

Boat Fishing For Trout “Fishing for success” ...



“Catch more trout on the lakes by improving your knowledge of the fish, it’s habitat and food chain, fishing methods and special techniques”

In pursuit of angling success

There is nothing quite like a day fishing on the lake - the scenery, good company and plenty of fresh air - but let's face it, catching fish is what puts the icing on our cake! Simply getting to know your quarry, its environment and food sources will improve your success...



Success!

Success Formula

- Knowledge of trout, smelt and insect lifecycles and water temperatures = location of trout
- Understanding when and how to use the different fishing methods = catching trout

Water temperature - a key to locating trout

Trout are cold blooded, so the speed of their metabolism is dependent on the temperature of the water they live in. Energy gained by feeding is used primarily for metabolic needs (breathing, blood circulation, and digestion etc), what energy remains is used for growth. The optimal temperature for trout growth is between 15°C and 18°C. As water temperatures drop below 15°C trout generally have to feed less, so they are less active to meet their metabolic and growth needs. Above 18°C their energy requirements just to stay alive increase considerably, so they will seek out cooler water, feeding during the colder periods of the day, then resting in cooler areas to make the best use of their food energy.

Seasonal temperature tips

Spring and autumn are the times when trout will be spread throughout the lake at a variety of locations and depths. This means all fishing methods can be successful from fly fishing at the surface to deep jigging or using a downrigger.

Although fish can be seen on the surface during summer, they often only spend a short time there. Mostly you'll be successful fishing with deep angling methods.

During winter adult trout will be found near spawning areas such as stream mouths and release points.

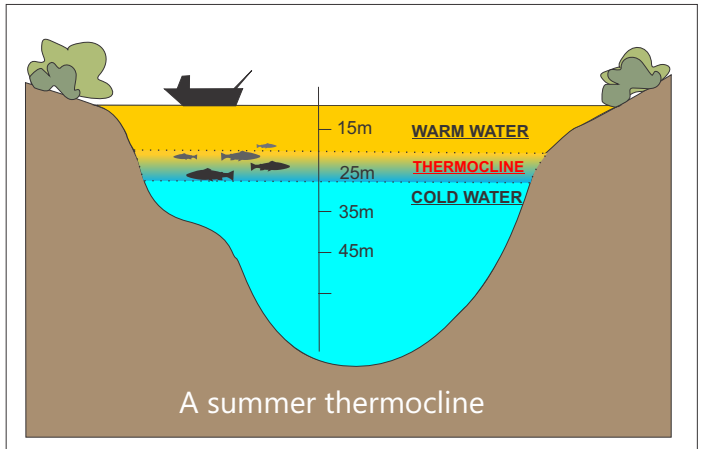


The Thermocline explained

During winter most lakes are the same temperature from the surface right down to the bottom. As summer sun has an effect, the surface waters become warmer and in deeper lakes, layers of temperature change develop. At the height of summer, the warm surface waters are separated from the colder bottom waters by a layer known as the thermocline.

The thermocline is a layer where temperatures drop suddenly (up to 1°C cooler for every extra metre of depth). Typically, lots of biotic (life) activity occurs at the thermocline. It can be rich in nutrients, providing food for all stages of the trout's food chain. Because trout prefer the cooler temperatures found at the thermocline and it's wealth of food, it's a good place to find trout.

The warmer the surface water gets the deeper the thermocline will be. The thermocline depth will vary from lake to lake, but as a guide, in deeper lakes it might be around 10-15 metres when it first forms in late spring, 15-20 metres in mid summer and 20-25 metres or deeper late in summer or during extended periods of



extreme heat. Wind, wave action and fluctuating weather patterns will move the thermocline's depth from day to day.

- Live data from buoys is often available on-line and this can demonstrate the depth of the thermocline accurately -

In shallow lakes thermoclines may only exist at shallow depths for brief periods of settled weather. Frequent winds over shallow water can provide enough energy to overcome the build-up of temperature layers, and in these lakes, trout need to find other cold water areas like cold water stream mouths or underwater springs.

Water quality monitoring buoys are present on many lakes around New Zealand. Live data from buoys is often available on-line and this can demonstrate the depth of the thermocline accurately. The buoys can also be a great source of information on things such as wind strength and direction. Another method to locate the thermocline is simply to use a fish finder. Increasing the sensitivity settings on your fish finder will indicate a band of dense clutter around the thermocline.

What do trout eat?



