

Find Your Fishing Partner!

BY SHANNON HAFNER

Here are easy-access, beautiful locations for exciting fishing for fun-seekers

Escape from your daily routine

ADAMS—It's easy to catch fish at Lake Icaria with excellent shore access and jetties. Use small jigs and minnows for bluegill up to 8-inches and crappie up to 11-inches on fish mounds and fishing jetties. Cast nightcrawlers or cut bait along the bottom of rocky shoreline areas or the fish mounds for excellent numbers of channel catfish of all sizes. Camping, cabins, nature trails, playground and beach at the county park.

ALLAMAKEE—There's a perfect trout fishing spot for everyone at Yellow River State Forest with easy-to-get-to places and adventurous treks to Paint or Little Paint creeks. Wild brook and brown trout and stocked rainbow challenge beginners and experts. Camping, hiking and equestrian activities, too. Effigy Mounds National Monument is nearby.

BOONE—Great outdoor fun for all ages at Don Williams Lake with a campground, beach, playground, trails, golf course and cabins. Catch plenty of crappie and bluegill. Dock fishing is good, especially late April and May when crappies spawn. From a boat, drift jigs down the middle of the lake during the mid-summer bite.

CLAYTON—Bloody Run Creek trout stream offers a bit of everything—primitive camping, easy access, stocked rainbows and wild brown trout. Pikes Peak State Park is close by with camping and hiking trails with gorgeous views of the Mississippi River valley. Shopping, restaurants, a winery and brewery are a short drive away in Marquette and McGregor.

DELAWARE—Unique experiences for all ages await at Backbone State Park—trout fishing, cabins and camping,

paddling and rugged trail hikes. Explore clear, cold-water Richmond Springs with easy access trails. Keeper rainbow trout are stocked weekly April through October. Use small spinners, jigs, prepared baits or fly-fish. The Maquoketa River yields brown trout in upstream areas and smallmouth bass below Backbone Lake. Easy lake access for small bluegill, crappie, largemouth and white sucker.

IDA—Stay in a lakeshore cabin at Crawford Creek and enjoy a weekend of fishing. A popular fishing spot for jumbo bluegill, large crappie and an occasional big perch. Some of the biggest largemouth bass in the county lurk in Crawford Creek. Beach, hiking trails, picnic shelters and paddle boats.

JONES—Excellent river fishing at Wapsipinicon State Park south of Anamosa plus caves, golf and unforgettable views. Famous for walleye, smallmouth and channel cat, especially below the dam near the park entrance. Camping, hiking trails, lodge rental and playground.

KOSSUTH—Keep the whole family busy catching spring crappie and bluegill over 9 inches at Smith Lake north of Algona. Bass have an 18-inch minimum, so large fish can be found. Lots of fun outdoor activities at Water's Edge Nature Center on west shore. Campgrounds, fishing docks, playgrounds, boat ramp, jetty, hiking trail and a couple beaches.

LYON—Quickly learn fishing basics at Lake Pahoja. Fast biting largemouth bass and lots of bluegill and channel catfish. A 3.5-mile concrete trail inside the county park surrounds the lake. Paddle boat, canoe and kayak rentals, playground and swimming beach.

MONTGOMERY—Viking Lake State Park is loaded with fun activities including lakeside camping, playground, beach and trails. Cast off jetties for 10-inch crappie in the spring. Catch bass up to 20 inches and 18- to 20-inch channel cat in summer.

VAN BUREN—Enjoy a fun weekend at Lake Sugema Recreation Area. Campground and playground, plus excellent largemouth, crappie and bluegill fishing. Cast for just about any species on the Des Moines River next to the park. Campground, playground and hiking trail. Stroll the rustic Villages of Van Buren County. Picturesque Lacey Keosaqua State Park is just minutes away.

WASHINGTON—Spend the weekend at one of Lake Darling's year-round cabins or camping cabins. Excellent spring crappie bite near submerged structure of rip-rap shorelines; many crappies exceed 10 inches. Many bluegill 8-inches or greater and lots of 18-inch bass. Mile-long ADA-compliant fishing trail from upper arm to campground and many revamped jetties.

Enjoy beautiful scenery

FAYETTE—Anglers willing to venture along a steep narrow path to Brush Creek in Brush Creek Canyon State Preserve will not be disappointed. Catch wild brown trout up to 17-inches. This stream has a variety of habitat types from deeper pools to limestone ledges to long shallow riffles. Use a variety of minnow, creek chub or crawdad imitation lures or flies.

JACKSON—Lots of public access to popular areas on Mississippi River pools 12 and 13 for spring walleye and sauger and summer bass, catfish, crappie, bluegill and drum. Use a small hook tipped with a nightcrawler and weighted with a sinker or split-shot. Easy boat access below dam at Bellevue, a pretty river town with blufftop camping and vistas at Bellevue State Park south of town. Good shore access below the dam, near the DNR fisheries station, Pleasant Creek, Green Island and Spruce Creek County Park.

