

**Reproduced from the Maine Sportsman March 2006**  
**by Gerald E. Wolfe**

Sebago gets more than its share of attention from ice-fishers because of its huge togue population, but other less notable waters also offer plenty of action from brown trout, and more recently rainbow trout. These two species grow to respectable sizes and are thriving in a few lakes through out the region.

**Thomas Pond**

The bass predation study that DIF+W did on Thomas Pond last spring was largely to find out whether spring stocking of 8-10 inch brook trout was worth-while, due to the number of large bass in the lake (MAG, Map 5, B-1)

I have touted Thomas as one of the best bass and pickerel fisheries in the region for some years. The study indicated that numerous largemouths 15 inches and larger were present. DIF+W decided to stop the stocking of smaller, more vulnerable spring trout and instead begin stocking fall yearling brookies of 12 to 14 inches, considered too large to be eaten by all but the largest bass.

I've taken several bass in the 5 pound class and a number of pickerel over four pounds in recent years from Thomas and know of at least one largemouth that tipped the scales at 8-pounds. This should be good news to both bass and trout fishers. A combination of big bass and big trout should make Thomas a prime hotspot in the coming seasons.

**Sebago Lake**

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Sebago Anglers will be happy to hear that things are looking up for the big lake. At a recent meeting of the Sebago Lake Anglers Association (SLAA), the senior biologist for DIF+W, advised the club that prospects for the coming season are excellent.

First, the togue populations appears to have stabilized and larger fish are being caught. These can be described by togue "fat as footballs, the best we've seen in 13 years."

Second, the condition of land-locked salmon has also improved steadily over the last 4 years. Salmon at the fish collection facility on the Jordan River this past November were two inches longer and over a pound heavier than the previous year. They too were described as being some of the "largest, fattest salmon in the last 17 years".

The club has been advised that because of the improved condition factors, a gradual increase in the numbers of stocked salmon would be forthcoming.

Much of this improvement in Sebago Lakes togue and salmon populations can be attributed to the rebounding smelt population. All indications show three solid year classes of the silvery bait-fish are present in Sebago.

A special thanks should go out to members of the Sebago Lake Anglers Association. Over the last 4 years, their smelt egg transfer program in co-operations with DIF+W and the Southern Maine Community College may have been the jump start necessary to get Sebago smelt population back on track. It looks as though tough anglers will have a banner year in 2006

with more to go in the 20-pound class and a few salmon approaching 6 pounds.

### **Hancock Pond**

Hancock Pond comes immediately to mind when brown trout are mentioned. This 858 acre lake is tucked away in the foothills of the western mountains between the towns of Denmark and Sebago (See the Maine Atlas and Gazetteer (MAG). Map 4, B-3). Brown trout don't have the same following in Maine as salmon and brook trout, but Hancock does tempt many ice fishers with trout that attain weights of 3 to 6 pounds.

The Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (DIF + W) manages Hancock Pond strictly for browns and no competition from other salmonids, one of the reasons growth rates are so good. It can be accessed from two boat launch sites: One off West Shore Road at the south end of the lake and the other where Hancock Pond Road and Swamp Road converge at the north end.

Big Browns are a naturally finicky and cautious fish, another reason they reach good size. They bite best in low light conditions so early morning and afternoon on overcast days are best. Set tip-ups in 5 foot intervals in water up to 30 feet deep - from just under the ice on down. A big shiner or fat, juicy night crawler is the best bet for a wise old brown trout.

### **Little Sebago**

Another lake that harbors big browns is Little Sebago in North Windham (MAG, Map 5, C-2 and 3). At 1,898 acres, it is the third largest lake in the region and gets an annual stocking of over 1,500 browns a year. Generally, these fish are well over a foot long when stocked, and many holdovers easily attain weights in the 5 pound class.

Access to Little Sebago is the public boat launch on Anglers Road off Rt 302 in Windham., next to Papas Restaurant. This is a lake with almost 15 miles of shoreline. Several good places to set out tip-ups would be in 20 to 30 feet of water between Horse Island and the Lower Narrows across from the launch site and above Cape Narrows in Hayden Bay and the north end of the lake.

DIF+W has stocked rainbow trout in Little Sebago over the last few years, and anglers can expect to catch some of these recent introductions in sizes comparable to the browns. Using Berkley Power Bait nuggets fished about 3 ft off bottom is an excellent way to take rainbows thru the ice.

### **Crystal Lake**

Crystal Lake in Gray has produced brown trout weighing up to 9 pounds in recent years, although the general run of fish will weigh in the 1 and 2 pound category. (MAG, Map 5, B-3). Crystal is one of the more popular destinations for ice-fishing in the region because it is heavily stocked with both browns and rainbows. This 189 acre lake was one of the original waters used in the experimental rainbow trout program and they thrived here with many trout reaching the 20 inch class.

Crystal has easy access from two sides -off RT 26 on the eastern shore and off Sebago Road on the southern shore at the town beach and launch site. It is one of the more heavily fished small ponds in the region but continues to turn out big fish due to an ambitious stocking program. Most of the rainbows and browns are in the 12 - 14 inch class when stocked so they have a good start. That plus fall stockings assures plenty of good size fish for the winter anglers.