



# Bay of Quinte

**FISHING MAP**

*20 Proven Fishing Spots!*

**DETAILED  
LAKE REPORT  
INCLUDES:**

- Tips From Local Experts
- Boat Landing Locations
- Fishery Survey Results
- Migration Patterns
- Stocking Reports
- Forage Base
- and Much More!



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## LOCATION

In southeastern Ontario, between Toronto and Kingston.

## SPECIAL FEATURES

Special fishing regulations apply to the Bay of Quinte and its tributaries. Consult the current Ontario Sport Fishing Regulations Summary. No fishing is permitted in the Trent, Moira and Napanee river fish sanctuaries from April 1 until opening day of wall-eye season.

Consumption advisories are in effect for fish taken from the bay. Refer to the Guide to Eating Ontario Sport Fish.

Zebra mussels have become established in Quinte in recent years. There have been no obvious effects to date, but fish managers expect increased water clarity to have a major effect on submerged weed growth and ultimately on fish species abundance and locations.

The entire bay is marked for navigation, from its head near Trenton through Adolphus Reach. Keep solid green buoys on the right when going toward Lake Ontario and solid red buoys on the right when returning. Most shoal areas are marked, but some are not, especially within 500 feet of shore. Caution is advised.

The West Section consistently develops safe ice, but conditions can be treacherous all winter long in localized areas, particularly "neck-downs" with currents. Always check locally before going out.

On the Tyendinaga Indian Reserve west of Deseronto, fishing rights are held solely for the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte.

## LAKE CHARACTERISTICS

**SIZE AND DEPTH** - The Bay of Quinte is "Z"-shaped and about 100 kilometers (60 miles) long, with a surface area of 260 square kilometers (100 square miles). It has three distinct sections: upper bay, Trenton to Deseronto (average depth of 11 feet); middle bay, Deseronto to Glenora (average depth of 17 feet); and lower bay, Adolphus Reach (average depth of 80 feet). This map covers the upper bay.

**WATER SOURCE** - Drainage lake: A watershed of about 17,500 square kilometers (6800 square miles) feeds the bay. The Trent River is by far the largest tributary, followed by the Moira, Napanee and Salmon rivers and several smaller streams.

Quinte outlets to Lake Ontario through Adolphus Reach.

Water level fluctuates annually within a range of about three feet, with highs normally in June, lows in December.

**SHORELINE** - The great majority of the upper bay shoreline consists of gently rising, sparsely wooded slopes, underlain by limestone bedrock. Large wetlands adjoin Muscote Bay.

Most of the frontage is in private ownership and is used for farms, cottages, campgrounds, and commercial/industrial facilities around the cities of Trenton and Belleville. The south shore from The Carrying Place to Rossmore is almost totally residential. Large limestone quarries are found at Point Anne.

**BOTTOM** - Generally, shoreline and shoals in the upper bay have a hard bottom of eroded limestone chunks, gravel and cobble, to a depth of six to nine feet. There are also scattered areas of limestone bedrock (especially at Telegraph Narrows) and sandy deposits (particularly at stream mouths). The lake bed is mostly clay/silt mud below nine feet.

Protected areas in upper Muscote Bay and several smaller bays have soft bottoms of silt and organic muck.

**WATER** - The upper bay is classified as eutrophic (high fertility). Water color is brown-stained and murky, with secchi disk readings of three feet or less, year-round.

In this shallowest section of the Bay of Quinte, winds keep the water well-mixed. Temperatures are usually consistent throughout the water column, and dissolved oxygen levels are adequate at all depths.

Quinte's water quality has improved in recent years, but numerous pollutants, including mercury and Dioxin, are still found. Frequent summer blooms of blue-green algae occur.

**VEGETATION** - In the upper bay, submergent weed growth is light and scattered due to the low water clarity. Primary species, coontail and watermilfoil, are mostly found on offshore shoals. Deep weedlines range from four to six feet and are a key locations for walleye.

In sheltered areas adjacent to wetlands, growth is heavier, with coontail, pondweed and wild celery the main submergent varieties.

Cattail is by far the dominant emergent plant, often forming dense, floating mats. These "undercut banks" are prime holding areas for largemouth bass.



