

FORGOTTEN LAKES

*of Northwestern
Pennsylvania*



photos-Marilyn Black

by Marilyn Black

Maybe you are tired of fishing busy popular lakes or are looking for a new challenge. Or, maybe you want to reflect back to a lake from your childhood. Here are three small lakes with public access that do not receive much notoriety or fishing pressure.

Let's explore Sugar Lake, Crawford County; Howard Eaton Reservoir, Erie County; and Lake LeBoeuf, Erie County. All three of these underutilized waters are well-suited to paddling and fishing by kayak or canoe. Each lake holds Largemouth Bass,



All three of these "forgotten lakes" are well-suited for kayaking.

Northern Pike, good-sized crappies, other panfish and even Bowfins. You will avoid crowds by trying any of these lakes.

Sugar Lake

The Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC) considers Sugar Lake to be one of the best fishing waters in Pennsylvania for Yellow Perch. This sweet 90-acre natural glacial lake with a maximum depth of 15 feet is located northeast of Cochranton, along Sugar Lake Road off of Route 173. Water enters from wetlands of Erie National Wildlife Refuge and exits into a tributary of Sugar Creek. Waterfowl including egrets and eagles enjoy this quiet spot.

Shoreline fishing is available only at the PFBC access area on the west shore and at the Sugar Lake Hotel property on its eastern bank. Until quite recently, boat motors were limited to six horsepower (hp) or less. The new hp rating cap is 10, but word seems to be spreading slowly, because boat traffic remains minimal.

Two sets of special fishing regulations apply to Sugar Lake. It is a Brood Stock Lake, which involves PFBC biologists using fish anesthetics to gather pre-spawn donors of Muskellunge eggs and sperm. Therefore, from April 1 through May 31, it is catch-and-immediate-release for Muskellunge, Northern Pike, pickerel and tiger muskellunge (hybrids). It is also in the Big Bass Program, with



Photos-Dan Black

This Largemouth Bass grabbed an artificial frog from milfoil.

daily harvest of Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass and Spotted Bass being 4 (combined species) each measuring at least 15 inches long.

Pickerel weed and beds of lily pads ring the banks of Sugar Lake. To attract the attention of fish, slowly drag artificial frogs and/or metal spoons with plastic trailers across the lily pads and through open pockets. On your retrieves, vary the speeds and pause-and-jerk frequencies as you fan cast to the lily pads. Hollow body frogs are designed to slide, pop or gurgle.

Howard Eaton Reservoir

Constructed in 1941 on a tributary to the West Branch of French Creek as the water supply system for North East Borough, today the Howard Eaton Reservoir (aka Bull's Dam) remains owned and maintained by the municipality. This tree-lined lake hugs the New York State Line. It is 5 miles from North East, Pennsylvania, and 8 miles from Ripley, New York.

Boats operated with electric motors are welcome on this 246-acre impoundment, as are canoes and kayaks. Boat launches are on Ashton Road and State Line Road. Shoreline access is excellent, due to a 3-mile public trail, which circles Howard Eaton Reservoir. Anglers share the trail with bicyclists, equestrians and hikers. In addition, a long, earthen fishing pier extends from the western shore near the upper end of the lake.



Don't be surprised if a bass smashes the underside of a lily pad when you drag a frog lure over it.

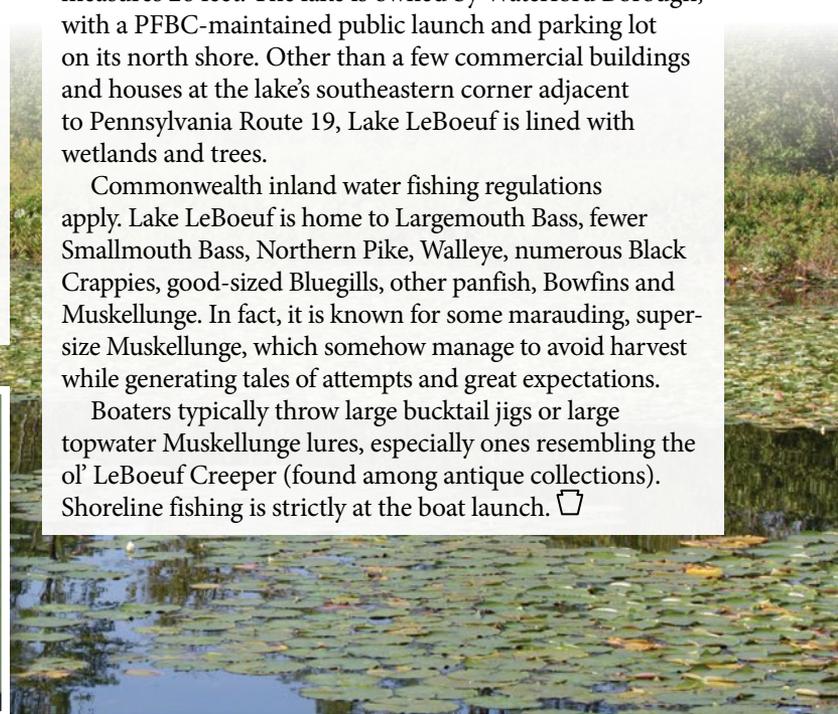
The most recent PFBC biologist report (2008) contains this interesting quotation, "Eaton Reservoir has a substantial Northern Pike population characterized by less than desirable size structure...It has habitat ideal for spawning of Northern Pike, shallow and highly vegetated, but is limited in its potential to grow larger desirable size northerns." This report also indicates nice populations of Black Crappies, Bluegills, Largemouth Bass and bullhead catfish.

Lake LeBoeuf

Lake LeBoeuf has an unusual boating regulation—horsepower is unlimited, but its entire 70 acres are "slow, no wake"—which means every type of watercraft is welcome to putt or paddle this donut-shaped natural glacial lake with a central island. The deepest water measures 26 feet. The lake is owned by Waterford Borough, with a PFBC-maintained public launch and parking lot on its north shore. Other than a few commercial buildings and houses at the lake's southeastern corner adjacent to Pennsylvania Route 19, Lake LeBoeuf is lined with wetlands and trees.

Commonwealth inland water fishing regulations apply. Lake LeBoeuf is home to Largemouth Bass, fewer Smallmouth Bass, Northern Pike, Walleye, numerous Black Crappies, good-sized Bluegills, other panfish, Bowfins and Muskellunge. In fact, it is known for some marauding, super-size Muskellunge, which somehow manage to avoid harvest while generating tales of attempts and great expectations.

Boaters typically throw large bucktail jigs or large topwater Muskellunge lures, especially ones resembling the ol' LeBoeuf Creeper (found among antique collections). Shoreline fishing is strictly at the boat launch. ☐



Pickerel weed and beds of lily pads ring the banks of Sugar Lake, Crawford County.