Smelt, are a small 'whitebait' like fish, found in many lakes in huge numbers. Where present they feature as the main food item for larger trout. Adult smelt are 30-70 mm long, have a white belly, silver or clear flank, sometimes with a purple sheen and grey or green

coloured backs. Smelt spawn in clean, fine sand along the shoreline or at river mouths at depths of 0.5 to 4 meters from November to January and again about March. This spawning congregates smelt in shallow water during spring and autumn and trout will target them near the surface. Dawn 'smelting' in shallow

water can be an exciting and productive time to chase trout and harling, fly fishing or spinning are all productive methods to use.

During the rest of the year smelt school in large shoals throughout the lake feeding on zooplankton. During the brightest part of the day they prefer to stay in deep water forming dense shoals. They move to the shallows or surface during the evening, throughout the night and mornings and can

be seen forming dimples on the surface during these times. Trout can often be observed on a fish finder sitting underneath schools of smelt ready to ambush them from below.



Typical stomach content of a lake trout

Other trout food

Trout are opportunistic feeders, making the most of whatever food items are available from season to season.

In addition to eating smelt, trout will feed seasonally on a number of other food sources. Some lakes are abundant in aquatic insects such as damsel, dragonflies and caddis and these food types can dominate during the warmer summer months. During these periods fly fishing or spinning near a shoreline will be a productive method.

Terrestrial insects such as beetles and cicadas, bullies, koura, snails and tadpoles are also targeted by trout. Keep an eye on the conditions and stomach content of the trout you catch.



Common bully, photo Alton Perry

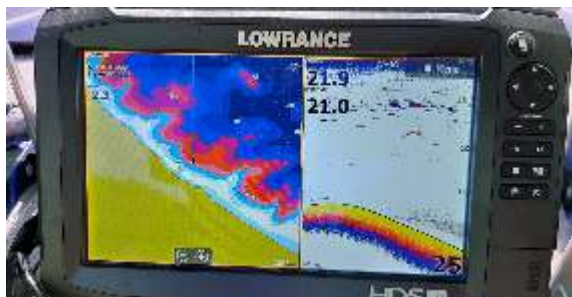


Cicada

Sounders and fish finders - your eyes underwater!

Depth sounders or fish finders help you locate trout, the thermocline, water depth, surface temperature and general lakebed topography. All of this information will help you locate good areas to find trout.

While your sounder won't actually show you where the temperature change occurs, by maximising the sensitivity settings you will be able to find the location of fish such as smelt and bullies and masses of zooplankton and algae (sometime



A quality fish finder is a valuable asset

Sounder Tips

- Each sounder is different and needs to be learnt
- Adjusting the unit's sensitivity will enable you to locate the thermocline
- Buy the best unit you can afford, but even a cheap sounder is worth having
- Make use of fish alarms

known as 'clutter')

It's likely bait fish will be located near the thermocline as will the trout. Additionally, bathymetric charts of the lake will quickly enable you to target specific depths and likely shoreline locations.

Modern fish finders feature GPS charts and enable the plotting of waypoints which can be re-visited. High-frequency systems are powerful enough to show jigging sinkers, lures and individual fish which makes the targeting of trout easier.

Although some equipment can be costly, even simple, inexpensive fish finders are a valuable asset when fishing lakes.

- Successful anglers depend on their fish finders -

Target Trout for Best Success

Actively targeting trout can make the difference between a good catch rate or coming home empty-handed! Making sure your lures are getting in front of fish is vital to increase your strike rates. Search out fish locations and make sure your lures are at the right depth. Too often anglers will anchor or drift and just wait for the fish to come to them. This works sometimes, but it's much more productive to go searching for and target the fish.

If you can't find good fish numbers try other locations – sometimes fish will be in particular areas and this might change from season to season. Again, a quality fish finder will be a huge advantage.

It's a good idea to keep a diary and be aware of where you have caught trout before, but be aware that seasonal changes will mean that fish location, and in particular fish depth, will change so don't assume a technique or locations that worked last time will work again.

Selecting the right lure

Many lures for trolling and spinning imitate smelt or bullies so are ideal for fishing lakes. The lure's action, the way it swims through the water, can attract trout from a great distance. Most lures 'swim' with an erratic action to imitate injured or distressed prey. Check the lure's action at various speeds by holding it next to the boat while you troll, varying your boat speed will make the lure swim differently so experiment. It's also a good idea to keep an eye on the tip or your rod while you troll, some lures transmit their action to the rod in turn making the tip vibrate. If the vibration stops suddenly you will have picked up weed and should clear your lure.



