

The folks at Perch Patrol Guide Service suggest March as the best time for giants because schools seem larger and more concentrated, and prespawn females are hitting peak weights. Large schools are often found in deeper portions of the main basin so finding fish can be a hole-drilling extravaganza. Perch here are well fed on abundant freshwater shrimp and can be far less aggressive than on other popular waters, meaning that smaller baits are often necessary to catch fish. Hali Spoons between 3 and 4 grams or other slender spoons, rigged with a dropline or chain entice large fish, especially light biters that barely mouth the smaller bait hanging below the spoon. Hali also sells chain droppers that can be added to other spoons. Horizontal-style jigs like the Genz Worm and Rat Finkees in the 1/50- to 1/32-ounce range also are top producers when tipped with maggots or waxies. **Contact:** Perch Patrol Guide Service, [perchpatrol.com](http://perchpatrol.com), 701/351-3474.

## LAKE SIMCOE

Like Devil's Lake, Lake Simcoe in central Ontario is a perennial producer of ponderous perch and is home to the world-famous Orillia Perch Festival held each spring. *In-Fisherman* Field Editor Gord Pyzer suggests a run-and-gun approach for targeting Simcoe perch during the winter months, as fish tend to travel in large schools on main basin flats in 24 to 40 feet of water. Cook's Bay on the south end is a popular base camp for winter perch, but many of the well-marked shoals or flats produce fish.

As the ice melts, many Simcoe perch congregate in Atherley Narrows on the north end. These are fish preparing to spawn, and the size of the females can be incredible. Light jigs and emerald shiners are popular spring presentations, but top anglers often employ Gulp! products and scented soft plastics to catch large numbers of fish while improving overall efficiency. **Contact:** Guide Dave Chong, [dchong@fishingharddreambig.com](mailto:dchong@fishingharddreambig.com), 416/993-3477.

## LAKE ERIE

Probably the finest all around yellow perch fishery on the planet, Lake Erie is well known for its trophy potential. Fishing pressure is



many lakes, most of the perch fishing pressure on these lakes occurs during winter.

Dan Kiazuk of Cat Eye Outfitter says that while both lakes have huge perch, Lake Manitoba has the best potential for numbers of large fish. The daunting size of these lakes makes locating fish a challenge and searching vast areas makes safety a top priority. A GPS unit is necessary, not only for marking locations of fish, but also for finding your way back home.

These lakes are shallow and hot winter bites often occur in depths of 14 feet or less. Run-and-gun tactics with livebait are the best approach for locating fish, after which a live minnow dangled under a single split shot is effective. Kiazuk says that Berkeley Gulp! and PowerBait outfish livebait on some days. **Contact:** Guide Dan Kiazuk, [cateyeoutfitter.com](http://cateyeoutfitter.com), 228-3933.

higher in the shallow waters of the western basin, but anglers in search of giant perch should look farther east on both the U.S. and Canadian sides. The eastern fringes of the central basin remain untapped for huge perch roaming the clear waters off Ashtabula and Conneaut and on into Pennsylvania. Pyzer echoes this for the Canadian side, suggesting that the entire north shore offers great opportunities for large perch and fishing pressure is light.

Perch in Erie are nomads and can be finicky, requiring livebait when the bite gets tough. Isolated man-made structures such as natural gas wells can be perch meccas at certain times of the year. Perch in the eastern and central basins are often in depths of 30 feet or more, so barotrauma often is an issue, requiring anglers to keep most of their catch. **Contact:** North Coast Charter Boat Association, [northcoastcharter.com](http://northcoastcharter.com), for charters fishing the eastern and central basins.

## MANITOBA MONSTERS

Manitoba boasts some of the finest habitat for growing big perch in North America—large, windswept lakes blessed with prairie fertility. Combine these factors with light fishing pressure and you have the perfect recipe for giant fish. Sprawling lakes Winnipeg and Manitoba are top waters for giants. Similar to

## NEBRASKA SANDHILLS

The Sandhill Lakes in Nebraska have long been known for trophy bluegills, but these shallow, natural lakes also provide excellent opportunities for large perch. Daryl Bauer, *In-Fisherman* contributor and fishery biologist with Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, says that winter is the best time to target Sandhills perch. Many of these lakes support lush aquatic vegetation during summer, which makes locating perch difficult.

Finding fish gets easier after the weeds die back and perch begin to roam the basin. Basin roamers tend to congregate around points, inside corners, and pinch points. The spot on the spot can be very subtle. A minuscule remnant of vegetation or a depth change of 2 feet or less might be all it takes to concentrate fish in large numbers. Finding these areas requires an active ice auger.

Bauer likes small minnows (where legal) and waxworms, but some lakes in the region are murkier and Lindy's Rattlin Flyer, Swedish Pimples, and Northland's Buckshot Rattle Spoon become good bets. When the bite gets tough, try a waxworm dangled on a dropper rig below a spoon. **Contact:** Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, [outdoornebraska.ne.gov](http://outdoornebraska.ne.gov). ■

\*Daniel Isermann, Stevens Point, Wisconsin, is a frequent contributor to *In-Fisherman* publications.