

NATURE'S FISH HATCHERY

Black Lake, often referred to as "Nature's Fish Hatchery", is the largest and most diverse of the many Indian River lakes. Over 60 miles of shoreline combined with numerous islands, offers the angler all kinds of ideal fish habitats from rocky points and shoals, to sandbars, weed beds, shallows, and deep water up to 40 feet. Ever changing winds thoroughly mix the water to provide highly dissolved oxygen content which support all of the lakes life forms at peak levels. When coupled with an abundant food supply and the fact that Black Lake is relatively shallow and warm, conditions are right for an almost super-normal development of warm water game and panfish. Large bays, which support dense weed growths, provide subsequent shelter for the annual hatch of growing fish fry. Black Lake is completely void of industry. This explains the unpolluted water that provides the angler with an incredible fishery that the lake is and will continue to be. Black Lake has NO fish consumption advisories as found in so many other waterways.

The lakes most dominant game fish are the smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, northern pike, crappie, and once again walleye.

Previous to 1960 Black Lake was noted as one of the country's premier walleye lakes. The 60's and 70's saw a significant decline in the walleye population and in some opinions near extinction. Through the restocking and spawning ground rehabilitation efforts of the *Black Lake Association*, the *Black Lake Fish and Game Club* and the *New York DEC* the walleye situation has been reversed. Walleye in the 6-pound range are once again common and a few in the 9 pound range have also been caught. Late April the walleye stage spawning runs up both the Indian River and Fish Creek.

The black crappie, a non-native fish, was introduced to Black Lake in the 50's. Their population has expanded and has made Black Lake one of the most popular crappie fisheries in the United States. After ice out in the early spring crappie can be found in shallow waters thru the entire lake as well as the lake tributaries.

Largemouth and smallmouth bass are especially abundant. In June 1998, *Fish & Game Finder Magazine* said "In June Black Lake brings about the best darned bassin' any where in the Northeastern United States." In the *New York Fishing and Hunting News* May 18th - June 1, 2000 issue Black Lake was rated #1 of the 10 best bass lakes in New York state. In the July, 2000 issue of *New York Game and Fish* Black Lake was rated as one of the top 5 best July bass lakes in New York state. In February, 2002 issue of *New York Game and Fish* Black Lake was rated as the best July largemouth bass lake in New York state. Black Lake was rated in the top 20 "**Best Of The Best**" of the nations "**Bassin's Great Lakes**" in the February, 2002 issue of *Sports Afield* magazine. The average largemouth is 2 plus pounds and the average smallmouth is in the pound and a half range. Lunker bass in the 4 and 5 pound range are fairly common with 6 and 7 pound hawks caught annually.

Northern pike have benefited the most by the introduction of the crappie. Northern of up to 10 to 15 pounds are quite common and 15-pound pike are caught regularly, especially thru the ice. *N.Y. Sportsman* April 2001 issue reported that Black Lake is a great all-round fishery, but it's best feature is it's year-round pike angling.

There are muskie in the lake but not in significant enough numbers for anglers to target them. Every year you will hear of a big one being caught.

Channel catfish can reach 25 pounds although most average in the 5 to 8 pound range. Bullhead are very common and it is not unusual to catch them in the 1 1/2 to 2 pound range. Immediately after ice out, the bullhead angler can be found at night or early morning along the shallow shorelines or in his boat in the shallow coves and bays.

Bluegill are also very common in the shallow waters of the entire lake. 8 or 9 inch, 3/4 to 1 pound gills are not uncommon.

Yellow perch are without a doubt the most abundant fish in the lake. They tend to run small, up to 7 or 8 inches. But 13 and 14 inch perch have been caught quite regularly. **BLACK LAKE** is quite literally a virtual Fish Factory.