

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Division of Fish and Wildlife, Bureau of Fisheries, Region 7

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April 6, 2021

To: Skaneateles Lake Angler Cooperators

Dear Fellow Anglers:

We have compiled the data from the 2020 diaries and are sending you the summary information, your 2020 diary and additional diaries for 2021 if needed. Thank you for your participation.

We would like to increase the number of angler cooperators in our diary program. If you didn't return your diaries this year, please do so next year. You may be removed from the mailing list if you do not participate. If you know anyone who might want to participate, please encourage them to join by calling (607) 753-3095 ext. 213 or emailing fwwish7@dec.ny.gov.

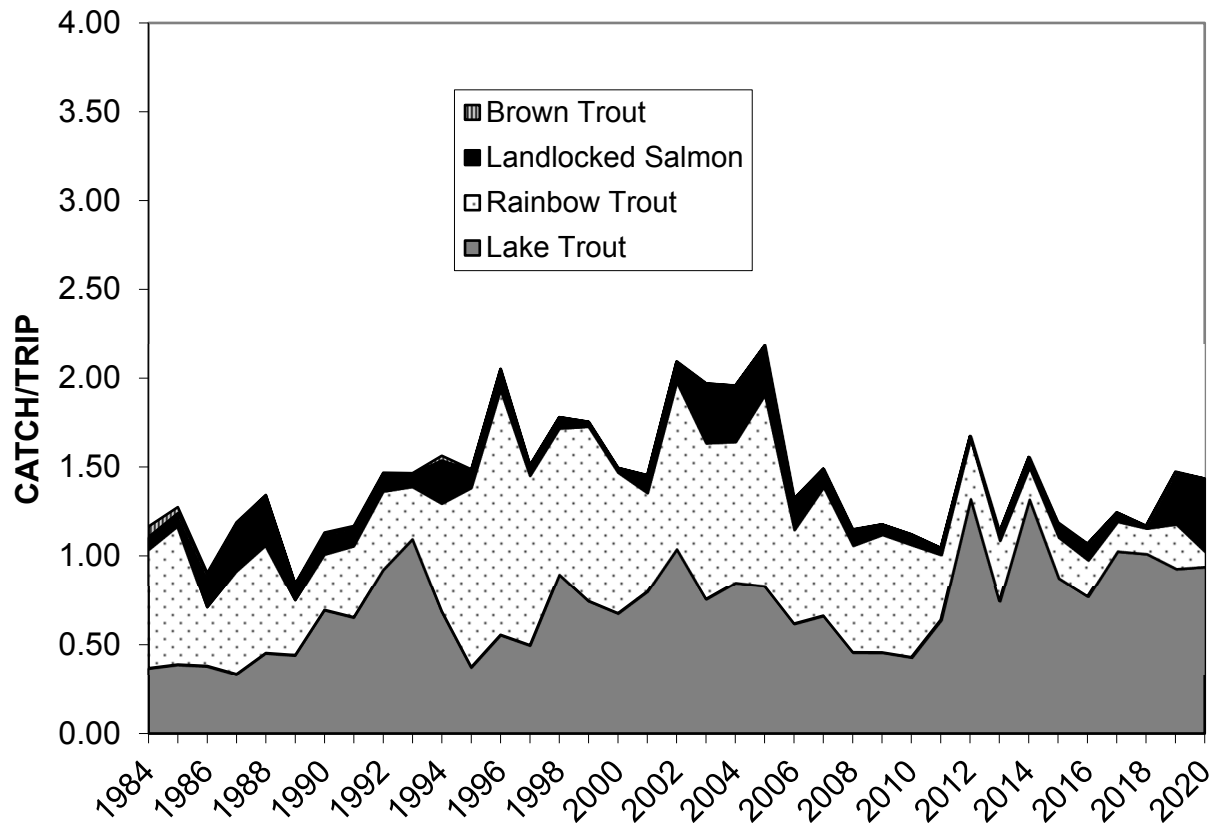
Skaneateles Lake receives annual stockings of approximately 20,000 rainbow trout and 9,000 landlocked salmon as part of a largely put, grow, and take fishery. There is some level of rainbow trout natural reproduction from the tributaries, but its contribution to the lake population is unknown. In 2017, we began a multi-year study to determine the relative contribution of the two strains of rainbow trout which we stock into Skaneateles Lake. Since the early 1980's we have been stocking the lake with both "Finger Lakes Wild" strain rainbow trout and a "hybrid" cross between Finger Lakes Wild strain and a "domestic" strain of rainbow trout.

