



## EXOTIC SPECIES

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01

# NORWEGIAN BORDER PIKES

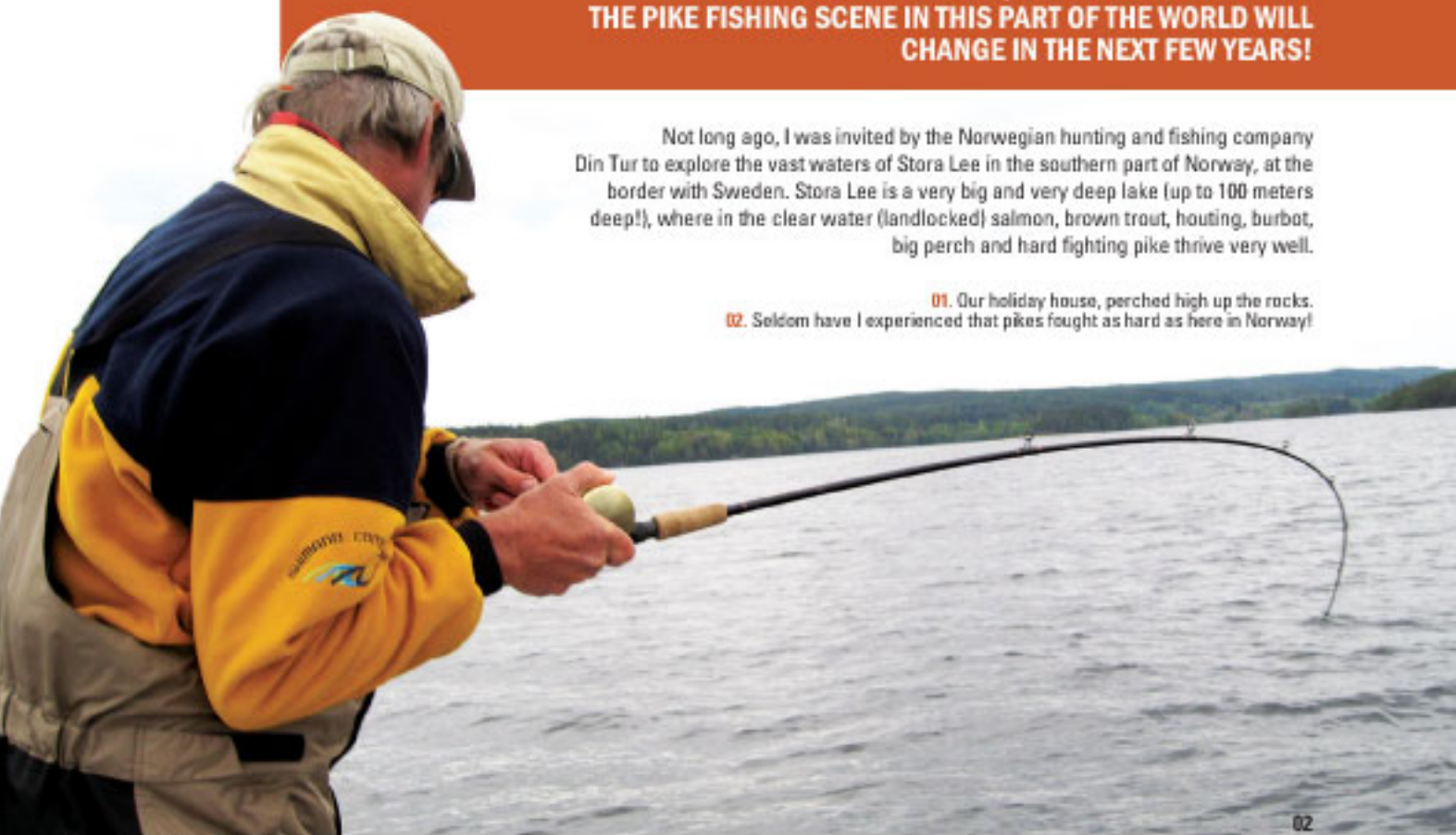
## THE LEAN, MEAN FIGHTING MACHINES

SWEDEN IS COMMONLY REGARDED AS A PRIME PIKE DESTINATION (SUCH AS VASTERVIK) IN EUROPE, BUT NOT SO WELL KNOWN IS THAT NORWAY ALSO OFFERS MAYBE EVEN BETTER FISHING FOR MONSTER PIKE.

