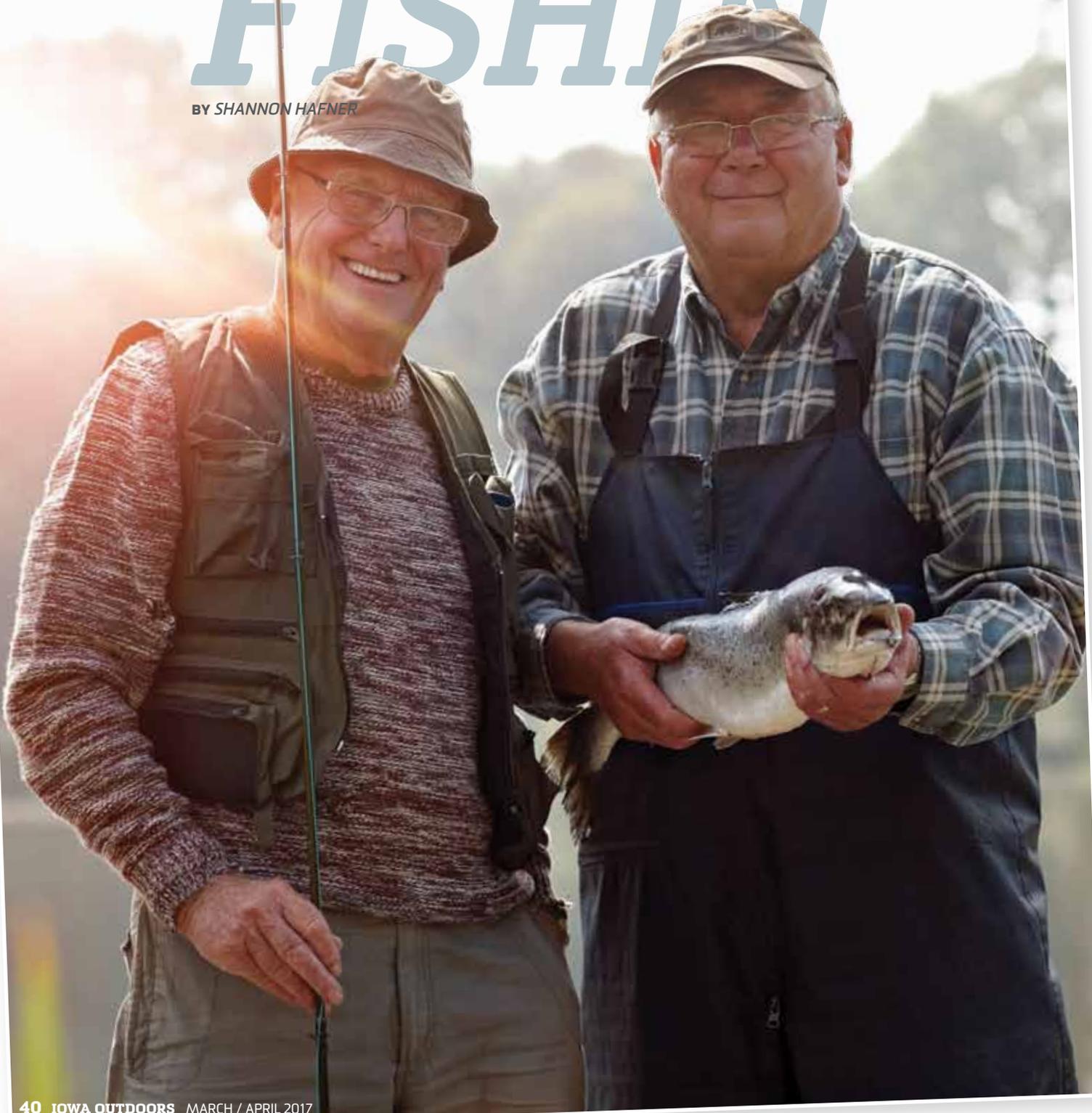


MISSION

We Need You to Get More People Fishing.

FISHIN'

BY SHANNON HAFNER



We released a *record 156 million fish* last year, renovated a gob of lakes, increased fish habitat, added angler access and improved water quality.

Now it's your turn to help. We are recruiting you on a mission to take someone fishing. A kid perhaps. Or another adult that hasn't cast a line for eons. Then share your story with us. Take your pick—write us a letter, an email, post your mission to DNR's Facebook, Twitter or Instagram with the hashtag **#MISSIONFISHIN**, or send your story and photos to *Iowa Outdoors*.

Succeed in your mission and you help introduce a new group of anglers. Frankly, those *extra license sales add desperately needed revenue* in yet another series of years of dwindling state budget allocations to the DNR for natural resources. License revenue is reinvested to improve fishing, access, habitat, stocking and more.