Starting in 2017 all stocked rainbows received a fin clip which will enable us to differentiate between the two strains. This study will continue for 2 more years. **It is vital that you pay attention and look for fin clips on rainbow trout in the coming years.** It has been 35 years since we last evaluated how well various strains of rainbow trout contributed to the Skaneateles Lake fishery. The knowledge we gain from this study will guide our decision on whether we should continue to stock both strains or switch all our stocking to one strain or the other. Additional stocking adjustments based on the illegally introduced population of walleye are also under consideration. We are also considering liberalization of harvest regulations for walleye to reduce their abundance and associated impacts.

Open Water Trout and Salmon Fishing

In 2020, 18 Skaneateles Lake open water cooperators caught 518 legal salmonids in 361 trips (cooperator and party members combined) for an average catch of 1.4 legal salmonids per trip. Open water cooperators spent about 976 hours fishing and had a legal salmonid catch rate of 1.9 hours per fish, which is an improvement from 3.7 hours per fish in 2013. Anglers were successful in catching at least one legal salmonid in 75 percent of their trips.

The graph below shows the catch rates (catch/trip) of legal salmonids caught by our Skaneateles Lake open water cooperators from 1984 through 2020 and the relative contribution of each species in the catch over time. Catch rates are used to remove the effects of having varying numbers of cooperators and trips from year to year. Note that the actual data are still provided in the attached summary table as usual.



Recent angler diary reports indicate that over the past few years Skaneateles Lake has not recruited as many trout and salmon to the creel as it did in the past. Ecological and biological changes in the lake may be having a negative impact on the survival of both stocked and wild salmonids. In addition to these stocked species, native lake trout, yellow perch, and smallmouth bass are also popular and self-sustaining game fish regularly caught by Skaneateles anglers.

Recent Skaneateles Lake warmwater angler diary reports show a substantial increase in the average size of smallmouth bass kept by our angler cooperators. This increase in smallmouth bass size is likely a result of an increasing food supply provided indirectly by the establishment of zebra mussels and increased stands of aquatic vegetation. Larger smallmouth bass are more likely to prey on young trout and salmon. In addition to concerns about smallmouth bass impacting trout angling, recent reports of walleye in the lake were confirmed in 2017, with several year classes present. Preferring similar habitats and food sources to trout, walleye are an even greater threat to the salmonid fisheries of Skaneateles Lake, as we learned at Owasco Lake and from studies at several other waterbodies in the country.

Lake Trout

Skaneateles Lake open water cooperators caught 340 legal lake trout, of which 57 were kept. Lake trout comprised 66 percent of the total legal salmonid lake catch. An additional 55 sub-legal lake trout were caught and released. The lake trout kept by our open water cooperators averaged 19.0 inches, and the largest one caught was 36.0 inches. Although very few fish are weighed, the average weight of kept lake trout in 2020 was 2.1 lbs. Trolling off Lourdes in summer, or at Fivemile Point in the fall resulted in the best lake trout catches.

Rainbow Trout

In 2020, Skaneateles Lake open water cooperators caught 30 legal rainbow trout, of which 9 were kept. Rainbow trout comprised 6 percent of the legal salmonid lake catch. An additional 6 sub-legal rainbow trout were caught and released. The fish kept by open water cooperators averaged 18.6 inches and the largest rainbow trout caught was 27.0 inches. Rainbow trout fishing appears to have been poor throughout Skaneateles Lake in 2020.

