

# On Wisconsin Outdoors

With the Dick Ellis Experts

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## Long in Variety

*Long Lake just one of 1000 Washburn County angler choices*

*By Dick Ellis*

Any “office stress” that might have been in Jim Stroede’s boat was thrown overboard with the first minnows sent to a waiting congregation of crappies spawning on Long Lake in Washburn County. Sunshine fell over Stroede and me as fluorescent floats drifted down the timber-strewn shoreline before sliding under the surface again and again, courtesy of a gaggle of hungry fish. After a leisurely ride northwest from the suburbs of Milwaukee, it wouldn’t take long before we were counting crappies in the live-well to ensure that we weren’t pushing our two-man limit.

“Anywhere there are trees laying in the water with the right kind of depth you’re going to find these spawning fish,” said Stroede, a professional guide working many of Washburn County’s nearly 1000



*Washburn County visitors find almost 1000 lakes to choose from and great fishing from panfish to trophy muskies. This northern pike was caught on Little Long Lake. (James Schmitz- Courtesy of Washburn County Tourism Association)*

lakes. “This is as simple as fishing gets. A hook and single split-shot with a bobber two feet up and a crappie minnow is all you need.”

Most anglers won’t argue with simple success. After our introduction in Spooner coordinated by Washburn County Tourism Director Michelle Voight, my afternoon fishing with Stroede was relaxed pure fun, and productive. After pounding crappies like he knew we would, we moved to bigger water on Long Lake to target northern pike, smallmouth bass, perch, some bigger crappies and hopefully a walleye or two holding on a weedline.

“We catch walleyes,” said Stroede. “But we also catch bonus smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, northern pike, crappies, perch and big bluegills by finding green weeds and working the deepest end of the weedline. It’s a great way to catch a lot of fish and different kinds of fish in the summertime.”

On this sweltering hot late May afternoon, the gamefish cooperated with the game plan. Stroede controlled the boat and kept us positioned just off the weedline, allowing us to work the water precisely. Our catch would include crappie, smallmouth bass, perch and a hard-fighting pike.

“This isn’t prime time for walleyes,” said Stroede. “But Long Lake is known as the Walleye Capital of Wisconsin and it would not have surprised me to pick up a



*After targeting and catching more than a dozen spawning crappies in short order on minnows, Guide Jim Stroede changes to a multi-species weedline jig and minnow tactic and catches smallmouth bass, northern pike and this bigger crappie. Anglers have almost 1000 lakes to choose from in Washburn County. (Ellis)*

fish or two despite the hot afternoon and bright sunshine. We catch a lot of 15 and 16 inch walleyes, 22 inch fish are common and there are many 30 inch walleyes caught out here. It’s a real nice lake.”

Long Lake is a narrow, 3300 acre gem stretching almost 19 miles and reaching depths of more than 70 feet. The fishing is fabulous, but Long Lake is only one choice of seemingly countless lakes that Wash-



Guide Jim Stroede's trophy muskies include this 49-3/4 inch Tiger Musky caught and released by client Dave Stewart of Chicago in 2005. He strongly recommends Washburn County to the musky angler as a well-kept secret with trophy lakes and 'action' lakes. (Courtesy of Jim Stroede)

burn County has to offer the Wisconsin angler and vacationing family. According to Tourism Director Michelle Voight, not only is Washburn County home to the Walleye Capital of Wisconsin in Long Lake, but it is also home to the Bluegill Capital of Wisconsin in Birchwood and the World's Largest Musky Fish Hatchery in the world.

"With nearly a thousand lakes and over 30,000 acres of water in Washburn County, fishing is one of the favorite pastimes of locals and visitors alike," Voight said. "Washburn County is a fisherman's dream where fishing tales become reality."

Washburn County, she said, is also home to many great events including the Spooner Rodeo in July and the Stone Lake Cranberry Festival in October. There are also great festivals including Birchwood Bluegill Festival in July, Minong Summer Days in August, Shell Lake Town & Country Days in September, and Spooner Jack Frost Festival in January.

"You could be waking up to the sound of a loon outside your cabin or the sound of a fish jumping outside of your tent when you stay in Washburn County," Voight said. "If you didn't bring your boat or are in need of someone to show you the fishing 'hot spots,' our Tourism experts will help you with fishing guides, bait shops, boat rentals and more. No matter what your interests are, you are

sure to find more than enough to do during your stay in Washburn County. From ATV to horse trails; Scenic, wild rivers to historic train rides; there are plenty of experiences waiting for you."

My experience on the water was superb. Stroede is an enthusiastic angler targeting all species of gamefish literally looking forward to "bigger" things ahead. The musky season would open with the Memorial Day weekend a week after our trip.

"Musky fishing here is awesome," he said. "We trailer the boat and move from one lake to the next. It never seems to end.

Washburn County doesn't get the musky fishing pressure

that some northern Wisconsin counties get, but the lakes here are of the same quality. You might be fishing a great 1000 acre lake in another county and be among 20 other boats fishing. You can come to Washburn County and find lakes with equivalent quality and be the only boat on the lake. You're missing great musky fishing if you don't expand your horizons into Washburn County."

Stroede begins fishing small, dark-water "action" lakes and by mid-summer is targeting open water for suspended muskies on bigger, clear water lakes. By fall, he has transitioned to live bait rigs and artificial lures to focus on trophy fish.

"I fish muskies on water from Hayward to Spooner to lakes close to Lake Superior," he said. "An average musky is 36 inches. It's our bread and butter fish and we can usually put one in the boat every day. As a guide, if you can take someone out and put a fish like that in the boat you can feel like you've done a pretty good job. Sometimes, if we've already caught a fish from 35 to 42 inches or the client just wants to roll the dice for a giant fish, we'll move to one of the lakes known for monster fish."

Stroede's best fish include a 52 inch true musky taken and released in 2004 and a monster, 49-3/4 inch Tiger, or hybrid, caught and released in 2005. His

clients made replicas of those fish for the wall. Washburn County fishing, obviously, builds memories

"The beauty of northern Wisconsin and Washburn County," Stroede said, "includes all the lakes and all the options."

Voight and team are more than ready to help you with those options. "Washburn County boasts a wide variety of accommodations including campgrounds, resorts, bed and breakfasts, and hotels," she said. "Whether you are looking for a Northwood's resort to spend a week at or a comfortable hotel, you'll be sure to find a great place to rest after a fun-filled day in Washburn County. If you've never experienced our true, northern hospitality, we welcome you to join us for a few days, a week, or longer. If you need any assistance in planning your trip, contact the Washburn County Information Center where our helpful, friendly staff is there to assist you."

For information on recreation, lodging, dining and more, log on to [www.washburn-county.org](http://www.washburn-county.org) or call 1-800-367-3306. Connect with Jim Stroede at [www.jimstroedefishing.com](http://www.jimstroedefishing.com), 715-635-7927, or [stroede@centurytel.net](mailto:stroede@centurytel.net).

More outdoors? Connect with us at [www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com](http://www.onwisconsinoutdoors.com). 



Guide Jim Stroede targeted a variety of fish species on the weedlines of Long Lake in Washburn County and this pike brought the cabbage up to prove where he'd been hiding. Smallmouth bass and crappies also fell to Stroede's jig and minnow presentation within 45 minutes. Washburn County, according to Tourism Director Michelle Voight, is a paradise for the Wisconsin traveler, including offering the angler almost 1000 lakes to choose from. (Ellis)