

Natural. Valued. Protected.

Lake Fact Sheet – Parry Sound District

Skeleton Lake

Location	
Official Name:	Skeleton Lake Local Names:.....
County/District:	Muskoka Geographic Twp: .Watt, Cardwell, Stisted, Stephenson
Municipality:.....	Township of Muskoka Lakes MNR Admin. Area:..... Bracebridge
Lat./Long:.....	45.2506 N -79.4506 W UTM (NAD83):.....17 621590 E 5011735 N
Topographic Map (1:50,000):	31E06 Drainage Basin:
	Skeleton River

Physical Features		
Surface Area (ha):	2075 Maximum Depth (m):.....	65 Mean Depth (m):
Elevation (m asl):.....	281 Perimeter (km):.....	42 Island Shoreline (km):
Volume (10 ⁴ m ³):.....	66400 Watershed (km ²):	50.2 Water Clarity (m):
	(excludes area of lake)	9.1

Land Use and Development	
Crown Land (%):.....	<5 Provincial Parks:.....None
Shoreline Development:	High; shoreline residential, commercial
Access:	Public: Skeleton Lake Road 2 and 3
Water Level Management:	Regulated; water level is controlled by MNR-owned and operated dam. Flows and levels are governed by the Muskoka River Water Management Plan.

Fish Species	
Major Fish Species:	smallmouth bass (I?), lake trout, walleye (I), lake whitefish, burbot
Other Fish Species:	rainbow smelt (I), cisco (lake herring), white sucker, bluntnose minnow, rock bass (I), brown bullhead, yellow perch, trout-perch, creek chub, lake chub, pumpkinseed, golden shiner, slimy sculpin
Other Species:	spiny water flea (I 1998)

Notes: E: extirpated, I: introduced – intentional or accidental, O: occasional, R: remnant, S: currently stocked, ?: status uncertain, 2009: year of first record or introduction if known, blank: presumed native

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Fisheries Management

Fisheries Management Zone:..... 15

Designation for Lake Trout Management:..... natural reproduction; not at development capacity

Fishing Regulation Exceptions:Only one line may be used when angling through the ice
.....Lake trout - none between 40-55cm

Current Stocking:..... None

Historic Stocking (last year stocked): walleye (1944), rainbow trout (1961), smallmouth bass (1971),
.....brook trout (1976), lake trout (1993)

Contaminants (species tested):.....lake trout, walleye, smallmouth bass, whitefish

Assessment:

Completed Projects:

- 1971 lake survey
- 1971 creel survey
- 1972 creel survey
- 1972 contaminant sampling
- 1977 creel survey
- 1984 lake trout spawning observation
- 1988 creel survey
- 1992 lake trout spawning observation
- 1994 winter creel survey
- 1995 lake trout contaminant study
- 2001 Spring Littoral Index Netting (lake trout)
- 2004 winter creel survey
- 2004 Summer Profundal Index Netting (lake trout)
- 2010 Summer Profundal Index Netting (lake trout)
- 2014 Summer Profundal Index Netting (lake trout)
- 2014 Broad-scale Monitoring (fish community assessment)

Dissolved oxygen profiles are collected on a regular basis

Synopsis

Skeleton Lake got its name over 125 years ago when surveyors discovered human skeletal remains on the shore. The lake basin is an eroded remnant of an ancient meteor crater.

The water quality in Skeleton Lake is excellent. The temperature-oxygen profile indicates there is a considerable amount of habitat available to lake trout.

Lake trout stocking was discontinued after the 1993 plant to ensure a natural, self-sustaining population. There is ample spawning and nursery habitat available to support the species. Spawning shoal enhancement was completed on the Shanty Island and Clifton Island shoals in the early 1990's.

The lake was well known for its fishing in the early 1880's when early pioneers would travel 3 miles from Lancelot to net lake trout. Catches would supply a community of 100 with lake trout. An angler in 1970

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noted over 100 ice huts on the lake. The 1994 winter creel survey indicated that the lake trout population was being over-harvested. Abundance of lake trout was low and the growth rate was fast. Harvest controls were implemented in 1996 including a 40-55 cm slot limit for lake trout and a limit of one line only when angling through ice. Recent creel surveys have found that winter effort has declined greatly in response to the regulation.

The 2004 assessment found that the lake trout population was relatively healthy, but that the growth characteristics of the population were such that only a small proportion of fish ever grew larger than the slot size limit. Lake trout regulations in Fisheries Management Zone 15 will probably be reviewed in the next several years and consideration will be given to changing the slot size limit to something better suited to the growth rate of fish in the population.

The 2010 and 2014 lake trout surveys have tracked a significant decline in the lake trout population – abundance has declined by about half since 2004. The reason of the change is not known, but is probably not related to fishing pressure as the slot size protects a large portion of the population and overall fishing activity, at least in winter, is fairly low.

2014 – Broad-scale Monitoring

Skeleton Lake was sampled in 2014 as a “state” lake for Cycle 2 of the provincial Broad-scale Monitoring program. Results will be reported through that program. Two species not previously documented in the lake were captured; Golden Shiner and Slimy Sculpin. Both species are thought to be native to the lake.

Updated: 2018

Refer to Lake Fact Sheet Interpretation document for explanation of content.

Skeleton Lake

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