Anyway you slice it, this mission is about getting out, having fun and bringing many new anglers along for the journey.

And here are 99 counties—full of fish—raring for you to tackle with "Mission Fishin'."

ADAIR—Create family fishing memories at Mormon Trail Lake. Don't miss the spring crappie spawn. Great shore fishing and jetties make it easy to catch crappie, bluegill, largemouth, walleye and channel cats. The county park has a beach, picnic shelters and camping.

ADAMS—Spring crappie fishing was phenomenal last year at Lake Icaria north of Corning. Excellent shore access and jetties make it simple to find fish. Channel cat are abundant and easy to catch. Troll crankbaits along the dam or points for 20-inch-plus walleye, or cast the fish mounds or cedar tree piles with jigs or plastics for largemouth, some exceeding 20 inches. The well-maintained county park has camping, rental cabins, nature trails and a beach.

ALLAMAKEE—Wonderous Yellow River State Forest is heaven for new anglers to trout fish Paint or Little Paint creeks. From easy-to-get-to places to adventurous treks, there's a perfect spot for everyone. Wild brown, stocked rainbow and brook trout challenge beginners and experts. Camping, hiking and equestrian activities also available.

APPANOOSE—Lake Rathbun is Iowa's perennial crappie hotspot. Anglers catch them by the dozens. White bass and hybrid striped bass fishing is tough to beat—perfect for newbies. It will be a successful year for 9- to 12-inch crappies, especially mid-May to mid-June.

AUDUBON—Littlefield Lake, the county's only public lake, offers well-manicured shore access. Catch 15- to

20-inch-plus channel cats, 8-inch bluegill and 9- to 10-inch crappie. Bring the family for camping, a beach, playground, trails and a live bison display.

BENTON—Keep new anglers busy catching and releasing 8- to 12-inch bass (15-inch minimum) at Hannen Lake, southwest of Blairstown. Find excellent shore access at fishing piers and jetties. Shoreside campsites let you fish right outside your camper. Hike through 180 acres of woodland and prairie surrounding the lake, or cool off at the beach.

BLACK HAWK—Hit the Cedar River for great walleye, smallmouth and channel cats. Use jigs tipped with minnows or crawlers during spring. Crankbaits in summer and fall, or a crawler fished near bottom. Shore fishing is good with downtown Waterloo access, several city parks, Black Hawk County Park and George Wyth State Park. Small boats are best due to shallows in some channels. Launch from ramps at Black Hawk County Park and Island Park to fish upstream of the Cedar Falls dam, or George Wyth State Park and Cedar Bend Park for access between the Cedar Falls and Waterloo dams.

BOONE—Bring the family to Don Williams Lake to catch plenty of 8- to 10-inch crappie. 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. A campground, beach, golf course and cabins offer added outdoor fun.

BREMER—The Cedar River near Plainfield and Waverly has a hot walleye bite. Great access to good catfishing and bonus smallmouth bass and northern pike. Sweet Marsh near Tripoli is worth a visit, too.

BUCHANAN—Self-sustaining northern pike and smallmouth bass thrive in the scenic Wapsipinicon River. Ten public access points provide easy access to lots of pike and smallies as well as walleye and channel cat. Shallow water can make motorboat navigation difficult, so paddle or walk-in—think adventure fishing, folks.

BUENA VISTA—Loaded with public access and family-friendly parks, playgrounds and restrooms, Storm Lake is perfect for kids and parents. Have fun catching and releasing slot-limit walleye (17 to 22 inches); 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.

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BUTLER—Find lots of nice smallmouth and walleye in the Shell Rock River as last year's flood kept anglers away. Trophy walleye up to 28 inches and lots of 15- to 20-inchers abound. Float while casting jigs, crankbaits or live baits, or use small Jon boats. Look for schooled fish in the spring below dams, obstructions and cobbles. Cast a jig and crawler, or try crankbaits during summer.

CALHOUN—Hook memories and small yellow bass at North Twin Lake. Shore access along Featherston Park makes taking kids easy. Stay the night at rental cabins and cook up a steamy plate of fresh walleye or catfish. Venture to South Twin Lake for a hot bullhead bite.

CARROLL—Invite friends or bring the family to Swan Lake. Stay on the action with several jetties around the lake—many have habitat structure within casting distance. Reel in lots of nice-sized bluegill and crappie. Stay comfortable inside the enclosed fish house.

CASS—New anglers have lots of summer fun drift fishing for bluegill and crappie at Lake Anita. It's easy fishing without casting or bobbers. Lots of 8- to 9-inch bluegill and 8- to 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. A 4-mile paved trail winds around the lake. The campground is one of the most popular in southwest Iowa.

CEDAR—Just 20 miles from Iowa City, Cedar Valley County Park offers lake and river fishing. Cast for bluegill in limestone quarries or try catfishing the Cedar River. A concrete boat ramp provides quick river access. Enjoy the view, camp, picnic or hike the trails.