Rainbow trout catch rates in 2016-2018 were the lowest since the mid-1970's, however the average fish size was still several inches larger than those caught when the catch rates (and presumably the population size) were higher. Catch rates did improve moderately in 2019. This is could be due to reduced forage competition resulting from the smaller rainbow trout population or it may simply be that more forage is available than in the past. Unfortunately, this positive trend did not continue in 2020.

Landlocked Atlantic Salmon

Our open water cooperators caught 148 legal landlocked Atlantic salmon, of which 34 were kept, a substantial increase from 2018. Landlocked salmon comprised 44 percent of the legal salmonid lake catch. Four additional sub-legal salmon were caught and released. The landlocked salmon kept by our open water cooperators averaged 19.9 inches and the largest salmon caught was 24.0 inches.

The switch over to the "Sebago" strain of landlocked salmon in the DEC hatchery, which has been described in previous cooperator letters, is now complete. It is hoped that the improved returns observed in the fisheries of other NY lakes, as a result of the strain change, will also occur at Skaneateles Lake. Due to difficulties at the Adirondack hatchery in winter 2018, landlocked Atlantic salmon from a variety of sources and sizes were stocked for 2019 only. These fish appear to have acclimated well as Atlantic Salmon fishing in 2020 was very good. However, if the walleye population continues to expand, we anticipate that they will greatly reduce survival of stocked salmon and trout in which case the switch to Sebago strain will be irrelevant.