## FISHERY

### SPECIES

**Primary** - Walleye (Pickerel), Yellow Perch, Brown Bullhead, Freshwater Drum, Carp

**Secondary** - Smallmouth Bass, Largemouth Bass, Northern Pike, White Perch, White Bass, Rock Bass, Black Crappie, Pumpkinseed, Channel Catfish

**Limited** - Muskellunge, Bluegill

**Seasonal** - Chinook Salmon, Rainbow Trout, Lake Trout, Lake Whitefish

**COMMENT** - For thousands of anglers throughout southern Canada and the northern U.S., the Bay of Quinte means one thing - Walleye (locally called "pickerel"). Preference for pickerel is so high they make up 90 percent of the bay's total annual fish-harvest.

After years of decline, Quinte's walleye population bottomed out in the early 1970's at fewer than 100,000 fish. Numbers began to rebound with an excellent 1977 spawn and exploded after a fabulous 1978 year class. Since 1984, abundance has remained very stable, at over 1,000,000 three-year and older fish, with a slight increasing trend (see chart). In 1993, anglers caught approximately 290,000 walleye and kept about 160,000.

Growth rates are excellent. Three-year-old pickerel average 15 inches and 1½ pounds, and a 10-year-old fish runs about 28 inches and 10 pounds. One of the main attractions for visiting anglers is the excellent chance at a true trophy walleye. Quinte consistently produces fish over 12 pounds, and 15-pound-plus hogfish are taken annually.

The upper bay holds moderate, stable populations of both smallmouth and largemouth bass. Fishing pressure, while still very light compared to walleye, is increasing. The average bass caught, whether smallmouth or largemouth, runs 14 to 16 inches and 2 to 2½ pounds. Good numbers of 3- to 4-pound fish are available, with both species topping out at 6 to 6½ pounds.

Northern pike are present in fair numbers, but little angling pressure is directed at them. The average pike is 3 to 5 pounds, and the realistic maximum weight is about 15 pounds.

Yellow perch are abundant, but tend to run small. In 1993, of 178,000 perch caught by anglers, only 10,000 were kept, averaging 7 to 8 inches.

Almost all other warmwater fish in the upper Bay

of Quinte are caught incidentally by walleye anglers, including good numbers of white perch, rock bass, channel catfish, and loads of freshwater drum (sheepshead). Drum run very large, with fish over 20 pounds not unusual.

Modest runs of Lake Ontario coldwater species, especially chinook salmon, rainbow trout, lake trout and lake whitefish, enter the bay and the Trent and Salmon rivers in fall and winter.

**SEASONAL MIGRATIONS** - Bay of Quinte walleye can be divided into two very distinct groups: young fish, less than five years old; and mature, spawning-age fish, five years and older. Young fish live in the bay year-round, whereas mature pickerel are highly migratory.

Following spawning in rivers and on shoals in April, mature fish begin moving out of the bay. By late May, the great majority have passed through Adolphus Reach into Lake Ontario. They return starting in early September, with peak movement in October. Large fish are normally found throughout the Bay of Quinte by early November, and remain until the following spring spawning season.

A second key migration is the huge spawning run of Lake Ontario alewife into the bay. When the alewife are in, from about mid-June through mid-July, walleye fishing is typically very poor.

