

# FISHING HOLE

## CLOUD LAKE



### WHY GO:

Despite a shift away from walleye that this lake was once noted for, its smallmouth bass fishery has continued to produce trophy fish, and a recent fish survey suggested it has larger and heavier smallmouth bass than other lakes in the region. The lake's yellow perch population has also increased.

**ACCESS:** There is a boat ramp on the north side of the lake on Cloud Lake Road, which is about 5 miles west of Hwy. 61—the turn just south of Neebing, Ontario.

**VITALS:** According to the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources' (MNR) Fish ON-Line database, Cloud has a surface area of 420.9 hectares, or about 1,062 acres. The database says it has a maximum depth of about 16.5 meters or 54 feet. The database does not list an aver-

age depth. The lake, southwest of Thunder Bay, is subject to MNR Zone 6 regulations.

**FISH SPECIES PRESENT:** Cisco, northern pike, rainbow smelt, rock bass, smallmouth bass, walleye, white sucker and yellow perch.

**WATER QUALITY:** Declining water quality conditions have been noted at the lake in the last decade, and, as a result, Lakehead University, in conjunction with the Ontario MNR and several other partners, studied the lake the last few years, finding increased amounts of nutrients in the lake, likely the result of shoreline development and shoreline practices, with increased algae blooms. The results were released last October.

The report indicated that lake residents can make the biggest impact on reducing the amount of nutrients getting into the lake.

**SMALLIES STILL DOING WELL:** A smallmouth bass spawning survey conducted in June 2015, as part of the Lakehead project, found 266 smallmouth bass nests on the lake, though only 131 of the nests had healthy eggs. The survey found 186 nests with fry, 90 with un-hatched dead eggs, 77 with dead eggs and 35 with fungus. Of the many surfaces that Cloud offers bass to spawn on, cobble was the most used, with 173 nests on cobble, but pebble (46) and sand (23) the next most used by

smallies.

Even though there have been some water quality issues on the lake, there have continued to be some hefty smallmouth bass caught on the lake, with fish over 5 pounds reported this year.

The spawning survey observed most (63) bass in the range of 13.7 to 17.7 inches, with 50 smallies measuring over 17.7 inches.

InfoSuperior states, "It was noted that smallmouth bass catch per unit effort was higher, and the fish were larger and heavier than compared bass lakes in the region."

**OTHER SPECIES:** InfoSuperior also noted that the Cloud Lake assessment showed a shift in the fish community between 2015 and 1999.

"Catch per unit effort in 1999 showed walleye at the highest followed by rock bass, smallmouth bass, yellow perch, and lastly northern pike," a summary read. "In 2015, however, index netting shows a shift to yellow perch being twice as high as the next species smallmouth bass, rock bass, white sucker, walleye and northern pike.

"This further supports the conclusion of a shifting fish community from the previous stocked walleye populations that most local fishermen were accustomed to."  
—Javier Serna