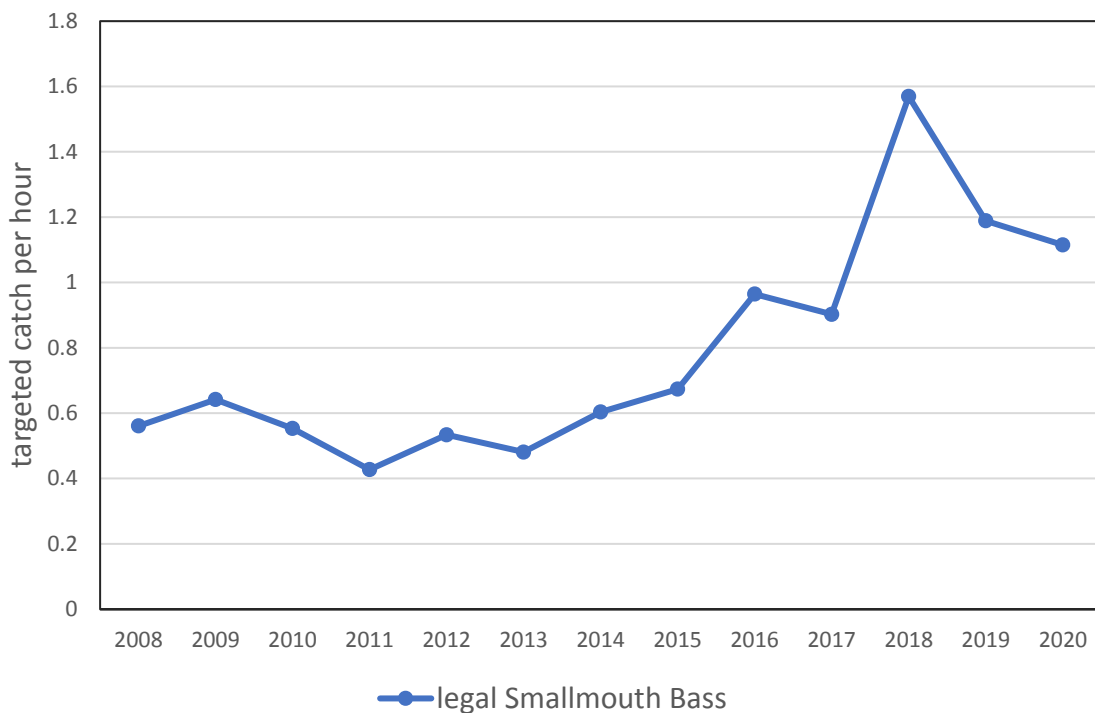
Skaneateles Lake Tributary Fishing

In 2020, two Skaneateles Lake tributary cooperators recorded 13 trips and caught four legal salmonids in 18.25 hours of fishing. There were no legal rainbow trout, two legal brown trout and two legal landlocked Atlantic Salmon reported, and one brown trout was kept. Fourteen sublegal rainbow trout were released. Please ask your tributary angling friends to become diary cooperators!! Grout Brook accounted for most of the reported tributary fishing.

Skaneateles Lake Warmwater Fishing

In 2020, our Skaneateles Lake warmwater cooperators had another excellent year of smallmouth bass fishing. Thirteen cooperators caught 632 legal smallmouth bass, of which seven were kept. An additional 230 sub-legal smallmouth bass were caught and released. One sub-legal largemouth bass and 5 legal chain pickerel were caught and released. Two legal chain pickerel were kept. Two sub-legal walleye were released and 8 legal walleye were kept. The largest smallmouth bass, largemouth bass and chain pickerel caught by our warmwater cooperators were 22.5, 11.0 and 25.5 inches, respectively.

Overall, our warmwater cooperators accounted for 739 hours of effort in 154 trips to catch a total of 863 bass, of which 632 were legal size. Our warmwater cooperators indicated they targeted bass (smallmouth and largemouth bass combined) during 114 of their 154 trips which accounted for 496 hours of targeted effort. The catch rates for anglers targeting bass were 1.6 fish per hour for all smallmouth bass and 1.1 fish per hour for legal size fish. Compared to other bass fisheries around New York, this is some of the best bass fishing around (even if there are a lot of smaller ones).



Our warmwater angler diary cooperators have provided us with a valuable history of bass fishing since 1978 and indications are that Skaneateles Lake is currently evolving into one of the best smallmouth bass fisheries in New York State. Graphed above is the catch rate of legal smallmouth bass for anglers fishing for smallmouth bass. Unfortunately, in some earlier years there were not enough warm water angler diary participants to calculate a rate, so those are not shown. Please ask your friends to participate so we can keep this program going!

The information provided by our warmwater cooperators suggests that Skaneateles Lake smallmouth bass spawning and recruitment to the fishery is very successful with many bass surviving and growing to 18 inches.

Thank you and good fishing in 2021.

