

FISHING HOLE

BY JOE SHEAD

WHY GO: Greenwood Lake is a classic Canadian Shield lake trout water. It's clear, deep and cold and produces good numbers of eating-sized lakers with an occasional trophy-sized fish.

ACCESS: To reach Greenwood Lake, head northeast up the Gunflint Trail for 16 miles, then turn right onto Forest Road 309 (Greenwood Lake Road). Proceed 8 miles on FR 309, then turn right and travel 0.3 miles to the access. There's a concrete ramp with a gravel parking lot and parking for six rigs. The landing has a dock and a restroom. Some of the islands are also have primitive Forest Service campgrounds.

VITALS: With an average water clarity of nearly 16 feet and a maximum depth of 112 feet, Greenwood is your classic lake trout lake. It has multiple deep, rocky basins that provide cool, well-oxygenated water. It's a big lake, too, measuring in at 2,042 acres. Despite its size, it is lightly developed and you'll get a real remote wilderness feel while fishing here. There are some cabins here, many of which were established in the last 20 years. Greenwood is a sentinel lake, so the fishery has been surveyed every other year in recent years to establish a fisheries population baseline to compare against in the future. Water temperature, dissolved oxygen levels and lake profiles are sampled twice a month during the open-water season as well.

GAME SPECIES PRESENT: Lake trout, cisco, smallmouth bass and northern pike.

LAKE TROUT: "It's primarily a lake trout lake," said Matthew Weberg, assistant area fisheries supervisor. "For the most part, they run in the 1.5- to 3-pound range." Lake trout were native to Greenwood Lake and stocking was discontinued in the early 1990s because most of the fish the DNR sampled were naturally produced fish. They are now entirely self-sustaining. Weberg said lake trout grow slower here than most other area lakes because young lakers compete with an abundant cisco population for invertebrates. "Early in their life cycle, they're negatively affected by ciscoes," he said. "But once they reach those larger sizes, they can really take advantage of them." Most lakers run about 15 to 19 inches. Although not common, lake trout have been known to reach 30 pounds in Greenwood. Lake trout are the primary draw on Greenwood most of the year, but especially in winter.

CISCO: Ciscoes were introduced into Greenwood Lake from Lake Superior in 1926. "They were added as a potential refuge population in case the Lake Superior herring completely crashed," Weberg said. They've done well here, with a booming population and with individual fish reaching large sizes: up to 18 inches. The downside is this abundant prey species competes with young lake trout for food, but once lake trout grow large enough to feed on ciscoes, they provide a high-fat forage base. They are abundant enough and large enough to attract anglers, however, most of the fish the DNR has sampled harbor a tapeworm in the flesh, which deters anglers from eating them. Closely related lake whitefish are also



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present in Greenwood, although in smaller numbers. Anglers are allowed to net ciscoes in the fall on Greenwood.

SMALLMOUTH BASS: In summer, when lake trout go deep to find cool water, anglers can still catch smallmouth bass close to shore. Smallmouths showed up in the lake sometime in the 1970s. Since then, they have established a fairly good population. Weberg said anglers will find a lot of slow-growing, medium-sized fish. You can expect to find some decent 12- to 14-inch fish with an occasional larger bass.

NORTHERN PIKE: Pike are scarce in Greenwood. Not much is known about them. It's likely they were native here and

have persisted in very low numbers. There is very little spawning habitat for pike. It's possible they get into Greenwood from Sunfish Lake. With the high cisco forage base, there would be potential to grow large pike, but they haven't showed up in surveys.

BONUS FISH: Low numbers of yellow perch are also present, and they sometimes reach a foot in length. Occasionally a brook trout shows up, probably coming from the Greenwood River. The last DNR fisheries survey turned up a 15-inch brookie. Wall-eyes are extremely rare in Greenwood.