

# New York City Reservoir Fishing

By Mike Flaherty

**N**ew York City reservoirs offer a surprisingly diverse group of fish species that people can catch (see table on page 27). These include coldwater fish, such as salmon and trout that need water temperatures less than 70 degrees, and warmwater fish that can tolerate higher water temperatures. Here is what you need to know to get started fishing the NYC reservoirs.

## Accessing the reservoirs

A NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) access permit is required to access the city-controlled reservoirs and lakes. In addition, special boating permits are available for storing your boat on the shoreline in designated areas. Some reservoirs allow non-motorized

recreational boating on a day-use basis. Review page 22 or visit [www.nyc.gov/dep](http://www.nyc.gov/dep) for more information.

## Warmwater fish

All of the NYC Reservoirs provide good fishing for warmwater fish. In reservoirs with stable water levels, most of the warmwater species will thrive in established submerged vegetation beds. Reservoirs that experience fluctuating water levels are usually relatively free of vegetation, and the warmwater species will often orientate to shallow bottom structure, such as rock ledges, drop-offs, or boulders for shelter. They are generally more available to shoreline anglers than coldwater fish.

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### Smallmouth Bass

Smallmouth bass are usually the dominant warmwater predator in waters without a lot of vegetation. Crayfish and open water baitfish are usually their prey. Bog Brook and New Croton Reservoir have produced smallmouths over 6 pounds. The reservoirs west of the Hudson River are all very good smallmouth bass fisheries. Ashokan Reservoir is excellent for both numbers of smallmouths and the occasional fish in the 4 to 5-pound range.

### Largemouth Bass

Largemouth bass are abundant in the vegetated reservoirs east of the Hudson River. Titicus and Croton Falls reservoirs have produced bass over 8 pounds. Because of boating restrictions, the reservoirs tend to be fished less heavily than other bass waters, allowing bass to grow to large sizes. Shore anglers can have great success during the spring catch-and-release season when bass tend to be in shallower water.

### Pickereel and Tiger Muskellunge

The vegetated shallows are also home to chain pickerel, and, although not as abundant as largemouth bass, they can be very exciting fish to catch. Fish up to 6 pounds have been taken from Muscoot Reservoir, and most of the well-vegetated reservoirs have pickerel populations. Tiger muskellunge (muskie) have been stocked in Middle Branch Reservoir since 2003. Tiger muskies over 40 inches long have been caught, with the potential for catching even larger fish.

### Perch and Crappie

With multiple, near state record-size catches of white perch and crappie in several NYC reservoirs over the years, it stands to reason that there may be even bigger fish out there. In the last four years, crappie exceeding 3 pounds have been caught from New Croton, Middle Branch and Cross River reservoirs. These same three reservoirs have also produced white perch approaching 3 pounds. Yellow perch are found in virtually all of the NYC reservoirs. Larger, 1 to 2-pound yellow perch are caught in Titicus, Kensico and Croton Falls reservoirs.

### Common Carp

Some of the largest fish swimming in many of the NYC reservoirs are common carp. Carp in the 10 to 15-pound range are relatively common, and carp over 20 pounds have been caught in multiple reservoirs. In addition, bowfishing for carp can be enjoyed from May 15 through August 31.

### Coldwater fish

Most of the coldwater fish in NYC reservoirs are maintained through annual stockings. These species include brown, rainbow, and lake trout and landlocked Atlantic salmon. All of these fish depend on cool well-oxygenated water to live. Take this into account when deciding on locations to fish and techniques to use. Browns, rainbows and landlocks prefer water temperatures in the 55°–60° range, while lake trout prefer 50° or less. During the summer, coldwater fish are usually only found in cold water, deep in the reservoirs.

routed through this reservoir. This high volume of water keeps the water moving and cool. In the summer, cool water is often only 10 or 15 feet down compared to 20 or 25 feet down in many other reservoirs. The north arm of Rondout Reservoir receives cold water from Rondout Creek as well as transfers from Pepacton and Cannonsville, so this is a very popular and productive spot to shore fish.

Landlocked Atlantic salmon are stocked in West Branch and Neversink reservoirs. Landlocks look a lot like brown trout. When fishing these waters, make sure you know how to tell them apart (page 58) as the regulations (page 22) are different for each.

### Rainbow Trout

The most famous NYC reservoir for rainbow trout is Ashokan Reservoir. The rainbow population in Ashokan, as well as the Esopus Creek that feeds it, are all naturally reproduced within the system. Trout move between the reservoir and the upper Esopus Creek to spawn. For this reason, two shore-fishing hotspots for rainbows include the mouth of Esopus Creek and the midpoint in the reservoir below the dividing weir. Fishing downstream of the dividing weir can be excellent early and late in the season, when water is spilling from the west basin of Ashokan to the east basin. Rainbows up to 10 pounds have been taken in Ashokan, but fish in the 3 to 4 pound range are more common. East of the Hudson, Muscoot Reservoir is now producing some nice rainbows up to 5 pounds.

