

## Lake St. Nicholas

Lake St. Nicholas, 55° 25' 30" N lat. 132° 54' W long., is located on the west side of Prince of Wales Island, just southeast of the city of Craig (Figure 35). Lake St. Nicholas is approximately 80 km (50 miles) due west of Ketchikan. Lake St. Nicholas is a medium size lake, as far as lakes go in southeast Alaska. It is 2.4 km (1.5 miles) long by 0.8 km (0.5 mile) wide. Its maximum depth is reported to be in excess of 30.5 meters (100 feet). There may be spots deeper than this estimate. Lake St. Nicholas lies at an elevation of 259 meters (850 feet) above sea level.

Lake St. Nicholas is generally accessible via float plane. The valley is rather open, allowing for good approaches by aircraft. Lake St. Nicholas is a moderately high elevation lake and, as such, has a bit more of an alpine setting. The terrain around Lake St. Nicholas is moderate in topography (Figure 36). Lake St. Nicholas has low banks for the most part which would allow fishing from the shore. The lake is surrounded by rain forest of cedar, spruce, hemlock, and pine. There are places where small muskegs come down to the lake shore. The northwest end of the lake is quite shallow and full of lily pads. This area is also dotted with several small islands.

There was a USFS recreation cabin and dock in this area (Figure 37) until 1980, when it became necessary to remove the structure as the lands around Lake St. Nicholas were selected by the S.E. Regional Native Corporation. All that remains at the site is a small skiff/airplane dock.

Lake St. Nicholas was visited on June 12 and 13, 1984. Two floating gillnets were set (Figure 38). One net was set near the inlet and one near the outlet on the west side. The nets were fished for 27 hours each. A total of 48 cutthroat and 121 Dolly Varden were captured. The cutthroat ranged in size from 177 mm to 366 mm (7 to 14.4 inches). The Dolly Varden ranged in size from 123 mm to 286 mm (4.8 to 11.3 inches). The overall average length of cutthroat was 234 mm (9.2 inches) and 196 mm (7.7 inches) for the Dolly Varden. Age-length relationships for both cutthroat and Dolly Varden can be found in Tables 30 and 31.

The cutthroat and Dolly Varden sampled from Lake St. Nicholas were examined for sexual maturity. It was found that 72% of the cutthroat and 64% of the Dolly Varden sampled were mature fish (Table 32).

Four inlets feed into Lake St. Nicholas. Three small inlets enter near the southeast end of the lake, while the major inlet is located on the southwest side. Spawning habitat was found to be only marginal in the small tributaries and fair in the larger inlet. In total, they do provide adequate spawning areas for the lake's population of cutthroat and Dolly Varden.

In early July, 1964, an attempt was made to plant Black Bear Lake with 21,000 eyed rainbow trout eggs. Black Bear Lake was frozen, so the eyed

eggs were stocked in the large inlet of Lake St. Nicholas. Prior to this time, no netting had been conducted on St. Nicholas to determine if fish were present. A survey was conducted in late 1964 which confirmed the presence of cutthroat and Dolly Varden. In face of the resident trout population, the planted rainbow trout were not successful in becoming established.

Lake St. Nicholas is quite close to Craig and, therefore, should be popular with recreational users. Lake St. Nicholas does not possess any unique or outstanding features, yet it appears to be capable of supporting a moderate sport fishery. The establishment of a tent camp and/or cabin may hinge on approval from the Native land owners.