

Pennask Lake and Esker

SITE #110201

GC1VCKZ

Written & Researched by Angela Wynton

SITE IDENTIFICATION

Nearest Community: Merritt, V1K 1B8
 Location: N 49°59.190'
 W 120°05.668'
 Geocache Location: N 49°59.226'
 W 120°05.686'
 Accuracy: 5 meters
 Letterboxing Clues: Refer to letterboxing clues page
 UTM: East 0708249;
 North 5541242 10U
 Geocache altitude: 1,425 m./4,676 ft.
 Overall difficulty: 1
 Terrain difficulty: 1.5 (road to site 5)
 (1=easiest; 5=hardest)
 Date Established: 1975
 Ownership: BC Provincial Park
 Access: • Gravel Road
 • Seasonal
 • 4x4 Vehicle accessible
 • *Detailed access information on next page.*



What does a lake, hidden deep in Nicola country, have to do with the golden pineapples of Hawaii? And where is this golden treasure teeming with wildlife, dotted with islands and abundant in history? At the end of a very primitive, steep and rough road, passing through low forests of jack pine, alder and spruce, Pennask Lake looms large and lovely, surrounded by thick wilderness.

The 244 hectare wilderness Provincial Park was established in 1975. The east side of the park is a mix of open spruce and pine forests with soopalallie and grouse berry shrubs growing on sloping uplands and elevated benches. The south end of the park is a low-lying upland, covered in the dense growth of twinberry, white rhododendron and Labrador tea shrubbery, amid a thick spruce forest.

The lake is abundant with bays, islands and coves. Stanley Read writes, "*It is rich in islands, small bays and inlets - some bearing names associated with fishermen of earlier days, some, names that are descrip-*

tive - Mud Bay, Peterson's, Prudhom Bay, Slaughter Bay, the Colonel's Kitchen, Burnt Island, Milwaukee Point, Dole Bay, and Lone Tree Islet.... the description is apt because of the towering tree, with its great osprey nest, even though now it has more than one tree."

At the very north end of the lake the geological history is evident. Due to volcanic activity more than 10,000 years ago and the glacial melt wash, the end of the lake shows geological evidence of melt water streams flowing in tunnels along the bottom of a melting glacier. Water seeping through crevasses and cracks in the ice gradually opened tunnels that ran downhill to the end of the glacier. The result was a long narrow ridge of gravel and sand, varying from metres to tens of metres thick and winding for kilometres parallel with the direction of the movement of the ice. This continuous and winding ridge of glacial deposit is the Pennask esker.

Pennask Lake is a great trout fishing lake going back to the turn of the twentieth century. Since the end of the glacial melt, rainbow

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trout have thrived in Pennask. They are probably descendants of the ancient steelhead that would have been trapped in the large inland lakes by the receding glacial waters.

In spring, more than half of the trout swim down the creeks to spawn. About five kilometres up Pennask Creek the eggs and milt of the spawning fish are collected for the Pennask Creek fish hatchery. There are between three and five million Pennask rainbow trout eggs annually and the fry from these eggs stock lakes throughout the southern Interior.

In 1927 James Dole, the Pineapple King, discovered the great rainbow trout fishing at Pennask Lake. So entranced was he, he bought 2,500 acres around Pennask, including sixteen of the twenty-five kilometres of lakeshore. By 1930 Dole created the Pennask Lake

Fishing and Gaming Company. At a cost of \$1000, fifty members were eligible to join and a private lodge was built.

In 1959 the lodge had the privilege of hosting and entertaining the British royal family, Queen Elizabeth and Prince Phillip. And there they were, the British Royals, in the lodge of the 'Pineapple King' from Hawaii, deep in the mountain woods, in the heart of Gold Country! The original lodge still exists and the Pennask Fish and Game Club and its members remain active at Pennask Lake.

At the lake there are also four known archaeological sites, however these are in the protected area and not accessible to the public. Additionally, there is one blue-listed variety of willow shrub known as Booth's willow (*salix boothii*), which must be treated with respect and care. And there is an abundance of avian life including eagles and hawks. As Read observed at the time, "*The birds are there - the swallow, the woodpecker, the occasional kingfisher, the great circling osprey, and the loon - active, noisy, entertaining, and handsome.*"

Pennask Lake, with a hint of Hawaii and the golden pineapple, home of the ancient rainbow trout, and with a touch of royalty, is a treasure trove of geology, wildlife, and beauty hidden high and deep in Gold Country.

Detailed access information:

- From Merritt follow Hwy #97C to the Sunset Main exit.
- Follow signs toward Hatheume Resort until the second 12 km marker.
- This is a seasonal road that requires caution and care.
- Only vehicles with good clearance will be able to reach the lake.
- Park at the campsite signage.

BIBLIOGRAPHY & SOURCES

(2009). Pennask Lake Provincial Park. Retrieved January, 2009, from BC Parks Web site:
http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/explore/parkpgs/pennask_1k/

Stewart, J. (1984). *Sport Fishing in the Kamloops Region*. In Kamloops Museum and Archives.