CERRO GORDO—Great shore and boat angling at Clear Lake, one of Iowa's better walleye fisheries. Catch 14- to 20-inch walleyes (14-inch minimum), with rod-bending trophies running 8 pounds-plus. Good yellow bass fishing and improved chances for crappie and yellow perch. A handy fish cleaning station is available at McIntosh Woods State Park.

CHEROKEE—Experience river channel catfish and walleye angling on the Little Sioux River. Channel cats run 2 to 6 pounds and walleyes span 15 to 25 inches. Try cut bait for cats and twisters for walleyes, or float a live chub for both. Find great shore access and a boat ramp at Wescott Park in Cherokee. Head down the road to Spring Lake for pond fishing. This old gravel pit has lots of shore access and a variety of fish species in its depths.

CHICKASAW—Twin Ponds Park is a 15 minute drive southwest from New Hampton. Nestled within the 157-acre

park is a nature center with beautiful educational displays. The Wapsipinicon River splits the park. Catch largemouth, channel cat and bluegill in two small ponds. The pond north of the nature center has a ramp for boats with electric motors. Watch waterfowl and wildlife from a bird blind. Explore woodland, prairie and wetlands while hiking.

CLARKE—Spend an afternoon fishing Q Pond in a small city park in northwest Osceola. Plenty of bluegill, some over 8 inches, and 7- to 11-inch crappie. Cast along brush piles on the east side and near the dam.

CLAY—Spencer's Stolley Pond is family fishing nirvana. Catch crappie and yellow bass, or hit the Little Sioux River that meanders through the park. A trail surrounds the pond and connects to riverside city trails and through historic downtown. Handicapped-accessible dock, picnic area, restrooms and shelter.

CLAYTON—Bring along a pole to Big Springs Trout hatchery and enjoy trout fishing the adjacent Turkey River and hatchery ponds. Primitive camping on the river banks.

CLINTON—Killdeer Lake between DeWitt and Clinton is an old favorite. Enjoy solitude catching largemouth, bluegill and catfish. Good shore access. Catfish exceeding 17 inches are possible. One of southeast Iowa's few places to catch yellow perch—great for new anglers. Use a softshell crayfish tail fished on a small hook under a bobber for catfish or a small jig tipped with a spike for perch or bluegill.

CRAWFORD—Enjoy a day fishing Yellow Smoke Park Lake with someone who hasn't fished in a while. Nab challenging monster-sized bluegill that run 9.5-inch-plus. Largemouth provide a lot of catch-and-release action (10- to 14-inch fish) with the chance to hook a lunger. Admire very clean water from the paved lakeside trail, big swimming beach or water's edge campground.

DALLAS—Avoid crowds and traffic by escaping to rural Beaver Lake. 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.

DAVIS—Escape to beautiful Lake Wapello State Park for unmatched bass fishing. Good bluegill (6- to 8-inch) and improving crappie numbers (up to 9 inches). Several miles of trails around the lake and through the park. Shaded picnic areas, family cabins and a revamped, rebuilt campground reopening in 2017.

DECATUR—The bluegill bite was hot last fall at Little

River Watershed Lake west of Leon. Lots of 8-inch-plus bluegill were caught from brush piles. Slowly troll jigs tipped with twister tails or Lindy Rigs with live bait along rock structure or mud flats for spring walleye (16 to 20 inches). Cast crankbaits along weed lines or plastics near cedar piles for summer bass (some over 20 inches). The lake features several fishing jetties, camping and rental cabins.

DELAWARE—Anglers of all skills are successful at Backbone State Park. Clear, cold-water Richmond Springs is popular for trout fishing. Keeper brook and rainbow trout stocked weekly April through October. Use small spinners, jigs, prepared baits or flyfish. Easy trails surround the stream. Running through the heart of the park, the Maquoketa River yields brown trout in upstream areas and smallmouth bass below Backbone Lake. The lake has easy access for small bluegill, crappie, largemouth and white sucker. Hike trails, picnic, camp, paddle or watch wildlife.

DES MOINES—The many ponds on Big Hollow Recreation Area south of Mediapolis offer outstanding fishing. Stocked with bluegill, largemouth bass and channel catfish, a few have good crappie populations. Hot panfish bite around mid- to late May. Bait a small hook with a chunk of worm and fish it under a bobber, or cast a small curlytail jig tipped with a spike.

DICKINSON—Anglers of all skills have plenty of fun at East and West Okoboji lakes. Excellent angling available from docks or by boat. Great yellow bass fishing and good numbers of yellow perch, channel cat, bluegill, crappie and walleye. Smallmouth fishing is some of the Midwest's best. "Anglers cleaned more fish last summer than ever," says biologist Mike Hawkins.

