

# FISHING HOLE

## OLIVER LAKE

**WHY GO:** This beautiful lake relatively close to Thunder Bay (in the jurisdiction of Neebing) is known for some big lake trout and northern pike, which anglers target in the winter, and lots of smallmouth bass, including some big ones, in the open-water periods.

**ACCESS:** Oliver has a boat ramp on the west end of the lake. The ramp is at the terminus of Podres Road E. The best route for getting here, whether coming from Minnesota or Thunder Bay, is heading west on 608 (from Hwy. 61). That intersection is north of Neebing. You'll be on that road for about 7 miles before 608 turns left and West Oliver Lake Road continues straight. Follow West Oliver until it turns into Podres Road and take a right. There was a ramp along East Oliver Lake Road that was blocked off by the Municipality of Neebing for safety reasons back in 2016. That access still shows up on the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry's Fish ON-Line website, but it is no longer usable.

**VITALS:** This 492-acre Ontario lake is pretty deep, giving coldwater refuge to lake trout and the ciscos that lakers and other predator fish love to eat. It has an average depth of about 75 feet.

**GAME SPECIES PRESENT:** Burbot, cisco, lake trout, lake whitefish, northern pike, smallmouth bass and walleye.

**LAKERS:** Justin Reid of D&R Sporting Goods Ltd., (807-345-3323) in Thunder

Bay said most anglers target lake trout in the winter. The winter season for lakers opens on Feb. 1, and a few years ago (2015), it became illegal to use smelt for bait in most of the zone, including Oliver Lake.

In the winter, anglers tend to jig with white tubes and swim baits. It's always good to bring along any electronics you have to help locate fish that could be suspended in the water column.

Reid said he's seen winter pictures from the lake with anglers posing with 20-pound lake trout, "even bigger," he said.

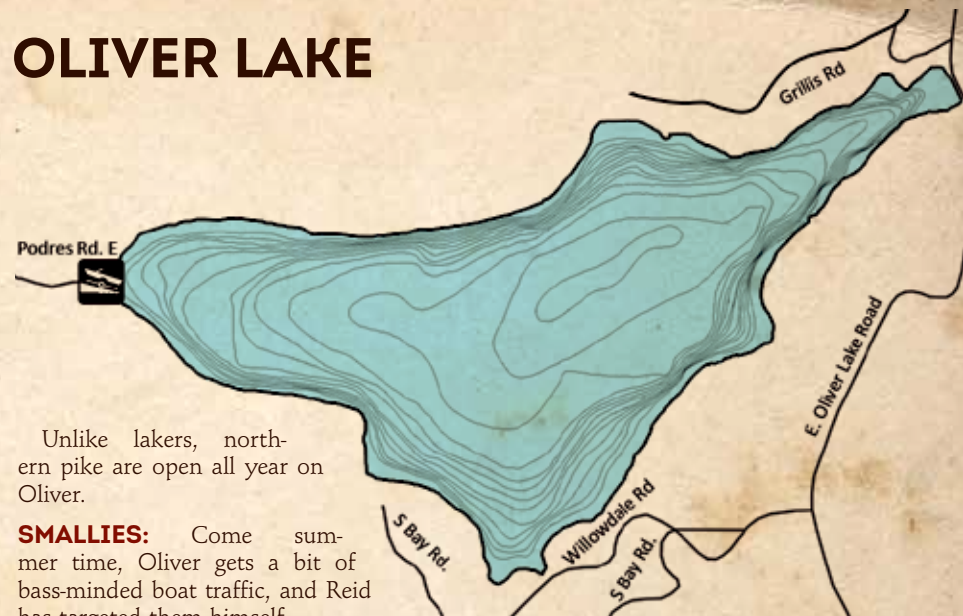
But there are also average-sized lakers to be caught there, too, he said. "I wouldn't say it's known more for big fish," he said.

There is some effort put towards lake trout in the summer with Dipsy Divers and other deep-running tackle, Reid said.

**BIG PIKE, TOO:** Reid said anglers will occasionally jig up a winter pike while fishing for lake trout, "depending on how deep you are," but setting tip-ups for the toothy predators is not a bad way to target them on Oliver.

"Just a plain hook and a sucker minnow, right through the tail and let it swim," he said.

There's also been some giant pike reported out of Oliver, he said, including fish that reached 25 pounds.



Unlike lakers, northern pike are open all year on Oliver.

**SMALLIES:** Come summer time, Oliver gets a bit of bass-minded boat traffic, and Reid has targeted them himself.

One of his personal best smallmouths, which breached four pounds, was caught on Oliver, he said.

"You get a lot of bass in the summer," he said. "It's clear water."

He's done well with Flukes, a soft plastic jerk bait. Spinner baits also work well.

**THE REST:** The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources also lists walleye, burbot and lake whitefish as being present.

A poster on an internet message board mentioned catching a big walleye on the lake a couple of summers back by slow-trolling a Rapala at dusk, and another poster also mentioned walleye.

Reid said he believes there is whitefish in the lake, but didn't know much else about them.

He said the lake is also popular with swimmers.

"There's some good cliff-jumping spots," he said, mentioning the natural features that give the lake some of its beauty.

—Javier Serna

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