

Hook, line & sinker: Niepagens make a huge haul in Manitoba
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Two generations of the Niepagen family from Bloomington-Normal scored big on a recent fishing trip to Manitoba.

Really big.

They boated channel catfish that touched 30 pounds and lake trout that topped that mark. At one point, they couldn't quit catching super-sized lake trout long enough to get some smaller ones for shore lunch.

"It was pretty crazy," said Lee Niepagen, who runs Wendell Niepagen Greenhouse on Fox Creek Road in Bloomington with his dad, who gave the place his name.

Wendell's brothers Melvin and Norman rounded out the foursome that headed north during the third week of July. Though mid-summer, it was just a week after ice-out at the northern most waters that were home to the lake trout.

First, the group drove to the famed Red River at Selkirk, Manitoba, about 30 miles north of Winnipeg to spend a day fishing with Dan Kiazzyk of Cat Eye Outfitter. Kiazzyk provided the cut bait made from 8- to 10-inch Goldeye. The pieces were put on 5/0 hooks attached to heavy line and taken down to holes in the river bottom 20 feet deep on a three-way rig. Some of the monsters took 15 minutes to land despite the heavy 40-pound gear.

"We caught 40 fish, all between 20 and 30 pounds, all channels," said Lee Niepagen, a hint of disbelief still apparent in his voice. "That was a good time, it was fun. The best thing about it was that it's supposed to be the best catfishing in the whole world, and we saw one boat the whole day."

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