LINN—Enjoy a quiet afternoon at Palisades-Kepler State Park



PHOTO BY CARTER MOORE

fishing a scenic stretch of the Cedar River with limestone bluffs and huge sand bars. Excellent white bass, walleye and northern pike fishing below the old lowhead dam. Shovelnose sturgeon and channel catfish action picks up late spring and summer. A popular area for kayakers to start their journey down the river. Hiking trails, camping, rock climbing, playground and boat ramp.

MUSCATINE—The serious scenery throughout the Cedar River corridor will keep you coming back. Restrooms, campground, playground and much more at the Muscatine County Conservation Board's Saulsbury Bridge Recreation Area. A nightcrawler under a bobber or on the bottom may entice a variety of fish to bite, including channel and flathead catfish.

PALO ALTO—Lost Island Lake will keep you busy from boat or shore. It's a diverse fishery with thousands of acres of prairie, lakes and large wetlands surrounding the lake.

WEBSTER—Enjoy a day of fishing at Brushy Creek surrounded by rolling hills covered in old growth timber. The lake is bordered by public recreation lands, so no matter where you go there's a good view of great wildlife habitat. Explore the many different coves and creek arms with a scattering of islands. Look for areas where multiple habitat types meet like where a weed line runs into standing



timber next to a rocky point. Home to very large walleye, an abundant largemouth bass population, monster catfish and 40-inch-plus muskie.

WORTH—Fabulous bluegill fishing at Silver Lake with lots of 8- to 10-inch fish. Abundant 15- to 17-inch largemouth bass after renovations in 2013. Two jetties and a concrete ramp provide easy access. Spend the night at the county park on the north shore.

Relax and recharge

BENTON—Fish right outside your camper at Hannen Lake, southwest of Blairstown, from a shore side campsite. A beautiful rental cabin sits next to the water. Kids will revel in catching and releasing 8- to 12-inch bass (15-inch minimum). Excellent shore access with fishing piers and jetties.

BUTLER—The West Fork Cedar River receives less pressure than the larger Cedar River and Shell Rock River nearby. Great channel catfish, smallmouth bass and walleye fishing. Use jigs or live bait rigs. Check river gage information for up-to-date water levels before making a trip.

DICKINSON—Early and late season walleye fishing at Silver Lake can be top notch. This large natural lake is relatively quiet, even on weekends.

GUTHRIE—Float or wade a section of the Middle Raccoon River for smallmouth bass. Catch lots of 10 inch bass with an occasional 14-inch plus bass. Use lead head jigs tipped with half a crawler in the pools, around rocks or below riffles. A catch and release only regulation protects the population from Lennon Mills dam downstream to the Redfield dam.

HARDIN—This Iowa River stretch provides an excellent half day fishing trip. Float past dense forested hills and limestone cliffs for smallmouth bass, walleye, northern pike and catfish. Put in at Alden Canoe Access and float to Iowa Falls.

LUCAS—Morris Lake just west of Chariton provides some of the best crappie fishing around. Catch 25 fish a day with fish up to 13 inches common. Best fished with a boat.

MADISON—Stand atop a natural limestone ridge at historic Pammel State Park to watch the Middle River flow in four directions. Excellent channel and flathead catfishing, especially below the ford. Spend a night or two in a Yurt style cabin. Search for Geocache boxes along Backbone and Lodge Trails.

MITCHELL—Explore Turtle Creek, just north of St. Ansgar, and its two miles of public fishing. Western most coldwater stream not in Iowa's driftless area. Stocked with rainbow trout weekly from April through October, it also boasts wild browns. Private ground open to public angling and public areas allow easy access to the stream.

WASHINGTON—Find flathead and channel catfish near downed logs, brush piles or creek mouths. Entice big cats with live green sunfish under a large bobber. Good freshwater drum in many reaches of the Skunk River. Try nightcrawler rigs or small jigs. Immediately put your catch of drum on ice to preserve freshness; they are a tasty treat.

WINNESHIEK—Trout Run is a perfect fishing spot for all skill levels. Stocked weekly April through October with hatchery-raised rainbow trout or wild brown trout. Wander the hatchery grounds, feed the fish, walk through a prairie, picnic or explore the trail circling Decorah. Catch a glimpse of the world famous Decorah eagles.

WOODBURY—Southwood Ponds are tucked away in the hills outside Smithland. These two small ponds, right next to each other, feature good water quality and an abundance of bluegill, largemouth bass and channel catfish in a tranquil setting. If you go early spring, you might hear turkeys gobbling while you fish.

Make waves

CASS—Have lots of summer fun drift fishing at Lake Anita for bluegills up to 9 inches and 10 inch crappie. Hang a 1/32nd ounce jig tipped with worm over the side, let out 30 feet of line and drift with the wind. You need a boat, kayak or canoe to get after these mid-lake suspended fish.

CLARKE—Troll West Lake Osceola main lake points or along the dam for feisty 14- to 20-inch wipers. Catch largemouth bass, some exceeding 19 inches, along the creek channels or main lake points.

