

Wakatipu Gems

Gems of the Wakatipu Basin

If Lake Wakatipu is considered the "jewel in the crown", then the smaller standing waters of the Wakatipu basin must surely be the gems. Shadowed by towering mountain peaks and dwarfed by the main lake, Wakatipu's smaller lakes are often mistakenly overlooked by anglers heading to the big lake or famous backcountry rivers. Tarns and small lakes in the Wakatipu basin offer excellent fishing opportunities and scenery to match. Each waterway has its own special characteristics, which anglers who take the time to explore will appreciate.

Spinning Lures for Small Lakes

Where permitted, spin anglers should try Mepps and Veltic spinners, articulated trout imitations, and some of the Rapala type lures. Tobies, Tasmanian Devils and Tillians lures can work well in some of the deeper standing waters. Natural colours such as greens and browns imitate bullies and damsel nymphs found in shallow water, while many anglers use brighter more visible colours when fishing deep water. If these suggested lures do not work you can always try one of the flies mentioned below on a bubble.

Flies for Small Lakes

An angler carrying a selection of the following flies in assorted sizes would be well prepared to fish any standing water in the region. Lures: Mrs Simpson, Monsums Bully, Hamils Killer and Green Woolly Bugger patterns. Dryflies: Loves Lure, Green Beetle, Cochybonhu, Royal Wulff, cicada and blow fly patterns. Nymphs: damsel, dragonfly, midge and snail patterns. If these flies prove ineffective consider lengthening and/or lightening your leader material.

Von Lake

Nestled near the Otago/Southland boundary this small high country tarn in the head of the Von Valley is entirely land-locked, there are no spawning streams. The resident rainbows which can grow to a large size are lake edge spawners. This is a relatively rare phenomenon in New Zealand. They lay their eggs in the shallow lake margins where wave action provides enough oxygen for their development. Run holder permission is required for access. In summer rainbows patrol the lake margin looking for damsel and dragon flies, bullies and terrestrial insects that have been blown onto the water.



Fish & Game staff about to release trout into Lake Johnson.

Lake Rere

Situated in a saddle between the Greenstone River and Lake Wakatipu, this small bush clad backcountry tarn holds a small number of well conditioned brown trout which can exhibit spectacular golden brown colouration patterns. Access to Lake Rere is along a tramping track which starts at the Greenstone Car Park.

Lake McKellar

McKellar is the source of the Greenstone River. Heavy beach forest surrounds this picturesque lake which contains high numbers of small brown trout. Spectacular scenery helps to compensate for the size of the fish. Spin fishing is the most common method as dense bush makes fly casting difficult. Please note that spin fishing is not permitted in the nearby Greenstone or Routeburn Rivers.

Lake Sylvan

Situated in a basin just north of the Lower Routeburn River, this approximately 1 km long lake must be one of the most underrated fisheries in Otago. The small beach forest clad lake holds high numbers of small and some medium sized brown trout and is easily accessed from a walking track at the mouth of the Routeburn River. Rarely flooded the small outlet stream is an important spawning ground for the Wakatipu fishery. The lake edge is heavily forested so a pair of wading boots can be a great help for accessing the margins and allow anglers to wade some distance on the sandy bottom. Patient fly anglers who are careful with their back cast can experience some great fishing on a warm summers day casting to cruising fish. Spin anglers using small Mepps spinners and Rapala type lures can often enjoy high catch rates.

The Glenorchy Lagoons

Located just north of the Glenorchy Township, these shallow productive waterways can produce some exciting fishing. As with many still waters the major trout food sources are midge pupae, snails, water boatmen, damsel and dragons fly nymphs, with the occasional tadpole and bully. Brown trout between 2-4 pounds are common and on calm evenings and still mornings the lagoons are enlivened with rising fish. Small midge and snail patterns on light lines and long leaders are often productive. A float tube is an ideal method of fishing these lagoons, allowing access to areas that are hard to reach on foot due to sodden ground and thick vegetation. As an added attraction, the lagoons provide good habitat for numerous waterfowl species.

Lake Luna

Located in the head waters of the Moonlight Creek catchment, access is walking only and land holder permission is required. Luna has the honour of producing one of the largest trout ever recorded in the Wakatipu Catchment; a 10kg plus brown trout that was caught in the early the early 1920s. Today the lake holds a high population of small brown trout.