AFTER THIS TRIP OF MINE, I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT THE PIKE FISHING SCENE IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD WILL CHANGE IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS!

Not long ago, I was invited by the Norwegian hunting and fishing company Din Tur to explore the vast waters of Stora Lee in the southern part of Norway, at the border with Sweden. Stora Lee is a very big and very deep lake (up to 100 meters deep!), where in the clear water (landlocked) salmon, brown trout, houting, burbot, big perch and hard fighting pike thrive very well.

01. Our holiday house, perched high up the rocks.  
02. Seldom have I experienced that pikes fought as hard as here in Norway!



02



03

### STORA LEE

Our home for the coming week is Stora Lee Camping (more info pg 36), near Halden/Åre mark, ideally located opposite the connecting passage to Foxen, another big deep lake with dangerous submerged rocks, situated in the province of Dalsland in Sweden, which is already well known for its numerous (big) pike. There are more than enough fishing options when you see that Stora Lee alone is more than 30 km long with numerous interesting bays and islands for fishing!

After a long but relaxed drive of 13 hours from Holland, my friend Dirk Wezelman and I arrive at the holiday house which is perched high up the rocks above the camp site with a splendid view of the lake. We cannot wait to start fishing, especially after inspecting our boat; a brand new fishing machine equipped with a 4-stroke 20 HP, four rod holders and a lot of working space. Within minutes after unloading, we have prepared our rods and reels but in my

enthusiasm I tighten the screw of the reel fitting of my Shimano Compre a little too much and there is a nasty cracking sound. Anyway, my Calcutta 400 looks okay and still fitted well on the rod (or does it?)

- 03. One of the bigger pikes of the first three, very tough days.
- 04. Finally I hit the (first) jackpot, landing this aggressive pike of 113 cm after a memorable fight with a collapsing reel fit!



04



## A COLD START

The last week's weather has been exceptionally warm for the time of year and according to some other anglers who have fished Foxen the week before, the fishing has proved to be quite difficult. The pike had just started/finished spawning and in some sheltered bays in Foxen the water temperature had risen to 17 degrees Celsius.

The weather is still very nice on arrival, but the forecast tells us that the weather will change in the coming days, with dropping temperatures and even frost in the nights! Michel, a friend of us who had fished Stora Lee and Foxen the previous week, had showed us some bays on the maps where he had caught some nice pikes and got a lot of fish following his lures, however no sign of a real big pike.

Hoping that we will have more luck and that the pike will cooperate a bit more, we explore the first day the same bays Michel showed us. But although they all look very promising with nice reed beds, submerged rock points etc., we fail to hook any decent pikes. Even small pikes are not easy to catch, we get most



action on 15 cm shads and dark coloured Sizmic Senior Toads (rubber frogs).

To cut a long story short, after three days of hard fishing we are quite desperate. Because of the strong, cold Northerly wind and frosty nights, the water temperature on Stora Lee has dropped suddenly from 11-13 degrees to 5-6 degrees Celsius in only 12 hours! On

Foxen the temperature drop is less extreme, but still a couple of degrees lower.

- 05. The second big pike of the day and what a fish; a 118 cm Norwegian beauty.
- 06. All pikes fought incredibly hard and had beautiful markings.
- 07. 111 cm; the third big pike of this unforgettable day.



This sudden drop seems to have stopped the activity of the pike and whatever we try in those three days, nothing seems to help. Trolling is also not a better option, although I catch almost straightaway a small pike of 50cm on a Super Shad Rap at a depth of over 17 meters! We try everything, deeper to around 8 meters near submerged rocks and very shallow in sheltered bays where the water is considerably warmer, but where we hardly see any activity of fish. Not even a sign of schools of bream, which was a pain in the ass, for Michel the previous week, was hooking them constantly in their backs with lures.