DUBUQUE—This portion of the Mississippi River is known for great bass, bluegill, catfish, crappie, freshwater drum, sauger and walleye. Shore fishing opportunities are limited, so most fishing is by boat. Action peaks for sauger and walleye in the tailwaters of Lock and Dam 11 in March and early April. Use heavy river jigs or pull three-way rigs tipped with minnows. The Massey Park boat ramp just south of Dubuque has easy access to some of the best side-channel and wing dam water. Good backwater habitat is available near Mud Lake Park Boat Ramp on the north side of Dubuque. Use a slip bobber rig near brush or rock habitat tipped with nightcrawlers for bluegill and bass, or minnows for crappie and bass. Historic Dubuque offers dining, entertainment venues, the Mississippi River Museum and a variety of hotels.

FAYETTE—Below Fayette, Volga River flows through Volga Lake State Park making tight turns around limestone bluffs, past springs and seeps covered with moss and ferns. Catch smallmouth bass, rock bass, suckers and occasionally trout. Many entry points provide easy access for canoe or kayak fishing. Water levels often get too low for floating about mid-July to September.



HUMBOLDT—West Fork Des Moines River. Great public access at the Rutland dam through Humboldt city parks down to Frank Gotch County Park for walleye, smallmouth and channel cats. Good shore casting from Frank Gotch County Park south of Humboldt.

LINN—Take a canoe trip in secluded back areas of Pinicon Ridge Park west of Central City. Cast for smallmouth, walleye and northern pike in the Wapsipinicon River. Climb the observation tower for a view of the Wapsi valley, or tour the 5-acre Alexander Wildlife Area. Hiking trails, camping, playground and boat ramp.

LUCAS—Fishing Red Haw Lake in Red Haw State Park from a boat or kayak gives access to areas where trails won't go. Look for bluegills over 9 inches and redear sunfish over 10 inches along vegetation lines. Enjoy the striking, white blooms of water lilies in summer.

MONONA—Escape to Oldham Lake outside Soldier for peaceful fishing. Good numbers of 8- to 10-inch crappie and nice bluegill (7.5- to 8-inches). Little public access, so use a small boat, float tube, canoe or kayak.

MONROE—A family fishing favorite, Lake Miami is one of the fastest improving lakes around with bluegill at 9 inches, some bigger. Great largemouth bass fishing with 18-inch fish common. Crappie fishing is very good and anglers catch

LEFT SIDE PHOTO COURTESY OF KIRSTIN DAVIS, ABOVE RIGHT COURTESY OF LARRY HOLLOWAY II

fish more than 10 inches long. Campground, cabins, trails, playground, lodge and captive elk herd.

PALO ALTO—Paddling is the best way to get around Virgin Lake with its clear water, lots of aquatic plants and islands to explore. Walleye, yellow perch and northern pike populations are quickly growing after recent renovation work.

WASHINGTON—Crawford Pond's small, gravel boat ramp is perfect to launch canoes, kayaks and small boats. Look for large bluegills and redear sunfish suspended near submerged brush piles and pallet structures. Come spawn, find slab 9-inch redear sunfish along the east shore next to the white pines. Keep bait small and slow your bait action to encourage these wary fish to strike.

WEBSTER—Explore Brushy Creek's abundant habitat. Look for areas where multiple habitat types meet such as a weed line that runs into standing timber next to a rocky point. Home to very large walleye, an abundant largemouth bass population, monster catfish and 40-inch-plus muskie.

Catch a thrill

ALLAMAKEE—Un-stocked French Creek is a paradise for avid anglers to test their skills. Gin clear water and wary, wild brook and brown trout make for challenging fishing. You can only use artificial lures in its plentiful public areas and brown trout must be immediately released when caught.

APPANOOSE—Rathbun Lake walleye offer a challenge worth the effort. Rathbun is known for large walleyes with 17- to 25- inch fish most common. Anglers are often most successful in the warm weeks of June-August, when other walleye fisheries slow down. Best fished with a boat.

CERRO GORDO—Hooking a trophy sized muskellunge on

your bucket list? Trek to Clear Lake for 40- to 50-inch fish. Be ready for a workout with these large predators—it takes many casts with good sized baits.

CLAYTON—Full of habitat and lined by vegetation much of the year, Hewett Creek at Ensign Hollow Wildlife Management Area has lots of wild brown trout. Artificial lures only and all trout must be immediately released.

CRAWFORD—Nab challenging monster-sized bluegill (9.5-inch-plus) at Yellow Smoke Park Lake. The water is extremely clear and the fish are wary to bite. Redear sunfish over 12-inches are hard to come by. Largemouths provide a lot of catch-and-release action (10- to 14-inch fish) with the chance to hook a lunker.

DICKINSON—Forty-plus fish species at West Okoboji Lake can take a lifetime to explore and master. Quality smallmouth and largemouth bass, crappie, bluegill, yellow perch, muskie and northern pike

LINN—Excellent chance to catch the elusive muskie at Pleasant Creek Lake. Many 35- to 42-inch muskies with some real monsters up to 50-inches. There is a 40-inch minimum length limit on muskie.