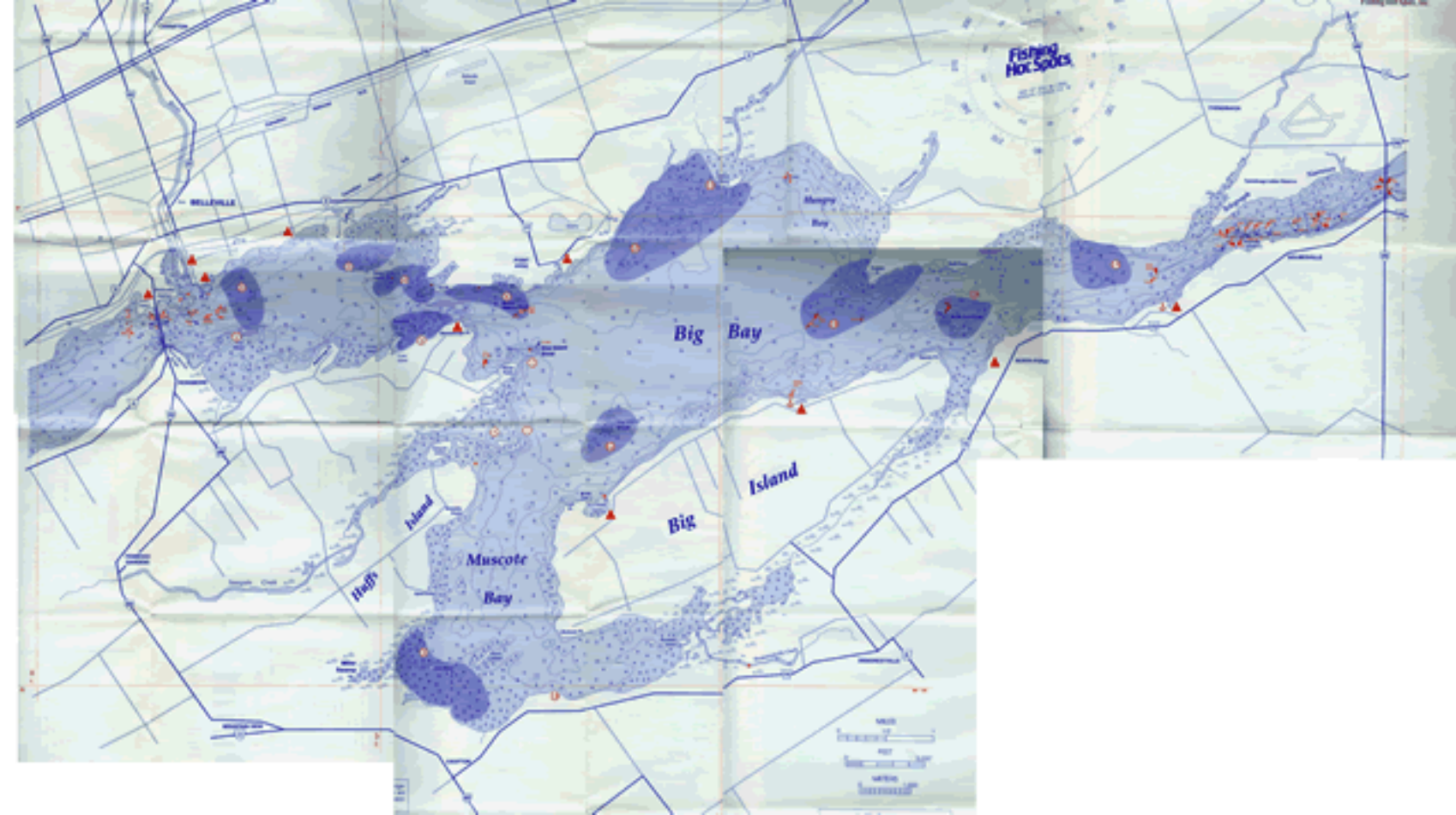
**FORAGE** - From opening day through early June, the primary forage species for pickerel are juvenile yellow perch, spottail shiner, trout perch and various minnows. When the alewife (locally called "shad") move in, walleye switch to them almost totally, gorging on the super-abundant supply. After alewife leave the bay, early season species are again prime. Large numbers of young-of-year gizzard shad (which inhabit the bay year-round) become available by September and are a key fall forage.

Largemouth bass, smallmouth bass and northern pike target spottail shiner, juvenile yellow perch and various minnows (especially bluntnose minnow).

Crayfish are heavily used by smallmouth bass and yellow perch, particularly from mid-to late summer.

**STOCKING** - No stocking is presently underway in the bay or its tributaries.

**TREATMENT** - The Lake Ontario sea lamprey control program is in effect on numerous inlet streams around the lake, including several in the Bay of Quinte.





# LAKE SURVEY MAP

## Fishing Areas Shaded

**Area (1)** Current and deep water draw hog walleye to the South Channel from late October until mid-December. Action can be good as far east as Cow Island, but is often best around the 34-foot hole just west of the bridge. Vertical-jig the riprap banks and piers from the old swing-bridge. If pickerel action is slow, try a Fat Gitzit for smallmouth bass up to six pounds.

