

Recreational Use of Patterson Lake

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This is what it is all about

Recreational use of any lake and cottages go hand-in-hand. What is the first thing most people think about when heading to the lake in the middle of a hot summer day? Having a swim to cool off. It is glorious!

However, swimming is only one of the recreational activities available for someone on a lake. Boating, fishing, and observing nature are very popular as well.

In the early pioneer days, a lake or river would be used mainly for transportation and food. In particular in the winter time, any lake or river would become a roadway that could provide access to the rest of the world. Even today winter roads are a vital part of keeping a northern Canadian community viable.

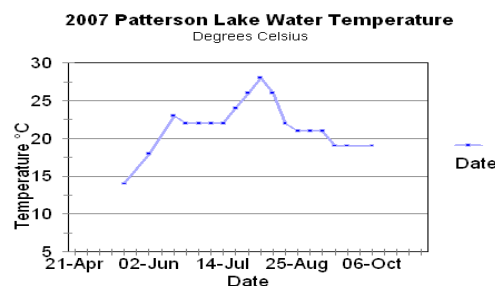
Recreational use of Patterson Lake up to the present will be examined in the areas of swimming, water craft, fishing, and transportation. In addition some discussion will be presented in each area about the nature of use from pioneer days in the early 1800s.

Swimming

Without a doubt the most popular activity at a recreational lake is swimming. It forms the basis of the fond memories of childhood at a cottage. As our age increases, the rambunctious activity of our youth gives way to the enjoyment of the water as a good exercise medium. And on a hot summer day, it provides cooling and relief.

Patterson Lake provides great swimming. The water is clear. The temperature in the summer is warm. And for those living on the lake, it is readily available.

The hearty souls usually make it in by the May long weekend. By July 1, the water is warm enough for everyone. By Labour Day, the temperature starts to lower, but it is still quite pleasant. By Thanksgiving, swimming is usually a thing of the past, but as a notable exception, it was warm enough to swim on the Thanksgiving weekend in 2007. The 2007 water temperatures for Patterson Lake at a depth of 1 metre were recorded and published on the web, and are shown in the graph.



Now Patterson Lake lacks the sand beaches of other popular spots, but the water itself makes up the difference. Once you are waterborne, it does not make any difference whether you have sand underneath or lush aquatic vegetation. Docks and stepping stones help everyone to get into the water comfortably, and once in, rafts provide a launching pad for the active swimmers. The round foam plastic swimming noodles are popular

today for effortless flotation, and provide a element of safety that is readily available to anyone who may need assistance.

One thing unique on Patterson Lake is the predominance of bottom springs in the lake. You really know when you have gone over one by the sudden change of temperature.

Snorkels, masks, and swim fins are easily obtained and mastered today, and used on the lake by a dedicated following. Doug Cross from Lakeside Rd likes to put on the fins, a mask, and snorkel along the shore looking at the life below the surface.

Water Craft

The waters of Patterson Lake probably knew the feel of a birch bark canoe and a cedar paddle. But it is doubtful that any great number of canoes were used on the lake because Patterson Lake was isolated and off the beaten track. Additionally, there was no easy water access to Patterson Lake from the outside world. The larger rivers in the area were much easier to navigate.

Probably the first boats of European influence on the lake were the cedar or pine flat bottom rowboats. Although none are known to exist today, they were there some 30 years ago. Terry Wilkie on Fairs Way had one made by Joe Purdon. As well, if you look down into the depths on the north side of the lake, there is a sunken hulk of a rowboat. The flat bottomed rowboat was common in early Ontario. It usually had one piece sides of 1 inch by 12 inch lumber, bent together at the bow, and wider at the back with a transom. The sides were usually sloped, wider at the top and narrower at the bottom. Seats were used to keep the shape of the hull. The bottom was flat boards nailed as tightly as possible together. Usually in the centre running from the bow to the transom at the back were two supporting keel boards, one on the inside and one on the outside. Yearly painting and oakum kept the boats reasonably waterproof. A pair of oars provided the means of moving the boat, with the rower looking backwards all the time. They were heavy, leaky, and high maintenance, but they worked and were well within the construction ability of most locals.

The next generation of watercraft were the aluminum, Fiberglas, or plywood boats that became popular in the 1950s. Usually they were about 12'-14' long with a 3' beam, which made them very stable. They could be rowed with oars or driven by a small outboard. They could be easily carried by two people and could be placed on car roof racks and taken anywhere. The greatest advantage of all to these boats were that they were practically maintenance free. They are still popular.

The 1970s and 1980s saw the rise of the small to medium size Fiberglas power boats with powerful outboards that could provide ample power for towing water skiers. Because they are well within the budget of most cottage owners, Patterson Lake has its share of these powerboats. It is rare to see a lake property without one. They can also be used for fishing, or a tour around the lake to see what is new.

Since the 1980s canoes, kayaks, paddle boats, international class sailboats, and sailboards have become more frequently seen on the lake. They are lightweight, human or wind

powered, and environmentally friendly. In particular from a few paddle boats and kayaks in the 1990s, these watercraft have grown in popularity so that most property owners have one or the other.