Sincerely,

Emily Zollweg-Horan
Senior Aquatic Biologist

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Skaneateles Lake

Coldwater Fishing Diary Summary

Year	Total # Angler Trips	% Trips Successful	Avg Hours/Trip	Legal Salmonids Caught				Average Length of Legal Fish Kept (in.)				Average Weight of Legal Fish Kept (lbs)				# hours to catch 1 legal salmonid	# of coop.
				LT	RT	BT	LLS	LT	RT	BT	LLS	LT	RT	BT	LLS		
1966	273	66	4.1	220	69	--	--	17.9	16.2	--	--	--	--	--	--	3.9	18
1967	155	69	4	51	83	--	--	19.4	16.5	--	--	--	--	--	--	4.4	16
1968	171	74	4.4	92	109	--	--	18.3	16	--	--	--	--	--	--	3.6	17
1969	302	71	4.1	234	115	--	--	17.7	15.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	3.2	25
1970	406	80	4.2	171	237	--	--	17.9	14.7	--	--	--	--	--	--	4.1	28
1971	133	61	3.2	69	102	--	--	17.4	15.5	--	--	--	--	--	--	2.5	16
1972	217	64	4	51	134	--	--	17.5	16.2	--	--	--	--	--	--	4.9	16
1973	159	73	5	115	57	--	--	18.6	16.4	--	--	--	--	--	--	4.6	16
1974	119	90	3.5	123	57	--	--	17.7	16.4	--	--	--	--	--	--	2.2	8
1975	101	90	3.8	40	70	--	--	19	16.5	--	--	--	--	--	--	3.4	7
1976	94	63	6.9	60	29	--	--	18.3	18.5	--	--	1.8	3.3	--	--	7.2	9
1977	114	58	5.5	91	81	--	--	18.2	15.3	--	--	1.7	1.7	--	--	3.6	12
1978	534	75	3.4	506	503	1	--	17.5	14.5	18.5	--	1.6	1.5	2.3	--	2.7	33
1979	474	83	3	253	619	1	--	17.7	14.2	10	--	1.3	1.4	--	--	2.1	35
1980	640	76	3.1	459	759	--	--	17.5	14.5	--	--	1.7	1.3	--	--	1.9	38
1981	1018	71	3.9	607	1103	--	--	17.5	14.7	--	--	1.6	1.5	--	--	3	77
1982	967	73	3.7	503	1198	4	--	17.7	13.8	11.8	--	1.7	1.3	0.8	--	2.7	72
1983	977	71	3.7	699	1074	18	19	17.4	14.5	13.3	17.8	2	1.2	1.5	1.6	2.8	67
1984	1532	86	3.8	483	925	68	99	17.5	14	14.4	16.4	2.2	1.2	1.4	1.4	3.2	70
1985	1596	73	3.4	508	1179	38	94	17.5	13.9	15.1	16.9	1.9	1	1.5	1.5	2.7	64
1986	1252	62	3.7	396	351	10	127	17.2	13.6	15.9	16.3	1.8	0.9	2.5	1.4	4.1	51
1987	1169	68	3.6	336	609	9	258	17.4	14.5	17.4	16.5	1.8	1.1	2.2	1.4	3	42
1988	1090	72	4.1	438	630	4	254	17.3	15.9	18.5	17.5	2	1.5	2.5	1.6	3.1	50
1989	1127	61	4.1	411	322	3	87	17.1	16.9	18.7	17.7	1.9	2.5	3	2.1	4.8	43
1990	1100	70	4.8	614	271	10	55	17.5	15.7	18.1	18.5	1.9	2.1	1.3	1.9	2.7	43
1991	1109	68	3.2	581	380	9	83	17.6	16	18.7	17.9	2.2	1.8	--	1.8	2.7	48
1992	1069	70	3.2	778	398	5	82	17.5	16	19.2	17.6	1.9	1.5	--	1.6	2.2	64
1993	1101	78	3	969	247	2	54	17.6	16.4	18.5	17.9	1.7	1.7	--	2.3	2.1	57
1994	1026	76	3.4	542	447	11	139	17.7	15.6	19.7	17.5	2	1.9	2.8	1.8	2.2	57



NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Skaneateles Lake

Coldwater Fishing Diary Summary

1995	951	67	3.3	277	636	2	67	17.9	15.1	19.5	17.7	2	1.3	--	1.8	2.2	60
1996	849	73	3.1	375	734	0	75	17.6	15.2	--	16.7	2	1.4	--	1.5	1.5	48
1997	877	74	3.5	332	665	2	39	17.4	16.2	20	17.5	1.7	1.5	--	1.8	2.3	41
1998	812	76	3.3	417	475	0	40	17.5	16.3	--	17.7	1.5	1.6	--	1.7	1.8	44
1999	485	72	3.1	228	344	0	9	17.3	16.3	--	18.7	1.4	1.5	--	2.2	1.8	33
2000	424	72	3.1	199	271	0	10	17.7	16	--	17.8	1.8	1.7	--	1.5	2.1	26
2001	537	72	3.2	319	240	1	46	17.2	16.7	20	17.6	1.6	1.7	2	2.1	2.2	32
2002	418	76	3.6	435	392	0	48	17.7	16.1	--	18	1.5	1.7	--	--	1.7	27
2003	762	79	3.2	577	669	0	255	17.1	16.6	--	18	1.4	2	--	2.1	1.6	36
2004	646	76	3.1	550	511	0	204	17.6	16.6	--	18.9	1.7	1.8	--	2.3	1.6	33
2005	597	78	3.5	497	641	0	166	17.8	16.5	--	19.2	1.6	1.9	--	2.3	1.6	43
2006	519	66	3.8	321	276	1	88	17.7	17.4	--	19	1.7	2.3	--	2.6	2.9	36
2007	375	72	4.2	249	272	0	38	17.3	17.8	--	19.9	1.5	2.6	--	2.5	2.8	31
2008	402	64	4.1	184	243	1	34	17.7	17.9	--	20	2	2.3	--	2.5	3.5	31
2009	390	61	4	178	260	0	21	18.4	19	--	18.9	2.1	2.7	--	--	3.4	27
2010	321	67	3.7	138	204	0	18	19.2	19.2	--	20.2	2.9	3.2	--	3.4	3.3	22
2011	314	57	3.6	201	116	0	11	18.2	20	--	21.8	3.4	3.3	--	4.1	3.4	24
2012	227	68	3.4	300	77	0	3	18.8	20.7	--	25	2	3.6	--	6	2	19
2013	256	60	3.9	191	88	0	11	18.1	18.8	--	20	2.3	2.8	--	1.1	3.4	24
2014	266	70	3.2	351	48	0	15	19.3	20.4	--	19	6.4	3.3	--	3.4	2	23
2015	260	71	3.4	228	60	3	18	19.3	19.1	22	18.7	4	3.7	5.7	3	2.9	25
2016	303	57	3	234	63	1	26	19.4	18.3	--	18.3	2.6	3.7	--	2.5	2.8	27
2017	352	66	2.8	362	59	0	17	19.6	19.3	--	20.8	2.6	3.3	--	3.2	2.2	28
2018	366	69	2.9	371	53	1	3	19.3	19.9	15.3	20	3	3.7	1.5	--	2.5	24
2019	430	75	2.8	400	108	2	124	18.6	18.2	19	17.6	2.3	--	--	2.8	1.9	29
2020	361	75	2.7	340	30	0	148	19	18.6	--	19.9	2.1	3.1	--	2.4	1.9	18