Lake Dispute

Access is via a 25 minute walking track located off the main Glenorchy/Queenstown road. Brown and rainbow trout average between 2-3 pounds. Although not recorded in recent years, a small population of splake (a brook char/lake char hybrid) may remain.

Lakes Moke & Kirkpatrick

If sight fishing to wary brown trout is your sport, then a visit to Moke and Kirkpatrick is a must. Signposted from the Queenstown/

Glenorchy Road, Moke Lake and its neighbouring smaller brother Kirkpatrick are only a short drive from Queenstown. Both contain shallow productive weed beds and very smart brown trout. Often the best way to target fish which cruise the shallow margins is to study their feeding pattern and set an ambush. Wait until the trout is out of sight before presenting your lure and then await their return. This tactic will help to avoid spooking wary fish, a common result when casting directly at well educated trout. Like most still waters, when the lake surface is ruffled by wind a small weighted Woolly Bugger or Monsums Bully can produce surprising result. Suspending a small nymph under an indicator can also be productive.

Lake Johnson

Only a few minutes drive north from Frankton, this small lake holds trout and perch. Lake Johnson contains no natural spawning grounds and is stocked with rainbow trout from the Macraes Hatchery. This waterway can experience algal blooms in summer, but when the water quality is reasonable the fish can grow quickly in this shallow productive lake, and some large specimens have been recorded.

Lake Hayes

Lakes Hayes contains brown trout, perch and an unusual species of freshwater jellyfish. The quality of fishing in Hayes depends on the trophic state (water quality) of the lake. In seasons without algae blooms, this lake can produce magnificent brown trout in great condition. Night fishing with a dark lure fly is a good way of targeting the larger brown trout that reside in the lake. Thread lining with perch imitations (small rapala type lures and rubber/silicone imitations work well) during the spring months before perch fry develop hardened dorsal fins can be deadly.

Reid's Lake

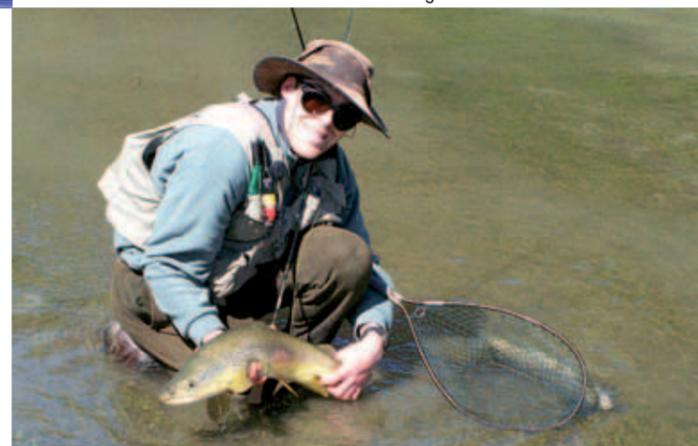
Located within the Diamond Lake Wildlife Management Reserve (Management Reserve), which was created in recognition of the outstanding wildlife and sports fishery values, this small shallow lake is approximately 15km north of Glenorchy. Reid's Lake is best accessed by walking up Diamond Creek from the Glenorchy/Routeburn Road. Reids Lake contains small numbers of medium and large well educated brown trout. Any anglers considering wading are warned that the sediment layers in this lake can be deceptively thick.

Diamond Lake

Also located in the Management Reserve, Diamond Lake is an excellent fishery, especially later in the season when water temperatures rise and snow melt from the Earnslaw Burn clears. Careful stalking of the shallow bays from spring onwards, can produce high catch rates of brown trout which average between 2-3 pounds. Hooking up on a well condition brown in shallow water can result in explosive action and anglers should be prepared for a searing run towards the deep water. Early in the season damsel nymphs, snails and midge patterns are productive and a large dragon fly nymph fished slowly can produce devastating results. Dry flies such as Green & Brown beetle, Cochybonhu, Royal Wulff, Cicada and Blow Fly patterns come into their own when the terrestrial insect world warms up from mid January onwards. Pitching dry flies at rising trout in Diamond Lake with the majestic Mount Alfred as a backdrop is as close to paradise as you are likely to get in this world.

