

Lake Ontario Fishing Boat Survey, Summer Report (June-July) 2024

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Lake Ontario Fisheries

This report summarizes Lake Ontario fishing quality during June-July 2024 and presents results in four lake areas compared with averages from the previous ten years ([Figure 1, Table 1](#)). According to anglers surveyed in this period, highlights include:

- Chinook salmon fishing quality was outstanding in June-July 2024 with Chinook salmon catch rates nearly double the ten-year average in all lake areas!
- Coho salmon were up an average of 79% across all lake areas.
- Below average brown trout fishing in west central and east central lake areas and below average catch rates for lake trout in three lake areas. However, catch rates for these species can be affected by good Chinook fishing since they are targeted less when kings are available.
- Higher catches of Atlantic salmon in west central and east lake areas.
- Parasitic sea lamprey numbers in June were about double the long-term average. Fortunately, lamprey numbers in July dropped and were about 8% above average. Lamprey were well below record levels seen in 2022 after pause of sea lamprey control program in 2020-21.



A 48-inch, 37 lb King caught in June on Salmonboy Sportfishing Charters, Wilson, NY

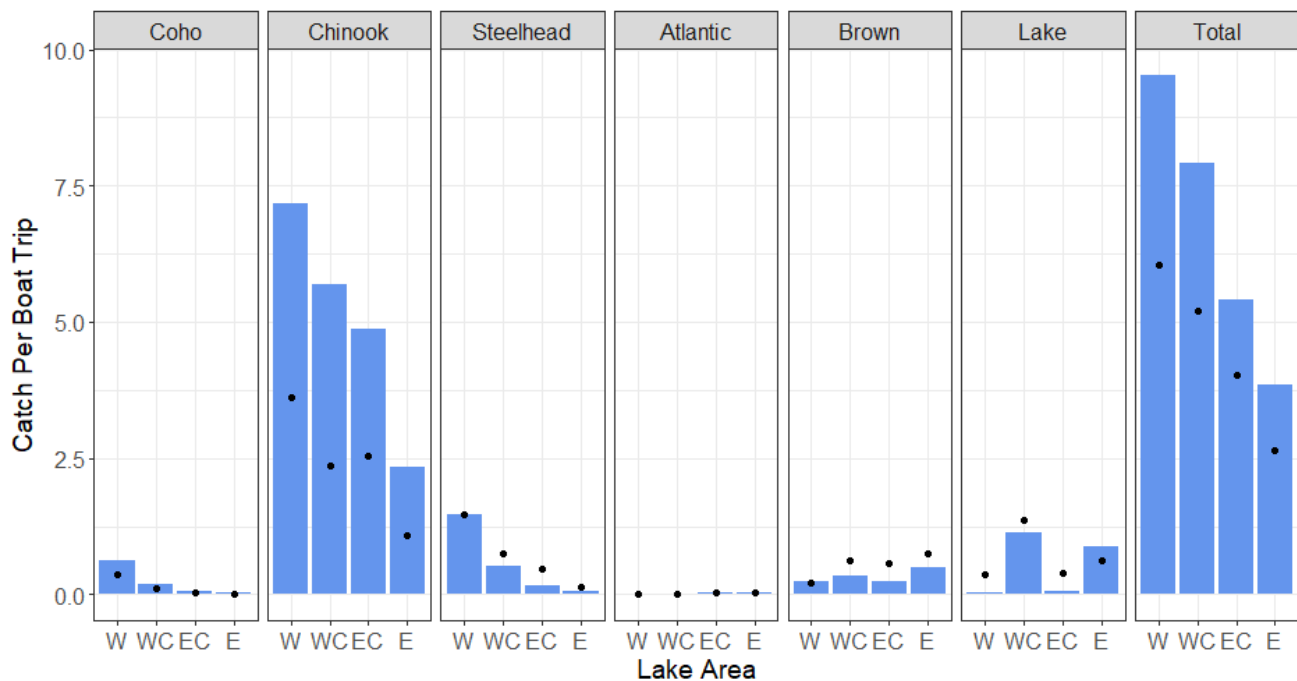


Figure 1. Average catch rate per boat trip for anglers targeting trout and salmon, June 1 to July 31, 2023 (blue bars) compared with previous 10-year average catch rates (black dots) in four lake areas of Lake Ontario including west (W), west central (WC), east central (EC) and east (E).

Lake Ontario provides anglers with a diverse world-class trout and salmon fishery. The six salmonine species monitored are the most sought-after fish in Lake Ontario and provide anglers with trophy fishing opportunities throughout the open lake season and in tributaries all year bringing an estimated \$564 million dollars annually to local economies.

The NYSDEC Lake Ontario Fishing Boat Survey has been conducted annually since 1985 to track angler effort, harvest, catch rate, fish size and other important information for management of the Lake Ontario fishery. In 2024, the Lake Ontario fishing boat survey is being conducted at 20 channels from Niagara River to Henderson Harbor ([Table 2](#)). From June 1 to July 31 this year, two survey teams conducted 85 site visits and interviewed 689 boats (i.e., 653 trout and salmon boats) and 2,231 anglers; of which 41% were on charters.

