



Fishing Forecast

BY SHANNON HAFNER

SEE WHAT'S NEW FOR ANGLERS IN 2022!

Anglers have become accustomed to some of the greatest fishing in state history, this year let's explore newer upgrades across our waters. So get busy exploring and wet a line. Fun awaits!

PHOTO BY NE ASSOC. FISH & WILDLIFE AGENCIES



BETTER ACCESS, LAKE SUGEMA, VAN BUREN COUNTY

Recent improvements provide easy access to the lake's excellent crappie and largemouth bass fishing. Two recently reconstructed parking lots, accessible from Lacey-Keosauqua State Park and Highway 2, offer more than 70 boat stalls and nearly 30 car parking locations. Eight fishing jetties were armored and resurfaced in 2021 and the handicap accessible pier in the north lot was reconstructed in 2021.

FIVE ADDITIONAL PONDS IMPROVE WATER QUALITY AT FAMILY FAVORITE LAKE

Miami Lake in Monroe County is one of the fastest improving lakes thanks to recent water quality projects. Renovated in 2013, it's popular for excellent bluegill, crappie, channel catfish and largemouth bass angling. Five additional ponds were constructed in the area in 2019 to reduce sediment that enters the lake and help retain good water quality.

OUTSTANDING BLUEGILL AT FORMER LACKLUSTER LAKE

For more than 25 years, very few game fish were caught at Corydon Reservoir in Wayne County before it was completely renovated in 2016. Anglers now enjoy outstanding bluegill and crappie angling with bluegills more than 10

inches available in the reservoir once dominated by common carp, gizzard shad and yellow bass. Largemouth bass density is extremely high and size and quality are improving. Water quality is much improved with visibility measured in feet or yards, compared to less than 6 inches before renovation.

EASILY CATCH PANFISH AND CATFISH FROM NEW JETTY LINED WITH SPAWNING BEDS

Keep busy at Smith Lake in Kossuth County catching largemouth bass, bluegill, crappie and channel catfish from the new fishing jetty added last year by the county conservation board. Find whopper largemouth with an 18-inch length minimum. Spend a night at one of 16 new full hookup campsites in the north campground—first-come-first serve, so plan ahead. Explore beaches and Water's Edge Nature Center on the west shore.

PLENTY OF PARKING, AMENITIES WITH MORE ADDED YEARLY

Find great outdoor fun at Deep Lakes, a small urban lake complex in Muscatine County, with boat ramps, swimming beach, trails, rental cabins, restrooms, courtesy docks and fishing pier. The Muscatine County Conservation Board



VOLGA RIVER PHOTO BY BEN PETTY; GIRL WITH FISH BY BRIAN STRONER; DOCK BY RBFF; FAR LEFT BY NE ASSOC. FISH & WILDLIFE AGENCIES

adds new amenities each year to the former sand and gravel quarry with more than 130 acres of clear water lakes surrounded by sand dunes. Good populations of bluegill, crappie and largemouth. Channel catfish and muskellunge stocked every two years.

NEW ADDITION TO COMMUNITY TROUT STOCKING PROGRAM A HOT SPOT

First stocked with rainbow trout in fall 2020, Mark Park Pond in Washington County will receive its second stocking this spring. Excellent bluegill, largemouth bass and channel cat fishing. Completely renovated within the last five years. Nature center, three-seasons lodge, trails and campground.

A NEW SPECIES FOR FISHY FUN

East Lake Park Pond in Henry County was first stocked with rainbow trout in spring 2021. It will receive its second trout stocking this fall as part of the Community Trout Stocking Program. Great outdoor fun for all ages with shelters, playgrounds, trails, sports complex, disc golf course and driving range.

FISHING JETTIES, HABITAT STRUCTURES IMPROVE ACCESS, SUCCESS

More fish habitat structures at Heron Bend Fishing Area Pond in Lee County benefit fish and anglers alike. Improvements funded by a DNR Fish Habitat Grant created

spawning beds along shore where fish can lay eggs, adding more fish to increase angler success. Additional fishing jetties help anglers get to more places for bluegill, crappies, largemouth bass and channel cats. The Lee County Conservation Board plans to build a shelter soon.

SECLUDED RUSTIC CABINS OR LAKEFRONT FAMILY COTTAGES

Book the perfect family getaway at Lake Icaria in Adams County. Choose from full-service cabins with a lake view, water's edge tent sites or two new full-service handicap accessible family style cottages with private lakeside dock and amenities of home. New courtesy docks were added in the marina cove. Good numbers of channel catfish of all sizes, plus largemouth bass, crappie, bluegill, walleye, wipers and blue catfish.

