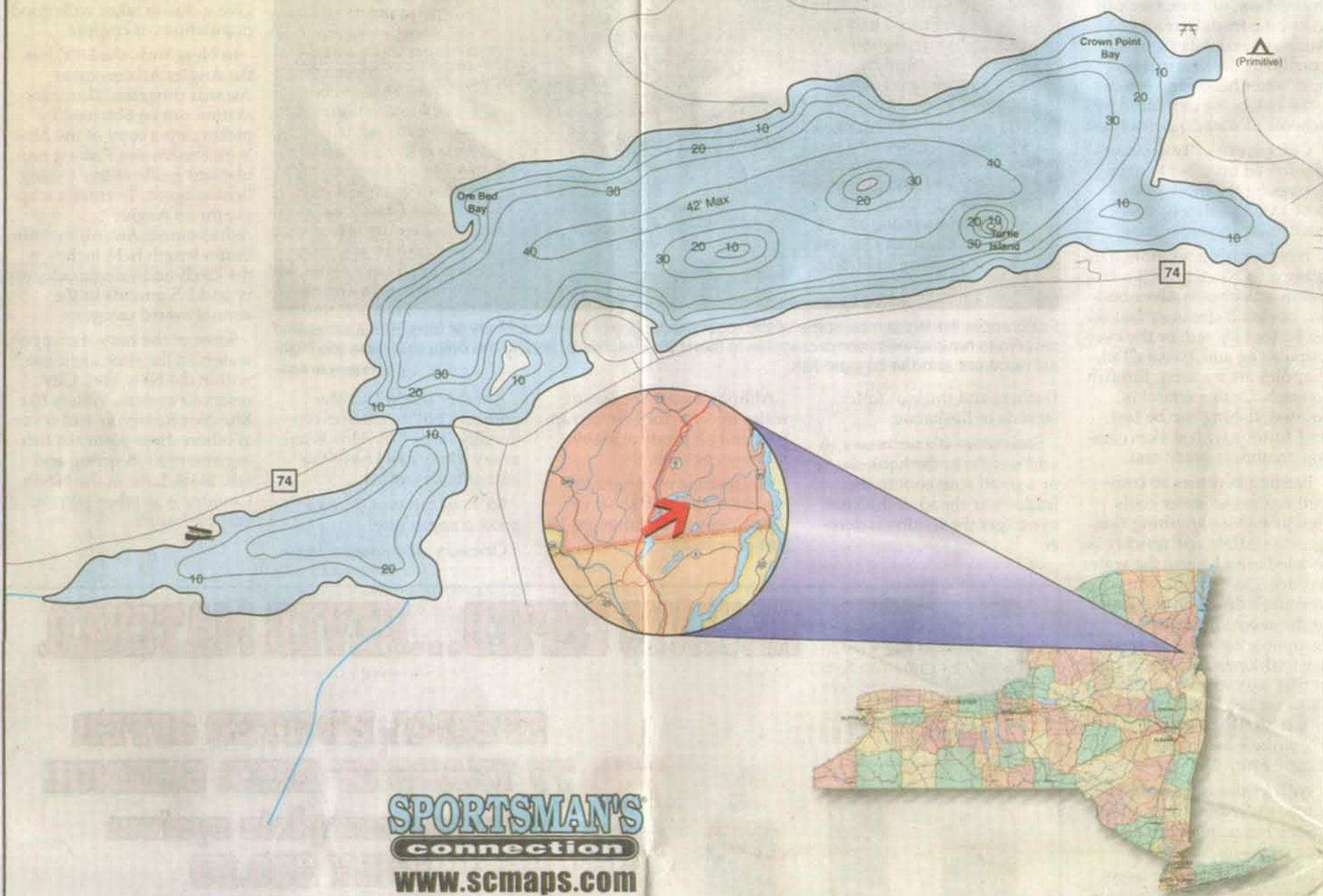


Lake Profile

EAGLE LAKE - ESSEX COUNTY



Essex's Eagle Lake has plenty of trout, and some big pike

By Steve Piatt
Editor

Eagle Lake is one of those waters that's a little tough to figure out. It appears to have everything an angler - and fish - is looking for. Decent water temperatures. Plenty of structure and a fine forage base.

But the 420-acre lake in southeastern Essex County can be a lesson in frustration for many who ply the water in search of trout, bass and northern pike.

