One County

The Driftless (Viroqua, WI)

- Driftless Area Restoration Effort (DARE)
- Conservation groups provide stream / land restoration
- Farmers grant easements to anglers
- Small annual stipends

The Driftless (Viroqua, WI)

- **Wild Browns & Brookies**

8-12” w/ a few to 15”

7-10”

We didn’t fish the Brook Trout streams

- **Hot Flies**

Para-Adams

Lady Victoria (Purple Haze)

BH Pheasant Tail

Pink Squirrel

- **Small Water, Remarkably Diverse Streams**
- **Stream Access: From car door easy to “Dude, you alive?”**

Small Water, Remarkably Diverse Streams

Fast Run Riffles

Rock Quarry Pools

Slow Meadow

Deep Cuts in Woodland

The Driftless

- **Rental Cabin along the Kickapoo River**

- **Guide and a Split Day Approach**
  - **Two anglers with guide on Coulee Stream**
  - **Other pair of anglers on own near cabin (Kickapoo)**
  - **Rotated morning / evening**

The Driftless

- Coulee fished well in afternoon, but otherwise marginal fishing
  - - Low water conditions
  - - Split day w/ guide limited flexibility on stream selection
  - - Fished much better last year (later in the summer)

Mostly Small Browns

Mix of dries & nymphs

Better fishing late afternoon

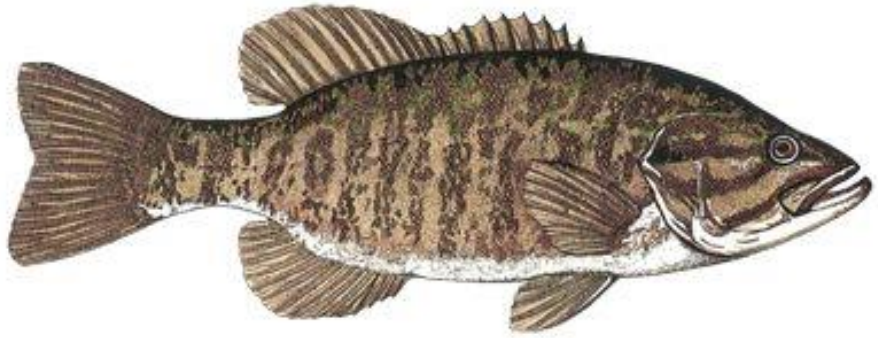
The Tippecanoe

Tippecanoe River

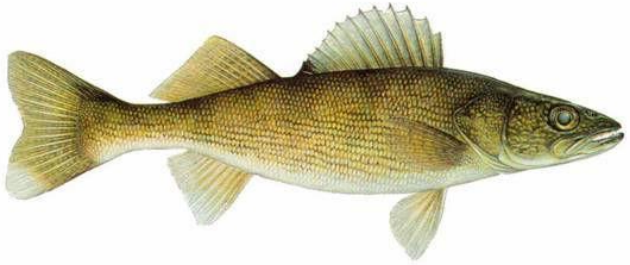
- 182 miles long – Central Indiana
- We floated 9 mile southern section
  - Near West Lafayette (Purdue Univ)
- Primarily Smallmouth
  + Sauger, Carp, Freshwater Drum
- Not a Destination River
  - Just a good mid-point between the Driftless and Fredericksburg

The Tippecanoe

Primarily a Smallmouth Fishery

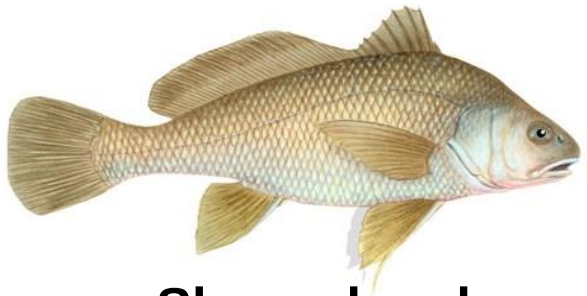


But Also:



Sauger

Buffalo (Carp)



Sheepshead (freshwater drum)

The Tippecanoe

Extended Full Day Float with Indiana Fly Fishing

- - Jeff Conrad (owner / operator)
- - Marc Dixon (from Marc Dixon Guides)

Hard Side
&
Inflatable Drift Boat

The Tippecanoe

Standard smallmouth flies: Poppers, streamers, divers

- - The Conrad Sculpin (a diver), the wounded minnow (streamer)

Not a lot of fish (water flow

& heat), but some nice fish

The 2021 BWCA Trip