DUBUQUE—The great Mississippi River is the go-to spot, known here for great bass, bluegill, catfish, crappie, freshwater drum, sauger and walleye. Shore fishing is limited, so most angling is by boat. Hit Lock and Dam 11 tailwaters in March and early April for peak sauger and walleye action. Use heavy river jigs or pull three-way rigs tipped with minnows. The nearest put-ins are ramps at Hawthorne Street or Chaplin Schmitt. Hotspots transition during summer as side-channels and main channel borders heat-up for channel cat and freshwater drum along wing dams, downed trees and off-current



flats. Easy access to the best side-channel and wing dam water is at Massey Park boat ramp south of Dubuque. Find largemouth, bluegill and crappie in side channels and main channel borders late spring through fall, and in backwaters fall through early spring. Backwaters are available year-round near Mud Lake Park boat ramp on Dubuque's north side, or from Massey Park's ramp in open water months. Use a slip bobber rig near brush or rock habitat tipped with nightcrawlers for bluegill and bass, or minnows for crappie and bass. Not a boater? Fish the main channel border upstream from Hawthorne Street ramps when river levels are not high.

EMMET—Lots of access along the West Fork of the Des Moines River makes walleye and catfishing easy. Great locale for canoe or kayak angling.

FAYETTE—Anglers exhilarate while floating the Volga

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River casting for smallmouth, rock bass and several sucker species. Multiple accesses at Volga Lake State Park make river fishing a snap. Stay the weekend at the campgrounds.

FLOYD—Rudd Lake, off Highway 18 east of Rudd, offers a 12-acre lake with hard surface ramp, trail, picnic area, playground and a beach. Plenty of largemouth, channel cat and bluegill await anglers from shore or boat. City campground, too.

FRANKLIN—Enjoy peaceful fishing with family and friends at Beeds Lake State Park near Hampton. Come in the spring for 6.5- to 7.5-inch bluegill and 7- to 9-inch crappie. Catch a few 6- to 8-inch yellow bass too. Several jetties scattered around the lake and a fishing pier on the south shore. A 2-mile trail follows the lakeshore.

FREMONT—Try summer flathead catfishing on the Missouri River with an experienced river angler. Use live green sunfish or creek chubs in pools below wing dams. Move often to find feeding fish; 20-inch-plus catfish are common, with chances for trophy 40-pounders.

GREENE—Easily catch lots of catfish at Spring Lake anywhere from shore—or even fish right from your camper. Burn off that big fish meal at the park swim beach and roller skating rink.

GRUNDY—Grundy County's newest recreation area, Grundy County Lake, is easily found south of the Highway 20 and T-55 interchange in Dike. Catch 6- to 7-inch bluegill and 12- to 16-inch largemouth bass (15-inch minimum). Fish the jetties or pier.

GUTHRIE—Springbrook Lake is great for kayak fishing. Catch 7- to 8-inch bluegills, 9- to 10-inch crappie, largemouth and channel cat. Three jetties along the nature trail, which winds around the lake. Camping and a rental cabin.

HAMILTON—Good access from jetties and lakeside trails at Briggs Woods Lake make it family-friendly. Cast for crappie, catfish, largemouth bass and bluegill. End the day with 18 holes of golf or a long hike in timbered forest.

HANCOCK—Trails abound at Crystal Lake—easy access for newbies and great for adventure-angler hikes to remote areas. Catch bluegill and crappie in May/early June. Easy access with two jetties (one off Main Street) and a long stretch of shore open through the county park and campground.

HARDIN—Head to Upper and Lower Pine lakes near Eldora for spring bluegill and crappie. Largemouth action heats up in these two scenic lakes in late spring and summer. Pine Lake State Park, one of Iowa's earliest state parks, has camping, cabins, swim beach and more than 10 miles of trails around the lakes.

HARRISON—Willow Lake, in the heart of the Loess Hills, is a family get-away. Extremely clear water—be careful not to spook the fish. Jetties and pier provide boat-free access to deeper water. Plan a weekend trip by using the cabins or campground.



HENRY—Enjoy a variety of fishing on the Skunk River near Lowell. Well-known for excellent flathead and channel catfish populations, use a live green sunfish under a large bobber, stink baits, cut baits or nightcrawlers. Good drum populations are exciting for new anglers. Try small jigs or worms fished under a bobber. Stephenson Park has restrooms, camping and boat ramp.

HOWARD—Vernon Springs Park on the Turkey River, south of Cresco, boasts a 17-acre lake with boat access and bass, pike, walleye, crappie and bluegill. Enjoy Prairie's Edge Nature Center, an open picnic shelter, modern restrooms, camping and hiking.

