

# The High Country Lakes

## Introduction

There are more than thirty high country lakes in the North Canterbury Region offering a wide range of fishing experiences, from stalking wary brown trout on the edge of a small tarn to trolling from a boat for salmon in a large lake. Even when the weather is foul and the rivers are dirty, there should always be somewhere to fish in the lakes.

## Getting There

There are three groups of lakes in the North Canterbury region, the Rakaia, Waimakariri and Hurunui Lakes. Most are within a two hour drive of Christchurch City. To get to the Rakaia Lakes, take State Highway 73 to Darfield, turn onto State Highway 77 and drive towards the Rakaia Gorge Bridge. Turn onto Coleridge Road at the township of Windwhistle and continue along until crossing the Acheron River. Turn right at the top of the Acheron Cutting and onto Homestead Road, which leads to most of the Rakaia group of lakes. The Waimakariri Lakes are all accessed off State Highway 73 between Porters Pass and Arthurs Pass. To get to the Hurunui Lakes take State Highway 1 north of Christchurch to Waipara, turn left onto State Highway 7 and drive to Waikari before turning onto the road to Lake Sumner (signposted). Drive through Hawarden and over into the upper Hurunui River valley.

## The Rakaia Lakes

**Lake Coleridge;** -Lake Coleridge is the largest and most heavily fished lake in North Canterbury. It supports one of very few New Zealand populations of landlocked Chinook salmon which are the most common catch in the lake. The best access points to the lake are at the Intake (off Mt Algidus Rd), Ryton Bay (turn left off Harper Road just before the Ryton River bridge) and Harper Bay (continue up Harper Road after crossing the Ryton Bridge, through the Harper village and turn left after crossing the Harper River).

**Lake Evelyn;** -This lake is most easily accessed by turning into the Lake Ida/ Mt Olympus Road, parking a few hundred metres down the road and walking over to the lake.

**Lake Selfe;** -The shingle fan on the north western side of the lake is a popular spot for spin anglers.

**Lake Henrietta;** -This lake does not receive a lot of angling pressure as it is mostly surrounded with swamp. However careful anglers can be rewarded with good fishing

**Lakes Ida and Little Ida;** -Turn right (signposted) off Harper Road onto the Lake Ida/ Mt Olympus Road. This is a private road but is generally open to the public. Travel down this road before turning left (signposted) toward Lake Ida. Little Lake Ida can be reached by walking to the top of the main lake and over a small shingle fan.

**Lake Catherine (Monck);** -Continue down the Mt Olympus Road past the turnoff to Lake Ida for 1.6km before taking the small track on the left. Cross the river (if the track is intact) and stop at the locked gate at the track end. A 200m walk is required to reach the lake.

**Lake Lilian;** -Lake Lilian is accessed through Glenthorne Station. Permission must be obtained from the station to use the road which runs up the Harper Valley from the top of Lake Coleridge. Once permission has been obtained, drive up the southern side of the river until reaching the Lilian Stream. Walk up the Lilian Stream for fifteen minutes to reach the lake.

**Lake Georgina;** -A nice little lake which anglers can walk right around during a fishing session.

**Lake Lyndon;** -This lake can be accessed from Lake Coleridge via the Lyndon (or dry weather) Road or directly off SH73 just over Porters Pass. Good populations of rainbow and brown trout are present.

**Lake Rubicon (not shown on map);** -This is a seldom visited lake lies in the foothills to the east of Porters Pass. Access is through Brooksdale Station, which can be accessed on SH73,

a short distance east of Porters Pass. Permission should be obtained from the station in advance of a visit. The lake is a one hour walk from the homestead.

## The Waimakariri Lakes

**Lake Sarah;** -Travel approximately 2km past Lake Grasmere on SH73 and turn right into a gravel road. The lake is a five minute drive along this road.

**Lake Grasmere;** -Turn into a paddock marked with a Wildlife Refuge sign about 3 kilometres west of Lake Pearson on SH73. Drive down the track and park at the lake edge.