POLK—Adventurous anglers can find rewards in the Des Moines River and Raccoon River systems in the spring and early summer when game fish migrate upstream looking for spawning habitat. Catch a diverse mix of walleye, white bass, hybrid striped bass and flathead and channel catfish below riffles/low-head dams and deep water pools. The Scott Avenue and Center Street dams in downtown Des Moines are popular fishing spots.

POTTAWATTAMIE—Walleye and wiper (a cross between a female striped bass and male white bass) fishing in Lake

Manawa can be very rewarding. Fingerlings stocked each year produce trophy sized (24 inch+) fish. Action starts soon after ice out, continues into spring and reheats again in fall. Explore the new depths and drop-offs.

UNION—Hook blue catfish up to 7 lbs (23+ inches) at Three-Mile Lake near Afton, stocked after being renovated in 2016. Use live bait or fresh cut bait fished along creek channels near main lake points or mud flats in early spring or late fall. Find good numbers of walleyes up to 22-inches, bluegill up to 9-inches and crappies up to 10-inches.

WAPELLO—Sturgeon on the Des Moines River put up a fight in the spring. Bounce a crawler and slip sinker off the bottom. Excellent channel and flathead catfishing, especially below the hydropower dam. Also great fishing for walleye, white bass and hybrid striped bass.

Relive childhood fishing memories

BUENA VISTA—Have fun catching and releasing slot-limit walleye (17 to 22 inches) at Storm Lake; lots of keeper size walleye, too. Use live minnows under a slip bobber or white twister tails from shore, or toss or troll shad-colored crankbaits April through June. Anything silver works since shad and emerald shiners are the main forage fish. After ice-out, try shad guts or cut bait on windblown shores for channel cat. Tons of public access and family-friendly parks.

DECATUR—Great opportunities for panfish at Little River Watershed Lake, especially bluegill with some fish over 9 inches. Catch lots of largemouth bass (some over 20 inches) with jigs or finesse plastics fished near cedar tree brush piles, along weed lines or rock piles. Camping, sleeping cabins, swimming beach, picnic areas, archery range and bait shop.

Connect with a simpler way of life

APPANOOSE—Catch hybrid striped bass and white bass by the dozen at Lake Rathbun. Expect to see lots of 12- to 20-inch fish. Be prepared to push your light tackle to the limit. Rathbun is also Iowa's perennial crappie hotspot. It will be a successful year for 9- to 12-inch crappies, especially mid-May to mid-June.

BLACK HAWK—South Prairie Lake, near the UNI-dome in Cedar Falls, has good catches of crappie, bluegill and bass. Use live bait in late spring. Trails along with a fishing jetty and accessible pier provide good shore fishing access.

CERRO GORDO—Fill stringers with yellow bass at Clear Lake every spring—the Island and Dodge's Point are favorite hotspots. Catch 14- to 20-inch walleyes (14-inch minimum) on live bait rigs or crankbaits in April, May and June. Great shore and boat angling. A handy fish cleaning station is available at McIntosh Woods State Park.

DELAWARE—Rainbow trout, stocked weekly from April to October, are eager to bite at Baileys Ford or Fountain Springs Park.

DES MOINES—Don't miss the hot panfish bite at Big Hollow north of Burlington each May. Catch 9-inch-plus bluegill and big crappies. Use a 32nd-ounce jig with a 1-inch paddletail body for panfish. Excellent bass lake for 15-inch plus fish. Lots of timber, hidden coves and structure, so bring plenty of jigs and lures. Good chance to hook a stocked musky. Camping, a beach, boat ramp and multiple fishing jetties.

DUBQUE—Heritage Pond, on the north side of Dubuque, provides easy shoreline fishing for largemouth bass and bluegill. Float a bobber and small hook tipped with live minnow or nightcrawler. Stocked with rainbow trout each spring and fall.

HOWARD—Excellent shoreline access at Lake Hendricks for bluegill, crappie, largemouth and channel cat. Plenty of places for fish to hang around with rock piles, crappie condos, pallets, concrete culverts, and cedar trees—most within casting distance of shore.

KEOKUK—Easily catch lots of bass at Lake Belva Deer near Sigourney. Plenty exceed 20 inches, bluegill to 9.5 inches and pound and a half redears. Excellent channel catfishing, too. Use a chunk of worm under a bobber for large green sunfish along rocks on the dam. ADA fishing pier on north shore, restrooms, gravel boat ramp and trail that loops the lake.

MAHASKA—Hawthorn Lake south of Barnes City has huge populations of bass up to 20 inches. Catch 25 fish a day. Abundant channel cat with some greater than 4 pounds. Crappie up to 9 inches and muskies up to 40 inches. Try the road grade, shallows on either end of the dam or the arm opposite the dam for spawning bluegills.

O'BRIEN—Mill Creek Lake near Paulina is a fun destination for all ages. Big bluegill and crappie should keep kids busy. Family fun with camping, cabins, concessions, lodge and hiking and biking.

POWESHIEK—Catch lots of 7- to 9-inch crappie at Diamond Lake west of Montezuma. Excellent access with 11 jetties. Fish cleaning station, paved trails, playground, some shore side campsites and many picnic spots. Boats with electric trolling motors only allowed on the lake.

