

FISHING HOLE

CLEARWATER LAKE

BY JOE SHEAD

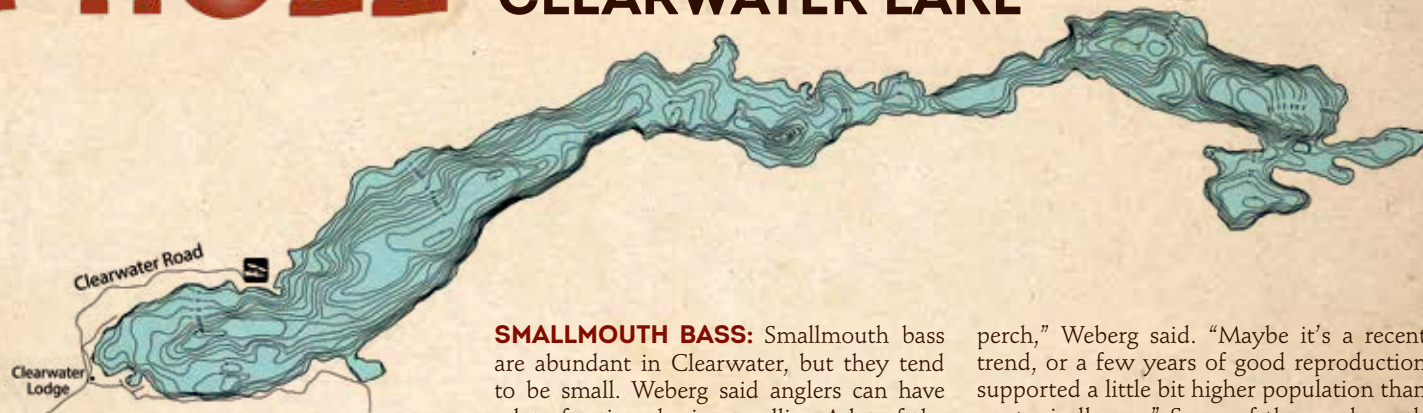
WHY GO: Clearwater is one of the premiere inland lake trout lakes in our region, providing good numbers of eater-sized lakers, and also the possibility of latching onto a real trophy up to 40 inches in length!

ACCESS: Clearwater Lake is located 23 miles north of Grand Marais. Take the Gunflint Trail north, then turn right onto Clearwater Road (County Road 66). The access is at the end of the road on the west end of the lake. There is a ramp with parking for about 10 vehicles. Most of the lake lies within the Boundary Waters. There is a 10-horsepower limit for the portion of the lake within the B-Dub. There are a few cabins on the west end of the lake.

VITALS: This is a classic Canadian Shield lake trout lake. Clearwater is deep overall with a maximum depth of 130 feet. In fact, of the lake's 1,344 acres, only 260 acres are less than 15 feet deep. The lake has an average depth of 42 feet. It lives up to its name, too, with 27 feet of water clarity. You'll enjoy good fishing in a remote, beautiful setting.

GAME SPECIES PRESENT: Lake trout, smallmouth bass, yellow perch and cisco.

LAKE TROUT: "It's one of our classic lake trout lakes," said Matt Weberg, assistant area fisheries supervisor in Grand Marais. "The lake trout population has maintained itself very well over the years." Clearwater has a good mix of eater-sized lakers in the



15- to 20-inch range, but there's always a chance the next fish you hook could top 30 inches ... or even push the 40-inch mark. The lake is sustained entirely by natural reproduction. Clearwater's lakers start out growing slowly. For one thing, they are competing for invertebrates with the lake's healthy cisco population. However, once lakers grow large enough, they may begin preying on those ciscoes, which helps them grow large. The most recent DNR survey netted a lake trout measuring just a hair under 40 inches. Weberg said that fish was released; rather than being killed just to get an age. Weberg noted that some lake trout probably utilize an insect diet most of their lives, never switching over to the cisco forage base. The last survey found a 27-year-old lake trout that only measured 19 inches. Most anglers who visit Clearwater are probably here for lake trout, and the fishery is popular both in summer and winter.

SMALLMOUTH BASS: Smallmouth bass are abundant in Clearwater, but they tend to be small. Weberg said anglers can have a lot of action chasing smallies. A lot of the fish you catch will only be 9 to 12 inches, but you may occasionally tie into a 14- or 15-incher. Some bass do reach 18 inches, but expect to catch a lot of small fish to get a few bigger ones. Smallies do well in Clearwater's clear, rocky water.

CISCOES: The cisco fishery in Clearwater is an interesting story. Weberg said they were stocked in Clearwater back in the 1930s from Lake Superior in case that population ever suffered a massive crash. They've done well and they grow large, with some whoppers reaching 20 inches. They are big enough to provide angling opportunities, but they serve primarily as forage for lake trout. Ciscoes grow fast in Clearwater and compete with small lake trout for invertebrates.

YELLOW PERCH: Yellow perch have been a recent surprise. "One thing we noticed in the last survey: fairly decent numbers of

perch," Weberg said. "Maybe it's a recent trend, or a few years of good reproduction supported a little bit higher population than we typically see." Some of the perch reach good size, approaching the 12-inch mark.

OTHER SPECIES: Clearwater contains some good-sized eelpout. Although they aren't well-represented in the DNR survey, there likely is a fair population of this bottom-dwelling species. Interestingly, on occasion, a pike or a walleye shows up on an angler's line, but they are very rare in Clearwater.

View all our Fishing Hole Maps at:
northernwilds.com/fishingholemaps