

# A year-roundlook at fishing hotspots

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When it comes to fishing, Illinois sportsmen have the good fortune to enjoy quality year-round angling opportunities. You can just about bet your favorite fishing rod that someone in Illinois is catching fish somewhere virtually every day of the year.

But, this doesn't mean that every lake, river and stream yields good fishing all of the time. Though most waters offer good fishing throughout the year, there are certain weeks or months when a specific location seems to outshine others.

The following are only a small example of the opportunities that exist. Perhaps these will provide a month-by-month taste of the great year-round angling opportunities that exist in our state.

**JANUARY** - When conditions permit, sauger and walleye fishing below the Mississippi River navigational dams can be excellent. Jigs or jigs-tipped-with-minnows often yield good catches of two- to three-pound fish.

**FEBRUARY** - Montgomery County's Coffeen Lake often yields some of its hottest crappie action during the latter weeks of February. Jigs or jigs-tipped-with-minnows often yield good catches of three-quarter-pound fish.

**MARCH** - Largemouth action heats up this month in the scenic waters of southern Illinois Kinkaid Lake. Spinnerbaits and jig and pork combinations probably account for the majority of fish caught from these waters.

**APRIL** - Bluegill begin moving into the shallows this month at Wayne County's Sam Dale Lake. Try fishing with crickets, mealworms or red worms near the spawning areas.

**MAY** - Action for Lake Michigan cohos heats up this month. Much of the better action will be found close to shore with fish averaging from two to four pounds.

**JUNE** - While the spring crappie fishing comes to a halt elsewhere in the state, action at this popular Lake Shelbyville in Shelby and Moultrie counties continues. Minnows and jigs worked along the deeper flooded timber typically yields the best results.

**JULY** - Though quality catfish action can be found throughout the state this month, few waters will match the big-fish producing qualities of the Alton Pool portion of the Mississippi River. Catches of 10 to 20-pounders are actually quite common and knowledgeable anglers regularly catch fish weighing up to 50 pounds.

**AUGUST** - Summertime white bass fishing has become a tradition at Carlyle Lake. While other species enter their summer doldrums, white bass put on the feed bag here at this sprawling Corps of Engineer impoundment. Good summer white bass action

typically begins in July and really heats up in August. The top spots include the areas near the Allen Branch, South Shore, by the island and the railroad trestle.

**SEPTEMBER** - Fall bluegill action at Lincoln Trail Lake near Marshall may not be as fast and furious as during the spawn, but this month brings good action for this popular panfish. Crickets, mealworms and redworms are all that's needed to land your supper.

**OCTOBER** - With the return of the fall Catchable Trout Program, rainbow trout fishing returns to Beaver Dam State Lake near Plainview. Try fishing with ultralight gear and live bait for best results.

**NOVEMBER** - Good largemouth fishing returns this month to the heated waters of this Jasper County's Newton powerplant reservoir. Try using a black jig tipped with a black frog and fish near bushy cover.

**DECEMBER** - The Calhoun County backwater areas of the famous Mississippi River take on something of a different appearance this month. Once the duck seasons close, few people can be found within these areas. Still, there are a handful of secretive anglers busily enjoying some of the finest crappie fishing of the entire year. Big crappies, often averaging better than three-fourths pound are common catches from these areas.

The sites listed above are only a small representation of the quality angling opportunities to be found in Illinois. The 2018-2019 Illinois Fishing Information booklet, available sometime next month from most license vendors and Illinois Department of Natural Resources offices, lists many more good sites.