SHELBY—Bluegills are big and black crappies plentiful in Prairie Rose Lake southeast of Harlan. Catch lots of fish fast in the gravel spawning beds and rock reefs in early May through mid-June. Find a printable fish structure map at iowadnr.gov/Fishing/Where-to-Fish. Abundant bass provide great catch-and-release fishing (15-inch minimum length limit).

TAYLOR—Reserve a cabin or campsite at Lake of Three



PHOTO BY JOE WILKINSON



Fires State Park, the region's most scenic. Catch 9- to 11-inch crappie with some over 12 inches, largemouth over 20 inches and lots of 8- to 9-inch bluegills. Antique shops and golf course nearby.

Master Angler worthy

BUCHANAN—Find trophy-sized smallmouth bass in the upper Wapsipinicon River with good numbers of fish bigger than 15-inches and a few 18-20 inch “smallies.” Use stout line and jigs; big smallmouth bass are often found around wood habitat in the Wapsipinicon River.

CERRO GORDO—Clear Lake consistently produces quality sized yellow bass over the Master Angler minimum size of 10 inches. Drift or cast jigs in 6-8 feet of water in late April through early June. Boat fishing is your best chance to get larger fish.

DELAWARE—Catch good numbers of brown trout above 18-inches with some fish over 20-inches at Spring Branch Creek. Only artificial lures can be used and trout must be 14-inches to keep.

DICKINSON—Find trophy size channel catfish and muskie, as big as they come, at East Okoboji Lake in the heart of the Iowa Great Lakes.

HOWARD—Stocked fingerling northern pike improve your chances to catch a trophy fish on the Turkey River near Cresco. Dam modifications at Vernon Springs Park improved angling opportunities and recreational use. Also stocked with walleye fingerlings. Best fished with small watercraft.

JOHNSON—Cast for master angler-size wipers (24-inch-plus) at Lake Macbride from boat or off the causeway road that crosses the south arm of the lake. Early morning and late evening bite is best. Use big topwater baits, shad swimbaits or shad-colored crankbaits.

LOUISA—Explore the seemingly endless chain of interconnected lakes, chutes and sloughs of Lake Odessa for trophy 10- to 12-inch-plus crappies. Use a crawler under a bobber or jig and 1-inch paddletail plastic body. Catch lunker largemouth with spinnerbaits near fallen logs, beaver dams or rip-rap shorelines. Plenty of shoreline access, boat ramps and habitat.

MARION—Explore the Whitebreast arm and marina at Red Rock Reservoir for a chance at a Master Angler sized crappie. Large white bass and hybrid striped bass provide exciting action. Watch for gulls hovering over surfacing baitfish and toss silver or white lures into the frenzy. Try fishing below the dam February through May.

MONTGOMERY—May and June are best for hooking largemouth bass over 20 inches and white crappies over 14 inches at Viking Lake State Park.

UNION—Although hard to find, some 10- to 12-inch jumbo yellow perch await at Twelve-Mile Creek Lake east of Creston. Catch largemouth bass of all sizes, some over 20 inches. Use nightcrawlers fished in the flooded timber or along creek channels for channel catfish over 30 inches.

VAN BUREN—Lake Sugema is an excellent trophy channel catfish destination. Chance to catch catfish exceeding 10 pounds, sometimes much bigger.

Hook your first fish

ADAIR—New anglers have plenty of opportunities at Greenfield City Reservoir to hook bluegills, crappies, channel catfish, largemouth bass and an occasional walleye. Easy shore access with fishing jetties and a paved walking path around the lake. May and June best to catch crappies and bluegills on spawning beds.

ALLAMAKEE—Scenic Patterson Creek, a short drive northwest of Waukon, is perfect for new anglers to try fly fishing. Almost two stream miles on private property is open to public fishing. Stocked weekly, except July and August, with catchable rainbow trout, it also sustains wild browns.

CARROLL—Tons of good shoreline access at Swan Lake State

Park will help newbies get close to the action. Reel in lots of bluegill and crappie from nine fishing jetties, an enclosed fish house or shore especially late May and early June.

DUBUQUE—Easy fishing access at Bergfeld Pond with two accessible fishing jetties and a hard surface walking trail around the pond. Catch bass, bluegill, catfish and sunfish. Restrooms near the pond and playground at the Bergfeld Recreation Area by the fairgrounds.

JEFFERSON—Catch lots of bluegills, most 6.5- to 7-inches, at Jefferson County Park Pond in Fairfield. Bring tackle for many species—bass and channel cat fishing is also good. New this spring, anglers of all ages can experience the thrill of hooking trout at the community trout stocking. Jefferson County Park has a campground, restrooms, shelters and a nature center.

LOUISA—Virginia Grove Recreation Area Pond has lots of hungry fish to keep newbies busy. Stocked with largemouth, bluegill and channel cats. Use chicken liver on a medium to large hook under a bobber for catfish. Nightcrawlers are always a good back-up. The pond is isolated from the campground, restrooms, playground and hiking trails.

