

Lake Dunstan



This brochure has been developed by the
Clutha Fisheries Trust

Lake Dunstan

History

Lake Dunstan (Te Waiwere) was formed as a result of the Clyde Dam development on the Clutha River (Mata-au). Covering an area of 26 square kilometres, Lake Dunstan runs the length of the Cromwell gorge (Dunstan Arm), across the Lowburn flats (Clutha Arm) and extends up into the Kawarau gorge (Kawarau Arm). The initial lake fill began in April 1992, taking 18 months to reach its operating range of 193.5m to 194.5m above sea level.

The first few years following the flooding of the fertile farmlands, anglers experienced extraordinary fishing. Bag limits of large Brown and Rainbow trout, and land locked Chinook (Quinnat) salmon being commonplace. In 1994 and 95, major flooding in Otago had a devastating effect on the lake, severely affecting the fishery over the next 2 years. Despite further flooding events since then, the lake has recovered and now provides for a first class angling experience.

Getting There

Nestled between Alexandra, Queenstown and Wanaka, Lake Dunstan is located alongside the township of Cromwell. From Dunedin, SH8 winds its way northwest, eventually sweeping along the eastern shoreline of Lake Dunstan, past the Cromwell turn-off, and onward north through the Lindis Pass and on to Christchurch. From Southland SH6 takes you on a superb journey that leads you along the Southern arm of Lake Wakatipu, through the Kawarau Gorge, past Cromwell, along the western shore of the Clutha Arm of Lake Dunstan to Hawea, Wanaka and the West Coast.



Access

Easy access is available to most parts of the lake. The entire length of the eastern shoreline is easily accessed off SH8. The Clutha Arm is the most productive part of the Lake Dunstan fishery and can also be accessed directly off SH6 (Wanaka - Queenstown), and through Pisa Moorings and Smiths Way.

Main boat ramps (see map) can be found at Dairy Creek, Champagne Gully, Bannockburn Inlet, Old Cromwell, McNulty Inlet, Lowburn Harbour and Bendigo. Several rest areas are provided around the lake, complete with barbecues and picnic tables. Those situated at inflowing streams provide the convenience of fishing and leisure for families.

Methods

Lake Dunstan has extensive aquatic weed beds that provide a beneficial habitat for fish and wildlife, but does require anglers to apply some thought to their angling techniques and equipment. For example, try fishing from a drifting boat amongst the weed beds, floating a bait, presenting a fly or casting a lure and you can be guaranteed good fun.

Trolling

This is the most popular method of angling on the lake. If using a leadline stay out in the more open water, targeting a depth of 3 -6 metres. Run 2 to 4 colours of leadline with a trace of at least 10 metres in length. Favoured lures are the King Cobras and Tasmanian Devils in varying colours. For clear water try the King Cobra No 63 (Traffic Light), No 75 (Gold with a red stripe) and if fishing near the weed beds the No 52 (Frog Pattern). For fishing discoloured water try bright colours such as fluoro pinks, reds and greens. Rattling lures such as the Rat-L-Trap brand in Rainbow and Glow Trap patterns are also worth having in the tackle box. The sonic vibrations they emit will sometimes entice fish to strike when all else fails.

Harling

An excellent method for fishing in and around weed beds and is a successful method on the lake all year round. A fly rod and reel is generally used but it can be adapted to any fishing rig. The reel is loaded with backing of dacron to which is attached 5 metres of leadline (1/2 colour) and a 10 metre trace. Feathered lures such as Mrs Simpson or a Hamills Killer work well, but Woolly Buggers are the pattern of choice for many successful anglers. The addition of a reflective or luminescent bead placed in front of the lure can increase the strike rate. Troll slowly and use your spare hand to draw and release the line to pulse the bait through the water, simulating a baitfish. The local tackle shops can provide more details on setting up a Harling rig. **Note :** The boat operator plays an important role in both these methods by keeping the boat in the required depth of water, varying the direction and speed or by keeping close to the weed beds.

