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Amik Outpost

Lac Seul Airways, Ltd.

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SHEARSTONE LAKE WHAT DREAMS ARE MADE OF



Shearstone Lake is one of those lakes most people can only dream about. In fact, outside of my own family and only a few people that have been hearty enough to come through a long portage have had the opportunity to experience these fish filled waters. It's a shallow, high productive walleye and northern lake. Reason for this is all the gravel and rock shoals as well as weed beds. The gravel shoals produce the excellent spawning areas and the tremendous weed beds produce oxygen during those hot summer months and also provide a lot of hiding places for bait fish.

Shearstone was originally a boat cache lake originating when some moose hunters had paid to have a boat flown in for a moose hunt in the late 60's. Nobody flew that far for great fishing. You simply didn't have to back then. There were plenty of great fishing lakes half that flying distance and a lot more affordable. So, until now, the lake sat there, being protected from the conquest of the northern movement of fly-in Outfitters always looking for new great fishing lakes.

One day, looking over a map of the Company boat cache lakes with a customer, he asks what's this lake way up there. In reply, I shrugged my shoulders saying I know very little about the lake. After he left, my curiosity peaked. I had planned an overnight fishing and camping trip with my 12-year-old daughter. A couple of days later with lots of anticipation, we loaded up the beaver with all our gear and supplies, and the two of us were airborne for the one-hour flight to unknown haunts of Shearstone Lake.

Upon flying over the lake, I see that it is made up of three different basins, all interconnected with a river system. WOW! How many people dream of doing this? Flying into about as virgin a lake as you can find to spend some one on one with your 12 year old. Oh yes, and testing the lake for its fishing potential has to rate up there pretty high, as well. Someone has to do it and this outfitter still has the same appreciation for the beauty of this lake country as I did 32 years ago doing the same thing as a 19 year old kid with a super Cub at the inception of a dream that later became, in reality, one of the largest remote fly in tourist operations in Northern Ontario. As we circled around looking for a clear landing area I could see Shearstone contained everything I had anticipated, and more. Beginning with the simmering dark blue water set against a backdrop of granite rock and green boreal forest. Throw in a blue bird sky and the beaver gently touches down bringing this dream to reality.



A short time later, after securing the beaver, we load up the boat and we are off to look for a suitable campsite. Yes, we will fish along the way. You never know there might be some fish in this lake! Just as it is suppose to turn out the fish are as happy to see us as we them. Short of jumping in the boat, it begins like a circus, between having 2 fish on at the same time for that entire first hour. And to help the excitement escalate, we are accompanied with our black lab, Sheba, dashing from one side of the boat to the other, seeing which one is the biggest! All this, and we are still within sight of the airplane. It's hard to contain our excitement to see what the rest of the lake is like.

I am not sure about my daughter, but exploring a new lake, finding out what is around the next point or bay is as fulfilling as the fishing itself. After a day of experiencing what my highest expectations had anticipated, I knew this lake had more than just the potential of a great fishing lake. Everywhere we stopped we caught fish, all various sizes and walleyes with mixed northern. A couple of hot holes produced over 30-35 walleye in a one-hour span.

Having been only authorized for a boat catch for this lake we had to make application to the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources to upgrade to an outpost Cabin. This task took us over a year. The Ministry advised us we needed to do a fish analysis to check the sustainability of the lake. We accomplished this by flying in and angling 100 walleye and measuring each fish, and documenting its weight as well as taking scale samples. Catching over 100 fish was no problem but measuring each fish, documenting the info and taking the scale samples was a lot of hard work. We also took light depth samples at various depths in different parts of the lake to test for water clarity and sun light penetration. The water is a dark stained color, most great walleye fishing lakes are. We also placed floating sensors that documented the water temperature each hour daily. After doing all this we waited with great anticipation for the OK to go ahead.

As with most governmental agencies that would rather error on the side of safety we were told they needed more information. We needed to prove the sustainability of the lake per the number of people we planned to have fishing the lake. In short they needed more info from a greater cross section of the fishery.

I had already told the MNR that we would allow only catch and release with only fish for shore lunch to be consumed. Our thoughts are that a lake as close as Shearstone is to being a virgin lake, that it is only right that we try to preserve the fishing to as close to original as possible. This way each party fishing Shearstone even in years from now would experience the same fishing as my daughter and I had. Still the MNR wanted more information and suggested we sample 1000 fish and the info obtained from the Electric Shock Survey would provide the key to the sustainability issue. Well, in theory that might be true, but by this time I was thinking in terms of my lake and my fish the same way I talk about Sheba, my black lab. Electric Shocking was going to kill the fish and nobody was going to kill 1000 fish of mine for any study. Especially on a lake we planned for catch and release, killing a thousand fish just didn't fit my ideas of testing a new lake for a catch and release program. There had to be another way. Finally it was





suggested that we used pond nets, we wouldn't have to kill any fish but we'd have to fly in 1/2 doz. pond nets and a MNR crew for a week including all the camp gear and supplies. This was a very expensive proposition with the MNR asking us to provide the flying.

Expensive yes, but compared to killing 1000 fish, it was a deal. Pond nets had to be set in various locations around the lake and checked every 12 hours to be accurate. The fish were counted, scale samples taken, weighted and measured and some were tagged, after a week we had the numbers necessary and the info just need to be analyzed.

60 days later it was great news. We could go ahead with our plans and start to operate in the 2002 season. With the assistants of the MNR we learned a lot about Shearstone from these two fish analysis, including what we already new, that Shearstone is a tremendous fishery.

Now keeping Shearstone's great fishing into the future consists of more then just catching and releasing. Care of catching and releasing is very important. From what we understand, the larger the fish, the more care that needs to be taken. Hold all larger fish horizontal. Holding these large fish vertical stretches and breaks their vertebrates. With broken vertebrates the larger fish have difficulty moving at deeper depths where the water pressure is greater. These larger fish spend a great deal of time in deeper water in July and August for oxygen. We are going to make wooden fish cradles for each boat. This will greatly enhance keeping all fish horizontal for purpose of measuring length. We just can't emphasis fish care enough. It's your and our future great fishing.

As we stated earlier during the testing of Shearstone the MNR had tagged a good number of fish and that we needed to prove to the MNR that we are keeping the fishery at Shearstone sustainable. One way we will do this is by keeping a record or log from each party documenting the daily fishing activity. Some of the information we will need to document at the end of each fishing day will be: number of people fishing, approx. number of hours fishing, what you mainly fished for, approx. temp, approx. wind direction and strength, and sky conditions. Also any tagged fish numbers need to be documented, as well as how many fish and species that were consumed for lunch. With this information we should be able to well document the sustainability of this great fishing on Shearstone Lake.

We completed the new log cabin on Shearstone in October, complete with showers and hot and cold running water. We will be completing the screened in porch on the cabin this spring and will be ready for guests who will be the first outpost fishermen to angle this near virgin fishery. Please give us a call if you have further questions or want to check on dates available. We look forward to hearing from you.

Good fishing.

Bruce, Debbie, John and Rena.

