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## Journal of Great Lakes Research

Volume 8, Issue 3, 1982, Pages 379-412

Feature article

### Large Lakes of the World

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[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0380-1330\(82\)71982-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0380-1330(82)71982-3)

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### Abstract

An inventory of the distribution, origin, and morphometry of the world's large lakes has been undertaken. Natural lakes, fresh and salt, with a surface area greater than 500 km<sup>2</sup> are included; 253 such lakes have been identified. Large lakes occur on all continents, except Antarctica, but nearly half of them (48 percent) are found in North America and most of these lie above the 40th parallel, attesting to the scouring action of continental glaciers. Tectonic belts, such as the Rift Valley of east Africa and the Lake Baikal region of Siberia, are the second most common loci of large lakes. Tabular morphometric data include: surface area, drainage basin, elevation, mean and maximum depth, volume, length and breadth, and orientation of longest axis. These data show that the large lakes of the world occupy a surface area of 1,456,000 km<sup>2</sup> and they have an estimated volume of 202,000 km<sup>3</sup>. Large lakes account for approximately 90 percent of the total surface area and volume of water held in all lakes of the world. Revisions and supplements to the data presented are welcomed.



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## Additional index words

Morphometry; water quality; limnology; bathymetry; lake geography

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