



# White Bass – Carlyle's Summer Angling Tradition

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CARYLE LAKE - After failing in earlier attempts to boat a few largemouth bass, my fishing partner and I were now focusing our angling efforts toward crappie. Unfortunately, our success was not improving even though fishing in one of Carlyle Lake's better crappie hot spots.

It was a typical central Illinois midsummer day. The weatherman was forecasting daytime temperatures near the 90-degree mark. With clear skies and virtually no wind, conditions were certainly less than favorable for fishing. But, like many Illinois anglers with busy work schedules, we were limited to fishing whenever time allowed.

Realizing the best chances for action would come early in the day, we had planned to launch the boat at first light. Still, the bite did not occur and the situation was now beginning to look grim.

Just as we were about to throw in the fishing towels and return home, a flurry of activity occurred near the mouth of the cove. A school of shad was skipping across the surface in an obvious attempt to escape a marauding predator. Soon the entire cove came alive with leaping baitfish.

"White bass," my partner said while grabbing a nearby pre-rigged ultralight spinning rod. "Let's see if we can catch a few while they're still in the mood for breakfast."

We were witnessing one of the welcomed Carlyle Lake summer fishing experiences. A large school of white bass was feeding on shad trapped between the surface and their ravenous pursuers.

We boated nearly a dozen white bass before the action came to a sudden stop. Most of the fish ranged in size from one-half to one pound. What began as an inauspicious day on the water had now become a productive fishing experience.

White bass have likely salvaged more summer fishing trips at Lake Shelbyville than any other species. While other popular gamefish species are suffering from summer doldrums, white bass are putting on the feedbag.

Our lure of choice this day was a Heddon Tiny Torpedo. When worked with short, erratic jerks, the lure's sputtering action simulated the sound of scattering shad. However, feeding white bass will aggressively attack virtually any lure resembling the look or sound of baitfish.

Our ultralight fishing gear allowed for long casts. Additionally, the light line added a challenge to landing the hard-fighting fish.

Surfacing white bass often vanish as quickly as they appear. Anglers need to remain alert for any surface activity in the area. Often, the same school of white bass will return to the surface a few hundred yards from the first place they originally appeared. The key to successfully boating a good catch of white bass often lies in knowing a bit about their interesting habits and characteristics.

Because of the need to spawn in flowing water, white bass occur naturally in most major streams like the Illinois and Mississippi rivers. However, they have also been successfully introduced into several of Illinois' larger reservoirs fed by rivers like the Kaskaskia.

Carlyle Lake is a perfect example of a quality white bass reservoir. During their spring spawning migration, the white bass move into the Kaskaskia River to spawn.

Throughout the remainder of the year, the voracious whites are commonly found in the lower reaches of the lake gorging themselves on the large schools of shad. Currently at normal pool and holding steady, the annual tradition seems to be on schedule.

When it comes to abundance of fish, Carlyle Lake has carried Illinois' white bass crown in recent years. The sprawling 24,580-acre lake supports a large population of the fish and annually yields some of the state's best white bass fishing.

Here, the voracious whites gather in huge schools during the summer months. Some of the best fishing is often found near Point Number One and near the silos at Keyesport.

Lake Shelbyville can also be a white bass hot spot. However, most of the better fishing in recent years has occurred in the fall.

Rend Lake, too, is quickly gaining fame for white bass fishing. Though the fish are a bit smaller, anglers are now finding good numbers of this species.

White bass can be found almost anywhere in the Illinois River, but waters below certain navigational dams seem to be particularly good fishing spots. The tailwaters of the Starved Rock and Peoria dams certainly rate among the best white bass areas on the Illinois River.

The Mississippi River also regularly yields excellent fishing for white bass. During the summer months anglers enjoy good success for white bass averaging between one and two pounds.

The new multi-year 2016-2017 Illinois Fishing Information booklet lists more than a dozen of Illinois top white bass waters. Chances are, one of these sites is near your

home. Single copies of the publication are available from any IDNR office or by calling the Division of Fisheries at (217) 782-6424.