MORE FUN FOR BOATERS, KAYAK ANGLERS

Getting on the water at Three-Mile Lake in Union County is easy with a new courtesy dock and kayak launcher at the main ramp near the beach. Fun for all boaters with a ski zone for pleasure boating and a no-wake zone with flooded timber for fishing. Catch largemouth bass up to 22 inches, walleye up to 16 inches, bluegills up to 9 inches and crappies up to 11 inches—plus a chance to hook an 8-pound-plus blue catfish.





NEW PIER PROVIDES ACCESS FOR NEWBIES TO HOOK FIRST FISH

A new family-friendly accessible pier at Lake Anita in Cass County puts anglers on bluegills, crappies and largemouth. Suspend a worm under a bobber, toss and retrieve small jigs, or rig a rubber worm. One of Iowa's best all-around lakes.

DIG THIS—DUO OF DREDGING PROJECTS DEEPENS DEPTHS FOR FISH, ANGLERS

Explore new depths and drop-offs at Lake Manawa in Pottawattamie County created by recent dredging. Walleye and wiper fingerlings (a cross between a female striped bass and male white bass) stocked each year produce trophy (24-inch-plus) fish. Action starts after ice out, continues into spring and heats up again in autumn.

CATCH MASTER ANGLER BLUEGILLS THANKS TO LAKE RENOVATION

Big, beautiful bluegills are plentiful in Prairie Rose Lake in Shelby County. Catch spawning fish off gravel spawning beds and rock reefs early May through mid-June. Find a fish structure map at iowadnr.gov/Fishing/Where-to-Fish.

EASY, WALK-IN ANGLING WITH ENHANCED SHORE ACCESS AT LOCAL GEM

It's easy to find the perfect fishing spot at Greenbelt Lake in Black Hawk County with a new handicap accessible pier and multiple walk-down access areas around the lake. A paved pier-to-parking walkway leads to good bass, catfish, bluegill and crappie fishing.

HOME RENOVATION FOR TROUT CREATES COZY CONFINES

Recent conservation work to help restore the stream's natural shape and flow added additional deep pool fishing areas and trout hides to Joy Springs in Clayton County. This popular trout fishing destination on the Maquoketa River is stocked with rainbow trout April-October and is home to wild brown trout.

HABITAT, SHORE ACCESS AT SPRING-FED STREAM

Recent habitat restoration efforts at the Swiss Valley area of spring-fed Catfish Creek in Dubuque County have improved shore access and added places for trout to hide. Stocked with rainbow trout in April-October, plus wild brown trout.

RECENT EFFORT IMPROVES WATER AND SHORELINE ACCESS

New fishing jetties and floating pier at George Wyth Lake in Black Hawk County provide

easy access for all anglers. Great bass, bluegill, crappie and northern pike fishing.

STREAM BANK IMPROVEMENTS HELP ANGLERS FISH FOR TROUT

Recently completed work at Mill Creek at Felderman Park in Jackson County removed old bank armoring that previously blocked shoreline access. Easy access trout fishing along a paved walking trail. Stocked with rainbow trout each April-October.

YEARS OF RESTORATION WORK IMPROVES ANGLER ACCESS

Expanded bank fishing access at Lake Meyer in Winneshiek County provides lots of fishing spots for anglers of all ages. Paddlers can easily launch and load from the new kayak launch near the dam. Fish attractors provide hideouts for bluegill, crappie and bass.

REVAMPED, RENEWED, RESTOCKED—READY FOR ANGLERS

Osborne Pond in Clayton County was fully renovated in 2018 to improve water quality and fishing opportunities. Pallet structures, cedar trees and old culverts were added to create habitat for newly stocked bluegill and bass. Bluegill should reach keeper-size this spring.

LOCAL PARTNERS TOIL TOGETHER, IMPROVE POPULAR IOWA GREAT LAKES PARK

Orleans Park, on the south side of Big Spirit Lake in Dickinson County, is a great family destination for watching fireworks on July 4. Working together, the Spirit Lake Protective Association, Dickinson County Conservation Board and Iowa DNR replaced restrooms, improved park and beach boardwalks, expanded the boat ramp and installed a large



Read on to learn about stream and river enhancements—hides, habitat, better access areas and water quality improvements.

TROUT FISHING PHOTO BY DEVON MULLENBACH; BANK PHOTO BY NE ASSOC. FISH & WILDLIFE AGENCIES



Rivers big and small. Creeks and streams. Iowa has them all—over 70,247 miles to enjoy, fish and explore.

new courtesy dock. The private drive-in food and ice cream restaurant was renovated recently.

REFURBISHED LAKE RESTORED AS POPULAR RECREATION HUB

Families have hooked memories at Central Lake in Jones County for decades. The lake was fully renovated in 2019 to improve water quality and recreation. Restocked largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish and channel catfish are now catchable-size. More than 250 structures were added to improve fish habitat. Great access with a new boat ramp, kayak access, handicapped accessible fishing pier and concrete fishing path extend from fishing pier to boat ramp. Beach and camping facilities were redesigned for enhanced visitor experiences.