Spinning

Lures such as Tobys, Veltics and other similar lures should generally be kept as small and light as possible for fishing from the shore. This allows the angler more control over the lure as it is retrieved. Colour selection varies with conditions, but as a rule Green, Gold, Black and Reds work well. Rapala CD5's and CD7's in Brown and Rainbow patterns are exceptional lures for deceiving trout. Floating lures such as the RTB Legends and Rapala Originals are very effective

when fishing in weedy areas and minimise snagging. Alternatively try using a Killer pattern fly such as a Woolly Buzzer on a short trace with a small amount of weight to facilitate casting. Fish are frequently only metres off the shoreline, cruising the weed edge, so a long cast isn't required. From May through to November target the Clutha River inflow, and inflowing creeks.

Fly Fishing

Fishing the shores of Lake Dunstan with fly rod in hand is an excellent way to spend the day especially around the Clutha Arm.

A 5 to 7 weight rod with a floating line, a selection of stillwater fly patterns and a good pair of Polaroid glasses will allow you to target cruising trout in most situations on the lake. Pattern selection should imitate the many aquatic insects that inhabit the weed beds, try patterns such as Damselfly nymphs and small Woolly Buzzers early in the season. Hare and Copper, Pheasant Tails and Snail patterns in sizes 12 to 16 work well throughout the year. Early summer sees the brown beetle take to flight in the evenings. Try a Cochybondhu or Brown Beetle imitation. Through the summer and autumn months dry flies such as the Royal Wulff, Black Gnat, Humpy and varied Caddis patterns in sizes 12 to 14 work well. If the fish are being fussy try a lightly tied size 16 black Parachute pattern. If there is a ripple on the water and visibility is limited, try suspending a Snail pattern 15 -20 cms under a visible dry fly such as Royal Wulff.

Bait Fishing

As Lake Dunstan is a weed based fishery it requires a change in technique to increase your chances of taking a fish or two.

By replacing the sinker with a float, the bait can be drifted along the edges of the weed beds and not become buried deep in the weed. Also try a bait with little or no weight and drop it a mere rod length out from the shore just inside the weed edge. This is where fish cruise looking for food and provides the added exhilaration of witnessing the fish approach and take your offering.



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Furthering the public's interest in the sports, fisheries and conservation values of the Clutha Catchment

SH6 TO WANAKA, HAWEA, WEST COAST

SH8 TO LINDIS PASS, CHRISTCHURCH

BENDIGO WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT RESERVE
5 KNOT SPEED RESTRICTION

BOATIES PLEASE NOTE

- Stay at least 100m out from shore anglers
- On exiting the lake please inspect your boat thoroughly for the lakeweed *lagarosiphon major*

CLUTHA ARM
Speed limit 5 knots within 100m of shore, 30m from other craft or swimmers

KAWARAU ARM
No speed limit except 5 knots applies within 30m from other craft or swimmers

DUNSTAN ARM
No speed limit except 5 knots applies within 30m from other craft or swimmers

KEY:

- BOAT RAMP
- PUBLIC TOILETS
- PICNIC AREA
- ACCESS
- EAST CARDINAL MARKER - pass on east of marker