### Lake Trout

Lake trout (lakers) typically live deep in the reservoirs, where they can find some of the coldest water. During late fall and through the colder months, they can be caught in shallow water. Lake trout are a very long-lived fish and can attain large sizes. Fish up to 20 pounds likely exist in Rondout and Kensico reservoirs, and lake trout over 10 pounds are caught each year. Lakes Gleneida and Gilead are smaller waters that have also recently produced some lake trout in the 10 to 12-pound range. Unlike the Rondout and Kensico, these lakes are open to ice fishing, which can be a very effective way of catching lakers.

### Ice fishing

There are 13 reservoirs east of the Hudson River that allow ice fishing. These waterbodies give anglers opportunities to catch some quality warm and coldwater fish year-round. If you don't have access to a boat on one of these reservoirs for the open-water season, the ice season can provide access to some water that normally might not be available to you.

### Fishing Regulations

All of the NYC reservoirs and lakes have special fishing regulations. See page 22 for details.

Try fishing a NYC reservoir. You might just be surprised at what you catch!



### Walleye

Walleye have been successfully introduced into several NYC reservoirs. Boyds Corners Reservoir was stocked with walleye fry in 1991 and 1992, and these fish produced a self-sustaining population. Some of these fish traveled downstream and have also produced a walleye fishery in West Branch Reservoir. Titicus Reservoir has recently been stocked by DEC. It is hoped that in several years, catchable numbers of walleye will be available. Walleye stocked into East Branch Croton River have made their way downstream, producing walleye fisheries in East Branch, Diverting, and Bog Brook reservoirs. Diverting and East Branch reservoirs have produced walleye in the 10 to 11-pound class over the last 10 years. On the west side of the Hudson River, the walleye population in Schoharie Reservoir is improving with a decent chance to catch legal fish.

### Brown Trout and Landlocked Atlantic Salmon

Brown trout are the primary coldwater fish species living in NYC reservoirs. Most of these fish are stocked annually, and they usually make up the bulk of the trout catch. Where adequate spawning tributaries exist, natural reproduction contributes to reservoir catches. In some cases, the largest trout caught are these "wild" fish. Brown Trout in the 8 to 10-pound range are caught every year from many of the reservoirs, and most reservoirs have some fish in the 12 to 15-pound range.

Some of the largest brown trout come from Kensico, Rondout and Pepacton reservoirs. Shore fishing near deep water or where there is moving water from tributaries or tunnel inlets (where access is allowed) are all likely hotspots. Rondout Reservoir is a great location for shore fishing because high volumes of cold water from Pepacton, Cannonsville and Neversink all are

## Fishing the New York City Reservoirs

Reservoir	County	Acres	Max. Dep. (FT)	Principal Sport Fish Species Present										Ice Fishing Permitted	
				BT	RT	LT	LLS	LMB	SMB	WAE	CP	PF	CAR		TM
<b>East of Hudson Reservoirs</b>				BT	RT	LT	LLS	LMB	SMB	WAE	CP	PF	CAR	TM	
Amawalk	Westchester	729	70	G				E	G		F	G	E		Yes
Bog Brook	Putnam	404	60	F				E	E	F	F	G	G		Yes
Boyd Corners	Putnam	230	45					G		F	G	G			Yes
Cross River	Westchester	940	110	G				E	E		G	G	G		Yes
Croton Falls	Putnam	1,111	95	E				G	F		F	G	G		Yes
Diverting	Putnam	154	34	F				G	G	F	F	G	F		Yes
East Branch	Putnam	624	65	F				G	G	G	F	G	G		Yes
Kensico	Westchester	2,260	155	G		E		G	G		F	G	F		No
Lake Gilead	Putnam	124	120	G	F	F		E			F	G			Yes
Lake Gleneida	Putnam	178	108	G	G	F		E			F	G			Yes
Middle Branch	Putnam	442	62					E	F		F	G	E	G	Yes
Muscoot	Westchester	1,188	30	F	F			G	F		G	E	E		Yes
New Croton	Westchester	2,173	150	F				E	G		F	G	E		No
Titicus	Westchester	694	80	G				E	F		F	G	E		Yes
West Branch	Putnam	1,086	50	G		F	F	F	F	F	F	G	G		Yes
<b>West of Hudson Reservoirs</b>				BT	RT	LT	LLS	LMB	SMB	WAE	CP	PF	CAR	TM	
Ashokan	Ulster	8,314	160	G	G			F	E	F		G	G		No
Cannonsville	Delaware	4,767	148	G					G		F	G	E		No
Neversink	Sullivan	1,539	160	G			F		G		F	F			No
Pepacton	Delaware	5,730	180	E	F				E		F	F	F		No
Rondout	Ulster/Sullivan	2,118	190	G		E			G		F	F			No
Schoharie	Delaware/Greene/Schoharie	1,159	148	F				F	G	G		G	F		No

BT - Brown Trout, RT - Rainbow Trout, LT - Lake Trout, AS - Atlantic Salmon, LMB - Largemouth Bass, SMB - Smallmouth Bass, WAE - Walleye, CP - Chain Pickerel, PF - Panfish, CAR - Carp, TM - Tiger Musky

- F Fair
- G Good
- E Excellent