

Early start to fall fishing action

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Though the official arrival of autumn shows a slightly cooler change in weather trends, more anglers are taking advantage of the excellent fishing currently found at each of Illinois' three large Corps of Engineer reservoirs.

Reports from bait shops within the vicinity of each of these lakes show the number of fishermen has increased with the anticipated arrival of cooler weather. And, these anglers are being rewarded with some of the finest fishing success of the past few months.

Although fishing was actually superb throughout most of the summer, sweltering daytime temperatures kept many anglers from enjoying these popular lakes. Those dedicated anglers willing to challenge the uncomfortable conditions generally reported excellent action.

A greatly improved crappie fishery has stirred a great deal of attention among anglers at Lake Shelbyville. Throughout the spring, fair to good catches of five to ten quality fish have been common. According to many local crappie enthusiasts, the past few years has found the great crappie fishing returning to this lake.

White bass fishing, too, slow much of the summer at Lake Shelbyville and Carlyle Lake, has finally began to improve. Catches of 20 to 30 fish per day have been more the rule than exception at both locations. Anglers frequenting these waters actually expect fishing to only improve during the next few months.

Catfish anglers are also finding success at Rend and Carlyle lakes. Throughout the entire summer, superb catches of channel catfish (some quite large) have come from both locations.

Bluegill are being caught in good numbers from all three locations. Lake Shelbyville anglers are also enjoying excellent success for largemouth bass.

The already good crappie action at Rend has many local anglers predicating even better fall fishing. They feel angling success for this species should only improve as water temperatures continue to fall.

Carlyle Lake, too, appears to have returned as a proven crappie producer. Though high water made them difficult to find during the spring and early summer, anglers are now enjoying good fishing for quality fish. We're told the secret is to find good woody cover.

The Carlyle tailwaters are yielding a potpourri of angling opportunities. Panfish, catfish, white bass and sauger are producing occasional spurts of good action.

In recent weeks, several huge flathead catfish have been pulled from the main lake and this popular shoreline fishing destination. Good numbers of white bass and largemouth bass also are being caught.

Due to less water passing through the dams, tailwater action at Rend and Shelbyville lakes has fallen off in recent weeks. Here, buffalo, carp and drum are providing the bulk of the action.

Even with below average rainfall the past spring and early summer, near-normal lake levels still exist at all three locations. Corps personnel report all recreational facilities are still operational.

Anglers can check out the latest fishing conditions at these popular Illinois fishing holes by seeing the Illinois Department of Natural Resource's special sportfishing internet site at www.ifishillinois.org.

West-central Illinois fishing action has also been exceptional thus far this year. Reports of some good catfish action has come from our rivers. In fact, the Mississippi River in recent weeks numerous catfish weighing in excess of 40 pounds have been caught.

Many of the smaller city-owned lakes are yielding improved crappie action, as well. Anglers at Lake Jacksonville, the Gillespie New Lake, Litchfield's Lake Lou Yaeger and Carlinville Lake Number 1 have witnessed better crappie fishing in recent weeks.

These same waters are also yielding quality catfish action. Good catches have been reported from almost every local lake, river and stream.

Throughout the state, good bluegill catches are also coming in from a number of smaller lakes and ponds. Live baits like crickets, redworms and meal worms have topped the list of the preferred offerings.