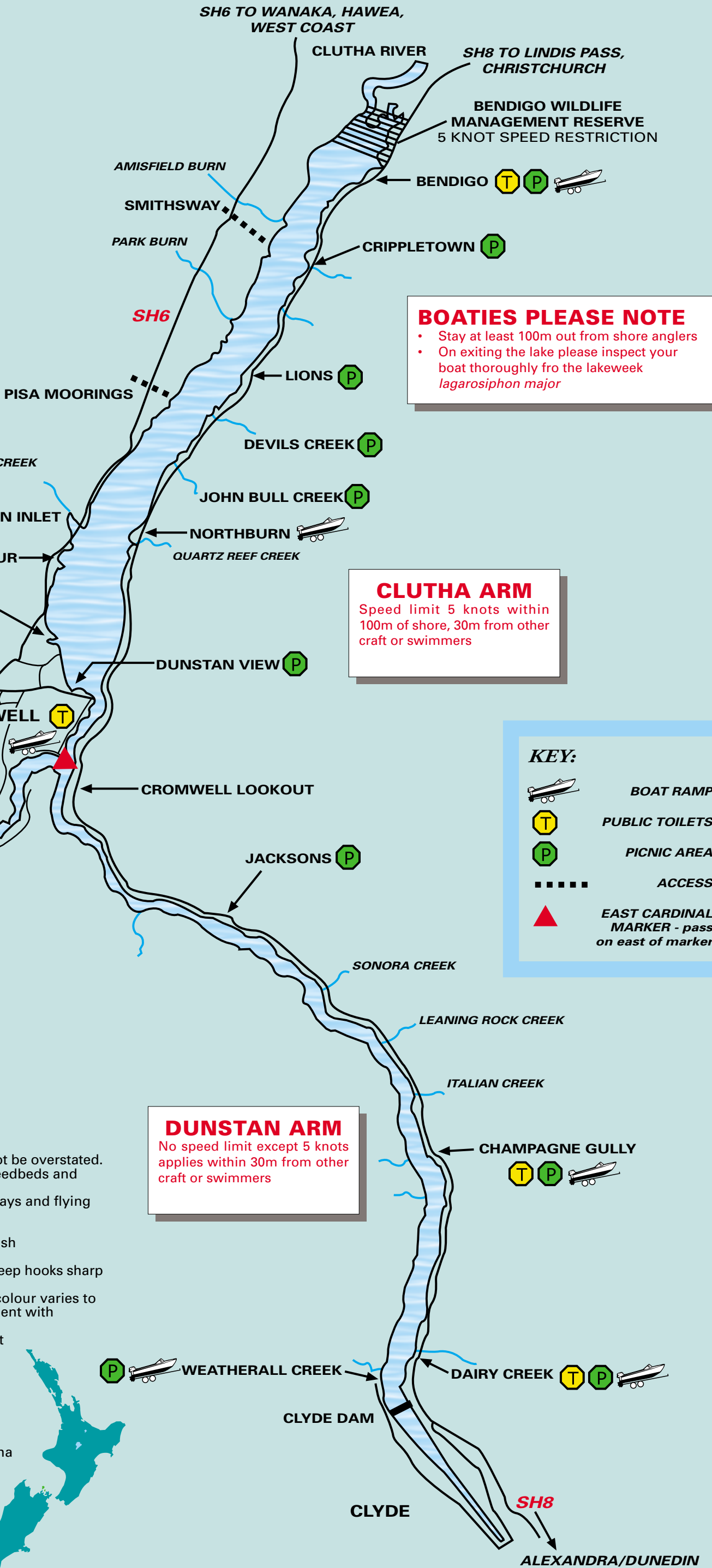
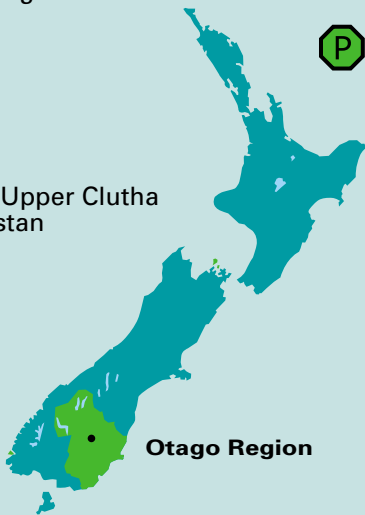
DANGER:
Shallow water above bridge

General Hints

- The importance of a pair of Polaroid glasses cannot be overstated. They improve an angler's ability to distinguish weedbeds and identify fish, as well as protecting eyes from harmful UV rays and flying fish hooks
- Retie knots frequently, especially after landing a fish
- No hook is too sharp. Use a small file or stone to keep hooks sharp
- There is no such thing as a magic lure. Size and colour varies to given conditions. Use the lure that you feel confident with
- If hook-ups are slow try doing something different
- Seek advice from the local tackle store

Other References

- The Guide to Trout Fishing in Otago
- Anglers Guide to Access Tracks of the Upper Clutha River and the Clutha Arm of Lake Dunstan





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