**Area (2)** Drift the 10-to 12-foot flat east of the George Street ramp for May/early June walleye. Chartreuse or white 1/2-ounce jig/grub combinations can be dynamite.

From ice-up through February, jig the 12- to 15-foot water between Meyers Pier and Cow Island for roaming schools of pickerel.

**Area (3)** The silt/sand hump rises to about three feet between the old Bakelite plant and Snake Island and develops a large coon-tail weedbed. From late July through mid-September, drift over the top and cast shallow-running crankbaits or tandem spinner-baits for "weed walleye." The weed edges also hold some decent summer northern pike.

**Area (4)** A gravel bottom with scattered huge boulders surrounds Ox Point, the small island west of Ox (locally called either "Horseshoe" or "MacIntosh") and Snake Island. Smallmouth bass spawn heavily here and remain through November. The 12- to 18-foot drop south of the small island can be outstanding in October.

For pickerel, check the 6-to 12-foot depths with jigs or crankbaits in May/early June; drop down a little deeper in October/November.

**Area (5)** A mix of a weedy, gravel-bottomed flat, a rocky drop to deep water, and current through a neck-down make Rush Bar classic walleye water. In May and early June, concentrate on 8 to 12 feet of water, especially on the north side. August and September, troll or cast cranks along the coontail edges on all sides of the hump. From mid-October through November, hit the steep slope near Buoy Q53 for a great shot at "wallhanger" walleye and smallmouth bass.

Some beautiful channel catfish, up to 25 pounds, are taken from the deep trench in July and August.

**Area (6)** Except when the alewife are in (mid-June until mid-July), Minnie Blakely Shoal can produce pickerel any time the season is open. The shoal is a favorite trolling run in May and provides excellent weedline jigging in late summer. The sharp south drop-off can be exceptional in fall, and the 12- to 18-foot slope toward Ox Point offers first-rate ice fishing.

Minnie Blakely, particularly the south side, is also a top spot for summer and fall smallmouth.

**Area (7)** A shallow rock bar connects Ship Island Shoal to Horse Point. For May/early June walleye, jig the 8-to 12-foot edges of the bar or troll in 10 to 13 feet of water from Buoy Q51 to Grape Island. This same stretch is known for nice catches through the ice. The north side of the shoal turns out some beautiful late-fall walleye, especially after dark.

**Area (8)** From Grape Island up to the first road crossing, Sawguin Creek offers over two miles of quality summer largemouth bass water. Flip a jig/Berkley Power Craw to rock piles, downed trees, weed edges and undercut banks, especially along the deeper north side.

Northern pike spawn here and can be good sport on spinners in May.

**Area (9)** The southwest part of Muscote Bay is loaded with vegetation: cane beds, pencil reed, coontail, undercut cattail banks, etc. Largemouth bass can be anywhere, but they seem to prefer either undercut banks or standing cane beds with blown-in weed mats, in at least three feet of water. Miller Swamp and the area southwest of Goose Island are prime.

Muscote is probably the No. 1 spawning area for northern pike in the Bay of Quinte and offers good action in May and June.

**Area (10)** Demorestville Creek and the channels at the head of Muscote Bay have amazingly deep (12 feet or more), clear water with lots of cabbage, coontail and milfoil, and are lined with undercut cattail banks. This is classic “flipping” water and produces largemouth to six pounds from July through October.



## FISHING TIPS

May is undoubtedly the premier month for Bay of Quinte walleye anglers. Spawning is normally complete by opening day and fish of all sizes feed actively in 6- to 12-foot depths, especially near stream mouths and shoals. Action can be terrific at any time, although late evening and night seem better for big fish. Key methods are jigging and flat-line trolling. Drift and cast a 1/4- to 1/2-ounce bucktail jig (perch color is a favorite), tipped with a nightcrawler-half or three-inch minnow. Berkley Power Grubs in white or chartreuse are also effective. If you prefer trolling, run medium-diving crankbaits, like Rapala Shad Raps and Cordell Wally Divers, in chrome or perch finishes. For a little better shot at a trophy, try a stickbait, like a No. 13 floating Rapala at night. Planer boards have not been necessary in Quinte's murky water.