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Skaneateles Lake

Warmwater Fishing Diary Summary

Year	Total # Angler Trips	% Trips Successful ¹	Ave Hours/ Angler Trip	Legal Gamefish					Average Length of Legal Fish Kept (in.)					Average Weight of Legal Fish Kept (lbs)					# Hours to Catch 1 legal Gamefish	# of Coop.			
				Kept ²		(Released) ³			SMB	LMB	WAE	NOP	PKL	SMB	LMB	WAE	NOP	PKL			SMB	LMB	WAE
1984					110 (61)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.9		
1985					37 (69)	0 (1)	--	0 (2)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.1	
1986	25		1.8		15 (80)	0 (1)	--	--	--	11.5	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.8	3	
1987	21	69	3.1		10 (34)	--	--	--	6 (6)	10.1	--	--	--	18.0	--	--	--	--	1.2	--	1.5	2	
1988	23	88	1.4		9 (83)	1 (0)	--	--	2 (2)	11.6	10.0	--	--	18.0	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.4	2	
1989	17	77	1.8		2 (41)	--	--	--	--	12.7	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.4	2	
1990	38	72	2.7		12 (85)	--	--	--	1 (5)	11.1	--	--	--	18.0	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.6	2	
1991	47	92	2.5		27 (127)	0 (8)	--	--	2 (2)	10.9	--	--	--	16.5	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.8	4	
1992	36	88	3.0		38 (27)	0 (7)	--	--	--	12.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.5	8	
1993	22	65	2.0		16 (4)	0 (2)	--	--	--	11.8	13.0	--	--	--	2.3	--	--	--	--	--	1.9	4	
1994	63	74	2.5		76 (72)	--	--	--	--	12.0	--	--	--	--	1.1	--	--	--	--	--	1.1	9	
1995	27	85	4.0		45 (12)	--	--	--	--	14.0	--	--	--	--	2.5	--	--	--	--	--	1.9	6	
1996	18	91	2.9		2 (35)	--	--	--	--	11.0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.4	4	
1997	6	40	1.4		0 (18)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.5	2	
1998	20	90	2.7		8 (20)	--	--	--	--	13.6	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.9	3	
1999	2	0	4.0			--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--		1	
2000	2	100	6.0		0 (1)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	12.0	1	
2001	27	77	1.4		0 (36)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.0	5	
2002	13	50	1.2		0 (7)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	2.3	1	
2003	27	69	1.3		10 (16)	--	--	--	0 (1)	11.9	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.3	4	
2004	0																					0	
2005	23	92	3.0		47 (2)	1	--	--	0 (1)	15.4	20.7	--	--	--	--	3.7	--	--	--	--	1.4	4	
2006	28	93	4.9		62 (18)	--	--	--	--	14.8	--	--	--	--	3.7	--	--	--	--	--	1.7	3	
2007	23	77	4.0		18 (14)	1	--	--	--	13.8	12.0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	2.8	4	
2008	55	87	3.3		12 (84)	--	--	--	0 (2)	14.8	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.8	5	
2009	53	82	5.0		22 (121)	--	--	--	--	14.6	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.8	5	
2010	41	95	5.4		10 (105)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.9	5	
2011	61	77	4.7		27 (80)	1	--	--	0 (1)	14.5	14.0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	2.6	7	
2012	78	100	4.9		46 (146)	0 (4)	--	--	2 (1)	15.1	--	--	--	20.3	3.4	--	--	--	--	--	1.9	10	
2013	70	94	4.9		41 (117)	1	--	--	0 (1)	15.3	15.7	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	2.1	9	
2014	86	96	5.8		24 (197)	0 (6)	--	--	0 (15)	14.5	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	2.1	6	
2015	80	91	4.8		20 (184)	0 (36)	--	--	0 (29)	14.8	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.4	8	
2016	94	91	4.9		22 (313)	0 (7)	*	--	0 (9)	14.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.3	8	
2017	86	89	4.9		26 (387)	0 (11)	3	--	0 (2)	14.3	--	19.8	--	--	--	--	3.7	--	--	--	1.0	9	
2018	88	92	4.8		12 (490)	0 (7)	6	--	0 (11)	13.6	--	19.9	--	--	--	--	3	--	--	--	0.8	8	
2019	142	91	4.3		43 (655)	0 (6)	*	--	0 (9)	14.1	--	--	--	--	2.3	--	--	--	--	--	0.9	13	
2020	154	90	4.8		7 (625)	0	8 (0)	--	2 (5)	13.1	--	21.4	--	25.3	--	--	3.3	--	--	--	1.1	13	

1 - Success equals one or more legal warmwater gamefish caught.

2 - Number of legal smallmouth bass - SMB, largemouth bass - LMB, walleye - WAE, northern pike - NOP and pickerel - PKL kept.