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

IDA—Crawford Creek holds jumbo bluegill, large crappie and an occasional big perch (plus a solid largemouth population). A popular fishing spot, it's one of the area's larger impoundments at 62 acres. Jetties and docks make access easy. Lakeshore rental cabins available from the county.

IOWA—Cast for master angler-size redear sunfish (10-inch-plus) at Lake Iowa north of Millersburg. Good bluegill and crappie fishing too. Trails meander around the lake through native prairies and woodlands or run along shore for easy access. Quiet, well-maintained county campground, beach and nature center with a large butterfly garden and bird observation blind.

JACKSON—Lots of public access to popular areas on Mississippi River pools 12 and 13 for walleye, channel cat, crappie, bluegill and drum. Good opportunity for springtime sauger and walleye, and summertime bass, bluegill, catfish, crappie and drum. Easy boat access below dam at Bellevue—a pretty rivertown with blufftop camping and vistas at Bellevue State Park south of town. A small hook tipped with a nightcrawler and weighted with a sinker or split-shot will catch most species. Find shore access below the dam as well as near the DNR fisheries station, Pleasant Creek and Green Island. Good access to the Mighty Miss above the dam and amenities at Spruce Creek County Park, too.

JASPER—Fantastic bluegill and crappie fishing await at this 28-acre lake inside the county-owned Jacob Krumm Nature Preserve. Cast for almost 13-inch crappies and 9-inch bluegills. A mowed trail rings the lake with access made even easier with a north end fishing pier. Located in eastern Jasper County, one mile north of Lynnville exit on I-80. Follow Jacob Avenue east to entrance.

JEFFERSON—Bluegill bite all summer at Jefferson County Park Pond in Fairfield. Catch lots of bluegills. Most run 6.5 to 7 inches. Bring tackle to target many species—bass and channel catfishing is also good. Jefferson County Park has a campground, restroom, shelters and a nature center.

JOHNSON—Lake Macbride State Park offers great fishing for all ages and skills. Haul in bluegill, walleye, channel catfish and crappie. Cast for trophy wipers (10-pounds-plus) and catch-and-release 30-inch-plus muskies (40-inch minimum). Multi-use trails wind for miles around the lake. Pontoon, motorboat, canoe, paddle boat or kayak rentals available.

JONES—Venture to Wapsipinicon State Park south of Anamosa for excellent river fishing for walleye, smallmouth and channel cat, especially below the dam near the park entrance. Camping, hiking trails, lodge rental, playground and a golf course available.

KEOKUK—Belva Deer Park Pond, on the north side of the dam at Lake Belva Deer near Sigourney, has excellent shore access with a trail around it. Bass, bluegill, redear sunfish and channel cats provide excellent fishing for kids, beginners and anglers who haven't cast a line for a while. ADA fishing pier on the east shore, restrooms and gravel boat ramp. Fish for large green sunfish along the rocks on the dam; use a chunk of worm under a bobber.

KOSSUTH—Smith Lake north of Algona is loaded with spring crappie and bluegill over 9 inches. Bass have an 18-inch minimum, so large fish abound. Enjoy a variety of outdoor activities at Water's Edge Nature Center on the west shore. Campgrounds, fishing docks, playgrounds, boat ramp, jetty and a couple beaches keep everyone enthralled.

LEE—The county and DNR greatly improved Wilson Lake near Fort Madison. It now has excellent water clarity. Many cedar tree piles, rock and old road culverts were placed to provide cover and feeding areas. Excellent fishing for spawning bluegill and largemouth. Find bluegills on spawning beds in shallow water and suspended in submerged brush. Try small jigs or a chunk of nightcrawler under a bobber. Stocked with trout each spring and fall; few anglers leave without their limit of five trout.

LINN—Spend a quiet afternoon at scenic Pinicon Ridge Park west of Central City. Cast for smallmouth, walleye and northern pike in the Wapsipinicon River. Paddle secluded backwaters. Climb the observation tower for a view of the Wapsi valley, or tour 5-acre Alexander Wildlife Area. Hiking trails, camping, playground and boat ramp.

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LOUISA—Off the beaten path, Virginia Grove Recreation Area Pond is accessible from U.S. Highway 78 east of Morning Sun—signs mark the way. Great place to bring new anglers—usually uncrowded. Stocked with largemouth, bluegill and channel cats. Use chicken liver on a medium to large hook under a bobber for catfish. Nightcrawlers are always good back-up. The pond is isolated from the campground, restrooms, playground and hiking trails.

LUCAS—Known for great bluegill fishing, Red Haw State Park features 8.5- to 9-inch bluegills and redear up to 11 inches. Loads of quality largemouth and crappies, too. Shady campground overlooks the lake, picnic areas by water's edge and a multi-use trail. The oft-overlooked Williamson Pond, east of Highway 14 near Williamson, boasts some of southern Iowa's best crappie fishing.

