



Here's a Boatful of Hot Panfishing Spots!

by Lee Keck

May 19 2020 2:48 PM





As more of the state lakes open after the virus pandemic, the month of May typically brings exciting panfish action to many downstate Illinois waters. However, cooler than normal temperatures and an abundance of rainfall has delayed much of the better action until now.

Recent reports indicate that the bite is currently on and bluegill and redear can be caught with relative ease. Now also a terrific time to take the entire family out for a fun day on the water.

Downstate Illinois has many fine panfish waters offering anglers quality fishing. Most contain good populations of bluegill but some also offer quality fishing for redear.

These downstate waters range in size from large reservoirs and lakes of several thousand acres to smaller ponds and lakes of less than 100 acres.

Light tackle and live bait are the most popular way to land a bunch of panfish. Crickets, redworms and mealworms top the list as the preferred choice of baits.

However, some fishermen prefer to use flyfishing equipment or ultra-light tackle with tiny artificial lures. In any case, you can be assured that these fish will offer some exciting angling action.

While you likely know of several good locations in our immediate area, the following is a just small representation of the better and lesser-known downstate panfish waters.

In addition, there are many more locations throughout downstate Illinois that will provide good fishing action during the month of June.

Crab Orchard Lake - Well known as a quality bluegill fishery, this 6,965-acre Williamson County lake boasts good fishing for bluegill. Crickets and redworms are the choice of baits among most local panfishermen. Look for the best action to occur near the stumps, brush and spawning beds.

Devil's Kitchen Lake - Another Williamson County lake with a reputation for producing some bragging-size bluegills. Average size of these big fish runs up to a half-pound. Once again, crickets and redworms are the top baits. Throughout May and June, most anglers look to the spawning beds for the best action.

Dutchman Lake - This is a small Johnson County lake with some big panfish. Sizeable bluegill and redear are common catches from this lake. Most anglers use live baits like crickets and redworms and search for spawning beds. This 118-acre lake is located about three miles southeast of Goreville.

Siloam Springs Lake (Adams County) - Another nearby and little-known lake yielding quality fishing action, this 58-acre is home to some huge bluegill and redear. Look for spawning beds in the backs of the coves to produce the best fishing.

Ramsey Lake - Often overlooked by many downstate panfish enthusiasts, this Fayette County location offers some top-notch bluegill and redear action. Look for the spawn beds to provide the best panfish angling. Bragging-size fish are typical for this lake. Ramsey Lake is located about three miles north of the city of Ramsey.

Lincoln Trail Lake - Another top site for big bluegill. Catches of quality fish are common occurrences from this 146-acre Clark County lake. Try fishing the brush or along the edges of the weed beds for best results. Lincoln Trail Lake is located about two miles south of Marshall.

Lake Murphysboro - Only 145 acres in size, this Johnson County lake produces quality fishing for big redear. Stringers of fish up averaging just less than a pound are common from these waters. Like many locations, the spawn beds are the place to look for these fish. Crickets tend to be the bait of choice among most local anglers. Lake Murphysboro is located about one mile west of Murphysboro.

The list of good panfish waters goes on and on with far too many to include. Anglers should not overlook such sites as Mermet Lake in Massac County, Virginia City Lake in Cass County, Randolph County Lake in Randolph County, Mill Creek Lake in Clark County and our own Beaver Dam State Lake near Plainview.

In addition, you can check with nearly any local bait shop and they can steer you to some fine panfish fishing near your home. There is definitely no end to the panfish opportunities to be found within a short drive of our own homes.