CATCHABLE FISH RETURN TO POPULAR FAMILY DESTINATION

Restocked largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish and channel catfish at Kent Park in Johnson County are now catchable-size. The lake was fully renovated in 2019 to improve water quality and recreation. Thousands of aquatic plants were planted to provide a healthy environment for fish and maintain good water quality by trapping and recycling nutrients in the water. Explore new accessible fishing pier and improved trail access around the lake.

POPULAR FISH HOUSE OFFERS UNIQUE EXPERIENCE YEAR-ROUND

Enjoy a fun day fishing at Black Hawk Lake in Sac County

inside the completely handicapped accessible fish house in Town Bay with access via Ice House Point. It was very busy last fall with anglers catching buckets of 10-inch plus crappies. Habitat structures built under and around the fishing pier really bringing in crappie. Expect great crappie fishing this spring.

RENOVATIONS SPARK NEW LIFE OFF BEATEN PATH

Popular recreation jewel, Mariposa Lake in Jasper County, is eager to welcome back visitors after recent renovations to improve water quality and angler access. Depth was re-established throughout and a variety of fish habitat structures were added. Restocked fish are still a bit young. New amenities include boat ramp with kayak launch, parking lot, fishing jetties, hiking trail, picnic areas and camping facilities.

FISH STILL MATURING, BUT PLENTY TO CATCH

More than 550,000 fish were restocked into Easter Lake in Polk County after years of work to improve water quality at this community recreation hub. More than 100 structures were added to provide habitat for still maturing bass, walleye and catfish. Upgrades to amenities include picnic shelters, trails, beach and boat rentals.

EXCELLENT SHORE ACCESS, QUALITY BLUEGILL

Excellent shore access to Dakins Lake in Story County with two jetties and a dock with a cleaning station. Plenty of underwater fish habitat including standing timber. Camping is available at the newly expanded park.



ANGLER TIPS FOR FISHING FROM KAYAK, CANOE

We asked several enthusiasts to share their thoughts on getting started. Here's what they said.

BEN PETTY, OF CONRAD, SHARES HIS WATER WISDOM

As a farm kid growing up in southern Iowa, I spent a lot of time outdoors fishing, hunting, trapping and roaming around when chores were done (sometimes even before chores). In my world, fishing meant chasing largemouth bass and bluegill in small farm ponds.

I didn't fish rivers until later in life. After graduating college and becoming a science teacher, I bought my first canoe. Not long afterwards, a kayak. I lived in Manson then, exploring nearby Twin Lakes, Lizard Creek and the Des Moines and Boone rivers. My wife's family was from northeast Iowa, so I started strapping my kayak on the vehicle to take on trips to my in-laws to float area rivers—the Volga, Turkey and Maquoketa.

I didn't fish these rivers the first few years as I paddled. I was happy enjoying scenery, nature and getting exercise. But curiosity led to taking a pole, and with a lot of trial and error, I've been river fishing from a kayak since.

Great paddling opportunities exist on Iowa rivers to catch smallmouth bass, walleye, northern pike, catfish and even trout and rock bass on some streams. Even if fish aren't biting, it's still a fantastic immersion in nature. There's always something new to see around the next bend. I've seen river otters play, bald eagles soar overhead, kingfishers dive for dinner and deer splash across the stream before me.

I target smallmouth bass most frequently since they are found in streams close to home, as well as across much of central and eastern Iowa, especially in rivers with at least moderately good water clarity and rocky habitat.

Some features to look for when floating and fishing are eddies around boulders or other current breaks where smallies are likely to hang out for prey. I also target outside river bends, especially undercut banks, cliffs or rocky structure, as these are a magnet for smallies and other fish.

Pools just above and below riffles are always worth trying. I've caught a surprising number of smallmouth in highly oxygenated pockets in riffles. As far as gear, I usually use medium or medium-lightweight spinning rods and reels with 6-pound line for casting lightweight lures long distances.

Mostly, I fish smallies using a jig and plastic, with salt-infused white twister tail grubs being a go-to. This combo is also effective for walleye and northern pike. Crayfish-colored plastic baits and crankbaits can also be effective for smallmouth. If I'm floating a northeast Iowa stream large



Bluffs, canoes and walleye...the Upper Iowa River says come explore.

enough to hold trout, my preference is an in-line spinner (often ¼-ounce size to get deeper into pools). While there are many manufacturers and styles of in-line spinners, the blade design of some work better in moving water for consistent spinning action. Favorites for trout are made by Panther Martin and Blue Fox.

The boat I often use on small rivers and streams is a Wenonah Argosy solo canoe. I've found it lighter than kayaks, with more storage and ease of access. It's designed for small rivers, with a decent amount of rocker making it highly maneuverable on twisting streams.