LYON—Lake Pahoja, inside one of the premiere northwest Iowa county parks, is tailored for kids or beginners. Amazing largemouth bass, bluegill and channel catfishing. A 3.5-mile concrete trail surrounds the lake. Rental cabins overlook the lake. Paddle boat, canoe and kayak rentals and swimming beach.

MADISON—Fish the Middle River at historic Pammel State Park, which is run by the county. Channel and flathead catfishing is excellent, especially below the ford. Stand atop a natural limestone ridge more than 100 feet high to watch the river flow in four directions. Hike five miles of trail winding through woodlands. Iowa's only highway tunnel runs under the ridge.

MAHASKA—A bass angler's vivid dream, Hawthorn Lake south of Barnes City has huge populations 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. Extend your fishing day at nearby White Oak Conservation Area Lake near Rose Hill.

MARION—Explore the Whitebreast arm and marina at Red Rock Reservoir for crappie that push 14 inches. White bass and hybrid striped bass fishing can be really exciting. Watch for gulls hovering over surfacing baitfish and toss silver or white lures into the frenzy. Try fishing below the dam February through May.

MARSHALL—Find superb largemouth bass, bluegill and channel cat fishing at recently renovated 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.

MILLS—Plenty of bluegill and crappie at Glenwood Park Pond keep anglers of all ages busy. Well stocked with catfish (14- to 17-inches). Try also for black bullheads, green sunfish and 18-inch-plus largemouth.

MITCHELL—Halvorson Park near St. Ansgar provides easy Cedar River access. Recent shoreline habitat improvements attract a variety of species within casting distance. A boat ramp complements abundant shoreline access at the 10-acre park. Camping, swim beach, playground, picnic shelters and modern restroom facilities.

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). It's best fished from a small boat, float tube, canoe or kayak.

MONROE—A fishing favorite, Lake Miami is one of the fastest improving lakes around with bluegill almost 9 inches. Good largemouth bass fishing with 16-inch fish common. Crappies are improving. A short drive south, the upper and lower Albia Reservoir has amazing bluegill fishing with 10-inch fish. The city park has ramps and shore access.

MONTGOMERY—Escape to East Hacklebarney Lake, a small lake off the beaten path. Go in May when bluegills and redear sunfish are bedding in the shallows. Cast toward shore with small 1/32nd-ounce jigs or hang a half a crawler 18 inches under a bobber to find the beds.

MUSCATINE—Discovery Park Pond near Muscatine features excellent bluegill, largemouth bass and channel cat fishing. Great shore access around the pond and large accessible pier. Try a chunk of nightcrawler for gills or chicken liver for cats under a bobber. Catch bass with a variety of lures, from rubber worms to topwaters to Beetle Spins. Trout stocked spring and fall. 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 located behind the Environmental Discovery Center. New anglers will enjoy the center's large aquarium with Iowa fish species.

O'BRIEN—Dog Creek is a perfect escape with pretty views for an afternoon of fishing. Renovated in 2014, bass are a bit small but abundant. Good numbers of nice-sized bluegills are being sampled. Great shore access and a jetty. The park, along the Glacial Trail Scenic Byway, abuts some of the best prairie in northwest Iowa.

OSCEOLA—Ocheyedan Pond offers unique fishing. This small former surface mine has decent largemouth, bluegill and catfish. Good shore access, picnic area, beach and trails.

PAGE—Catfish up to 26 inches were caught last fall at Rapp Park north of Shenandoah. Good-sized crappie and largemouth bass over 17 inches also await. Enjoy camping, trails and picnics after fishing this county park.

PALO ALTO—Five Island Lake, one of Iowa's bigger natural lakes, has good numbers of crappie, walleye and a newly established yellow bass population. Great shore access with handicapped-accessible pier and shoreline. The state park, run by the county, located at Town Bay (south end of town), has camping spaces available.

PLYMOUTH—Hillview Recreational Area, nestled in the Loess Hills, is a scenic fishing getaway. Good bluegill, largemouth bass and channel cat fishing. Several trails wind through oak forests, prairies and around the pond. Swim beach, primitive and modern camping and cabins.