Specific colour or flashes will attract trout too. You might copy or match the natural colours of the trout's food closely, or use something that stands-out, like say fluorescent pink! Either way, try different colours until you find something that is working - some colours will work with

specific light conditions, others won't, so you'll need to experiment. If you have multiple lures fished from the boat vary the colour selection until you can find what works. Also, don't be shy asking successful anglers for their favourite choice of lure, most anglers will be happy to give you some good advice. Lure size is also important but frequently overlooked. Trout in lakes will feed on tiny juvenile smelt, perhaps as small as 15mm, as they hatch in spring and might go onto large 100mm smelt late in the Autumn. Again, experiment with a variation of sizes until you are successful. Try trolling with a combination of both flies and traditional trolling lures.

Lure specifics

Consider a lure's size, shape, action and colour in that order.

Often we pick lures because of how they look - specifically their colour, but their overall size and shape is more important, especially when trout become selective or fussy.



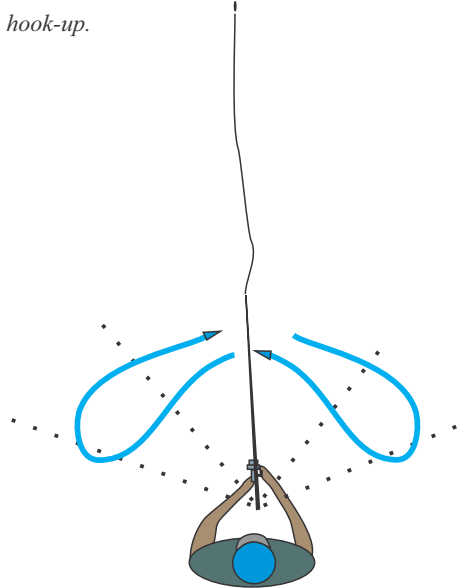
It's hard to beat a Tassie for trolling or casting

Inducing a strike

Trout are a predatory fish, programmed to hunt their prey. Changing lure speed and direction is a key method to induce a wary trout to strike. Speeding up a retrieve is a good method because it fools the fish into thinking their 'meal' is getting away. Try trolling a zig-zag course and manually pulse the rod tip or use the motor to surge the boat. Lures which give-off a lot of vibration are best fished deep where trout use their 'hearing' and sense of feel to detect injured prey items. Vertical lure movements can also trigger an aggressive response from trout. Try stopping lures completely or dropping and retrieving vertically to stimulate a strike. When trolling in adequate depth, try stopping the boat for some time allowing your lures to drop before commencing at normal speed.

Zig-Zag for best results

'Working' the rod tip left and right in a zig-zagging manner while retrieving at an even pace will make your lure speed up and slow down effectively whilst changing direction - a sure-fire way to encourage a hook-up.



Fishing methods

There are a multitude of different ways to fish for trout in lakes. Successful anglers recognise that being able to fish in different ways, depending on the situation, will produce the best catch rates.

Trolling & Harling

Trolling simply means to tow or trail lines and lures behind a moving boat, it is a very productive and popular way of fishing lakes. You can troll while paddling a kayak, rowing a dinghy or moving slowly along with the aid of an outboard motor. Unlike jigging, trolling can be undertaken during windy conditions and it can be a useful way of searching out fish locations as you move around the lake.

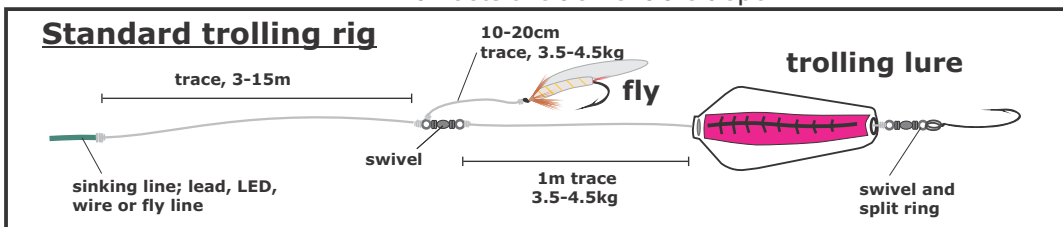
Trolling depths are mostly determined by the type of lines being used and the speed of the boat. Shallow trolling with monofilament line and a weighted lure or fly will get from just below the surface to around 1.5 metres of depth. This is the ideal method between April and December or on cool cloudy days during summer when fish are feeding in the shallows. To get slightly deeper use of an LED or sinking level 'fly line' is recommended. These lines will target depths of around 2-5 meters and are a good choice when trout are feeding on the drop-off or near the edge of weed beds during spring, winter and autumn.