What can we do more? A phone call with the domestic fishing guide Pal Dramstad doesn't give us much more hope. He also gives us the advice to fish with dark coloured jerk baits (brown, orange, dark green) at places where the bottom shelves up from 7-8 meters to 2-3 meters, something we have tried numerous times the previous days, without any luck. He has caught however a lot of fish doing that same thing two days ago, with a few pikes over a meter, in a bay which we had ignored so far... one

of the few! We decide to give this bay the next day an ultimate shot, you never know!

### D-DAY

After the alarm have woken us at 5 o'clock in the morning, we are on our way. It's an hour to the bay, which means a long drive. Luckily the water is calm this morning and 45 minutes later we are in the back of the bay where we find some interesting rock points with nice depths around them. After a couple of casts over 7 meters of water I notice in the dark clear water a big pike following my brown Sismic Magnum Toad, which turns away from the boat at the very last moment. I drop the lure back straight away but in my frantic hurry the line gets tangled around the big single hook, chance gone!

After that nothing happens for the next hour, although the place "smells" of pike with numerous submerged rocks and very irregular bottom, until Dirk catches the most ugly pike of the week; a black, battered fish of around 85 cm. To make things worse the pike goes frantic during unhooking and drives one of the hook points of the treble deep in one of his fingers! There is no chance to turn the

hook point and cut it off, so there is only one option, pull! Dirk, being a sturdy commercial fisherman, doesn't give a damn and minutes later we are on our way to another spot in the big bay. But it is the same story again, whatever we try, we fail to catch any pike, let alone a big one!

It is already past midday when we are drifting alongside two islands, when suddenly a big pike appears out of the dark depth, aggressively following my mega-frog. Shit! This pike looks definitely hungry and I quickly drop the lure again and within seconds it is taken violently. With the attack only a few meters under the boat the rod is bent double on the strike and at that moment my reel is launched into the air! Luckily I manage to grab the reel in reflex action, playing the fish with, in one hand the rod and in the other hand the reel! It is a big pike and I am glad that everything goes okay. Minutes later we are admiring at the first big pike of the week, 113 cm. Yes, finally!

**08.** This 'big head pike' of Dirk missed the meter mark by one centimetre!



My rod and reel get a closer inspection and with a ty-rib we fix the reel again firmly on the rod. Hope that will do for the rest of the day!

We try the same spot for another 20 minutes. I get another hit on my Magnum Toad, but after that nothing more. But on the shallower water in between the islands with some weed growth, Dirk's first cast with a Strike Pro Buster Jerk results straight away in a nice pike. After that we experience some hectic actions in the next hour in which we hook at least 15 pikes, mostly on jerk baits. True, no meter plus fish any more, but nice distinctive marked pikes between 75 and 90 cm, which all fight incredibly hard!

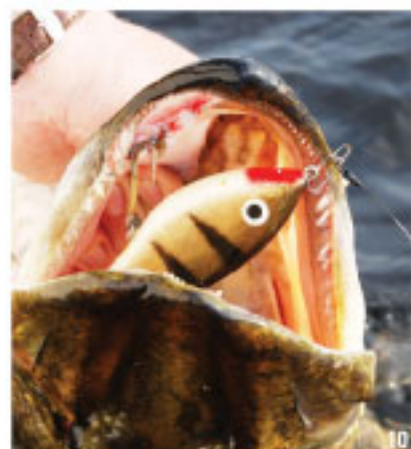
### GETTING MORE EXCITING

After a short break on the biggest island, we give the hot spot a well deserved rest, planning to come back a couple of hours later. Another isolated island looks also quite interesting with sharp submerged rocks coming up steep from 10-15 meters of water.

On the first point I soon catch a nice pike of around 80 cm on a natural perch coloured Fox Replicant. That gives hope for more.