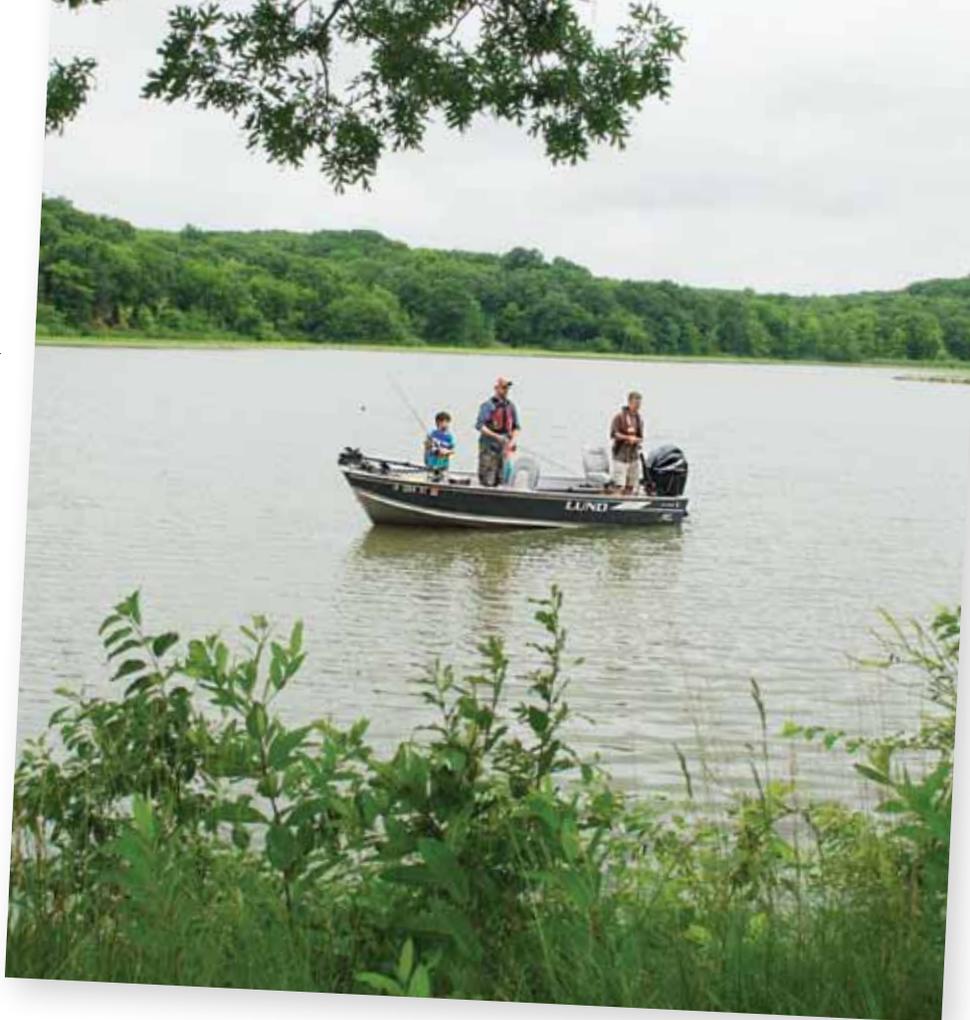
POCAHONTAS—Have fun canoe or kayak fishing for perch and northerns at newly renovated Lizard Lake. Keep your eyes on the abundant habitat for excellent wildlife viewing.

POLK—Stocked walleye at Big Creek State Park the past five years have survived well. Now reaching “eater size,” the bite should be good for 15- to 20-inch walleye in upcoming years. Hit the post-spawn bite May through June.

POTTAWATTAMIE—Lake Manawa is a favorite spot of anglers young and old. Crappie fishing is expected to improve in 2017 based on last year's netting survey. Find 9- and 10-inch black crappies spawning in the rocks in May. Stocked with walleye, wipers and channel cat. Paddle boat, paddle board and kayak and canoe rentals at the beach concessionaire.

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

RINGGOLD—Gravel spawning beds and rock piles recently added to Fife's Grove Park Pond north of Mount Ayr provide more spots to catch bluegill, bass, wipers, channel catfish and crappie. Great shore access with a gazebo in a well-maintained county park. Explore a historic one-room log cabin nestled in an oak savanna



where many trees are more than 150 years old.

SAC—Black Hawk Lake, renovated in 2012, has great fishing for all ages. Walleye fishing last spring was phenomenal with anglers taking home limits throughout May. Try right off of Ice House Point (part of Black Hawk State Park) for 8-inch bluegill and 8- to 10-inch crappies. Catch dozens of largemouth bass per trip. Many channel cat exceed 4 pounds. Set the drag and hook a muskie for an incredible fight. Half the shore is public, with plenty of trails, parks and new playground.

SCOTT—Lake of the Hills, Davenport, is the largest lake in the West Lake Park Complex. Good bass, bluegill, crappie and channel catfish. Panfish are a bit small, but easily caught. Largemouth over 17 inches possible. Many large broodstock largemouth bass, retired from the Fairport Hatchery, have been stocked over the years. Try crankbaits fished along rocky areas. Channel cat over 18 inches await lucky anglers; use chicken liver under a bobber.

SHELBY—Prairie Rose Lake, nestled among scenic hills southeast of Harlan, has excellent bass, channel catfish, bluegill and crappie fishing. Bluegills are big and the crappie population is developing fast. Abundant bass provide great catch-and-release fishing (15-inch minimum length limit). Fish the rock piles and reefs added during 2012 renovation. Shore access is limited with lots of aquatic plant habitat, so fish from a boat, kayak or jetty.