One other type of watercraft that has become popular is the pontoon boat. These are very stable boats that do not draw much water, and can be used for fishing, touring, swimming, or quiet meals for two people.

The actual shoreline count for September 2, 2008 is shown below.

Watercraft Count

Patterson Lake

Watercraft	02-Sep-08
Kayak	22
Canoe	43
Paddleboat	34
Sailboat	2
Sailboard	2
PWC (water jet powered)	2
Small Fishing Cartop	40
Medium Fishing Trailer Transported	13
Large Fishing Trailer Transported	8
Pontoon	6
V-Bottom Fishing/Power/Bass/Pleasure	25

Notes:

The count is only valid for the particular day. A month earlier or later would yield another count.

PWC (water jet powered) - for example a Sea Doo

Small Fishing Cartop - small aluminum or Fibreglas boat. 15 HP or less motor. Can be rowed.

Medium Fishing Trailer Transported - Usually steered by outboard. 30 HP or less motor

Large Fishing Trailer Transported - Centre console steering. Usually larger than 50 HP motor

V-Bottom Fishing/Power/Bass - Inboard/outboard or outboard motors. 75 HP or greater

There is one significant comment on the shoreline count shown above. Although canoes show up as the most numerous on the shore, kayaks and paddle boats are seen more often in 2008. The canoes are there, but they are for the most part unused.

Fishing

In pioneer days, fish in lakes and rivers provided a ready source of scarce food. It was a well known food item in the background of European settlers when they arrived to take up land. They may not have known all the new type of species that they found, but there were enough similarities to the species in the old country that they quickly adapted. And in the unpolluted waters of the area in the 1800s, there was nothing that they caught that could not be eaten – and probably had to be eaten in tough times.

Not too much exists in actual recorded data to say what was around in the 1800s for fish species. A good guess would be that it was similar to what is around today. There would be a lot of small pan fish which could be readily caught and cleaned by kids, and cooked for supper. Yellow Pickerel (which has many many local names) and bass were not only

good game fish, but good eating as well. And ice fishing in the winter would also be available to provide meals for the pioneers.

Other sections of this report give the ten most common fish:

Smallmouth Bass (*Micropterus dolomieu*), Yellow Pickerel (*Stizostedion vitreum*), Northern Pike (*Esox lucius*), Bluegill (*Lepomis macrochirus*), Yellow Perch (*Perca flavescens*), Rock Bass (*Ambloplites rupestris*), Sunfish (*Lepomis gibbosus*), White Sucker (*Catostomus commersoni*). Largemouth Bass (*Micropterus salmoides*), Brown Bullhead (*Ameiurus nebulosus*)

Notes in the 1969 Ontario Lands & Forest map of Patterson Lake lists the most common species and provides some angling advice:

“Fish Species Present

Yellow pickerel, smallmouth bass, northern pike, bluegill, yellow perch, rock bass, pumpkinseed, white sucker, golden shiner, largemouth bass.

Fishing

Angling success on Patterson Lake is fair for yellow pickerel, northern pike and smallmouth bass and good for panfish. Yellow pickerel fishing is particularly good during the early morning and evening hours.”

One change from 1969 may be the largemouth bass. They are not very common in 2008, and some long time fishers such as Bill Brooks from Porcupine Way will give you a convincing argument that there are no largemouth bass now nor in the past in Patterson Lake.

In 1980 an Ontario Lands & Forest fishing information page on the lake gave the following:

“Patterson is a mesotrophic lake located in Dalhousie Township. There is public access permitted through private property (permitted). The lake receives about 4200 rd hrs of pressure annually. (Allowable pressure of 12,700 rd hrs). The lake has been stocked with Yellow Pickerel and Smallmouth Bass. Oxygen is limiting below 25 ft in the summer. The lake is being managed as a Northern Pike fishery.”

Winter fishing is still being done on Patterson Lake, although not in any great amount. Each year there are two to four fish shanties on the ice in the same popular fishing spots as in the summer. Most fishers reports panfish and Yellow Pickerel as the catch.

Transportation

Patterson Lake as a transportation highway is a non starter. Because it is a headwater lake, off the beaten track, and has no easy water access to the outside world, the lake has never been used as a transportation artery.

A sawmill once existed at the eastern end of the lake, and probably horse teams used the ice to bring the logs to the mill. In the summer they could be floated, but low swampy areas would have made the trip much more difficult. Getting the logs from the lake to the mill would be almost impossible for horses in the marshes, and miserable work for men, if not beyond their ability.

Because of the lack of connecting roads around the lake, property owners use the lake today as a means of visiting other areas, or most of all, a tour around the lake to see the what is new.

During the winter, local snowmobile clubs have a trail that comes in on the northside on a Concession 6 extension and exits on the south-east side in MacCrimmon Bay.

One last transportation vehicle in widespread use in 2008 around Patterson Lake is the all terrain vehicle that can go over the most rudimentary of paths through the woods. These popular four wheel vehicles are inexpensive, versatile, and fun to drive. They can also be used to lug stuff around the property.