To achieve even greater depth during summer months lead or wire line is needed. Most lead lines are colour coded every 10 metres and 1 colour will sink about 1.5



Colour coded lead line

metres, so 10 colours will achieve a maximum depth of about 15 metres. Wire line is thinner than lead line so it can reach up to 20 metres depth. Deep trolling is the best option when the thermocline has formed, and trout can be targeted in deep areas. It is very productive during summer but will catch fish throughout the year also. Remember that the speed of your boat affects the achievable depth.



Lead line, wire line and downriggers are not permitted on the Waikaremoana lakes. Always check local regulations.

Trolling with a downrigger allows light tackle to be used and all depths to be targeted. A wide variety of lures can be used for trolling however the most popular trolling rigs include a tassie style lure and a fly mounted about 1 metre ahead of it as shown in the diagram above.

Trolling and Retrieve Speeds

Your trolling and retrieve speed affects both the lure action and its depth. Commonly accepted speeds are between 2.5 and 4.5km/hr (1.3 to 2.5 knots) or about walking speed. Again, experimentation helps. Try some likely runs at differing speeds and watch how fast other boats are going. Short bursts of a slightly higher speed can also induce a strike from otherwise uncooperative fish. The pulsing action of your rod tip when using 'Tassie' style lures will also indicate good boat speeds. Consider wind direction too as this might greatly affect the speed of your trolling.

When making large u-turns lines and lures sink deeper. This can be to your advantage if it's what you want to achieve, if not, it pays to increase your turning speed slightly to prevent fouling the bottom.



Trolling Tips

- Familiarise yourself with the area before you go. Have a look at some charts or maps.
- Start a little deeper until your gear is out, then move in towards the shallower water where you want to fish.
- Drop-offs, ledges and the edge of weed beds are always prime locations.
- Sudden changes in lakebed shape such as points tend to concentrate trout numbers.
- Use a sounder and landmarks to stay at your chosen depth. Don't just troll along aimlessly.
- Shags feed along dropoffs - a line of shags is a good line to troll
- When a fish strikes, maintain your speed until you are sure it's well hooked and under control.
- Re fish areas where you have had success and mark them on a GPS or in your dairy, trout will be in groups or the same location

Jigging

Jigging can be a very successful method of catching trout. Jigging works all year round on deep lakes but summer, when the surface water temperatures are high, is the best time. Unlike trolling, jigging mostly occurs from a stationary or slow drifting vessel. In windy conditions it is advisable to use a drogue, anchor or electric motor to maintain location.

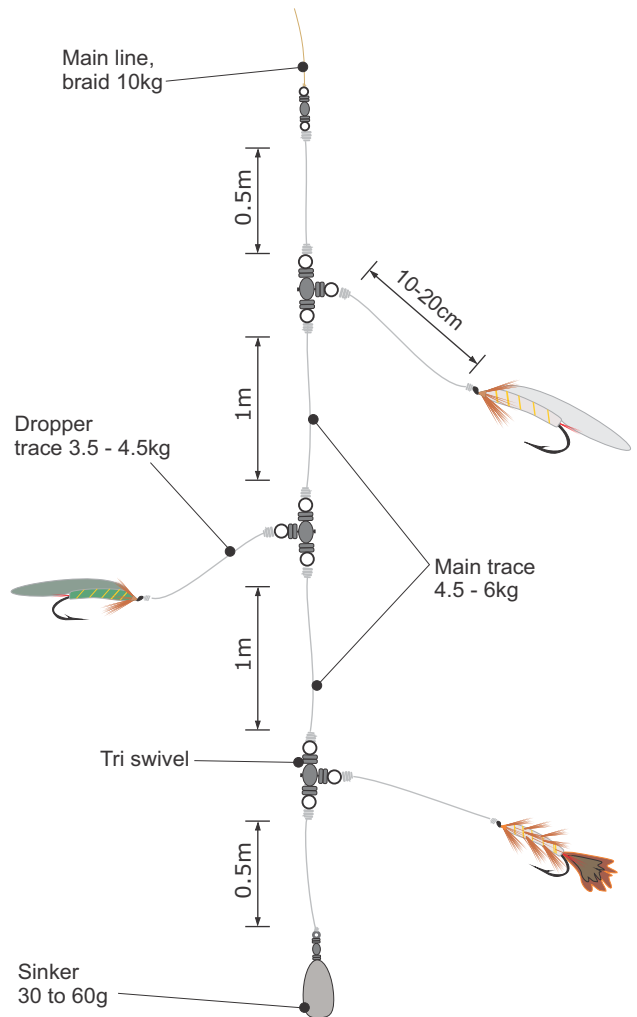
Lures or flies are lowered directly into the zone where fish are located so it is worth spending some time to find a spot where trout are abundant before commencing. During summer this will mostly be in or below the thermocline. A quality fish finder is a highly valuable tool for jigging.