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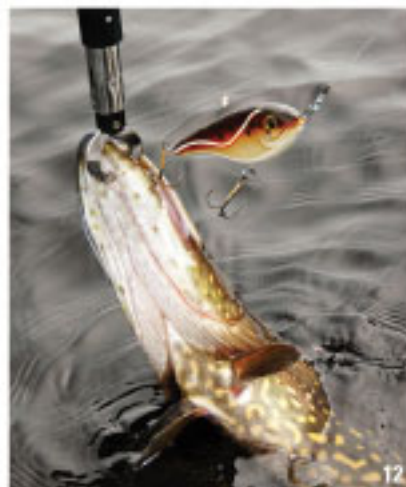


Ten minutes later the same lure lands with a big splash right in between two submerged rocks. The moment I lift it up from the bottom with a sharp jerk I get a very firm strike.

For a moment I can feel the braid scraping over the rocks but seconds later the fish dives deep under the boat. I can feel it is a big fish, but how big? I notice a dark shape in the clear water and my first estimation is another pike of around or just over a meter. But when I drag the fish beside the boat we both realise it is much bigger. On the unhooking mat in the boat the measuring tape reveals 118 cm! A beautifully marked Norwegian pike in splendid condition. What a day...and it is not over yet!



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- 09. A nice pose for magazine cover.
- 10. The only picture of my cannibalistic monster of well over 110 cm, just before it went off without another picture!
- 11. Two of my favourite lures, which did very well on this trip.
- 12. Dirk's favourite; Strike Pro Buster Jerk in the special cod colour. A lot of pikes, but why not a really big one?

Towards 18:00 hour we are back at the two small islands, but funny enough we fail to get a bite in the first half hour.

Where are the pikes, have they moved again to another place? On the depth finder we notice a long submerged rocky ledge on the other side of the smallest island, going out for at least 50 meters before it drops sharply from 2 to 8 meter. Right on that precise spot we hook every drift one pike after another on our jerk baits! And they are all big fish over 90 cm, this is



complete madness! Dirk hooks at least 10 pikes with lengths of 97, 97, 98 and 99 cm, but fails somehow to catch one over the magic 100 cm.



Luck is on my side today and after catching a couple of nice pikes over 90 cm, I land another big, mean but lean pike of 111 cm, followed by another even bigger fish, which has swallowed just recently another pike of at least 60 cm! Just when I want to take a closer picture while Dirk is unhooking the pike, the monster makes a sudden move and Dirk has to let it go. No picture of this cannibalistic pike, no exact measurement, but we both agree that this pike is for sure a lot bigger than the last one! But four fish of 110 cm+ on lures in one day, it would be hard to break this record again!

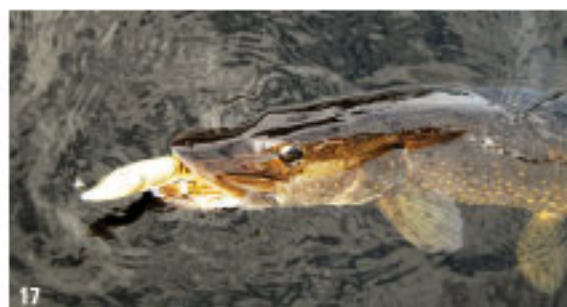
In ecstasy we drive back to our comfortable holiday house. Who would have expected this result after some very tough days? For sure not us!

### CANNIBALS

Not surprisingly we find ourselves the next day at the same place, early morning again. But after four hook ups in a row, with three nice pikes over 90 cm as a result, it is suddenly over on the submerged rock bar. We try all areas around the two islands but to no avail, except for one nice pike of 97 cm which attacks my Salmo Pike jerk bait very greedily, as if there is no tomorrow, in hardly 2 meters of water.



- 13. Irresistible action!
- 14. The Sismic Magnum Toad in front and the 20 cm Fox Replicant behind.
- 15. Any idea how many casts you make during a week like this?
- 16&17. Pike are real cannibals during the spawning season, so don't forget to put a Salmo Pike in your tackle box!