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SIoux—Find good numbers of bass, bluegill and cats, and improved shore access, at Big Sioux Recreational Area. Concrete ramp for easy access to the Big Sioux River.

STORY—Find good numbers of bluegill and bass in Dakins Lake, north of Zearing and stocked in 2014. Bluegills are now up to 9 inches. Excellent shore access makes it a great pick for beginners. Camping available, so take the family.

TAMA—Yellow bass fishing is hot at Otter Creek Lake near Toledo. Catch 7- to 9-inch yellow bass close to shore around Memorial Day. Bluegill, bass and crappie available. Fish cleaning station near the ramp. Hike the 3-mile scenic lake trail, visit the 2-acre native prairie or tour the nature center.

TAYLOR—Spend a fun family day at Lake of Three Fires State Park, the region's most scenic, northeast of Bedford. Catch 9.5- to 10-inch crappie with some over 12 inches, largemouth over 17 inches and bluegill up to 8. Eight miles of trails, a large picnic area under trees near shore, sandy beach with playground and rental cabins.

UNION—Hit Summit Lake on the west side of Creston for prize catches of 10-inch yellow perch, 8- to 10-inch crappies and 8- to 9-inch bluegills. Fish brush piles by the jetty or along the Highway 25 bridge. Shore access limited, so bring a boat. A concrete boat ramp and adjacent fishing jetty just off the Summit Lake Bridge on State Highway 25 offers easy all-weather access.

VAN BUREN—Lake Sugema is loaded with county park amenities for families and campers, plus excellent largemouth, crappie and bluegill fishing. A great hiking trail leads to popular, pretty Lacey-Keosauqua State Park. Cast for just about any species on the Des Moines River next to the park, then stroll the rustic Villages of Van Buren County—a tourism destination.

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

WARREN—Lake Ahquabi State Park is a family destination five miles south of Indianola. A fishing pier, numerous jetties and trails provide great access. Catch bluegill, redear sunfish and crappie late April through early June. Hop across the road to the south for largemouth bass or channel catfish in Hooper Pond.

WASHINGTON—Thomas Marr Lake, near Ainsworth, is perfect for new anglers. A paved trail loops around the

lake. Lots of submerged brush within casting distance of shore. Two jetties provide access to deeper water. Stocked with largemouth, bluegill, redear sunfish, channel cat and crappie. A few anglers had great success last summer using topwater baits that mimicked water snakes. Venture to Marr Park Pond to cast off the covered pier, visit the nature center or spend a night camping.

WAYNE—Excellent largemouth fishing at Humeston Reservoir will rekindle the joy of fishing for anyone who hasn't dipped a line lately. Lots of bass up to 22 inches. Great crappie angling with fish up to 12 inches. Catch plenty of bluegill up to 9 inches. Nearby Seymour Reservoir is also a good bet for bluegill and crappie.

WEBSTER—Brushy Creek, Iowa's secret walleye hotspot, has monster catfish and 40-inch-plus muskie. Cast off the foot bridges for walleye. Bass, bluegill and crappie fishing is also good. Jetties provide easy access. Lots of habitat to explore by boat.

WINNEBAGO—Get away to quiet Lake Catherine, nestled in timber west of Forest City. Catch nice-sized bluegill in the spring and channel cat and largemouth as water warms. Two fishing jetties and a handicapped-accessible pier provide easy access. Enjoy lake views from the cabin.

WINNESHIEK—Take someone new fishing to Lake Meyer. At 40 acres, it has plenty of water to pursue bluegill, crappie and largemouth. A concrete ramp provides easy boat use in addition to abundant shore access. Multiple fish attractors added during a recent drawdown provide lots of fishing spots. The park offers picnic areas, campground, playground and trails.

WOODBURY—Little Sioux Park Lake offers easy fishing and camping fun. This abandoned gravel mine turned fishing and swimming hole has extremely clear water. Plenty of shore access. Find 7.5- to 8-inch bluegill in the "arms" of the pit sitting on nests in springtime. Largemouth bass and channel cat lurk below begging to be caught. Hop over to the Little Sioux River adjacent the park for walleye and bigger catfish.

WORTH—Bluegill and yellow perch fishing was fabulous at Silver Lake last year. Nice largemouth, some 15 to 17 inches, are coming on strong after renovations in 2013. Two jetties and a concrete ramp provide access. Spend the night at the county park on the north shore.

WRIGHT—Channel catfishing is excellent at Lake Cornelia off the north end jetty and north shore. Catch nice-size bluegill, 6- to 8-inch yellow bass and an occasional walleye. Hike the lake trails or spend a night at a lakeside camp. 🐾

