

## How To Find Fish in Small Lakes

Many anglers look at lakes as mysterious black holes that give no clues about where to drop your line or where the fish actually live. Rivers, on the other hand, have currents to define pools, riffles and runs, all of which are important living spaces for trout and other fish species.

A close look at a small lake will reveal prime feeding and resting areas frequented by trout. A typical small lake is shaped like a soup bowl, with a deeper middle portion surrounded by shallow water extending to the shoreline. The shallow water or shoal areas of a lake produce the majority of the food that trout eat. Here the sun can penetrate to the lake bottom and allow green plants to grow which provide the habitat for such food sources as shrimp, mayflies, damselflies, dragonflies, caddisflies and leeches. The effects of the sun and photosynthesis can often be felt in water as deep as six metres.

The next time you go fishing, take a look at how far out the aquatic plant life extends from the shore. During the spring months when the shallow water is still cool, trout will feed right into water less than one

metre deep. As the water warms, trout will feed in the deeper parts of the shoal. The really hot summer temperatures finally force the fish off the shoal during daylight hours. At night, when the water cools, trout will often return to the shoals to feed.

A transition zone occurs as the shallower



Photo: Brian Chan

shoal water quickly deepens to the mid-part of the lake. This slightly deeper water is called the drop-off and it generally marks the outer limits of rooted aquatic plant growth because the water is now too deep for sunlight penetration. The drop-off zone makes excellent trout habitat. Here the water remains cool and well oxygenated even during the warm summer months and it is deep enough to provide protection from predators such as loons, ospreys and otters. Trout can leave the drop-off zone to feed for short periods of time on the shoal and then return to the deeper water refuge. The drop-off zone is always an excellent place to fish and finding the drop-off is easy in clear-water lakes. All you have to do is just follow the shallow water out until the lake bottom can no longer be seen; a good pair of polarized sunglasses can really help. In stained or algae-laden water, the drop-off can be found with an electronic depth sounder or by referring to a contour map of the lake.

See page 80 for information on how to obtain bathymetric (depth) maps for many lakes in the province.