Table 1. Number of interviews, percent of trips with at least one fish caught, and mean catch rate per boat trip for anglers targeting trout and salmon in June and July, 2024, in four lake areas of Lake Ontario. Cells shaded in green are values above 10-year averages for each lake area, and cells shaded in red are values more than 30% below 10-year averages. Yellow cells are below average but less than or equal to 30%.

Lake Area	Number of Interviews	Percent of Trips with at least one fish	Catch Per Boat Trip						Total
			Coho Salmon	Chinook Salmon	Steelhead Trout	Atlantic Salmon	Brown Trout	Lake Trout	
West	219	95%	0.61	7.18	1.46	0.02	0.23	0.02	9.5
West Central	86	94%	0.20	5.70	0.52	0.01	0.35	1.13	7.9
East Central	219	88%	0.07	4.86	0.16	0.02	0.24	0.06	5.4
East	87	77%	0.02	2.34	0.06	0.05	0.48	0.89	3.8

West Lake Area (Niagara-Point Breeze): Fishing for Chinook salmon was excellent in this lake area in June and July, with catch rates 94% above the ten-year average. Catch rates for Coho were also very good, i.e., about 70% above average. For other species, catch rates for rainbow trout (down 1%), brown trout (up 7%) and Atlantic salmon (down 4%) were near the ten-year averages ([Table 3](#)). Lake trout average catch rate was down 94% in this lake area, but good fishing for Chinook may have affected catch rates for this species (i.e., more anglers targeted and caught kings, rather than lakery). Anglers caught at least one trout and salmon per trip in 95% of the boats interviewed.

West Central Area (Bald Eagle-Irondequoit): Catch rates were also outstanding for Chinook (up 142%), Coho (84% above the 10-year average) and Atlantic salmon (up 20%) in the west central area for June/July ([Table 3](#)). Although Lake trout and brown catches were down, these species are targeted less when fishing for other species is good. Anglers caught at least one trout or salmon in 94% of the boats interviewed, and overall, caught an average of 7.9 trout and salmon per trip.

East Central Area (Bear Creek-Oswego): Fishing quality for Chinook was up 91% and was up 63% for Coho in this area! Brown trout catch rates were down in this lake area (by 58%) compared to the ten-year average, along with Lake trout (down by 85%), Steelhead (by 64%) and Atlantic salmon (by only 7%). Although trout catches were down, fishing for Kings may have made up for it. Overall, 88% of boats interviewed caught at least one fish, and averaged 5.4 trout and salmon per trip which is 34% higher than the 10-year average.

East Area (Catfish Creek-Association Island, Henderson): Fishing quality for salmon was exceptional this summer! Catch rates for Chinook, Coho and Atlantic salmon were 114%, 98% and 91% above ten-year averages respectively. Lake trout catches were also 40% above average so anglers still targeted lake trout during times when Chinook fishing slowed down. Anglers caught at least one trout or salmon in 77% of boats interviewed and averaged 3.6 salmon and trout per trip.

Table 2. Number of days surveyed per channel during June and July 2024. Sampling effort is stratified by day type (weekend, weekday) and channel type including medium (M), high (H), and super (S) use channels with higher use channels receiving more survey visits. Dates of sample, and whether sample occurred in first half (AM, ~7:30 AM – 2:30 PM) or second half (PM, ~2:30 PM-9:00 PM) of day are also provided.

Lake Area	Channel Location	Channel Type	Number of Days Sampled	June		July	
				AM	PM	AM	PM
West	Niagara River	H	4	17	27	20	30
	Wilson	H	4	22	30		10, 27
	Olcott	S	7	21, 23	2, 6	16	4, 29
	Point Breeze	S	5	15	7, 26	13, 17	
West Central	Bald Eagle Creek	M	2		1		2
	Sandy Creek	H	6	19	5, 8	15	7, 28
	Genesee River	H	4	16		21	1, 5
	Irondequoit Bay	H	4		9, 13	14, 24	
East Central	Sodus Bay	S	5		10, 29	2, 23	6
	Port Bay	M	2		14	6	
	Little Sodus Bay	S	5	6	20	10, 27	20
	Oswego (Wrights)	S	9	4	16, 22, 23, 26	30	14, 18, 23
East	Oswego Marina	H	4	2	23	5, 28	3
	Catfish Creek	M	2	1			11
	Dowie Dale	M	2	28			20
	Little Salmon River	S	7	5, 9	19	1	12, 21, 22
	Salmon River	H	5	10, 29	15	7, 26	2
	Sandy Pond	M	2		25		13
	Stony Creek	M	2	30			27
	Association Island	H	5	8	13	4, 31	17
Total Days Sampled							

Table 3. Ten-year average number of interviews, percent of trips with at least one fish caught, and mean catch rate per boat trip for anglers targeting trout and salmon from 2013-2023 in four lake areas of Lake Ontario during June and July.

Lake Area	Number of Interviews	Percent of Trips with at least 1 fish	Catch Per Boat Trip						Total
			Coho salmon	Chinook salmon	Steelhead trout	Atlantic salmon	Brown trout	Lake trout	
West	217	84%	0.36	3.61	1.47	0.02	0.21	0.38	6.0
West Central	56	80%	0.11	2.36	0.76	0.01	0.61	1.36	5.2
East Central	248	77%	0.04	2.55	0.46	0.02	0.58	0.38	4.0
East	133	63%	0.01	1.10	0.13	0.02	0.75	0.63	2.6