Before fishing any water please check your regulation guide (obtained with your licence) and remember fishing from a mechanically propelled boat is not permitted on Lakes Dispute, Hayes, Johnson, Moke and Reid's. No angler shall fish from a boat on Lake Kirkpatrick. Waterways of the Wakatipu basin that are not specifically mentioned in the regulation guide are open from the 1st of November to the 30th of April, to all legal methods, and have a bag limit of one sports fish per day.

Chris Kensington with a brace of trout.



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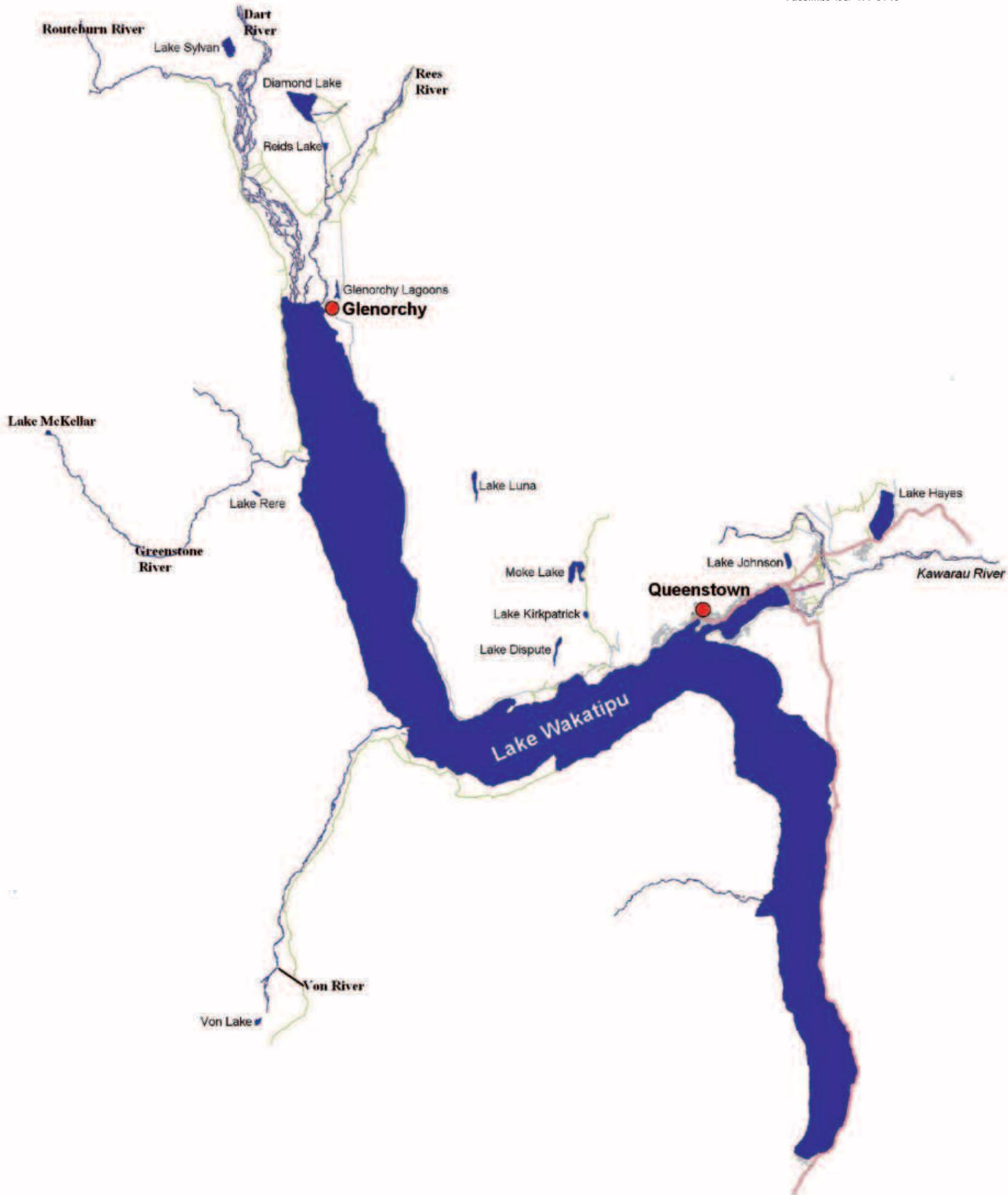
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Regulations

Angling regulations are reviewed annually, please check your regulation guide booklet before fishing any water.