And, in fact, Eagle Lake may be as popular or even more so during the ice fishing season, as the hard-water crowd sets tip-ups and jigs for trout, pike and panfish.

"It's very popular through the ice," says Ron Nadler of FISH307, a popular shop down the road in Lake George. "We don't hear a lot about it, but when we do it's that there's excellent brown trout fishing through the ice and in the spring, and some really good pike. Not a lot of northerns, but some really good ones."

Even DEC Region 5 fisheries biologist Emily Zollweg says they don't hear much about the fishing action in Eagle Lake. That, however, may simply mean successful anglers are trying to keep

their fishing spot a secret, or they don't have anything to complain about.

Trout anglers definitely should be happy with DEC's efforts in keeping them into fish. The state has for many years stocked Eagle Lake with brown trout, and this spring's allocation was scheduled to be 3,830 yearling fish of 8.5-9.5 inches. In some years, that number has topped 4,000 yearlings, and the lake occasionally receives some 2-year-old browns - fish that stretch the tape measure to about 13-14 inches.

While some of those stockings undoubtedly get picked off quickly by anglers who get wind of the DEC planting, others hold over well in Eagle Lake. Trout of 2-3 pounds are fairly common, particularly those caught in the fall or through the ice. Many anglers will privately admit that the hard-water trout action is more consistent than during the open-water season.

On Eagle Lake, trout are generally regarded as the No. 1 attraction. But Nadler says pike anglers shouldn't overlook the possibilities there. Although you won't find them in huge numbers, make no mistake, there are some

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Nearest town.....Chilson
Surface area.....420 acres
Maximum depth.....42 feet
Shore length.....7.8 miles

Fish species present:

Brown trout, smallmouth bass, northern pike, chain pickerel, yellow perch, black crappie, rock bass, sunfish, bullhead

For information:

DEC Region 5 sub-office,
232 Golf Course Road,
Warrensburg, NY 12885-0220
(518) 623-1200
fwfish5@gw.dec.state.ny.us
Norm's Bait and Tackle, 286
Bridge Road, Crown Point,
NY 12928

(518) 597-3645

FISH307, 6 State Route 149,
Lake George, NY 12845

1-800-FISH-307

(518) 798-9203

www.fish307.com

heft waterwolves roaming Eagle Lake - and likely picking off their share of stocked browns in the process.

A 1997 DEC gill net survey turned up just a few northerns and none of the big boys, but that wouldn't necessarily be a reflection of what's swimming in Eagle

Lake; northerns are notoriously difficult to capture in gill nets. There are also some chain pickerel in the lake.

The smallmouth bass fishery is definitely worth a look, too. The bronzebacks may be elusive, but there's some good structure to target and some fish in the 12- to 14-inch range, along with some 15 inches and larger and the occasional bruiser that hits the magical 20-inch mark. Fish in the area of one of the lake's three islands and you should be in business. Ore Bed and Crown Point bays along the north shore are also worth a visit, as is the entire north shoreline, since it offers the kind of depth changes smallmouth like.

Other popular spots to target are a hump located near the middle of the lake, where the depth changes from 30 up to 10 feet; and the shallow bay in the eastern end of the lake, where yellow perch are known to mill around in the 10-foot depths.

The panfish lineup is worth noting, in particular since Eagle Lake has decent numbers of eating-sized perch in the 9- to 11-inch range. The ice fishing season may be the best time to target the ringbacks. There's also rock bass

and black crappie, but you might have to do some sorting to find a keeper.

Eagle Lake's trout fishing is open all year, with a five-fish limit and no minimum size. That's the lone special regulation for the water.

Boaters are limited in terms of what size craft they can launch by the fact that the lone access site is a state-owned beach launch off Route 74, a mile west of the hamlet of Eagle Lake. There's some limited parking for vehicles and trailers, but it's usually enough to accommodate the fishing pressure. Shore fishing may be an option in some areas, and there's primitive camping available as well.

You can get to Eagle Lake by jumping off the Adirondack Northway (Interstate 87) and heading east on Route 74. From points east, Route 74 will take you west out of Ticonderoga to Eagle Lake.

Many anglers will parlay a visit to Eagle Lake with a stop at Paradox Lake, located a few miles to the west, also along Route 74. Paradox is twice the size of Eagle, has a hard-surface ramp and holds lake trout, rainbows, bass, pike and panfish.

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