By mid-June, most large walleye have vacated the upper bay, and millions of spawning alewife have moved in. Methods that produced easy limits in May are suddenly almost completely ineffective. Until the alewife move out in mid-to-late July, many local anglers fish for bass or paint the house. If you insist on targeting walleye at this time, try trolling stickbaits, like Jr. ThunderSticks, from downriggers for suspended fish during daylight hours or cast crankbaits on shoals after dark.

Once the alewife leave, fishing success improves dramatically, although pickerel over 5 pounds are rare. From late July through September, the key locations are gravel points and shoals with weed edges and pockets in 4 to 7 feet of water. Time of day is not a factor. Jigging and flat-line trolling again become effective. Use the same lures that produced in May, but try to stay in contact with the weed edges. Tip jigs with nightcrawler halves rather than minnows.

Casting with crankbaits, like CC Shads, or rattlers, like Rat-L-Traps, in chrome or fire-tiger patterns can also be very productive. Some anglers do well with bass-style tandem spinnerbaits, like Stanley Wedges. White with silver Colorado blades is the hot color pattern.

Starting in mid-September, migratory walleye move back into the bay. In October and November, concentrate on gravel and rock-bottomed shoals with relatively steep drop-offs to deep water. Key depths are 15 to 30 feet, and current in neck-down areas is a definite plus. Action can heat up any time of day (or night) as schools move through. Vertical jigging is a top method for these migrating fish. Spoons, like Luhr-Jensen Crippled Herring, or 3/4-ounce bucktail jigs tipped with a three-inch min-

now are effective. In November, big pickerel make feeding forays into very shallow water after dark, targeting gizzard shad. Trophies are taken annually by anglers casting crankbaits from shore and piers.

Safe ice usually develops on the upper Bay of Quinte by late December to early January, and the popular ice fishing season gears up. Catch rates are typically much lower than during peak open-water seasons, but fish run huge. Walleye average close to four pounds, and a 15 pounder is always a possibility. Schools roam widely over large, mud-bottomed flats, often in 12 to 18 feet of water. Drill multiple holes, work a spot for 5 to 10 minutes and move on until fish are located. Jigging is by far the favorite method. Tip either jigging spoons, like Rockets, Kast-Maters or Swedish Pimples, or Little Cleo-type casting spoons with a three-inch minnow. Popular colors include silver/red, silver/blue, silver/green and gold/red. Always work the lure within 1-1/2 feet of the bottom. Fish can be taken throughout the day, but the periods from dawn to 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. until dark seem best.

Largemouth bass fishing on the Bay of Quinte is basically a warm weather sport (July through September). Work shallow water cover, such as weed edges and pockets, docks, rock piles, overhanging willow trees and especially "undercut banks" of floating cattail-mats, 2- to 6-foot depths. Key lures include tandem spinnerbaits, like Strike Kings (chartreuse or white with silver blades), surface baits, such as Zara Spooks, soft jerkbaits like Slug-Go's and various plastic worms/crayfish/lizards. In particular, try flipping undercut banks with a jig n' pig or jig/Power Craw.

Smallmouth bass relate to rocky points and shoals year-round, especially in areas with scattered weed growth. From opening day through September, concentrate on 4- to 8-foot depths. Effective presentations include surface baits, like Tiny Torpedoes or Zara Spook Puppies, and medium-diving crankbaits, like Bomber Model A's or Rebel Crawdads. Action peaks in October and early November when fish school and move deeper. Jig steep-sloping chunk-rock/rubble drop-offs in 12- to 18-foot depths with a pink-and-white head/white grub combo or a smoke-colored Fat Gitzit.

May and September/October are probably the best times for northern pike. In May, drift and cast around new submerged weed growth in marshy bays in 3- to 6-foot depths. Stickbaits, spinnerbaits and in-line spinners, like No. 4 Mepps, are all productive. In the fall, concentrate on rocky drop-offs in 15 to 25 feet of water with deep-running crankbaits, like Bagley Bang-O-B's.