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*Seldom have I fished in a more beautiful and pristine surrounding as Stora Lee in southern Norway. For sure, the deep, clear water here harbours enormous pike and it would not surprise me at all when a monster pike of well over 20 kg will soon be caught!*

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The rest of the day we manage to catch a few more pikes, but nothing compared to the hectic actions of the previous day. However Dirk is a little luckier this time with a fish of exactly 100 cm.

The last day comes faster than expected and we decide to explore another area which looks very interesting on the map with lots of small and bigger islands and shallow bays, close to deeper water. Although we catch some nice pikes during the morning and early afternoon, nothing special happens except maybe for two big (meter plus) fish which are following my lure right under the boat again, but not willing to attack it, whatever I try.

But when we go over a series of

small bays of a big island, it is bingo again on jerk baits. Most of them are good fish of well over 90 cm and when Dirk is playing a smaller fish I catch my fifth pike over a meter, a very thick fish of 102 cm. We do miss a lot of strikes on our 'flankers' (flat jerk baits), while on my Salmo Pike every strike results in a fish! They seem to be very aggressive towards members of the same species!

Dirk has saved his luck for the last moment and hooks finally another big fish, which grabs his dark green perch Max right under the boat. It seems that this fish wants to prove one more time how strong these Norwegian pikes are and dives into the reeds time after time before we can land it. A gorgeous looking pike of 111 cm, which looks even bigger with its big,

aggressive head.

On our way back with over 20 pikes in the pocket we cannot resist to make a couple of last casts on our lucky submerged rock bar. Dirk gets almost straight away two hook ups of which one stay on the hook and on the other side of the island I manage to catch a real last minute pike of 92 cm on a shallow Buster Jerk. Perfect finale for a perfect last day.

Three very difficult days, followed by three fantastic days with over 50 pikes, most of them well over 80 cm. It certainly speaks volume about the fantastic fishing potentials of Stora Lee and Foxen.

18. Irresistible for most pikes!

19. My fifth pike over a meter, a heavy lady of 102 cm.





## THE POSER

There was one other interesting fact worthy of our attention; all pikes over a meter (and also all the really big fish that followed our lures) were caught on lures without a rattle! Coincidence? Maybe, true we caught a lot of fish on the fine Strike Pro Buster jerk baits, but none was over a meter (but very close, to be honest). Dirk caught both his two meter fish on a home made dark green, perch coloured Max of André Koehoorn/Marco Dol.

Of my five big pikes, three were caught on a 'good old' brown/golden Robbait of Rob Kraaijeveld, one a brown/orange bellied Sizmik Magnum Toad and the biggest on a natural perch coloured Fox Replicant 20 cm.

Rarely have I fished in a more beautiful, pristine surrounding like southern Norway with lots of fish eagles,

gorgeous black-throated divers (Lat. *Gavia arctica*), beavers and elks (moose).

And one thing is for sure; in the deep, clear water of Stora Lee (and Foxen) live plenty of enormous pikes, and it would not surprise me at all when a monster pike of well over 20 kg will soon be caught!

(The unofficial record for Stora Lee at the time of writing stands at an impressive 17.9 kg and 132 cm!)

**Coming next issue:**  
*'Northern Norway - A fishing paradise', by Ferrario Roberto of Italy.*

20. Released to fight another day.  
21. Last but not least: Dirk with his well earned Norwegian 'power hitter' of 111cm.



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# STORA LEE THE NEXT HAVEN



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Stora Lee Camping is about halfway between Goteborg and Oslo in Southern Norway. You can fly to Oslo and then drive for 2-2.5 hours to Stora Lee (or drive all the way).

For fishing in Norway you don't need a permit, but beware, for fishing in Sweden (Foxen) you do! Something else you also have to take care of is the dangerous submerged rocks which can ruin your boat and engine in a split second! Most of them are well marked on the map with a stick, but you have to stay alert at all times!



- 22. Fish eagle sightings are common here.
- 23. A beautiful view of Stora Lee.