LUCAS—Anglers of all skills are successful at Red Haw State Park. Great bluegill fishing with 8.5- to 9-inch fish and redear up to 11 inches. Loads of quality largemouth and crappies. Easy bank fishing with numerous fishing jetties and many shore accesses. Shady campground overlooks the lake, picnic areas by water's edge and a multi-use trail. Admire thousands of red bud trees in beautiful bloom mid to late April.

PLYMOUTH—Bass and bluegills are easy for new anglers to catch at River's Bend Pond, in a new county park with a new fishery and easy access.

POLK—Catch bluegill, largemouth bass, and rainbow trout from the new fishing pier at Terra Lake in Terra Park in Johnston. Playground, paved trail, bathrooms and picnic tables.

POLK—Venture to the newly renovated Fort Des Moines Park & Pond in Des Moines. Catch bluegill, crappie, and largemouth bass from the jetties and boardwalk in April and May. Learn more about 39 central Iowa trees in the arboretum—plaques help you identify each tree.

RINGGOLD—Great shore access at Fife's Grove Park Pond, north of Mount Ayr, with lots of spots to catch bluegill, bass, wipers, channel catfish, yellow perch and crappie. Gravel spawning beds and rock piles were recently added.

TAMA—Easily catch hungry largemouth bass at Union Grove Lake around the fishing jetties and rocky shoreline. Loaded with 7- to 8-inch bluegill and 10- to 12-inch largemouth bass. Renovated and restocked in 2015.

TAMA—Catch lots of 7- to 9-inch yellow bass close to shore at Otter Creek Lake near Toledo around Memorial Day. Bluegill, bass and crappie fishing, too. Fish cleaning station near the ramp. Camping, swimming beach and hiking trails.

WINNESHIEK—Many fish attractors added to Lake Meyer provide lots of fishing spots for bluegill, crappie and bass. A concrete ramp provides easy boat use with electric motor only. Abundant shoreline access. Two jetties offer easy access to deeper water. Picnic areas, a campground, playground, ball diamond and trails in the county park.

Make memories with family and friends

AUDUBON—Not far off I-80, Littlefield Lake is a popular fishing spot for all ages. Catch 15- to 20-inch-plus channel cats, 8-inch bluegill and 14-inch largemouth bass. Great shore access. Camping, beach, playground and trails.

CLAY—Easy fishing for bluegill, crappie and lots of catfish at Scharnberg Pond. Great access with a handicap accessible fishing pier and rock jetties. Camping, cabins, beach, playground, hiking trail, and paddle boat and canoe rental at the county park.

DAVIS—Spend an afternoon at beautiful Lake Wapello State Park, one of Iowa's premier largemouth bass waters. Good bluegill (6- to 9-inch) and very good crappie fishing (up to 11 inches). Several miles of trails around the lake and through the park take you through prairie, woodland and near wetlands. Shaded picnic areas, swimming beach, family cabins and a revamped, rebuilt campground with great lake access.

FLOYD—Plenty of bass, catfish, and panfish await anglers at Rudd Lake, east of Rudd. Find bluegill around pallet structures within casting distance of two jetties. Look for largemouth bass around the edges of the cattails and other submersed vegetation. With extremely clear water, early morning and late evening is best for channel catfish (9- to 22-inches). Boat ramp, trail, picnic area, playground and beach. Close to a city campground, too.

FRANKLIN—Plan a spring family fishing trip to Beeds Lake State Park near Hampton. Several jetties scattered around the lake and a fishing pier on the south shore. Catch 7 to 7.5-inch bluegill, 7- to 10-inch crappie, a few 7- to 10-inch yellow bass and quality largemouth bass, too. Enjoy a relaxing lunch or snack at a shaded picnic area. Hike the two-mile trail around the lake, which is no-wake. Spend a night or two in the campground.

JOHNSON—Hook family memories at Lake Macbride State Park catching bluegill, walleye, channel catfish and crappie. Easy access to limestone shores, numerous fishing jetties and a handicapped accessible fishing pier connected via sidewalk to the parking lot. Only lake in Iowa to catch the

PHOTO BY BRIAN BUTTON

prized Kentucky spotted bass. Camping, swimming beach, hiking trails, lodge rental, picnic areas, bike trails and pontoon, motorboat, canoe, paddle boat or kayak rentals.

MUSCATINE—Start a fun day in Muscatine at Discovery Park Pond, close to the Muscatine Arboretum and Fuller Park. Excellent bluegill, largemouth bass and channel cat fishing and a chance to catch trout stocked each spring and fall. Try a chunk of nightcrawler under a bobber for 'gills or chicken liver for cats. Catch bass with a variety of lures, from rubber worms to topwaters to Beetle Spins. Try flashy spinners for hungry, recently-stocked trout; dough baits, corn or other scented baits work best after trout settle in. Stroll to Heron Hideaway Pond, with its newly renovated shore, located behind the Environmental Discovery Center.

