

Trout Site-Lake Trout

Lake Trout on a fly rod is not impossible.
By Bob Willis

I have managed to catch four Lake Trout over the years on a fly rod. Two of those fish were caught in 2011. It took me forty years to catch two Lakers and in one year I was able to catch two more. There is a reason for that. I actually fished for Lake Trout and Blueback Trout in 2011 and caught the other in Alaska during the fall Salmon run. That fish came out of the Kenai Lake into the Russian River during the Salmon run. So three of these catches were more good fortune than anything else, but the other fish was caught in Maine early in the fishing season with deep water fly fishing.

Lake Trout are the true monsters of the Trout World with fish over 100 pounds have been reported. The world record is 102-pound fish, and most of the state and Canadian provincial records are over 60-pounds. It is probably not going to be possible to catch that size fish with a fly rod, but 10-20 pound fish are possible. The largest Lake Trout I have caught was around three pounds.



This is the Russian River in Alaska where I caught a Lake Trout in 2011. If you enlarge the picture you will see a nice Grizzly Bear fishing on the far bank. There are a few places that it is possible to wade and catch these fish in streams, but most of the time a boat is needed. It is also possible to tube for them, but can be very cold!

So what is the best bet for catching one of these fish on a fly rod? The northern areas of the Continent provide the best chances to catch Lakers on a fly rod. At those latitudes the water stays cold enough to catch Lake Trout on fly beyond ice-out. The early season for the Arctic is typically in July and the Lake Trout will spawn in August in those areas and then move to deeper water. In the Arctic, deeper water is typically 20 to 30 feet, and it is still possible to reach the fish with sinking fly line.

In the northern United States and most of Canada the fish stay close to the surface just after ice-out and then retreat to deeper parts of the lakes as the water warms. Fly-fishing with streamers or bright colored clouser minnows can work during this time of the year. Large Lake Trout are strictly carnivores and have almost an exclusive fish diet. The smaller fish will take nymphs and other aquatic insects. I caught the fish in Alaska on a bead fly and the one in Maine on a large black leech. The two earlier fish both took a black stonefly nymph.

These fish are the longest living trout, and may live up to forty years. The typical maximum age is around twenty years, and longevity depends upon diet, water temperature, altitude, and

genetics. Lake Trout are very slow growing and do not mature until the sixth or seventh year. They spawn in extremely deep water in the southern part of their range and spawn at night. In the northern climates they only spawn every other year. The fish prefer water in the 45-55 degree range and will always seek water in that temperature range. This means that they are very deep in most of the lakes in the lower 48 states most of the year.

Lake Trout prefer large, deep, cold lakes and will spend their entire lives roaming within watery homes. They do a lot of traveling when foraging for food and it is not unusually for them to travel many miles each day hunting for food. This feeding characteristic is one of the reasons that deep trolling works to catch these fish, and that it is good to cover as much water as possible. The same thing is true when fly-fishing for these white-spotted giants. You will be fishing in the spring, in cold water and the fish will be nearer the surface, but will still be traveling good distance to forage for baitfish. So cover as much water as possible. This may mean trolling your fly in some of the southern part of the Lakers range.

I fished for Blueback and Lake Trout in Wadleigh Pond, Maine with deep fly fishing techniques and did manage to catch a decent Lake Trout. These fish are a challenge on a fly rod and much thought has to go into a fly fishing trip for these large beauties. To learn more about fishing for Lake Trout and all of the other trout species in North America read the book **Trout Adventures – North America**. The book or e-book will be published in 2012 by Wilderness Adventures Press in 2012. Check out their website at www.wildadvpress.com.