

Trout Site - Splake Trout

By Bob Willis

Splake are one of the first hybrids that were bred in hatcheries in the United States and introduced throughout North America. Records are a little cloudy, but it appears that the first crosses were developed around 1880. These fish are created by crossing a male Brook Trout with a female Lake Trout. The name is also a hybrid using the "SP" from Speckled Trout (another name for Brook) and the "lake" part of the name is self-explanatory. Several hatcheries have also attempted to cross a male lake trout with a female brook trout to create Brookinaw but that hybridization has not been successful. When you cross two chars you do get another char and the fish has all of the char characteristics. Some of the Splake do have the broken lines on the top of the body that are characteristic of Brook but most do not, and their spots are more colorful than the typically white-spotted Lake Trout.



This fish is not as colorful as some Splake. I have seen them with more red and yellow spots. But each of these hybrids is a little different and since they cannot reproduce each fish is one of a kind.

I have fished for Splake in Maine, Ontario and Utah. Maine does have the most extensive Splake stocking program. Maine has 53 waters within the state that are being managed for Splake as the primary fishery. Ten of those lakes are considered trophy management waters. Other states and Canadian provinces stock Splake, but on a somewhat less scale. The Maine Splake stocking program is surrounded by controversy. Many people in the state do not support introduction of this unique fish. The Maine Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Department developed a paper explaining why Splake were being stocked and the benefits of the program. The benefit is to all of us that enjoy catching a beautiful and worthy fighting fish. I think Splake are magnificent and have enjoyed fishing for them at every opportunity.

I would offer this caution about fishing for Splake in both Canada and Maine. Many of the Splake waters in both of these areas have other species in the Splake Lakes. In both areas I have caught more smallmouth bass than Splake when fishing with a clouser minnow for Splake. In

Utah, in a lake with only Tiger Trout as competition I caught more Tiger Trout than Splake, but didn't really mind as much. It was possible to get through the Tiger's to the Splake, which were a little deeper in the lake. In the spring and fall they can be caught with flies and light tackle near the surface, but in the summer they do go deep generally preferring water that is less than 60 degrees F. Splake are fun to catch and fight reasonably well. They do fight down in the water and you tell the difference in the fight with other trout.

To find out more about Splake and the rest of the trout in North America check out the book or e-book **Trout Adventures – North America** to be published in 2012 by Wilderness Adventures Press. The website for Wilderness Adventures Press is www.wildadvpress.com. They specialize in fly fishing books.