SAC—Keep kids busy catching lots of largemouth at Black Hawk Lake, renovated in 2012. Try right off of Ice House Point (part of Black Hawk State Park) or fish inside the new enclosed fish house for buckets of 8-inch bluegill and 10-inch plus crappies. About half of the shoreline is public, with restrooms near accesses. Two public campgrounds make for a perfect family getaway. Great playground in Speaker Park, across the street from the lake, and splash pad open from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Miles of hiking trails within walking distance and a paved bike trail that runs over 30 miles to Carroll.

TAMA—Good shoreline access at Casey Lake for bluegill, largemouth bass and channel catfish. Cabins, campsites, natural areas, hiking trails and a wildlife exhibit at the county park.

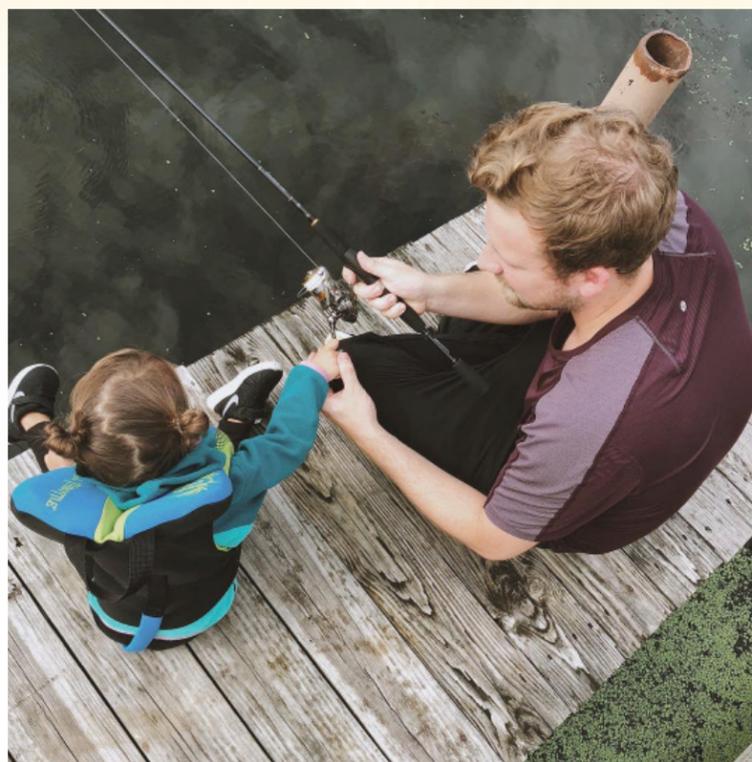
UNION—Enjoy a fun-filled weekend at Green Valley State Park, north of Creston. Cast for 14- to 18-inch bass, 6- to 8-inch bluegill, 7- to 9.5-inch crappies, and 12- to 15-inch walleye—some top 20 inches. Rent a pine log cabin, camp, walk lakeside trails, keep kids busy at the playground, swim, bike from the park to Creston on the paved trail or enjoy a picnic.

WARREN—Enjoy a fun day of fishing at Lake Ahquabi State Park south of Indianola. Great access with a fishing pier, numerous jetties and trails. Catch bluegill, redear sunfish and crappie mid-April through the end of May. Go camping, rent a canoe, kayak or stand up paddleboard. Explore the Annett Nature Center, less than 1 mile north. Attend a fun outdoor event at the Warren County Izaak Walton League clubhouse, across from the main entrance.

Connect with a simpler way of life

ADAIR—Largemouth bass and channel catfish grow big at secluded Meadow Lake just south of the original "Freedom Rock" by artist, Ray "Bubba" Sorensen II. Catch 7 to 8-inch bluegills and 8- to 12-inch crappies. Spring bite is best.

CARROLL—Hike in 1/4- mile to Tigges Pond—built and



stocked several years ago with largemouth, catfish and bluegill that exceed 8-inches. Pull a small kayak on a cart into Tigges Pond to get on rarely fished water.

CLAYTON—Escape to North Cedar Creek for quiet fishing among timber and mature forests. Use a smaller pole under the dense tree cover. Deep holes and fast moving runs hold stocked catchable rainbow trout in the lower end and wild brook and brown trout further upstream.

CLINTON—Escape the stresses of everyday life at Hagenson Pond off highway 67 south of Camanche. Usually not a lot of angler activity. Keep kids busy with good numbers of 12- to 15 -inch bass and 6.5-inch bluegill, along with catfish.

DALLAS—Escape to Beaver Lake in rural Dallas County. Boat anglers find good panfishing at this small lake full of timber. Abundant crappies, mostly 7- to 9-inches, with some 10- to 11-inchers. Bluegill numbers are strong, with 7- to 9-inch fish.

DICKINSON—Marble Lake is shallow lake jewel with an impressive diversity of fish species. Kayaks and canoes recommended.

HANCOCK—West Branch Iowa River. Hike for pike along the wildlife area where East Twin Lake flows into the river. Use lures, jigs and minnows or spoons. Good spring and fall pike fishing when water flows from the lake.

