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Check local weather and road conditions before traveling. Access is restricted to many of these lakes and streams during the winter when roads are closed due to snow, generally December to early April.

Consult the Arizona Fishing Regulations for seasons, bag limits and other special regulations. The booklet is online at azgfd.gov and available at all license dealer locations.

For more information, visit azgfd.gov or contact the local Arizona Game and Fish Department office.

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CONSERVE AND PROTECT

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Fishing Guide for White Mountain Lakes

Big Lake and Other Eastern Arizona Lakes



LUNA LAKE

Fish present: rainbow and cutthroat trout

Luna Lake is the last chance to fish in eastern Arizona before the New Mexico state line. Large, scenic, with lots of visitor amenities and close to the town of Alpine, Luna Lake offers good spring, early summer and fall fishing for locals and visitors alike.

Luna Lake lies at 7,890 feet on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. It is located about 3 miles east of Alpine, just north of U.S. Highway 180. It's accessible year-round, but ices over in winter months. Ice fishing is usually possible, but always use caution and check ice conditions before setting out.

Luna Lake has a boat launch, fishing pier and pit toilets. A local organization, Friends of Luna Lake, helps to upkeep the facility grounds and works to promote conservation and fishing.

Trolling with flies works well in spring and early summer. Try woolly buggers, a prince nymph and other large wet flies. Night crawlers and PowerBait fished off the bottom also work well. As water temperatures go up in the summer, fish in deeper, cooler water.

The daily bag limit is 4 trout in any combination. Boat motors are restricted to either single electric motors or 10 hp gas motors or less.

GREER LAKES

Fish present: rainbow and brown trout
River Reservoir also contains common carp and yellow perch.

The Greer Lakes, as they are collectively known, include Bunch, Tunnel and River reservoirs, and are a short distance apart from each other. The lakes are located at 8,260-foot elevation on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. They are about a 45-minute drive from Pinetop-Lakeside via State Highways 260 and 373 (Greer turnoff). At the junction of the two highways, take Hwy. 373 south for 3 miles, then turn left on Forest Road 87B. Each is accessed from FR 87B.



Try spinners and small spoons such as Panther Martins, small Kastmasters and Z-rays after the first spring stocking. Fly anglers can try flies – such as a prince nymph, hare's ear nymph and peacock lady – either by wading in or from a float tube. You can also try fishing off the bottom with night crawlers or PowerBait.

The daily bag limit is 4 trout in any combination on Bunch and Tunnel reservoirs. River Reservoir is catch-and-release only for trout; trout must be immediately released unharmed; no trout may be kept and artificial fly and lure only from Oct. 1 through April 30. The statewide daily bag limits of 4 trout applies from May 1 to Sept. 30.

Boat motors are restricted to single electric motors only on Tunnel and Bunch. Boat motors are restricted to single electric or 10 hp motor or less on River.



BECKER LAKE

As with most trout waters in Arizona, catch rates are best in spring, during late April and May after winter ice thaws and later in summer and into fall until freezing over again in late November. Ice fishing is also popular. Always check ice conditions and use caution.

Situated at 9,000 feet in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest, Big Lake is located about 30 miles south of Springerville and Eagar, accessed by paved road via Highways 260 and 261, and is approximately one hour's drive from Pinetop using Highways 260 and 273 and Forest Road 113. Access is restricted in the winter when roads are closed due to snow, generally December to early April.

Bait and shore fishermen can try anything from worms to PowerBait. Fishing from a boat is generally more successful in the summer and fall than fishing from the shoreline. Boaters should try trolling spinners and flies. To attract cutthroats, use lures that resemble crayfish or their movement. Brook trout will hit flies, but also try nightcrawlers on the bottom. When brook trout attempt to spawn during the fall, catch them with roe or salmon eggs. Big Lake is well known for producing large brookies in October and November.

The daily bag limit is 4 trout in any combination. Boat motors are restricted to either single electric motors or 10 hp gas motors or less.

BIG LAKE

Fish present: rainbow trout, cutthroat trout and brook trout

When mid-summer fishing doldrums set in at White Mountain lakes because of water quality, Big Lake typically continues to produce decent fishing action. Because of its size, productivity and visitor amenities, Big Lake is considered one of the White Mountain's best fishing lakes.

BECKER LAKE

Fish present: rainbow trout, tiger trout, green sunfish, largemouth bass and channel catfish

Becker Lake is managed as a catch-and-release, trophy trout lake with special regulations. Located near Springerville, it also includes the 622-acre Becker Wildlife Area, where wintering bald eagles can be spotted most years in nearby cottonwood trees.

Built around 1880, Becker Lake is one of the oldest reservoirs in the White Mountains. The Arizona Game and Fish Department acquired the lake in 1973.

Becker Lake is located at 6,910 feet. Easily accessible, it is a mere 2 miles from the center of Springerville, off the west side of U.S. Highway 60.

Year-round angling is catch-and-release with artificial fly and lure with a single barbless hook. No bait fishing is allowed, and all trout must be released immediately.

In spring, trout attempt to spawn in gravel beds near the boat ramp. Big fish also lurk along the weed beds on the south end. Flies to try are midges, Prince Nymph, brown Montana stone and KP bugger. Using a boat or float tube are the best ways to fish here. There is limited opportunity for shore fishing and wading because of heavy vegetation, but there is a floating fishing pier. Spin fishermen can try Z-rays, small Kastmasters or Panther Martins with the treble hook replaced with a single barbless hook.

No trout may be kept. The daily bag limit is unlimited for sunfish, 6 bass and 10 catfish. Boat motors are restricted to single electric motors or 10 hp or less gas motors.

NELSON RESERVOIR

Fish present: rainbow trout, black crappie, and green sunfish

Anyone who's driven from Springerville to Alpine has seen Nelson Reservoir. A long and narrow lake, it follows the Nutrioso Creek Valley for nearly a mile. Fish that remain in Nelson Reservoir after summer

stockings can grow to good size, making it a popular fishing site with local anglers.

Nelson Reservoir is situated at 7,412 feet on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. It is easily accessed by driving south on Highway 180/191 about 7 miles from Eagar. The lake sometimes freezes for short periods during the winter, but typically is open to fishing year-round.

When the lake is first stocked in late spring, just about anything works. Try spinners such as Panther Martins or Z-rays, artificial flies and bait, especially night crawlers. As the weather warms, fish deeper with bait rigs. In the fall and spring, try trolling with woolly bugger flies or Panther Martin spinners, or suspend a night crawler below a bobber. The south end of the lake can become difficult to fish in late summer because of weed growth.

The daily bag limit is 4 trout in any combination and unlimited panfish. Boat motors are restricted to either single electric motors or 10 hp gas motors or less.



NELSON RESERVOIR