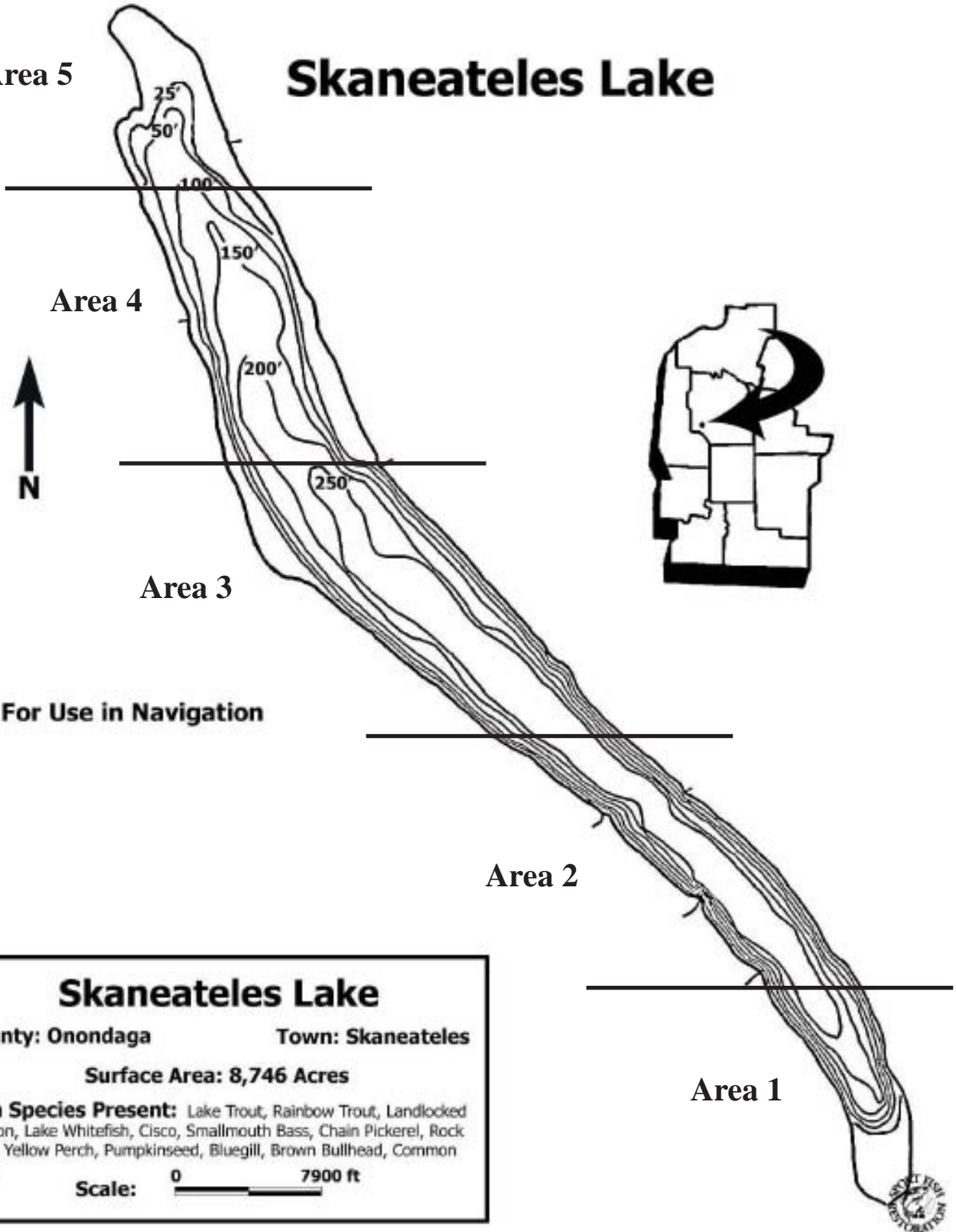
* one sublegal walleye caught and released



Region 7

Area 5

Skaneateles Lake



Area 4



Area 3

Not For Use in Navigation

Area 2

Skaneateles Lake

County: Onondaga

Town: Skaneateles

Surface Area: 8,746 Acres

Fish Species Present: Lake Trout, Rainbow Trout, Landlocked Salmon, Lake Whitefish, Cisco, Smallmouth Bass, Chain Pickerel, Rock Bass, Yellow Perch, Pumpkinseed, Bluegill, Brown Bullhead, Common Carp

Scale: 0 7900 ft

Area 1