JACKSON—Less crowded than popular upstream segments,

this section of Maquoketa River has a great population of big channel catfish and abundant other species including suckers and carp. Use cut bait or crawlers in wood habitat. Best accessed with small boat.

LEE—It takes a hike to get to White Oak Lake in Shimek State Forest near Ft. Madison. Catch 8- to 9-inch bluegill and 9- to 10-inch redears. Fish off the dam, or float a bellyboat to inaccessible shores. Shagbark Lake has 9-inch bluegill, a shore trail lake, and can be driven to. Enjoy massive white pines throughout the forest. Campground and hiking trails.

MARSHALL—Find superb largemouth bass, bluegill and channel cat fishing at Green Castle Recreation Area. Several jetties for easy access. Great place to fish from a canoe or kayak as motorized boats are not allowed. Picnic areas, hiking trails and universally-accessible facilities.

POTTAWATTAMIE—Farm Creek/Young's Pond, built 15 years ago between Griswold and Carson, is in its prime. Look for spawning bluegills and crappies along the dam face in spring. Launch a small boat from the ramp in summer to fish over the old creek channel for suspended fish.

Fish Local

BLACK HAWK—Great walleye, smallmouth bass and channel catfish action in the Cedar River in the Waterloo-Cedar Falls area. Shore fishing is good with access in downtown Waterloo, several city parks, Black Hawk County Park and George Wyth State Park. Use crankbaits or jigs tipped with minnows or crawlers. Small boats are best with shallow water in some channel crossovers. Waterloo-Cedar Falls offer lots of family fun including bike trail systems, sports and entertainment, great eateries and hotel options.

CERRO GORDO—Experience the thrill of trout fishing at Blue Pit just off of Pierce Avenue in Mason City. Stocked in November and again in January for ice anglers. You need to pay the trout fee to fish for and possess trout.

LINN—Clear water and amazing views welcome you to Prairie Park Fishery on the northeast side of Cedar Rapids. A popular spot to catch largemouth bass, crappie, bluegill, walleye and white bass. Trout are stocked each spring and fall. Use a small bobber and small hook tipped with an inch of night crawler or prepared bait. Good shoreline access to parts of the lake through walk down areas and jetties. Other areas best reached by canoe, kayak or rowboat. Explore the Cedar River with access by the hard surface trail that loops the lake. Boat ramps provide access to the lake and river. Excellent spot to watch bald eagles in late fall and early winter.

MUSCATINE—Deep Lakes, a small urban lake complex, is stocked with muskellunge every two years; the largest are 28-inches. A series of deep interconnected lakes and

ponds are surrounded by extensive sand prairie habitat for a unique watchable wildlife experience. Good bluegill, crappie, largemouth bass, and channel cat fishing. Boat ramps, beach, hiking trails and restrooms.

POLK—Plan a quick get-away to Big Creek Lake near Polk City. Use small tackle and light line to catch crappie close to shore in May. May is best for walleye. Easy access with numerous fishing jetties along the lakeshore and a universally accessible fishing pier on the east side of the lake. Rent fishing boats, pontoons, water bikes, kayaks and more at Big Creek Marina.

POTTAWATTAMIE—An array of fishing fun awaits anglers of all ages and skills at Lake Manawa State Park. The spring crappie bite draws a large crowd. Summer fishing focuses on channel catfish. Cast for trophy size (24 inch+ common) walleye and wipers (a cross between a female striped bass and male white bass) stocked each year. Wipers are explosive fighters—use shad imitating lures to hook one. Keep the kids entertained all afternoon with an abundant population of yellow bass. Fishing jetties and pier provide great fishing access. Make a day of it and take advantage of the state park's many amenities including a nature trail, several picnic shelters around the lake, playground and beach.

SCOTT—Fish are well fed and growing fast at Lost Grove Lake, six miles east of Eldridge. Catch 8-inch bluegill, muskies over 40 inches, 18-inch walleyes, lunker bass and crappies (many 10+ inches). Easy shoreline access with ADA compliant fishing trails and jetties. Fishing platforms help anglers get to deeper water. Fish attracting habitat like spawning beds and culvert piles are within casting distance of fishing pathways. Waters surrounding Wayward Pines Point are loaded with brush piles, tree reefs, stump fields, hinged trees and terraced lake bottom. A popular paddling destination--canoe and kayak entries are along the fishing accesses.

WOODBURY—Bacon Creek Lake, a fun family fishing destination on the east edge of Sioux City, features clear water, a paved loop trail, playground, restrooms, picnic area and dog park. Catch bluegills and crappie in shallow areas during the spawn (spring and early summer) then move to the deeper water in the upper area of the lake. Cast for rainbow trout stocked each fall.

WINNESHIEK—Catch walleye, smallmouth bass, rock bass, trout, and a variety of suckers in the Upper Iowa River. All black bass caught on the lower end of this section, starting at the 5th St. bridge downstream to upper dam, must be immediately released. Ride the bike trail, float the Upper Iowa River or wander through the Decorah Community Prairie. Twin Springs trout stream and the Pulpit Rock campground are nearby. 🐾

PHOTO BY DAKOTA HOMONTOWSKI