**Lake Pearson;** -A number of small tracks lead off SH73 down to parking areas at the edge of the lake.

**Lake Hawdon;** -Continue down the shingle road beyond Lake Sarah. Just after crossing the railway line for the fourth time a track can be seen on the right hand side. Vehicle access is no longer permitted and a fifteen minute walk is required to reach the lake.

**Lake Marymere;** -Continue along the road past the Lake Hawdon track for 700m and another track will come into view on the right. Once again vehicle access is no longer permitted and a fifteen minute walk is required to reach the lake.

**Lake Blackwater;** -This lake lies on Flockhill Station and is a one hour walk from the road which leads to Lakes Hawdon and Marymere. Anglers must obtain permission to use the track from the station.

**Lake Letitia (not shown on map);** -Cross the Mt White Bridge over the Waimakariri River just past the Cass township, travel downstream on the shingle road for about an hour until reaching Mt White Station Homestead. The lake is at the end of the road just past the station cookshop.

## The Hurunui Lakes

**Lake Sumner;** -Unrestricted 4WD road access is available to Loch Katrine, but anglers need to get the combination to a

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gate lock to drive from the Loch to the head of Lake Sumner. Contact the Department of Conservation in Christchurch for further information. Boats can be launched at Loch Katrine and can be taken through to Lake Sumner via the canal that connects the two lakes.

**Loch Katrine;** -A settlement of huts at the head of Loch Katrine is the location for many holiday-makers using the area.

**Lake Mason;** -Lake Mason and Little Lake Mason lie on Lake Taylor Station. Permission must be gained from the station before driving to the lake. Walking access is available to Lake Mason from Home Bay at Lake Sumner.

**Lake Taylor;** -Lake Taylor is a popular fishing and camping spot.

**Lake Sheppard;** -Access to this lake is over private land through the Lakes Station Homestead. It is advisable to ring the station before leaving home to ensure permission is obtained.

## Methods

Trolling, spinning and flyfishing are all popular methods in the high country lakes, although trolling and spinning are not permitted in every lake. Bait fishing is not permitted in any of the lakes. Trolling from a motorised boat is a popular technique in Lakes Coleridge and Sumner. Lures such as Rapalas and Tasmanian Devils should be trolled at a slow walking pace around the drop-off zone, where the shallow margins drop away to the deeper water. Lures can either be trolled straight from the rod tip on monofilament line, or behind a downrigger or leadline which will take them down deep. Spin fishing from the shore is legal in most lakes and works best on a windy day when the fish are actively feeding. Stand at the downwind end of the lake and cast into the wind where the fish should be feeding on insects and fish being dislodged by the waves. Lures such as Tasmanian Devils and Tobys work well in the smaller lakes while tigers work better in the deeper lakes or in windy conditions where casting distance is important. Flyfishing is the most effective

technique in calm conditions, or for fish which are feeding predominantly on insects. In the early stages of the season blind fishing with a dragonfly larvae imitation is effective. Cast out into the deep water and retrieve the fly back up the ledge. As the season progresses anglers start to target fish feeding in the shallows. Cast a dry fly or nymph ahead of a cruising trout and give it a little twitch when the fish gets close.

## Regulations

A current sportsfishing licence is required for trout and salmon fishing in the high country lakes. The authorised methods of fishing vary from lake to lake so please consult a current South Island Sportsfishing Regulation Guide before you commence fishing. The high country lakes are referred to as “Western Zone Lakes” in the regulations.

## Further Information

The high country lakes lie at the foot of the Southern Alps and are subject to highly changeable weather patterns. Storms from the northwest and southwest can bring rain, snow and high winds at any time of year. In order to avoid disappointment and possible danger, anglers are strongly advised to check conditions before leaving home. The following information sources should be of help:

### Metservice

[www.metservice.co.nz](http://www.metservice.co.nz)

This site is great for high country weather forecasts. The most settled weather in the high country often occurs immediately after a southerly front has gone through.

### Email Fishing Reports

Free weekly email fishing reports are available throughout the summer season which advise on recent catches and make predictions of likely fishing conditions in coming days. Contact the F&G office to register for this service.