

# FISHING HOLE BEAR LAKE

BY JOE SHEAD

**WHY GO:** Bear Lake is a tiny little trout lake tucked inside Tettegouche State Park. Bear is off the beaten path, but the trip is worth it. Not only does it offer some relatively untapped trout fishing; the views of the rocky cliffs are incredible.

**ACCESS:** It takes some effort to reach Bear Lake. There are a couple ways to get there. Parking is available at the Bean and Bear trailhead on Penn Blvd., just west of Quincy Drive in Silver Bay. From this trailhead, you can take the trail to Bean Lake. ATVs and snowmobiles are allowed on this trail. From Bean Lake, take a .16-mile portage trail from the northeast end of Bean Lake to the southwest end of Bear Lake. Or, you can park at the Bay Area Historical Society near the intersection of Outer Drive and Davis Drive in Silver Bay. From there, take a spur trail off the Superior Hiking Trail to reach Bear Lake directly. You'll find four walk-in campsites on the northeast end of the lake, but they are in high demand. You'll need to go at an off-peak time—or be really lucky—to get one.

**VITALS:** Bear Lake is an 18-acre lake with a maximum depth of 69 feet, located within Tettegouche State Park. It's a designated trout lake that contains splake and lake trout. Lake Superior notwithstanding, there are few lake trout lakes in the area, so the lake does get some pressure from anglers. Nearby Bean Lake gets quite a bit of fishing pressure (it's stocked mainly with rainbows

and occasionally splake), but due to its remote location, Bear gets relatively little angling pressure. Most anglers fish it in winter. Although you may not see another angler in summer, you might see other people because the lakeside cliffs are popular with hikers on the Superior Hiking Trail. Bear is incredibly scenic and is one of the most photographed lakes in the state.

**GAME SPECIES PRESENT:** Splake and Lake Trout.

**SPLAKE:** Dean Paron, DNR Area Fisheries Supervisor in Finland, says splake are stocked in Bear Lake in the fall of odd-numbered years. He says his crew transports the splake fingerlings via ATV to Bean Lake, then canoes across the lake and hikes them via the portage trail to Bear. "Right now it seems the splake are doing well," Paron says. "They're there if people want to fish them." Paron says the majority of splake in DNR surveys measure from 12 to 15 inches, with a few around the 20-inch mark. It's unknown for sure what they eat, but Paron says there is a good minnow forage base for

them. Anglers who make the effort to reach the lake will probably be happy with the fishery.

**LAKE TROUT:** Lake trout are an interesting story in Bear Lake. "Bear Lake also has a remnant population of lake trout," Paron says. "They were stocked off and on prior to 1970." Although they aren't numerous, the population has hung on, sustained by natural reproduction over the decades, and every DNR lake survey turns up a laker or two. Paron says the naturally reproducing lake trout raise some questions for his staff. There have been thoughts of temporarily stopping splake stocking and trying to give lake trout a boost. "The opportunity to have a lake with lake trout is very ap-

pealing, but it's a small lake that probably couldn't sustain much harvest," Paron says. "With splake fishing so popular, how would people react to us not stocking splake for a couple years?" For now, it's just an idea, but it's something to consider. He knows a few locals do target lake trout on Bear, but with a good population of nice splake, he hesitates to mess with a good thing.

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