Other advice I give paddlers new to fishing is to start early. While fish are often caught all day, the first few hours of daylight are most productive. Also, reduce the number of miles you paddle when fishing. I've spent the better part of a day on some 6-8 mile fishing trips, where I might paddle twice that distance if not fishing.

Finally, be patient and persistent; it takes time to learn how to "read the water" and identify good fish habitat. Even when you do, every angler knows there's no guarantee fish will bite—just enjoy time in nature and on the water!

BRIAN STRONER OF WEBSTER CITY

Living in Iowa most of my life, I have paddled and fished since childhood. My dad always had a canoe and in Scouting, paddling was a big focus of our Iowa trips. Since then, I have paddled and fished all over the U.S. and Canada. I have been involved with Protected Water Areas, Water Trails, REAP, Project AWARE, Boone River Cleanup

PHOTOS BY BEN PETTY

and Iowa Rivers Revival. Currently I am the Environmental/Safety Coordinator for the City of Webster City and spend a lot of my time smallmouth fishing on the Boone River.

Here are some of my insights:

Know your skill level—for beginners, avoid challenging waters until proficiency and skills improve or you have gone with more experienced paddlers.

Know the water—is it a larger lake subject to strong wind and waves? Is it a river with rapids, dams, and strainers (those downed trees that can ensnare unwary paddlers)?

Know the weather—spring and summer thunderstorms can appear quickly.

Have proper gear—a properly sized paddle, wear a correctly-sized PFD, wear adequate clothing, bring a first aid kit, bring dry storage bags, etc.

KAYAK FISHING TIPS FOR BEGINNERS

Fishing from a kayak is an active way to get close with nature. Kayaks are small, quiet and more maneuverable than any other boat. Plus, you can get close to shore where other boaters rely on less accurate, long distance casting.

TRY THESE TIPS FOR A FUN, SAFE KAYAK FISHING ADVENTURE:

Be a confident paddler. Learn basic paddling strokes and how to self-rescue. Hands-on instruction and online paddling safety courses are available.

Leave your packed tackle box home. Bring only basic tackle for the specific fish species you are trying to catch.

Check water levels. Fish with a buddy and let someone know where you're going.

Be safe. Wear a properly-fitted life jacket and bring a first aid kit. Carry a cell phone in a watertight dry-bag for emergencies.

Tie down your paddle, tackle box and other fishing necessities to avoid losing them.

Bring plenty of water. Wear light, loose fitting clothing that dries quickly. Wear a hat, sunglasses and plenty of sunscreen.

FISH LOCAL

You don't have to travel far to get out on the water and catch fish. Check out these community fishing ponds that allow kayak fishing:

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| • Ada Hayden Heritage Park, Ames | • George Wyth, Waterloo | • Prairie Park, Cedar Rapids |
| • Bacon Creek Lake, Sioux City | • Goldfinch Pond, Marshalltown | • Purple Martin, Des Moines |
| • Banner Lakes, Indianola | • Grays Lake, Des Moines | • Quarry Springs, Colfax |
| • Big Woods, Cedar Falls | • Greenbelt Lake, Waterloo | • Sand Lake, Marshalltown |
| • Blue & Black Pits, Mason City | • Harold Getty, Waterloo | • Terra Lake, Johnston |
| • Bluebill Lake, Mason City/Clear Lake | • Iowa River Trail Pond, Iowa City | • Terry Trueblood Lake, Iowa City |
| • Cedar Lake, Winterset | • Lake Petocka, Bondurant | • Sand Lake, Marshalltown |
| • Copper Creek, Pleasant Hill | • Meyers Lake, Evansdale | • Thomas Mitchell Lake, Mitchellville |
| • Easter Lake, Des Moines | • Moorland Pond, Moorland | • Timber Creek Pond, Marshalltown |
| • Fort Des Moines Pond, Des Moines | • Ottumwa Park Ponds, Ottumwa | • Yellow Banks Park Pond, Pleasant Hill |

Get better—Join a paddling club or take classes to improve paddling skills.

Look for structure—Fish near rocks, trees, docks, weed lines and current transitions like eddies or behind boulders.

"Match the hatch"—find out what your target species likes to eat and mimic that. For example, smallmouth bass love crayfish.

In the kayak—Try to have multiple rod holders. Make sure important gear is within arm's length.

Go small, smart— To avoid fumbling around with a large, overflowing tackle box, take a small tackle box that fits between your legs. Fill with tackle you will use. Make sure you have the right rod and reel combo for your target species and know the species. Research when they actively feed, what temps and locations they spawn, etc. 🐟

Stay well downstream and upstream of low-head dams. Use caution fishing around wood debris (strainers) on outside bends of streams and rivers. Be careful paddling around obstructions such as snags, log jams, submerged logs and other debris.



A beautiful brown trout on the beautiful Yellow River.