To know how deep you are fishing, you can 'mark' your fishing line with depth indicators using a vivid marker or use colour coded braided lines.

Jigging rigs utilise three flies or lures. Favourites are a variety of smelt patterns and often feature a darker 'bully or koura' type fly as the bottom fly.

Lures should be moved minimally. A slow lift of the rod tip or the movement of the boat is enough to attract the attention of a nearby trout.

Jigging rig, three flies



Jigging



Tips

- Spend time locating a good spot before dropping your lines
- Continue to use the sounder while you fish, always noting the depth of fish and targeting them
- Use tackle specifically set-up for jigging, see your tackle store for advise
- Use marked braid to help with depth targeting and rigs with three flies

Soft Plastics and Spinning

A simple way of fishing for trout is by casting and retrieving a swimming or wobbling lure; spinning or soft baiting. It can be done easily from the shoreline or from a boat at any time that fish are shallow. Spinning and soft plastic lures generally represent bait fish like smelt, so the method is particularly productive when trout are feeding on smelt near the shoreline or lake surface. Autumn and spring are especially productive times for spin fishing.

Use of soft plastics is increasing in popularity. Their realistic actions and soft feel make them attractive to trout. Soft plastics can be cast, slow trolled or used on a jigging rig. Be aware that scented lures are permitted in bait fishing waters only.



A selection of spinning and soft plastic lures

Depending on the season and daily conditions you might want to take both jigging and trolling tackle and be prepared to swap between methods as the situation dictates. It's always handy to have a spinning outfit on the boat for fish that appear at the surface unexpectedly.

Consider the seasons!

Trout move around lakes seasonally to fulfil their requirements for food, habitat and spawning. Cold streams that run into some shallow lakes will produce great habitat during hot summers.

Food sources will also move around seasonally and trout will migrate to particular locations in order to find their food. Be aware that some locations are better at some times of year. As spawning approaches trout might begin to congregate near spawning streams or hatchery release points. Consider time of year when planning where to, and how to fish.

Make a change for success

It's all too easy to set your gear and hope the fish will bite! Chances are if you adopt this approach you'll be a long time between fish, or worse, not successful at all! Try a particular method for twenty minutes. If it doesn't result in success or even a strike then make a change. Fish for another 20 minutes and see if it results in success – if not make another change.

Start with small changes, such as a different lure, then try a different depth or method. If you are still unsuccessful try another location.

Caring For Your Catch

Lake fish can be superb eating. Carefully selected fish will be have tasty orange/pink flesh and good preparation will ensure their eating qualities are maintained.

- *Land fish quickly and select bright, well conditioned specimens only for the table. Inferior looking fish will not taste as good*
- *Iki spike the trout and for best results cut a gill to bleed the fish*
- *Put the fish on ice or in a cold chilly bin as soon as possible*
- *Gut and clean as soon as practical wiping slime clear with a paper towel*
- *If eating within 24 hours simply wrap and refrigerate*
- *Vacuume bagging will vastly prolong and improve frozen fish*
- *Cook trout lightly, as overcooking will dry out flesh*



Protect our waters



Unwanted aquatic weeds, algae and pest fish threaten freshwater environments for the trout fishery, native species, and all recreational users. Be a responsible user...



CHECK, CLEAN, DRAIN AND DRY

CONTACT US:

www.fishandgame.org.nz/eastern/

Fish & Game 
NEW ZEALAND

Eastern Region
Paradise Valley Rd,
Private Bag 3010,
Rotorua, New Zealand

Tel (07) 357-5501
Fax (07) 357-5503

Report Poaching:
0800 POACHING, 0800 762 244



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