

FISHING FORECAST

2014

2013 Fish Sampling Charts

Guide to Fishing Nebraska in 2014



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NEBRASKA
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A GUIDE TO FISHING NEBRASKA IN 2014 By Daryl Bauer, Game and Parks fisheries outreach program manager

WALLEYE

The 2012 drought had impacts on Nebraska fish populations, especially in our large irrigation reservoirs. Overall, sampling in the fall of 2013 showed that walleye numbers were lower in several waters in the state. However, that does not mean there will be no great walleye fishing in Nebraska in 2014. Minatare, McConaughy, Merritt and Maloney reservoirs will provide some of the best walleye fishing this year. Those reservoirs will provide anglers with excellent opportunities to catch some eating-size, 15- to 20-inch walleyes. Calamus, Enders, and Johnson also will be good spots to harvest a few walleyes for a meal of fresh fish. Do not overlook Lewis and Clark Reservoir, which also will be good for some walleyes, and sauger are often caught right along with walleyes at Lewis and Clark. For a shot at a trophy walleye, McConaughy, Merritt, Lewis and Clark, Calamus and Sherman will be some of the best waters. Small- to medium-size Nebraska reservoirs tend to have fewer walleyes because smaller waters are less ideal walleye habitats; however, anglers will have some opportunities to catch walleyes, and perhaps some big ones, at East Twin, Wanahoo and Box Butte reservoirs in 2014.

WHITE BASS

Harlan was excellent for white bass in 2013 and Calamus has been excellent for the past several years. Both of those reservoirs are consistent producers of white bass and should be again in 2014. Anglers will find some exceptional white bass fishing on Enders this year. Likewise, anglers should not overlook Davis Creek Reservoir downstream from Calamus. The canal reservoirs in central Nebraska are also excellent white bass habitats that produce consistent white bass fishing; Johnson and Jeffrey will be the best of the canal reservoirs

this year. Sherman Reservoir also will offer anglers a lot of 12- to 15-inch white bass. Southeast Nebraska anglers looking for white bass should fish East Twin this year.

WIPERS

Wipers are large open-water predators that also thrive in Nebraska's irrigation reservoirs. The drought had an impact on wiper populations in those irrigation reservoirs, as overall numbers were lower statewide. However, some of the Nebraska waters that are consistently good for wipers again will be some of the best waters in 2014. Red Willow has long been known for its wiper fishing and is home to Nebraska's hook-and-line state record wiper. Water levels at Red Willow have been exceptionally low for the past couple of years because of dam repairs, but Red Willow will provide some good wiper fishing this year. Other waters that will be among the state's best for wipers in 2014 will be Sutherland, Calamus, Enders and Swanson. Elwood will be best in state for big wipers this year, but do not overlook McConaughy for some of the very biggest fish. In eastern Nebraska, smaller reservoirs are less ideal wiper habitats, but anglers will have a shot at some wipers at Stagecoach and Wagon Train reservoirs.

BLUEGILL

Bluegills thrive in a variety of waters, especially those that have clean water and an abundance of shallow-water cover, particularly aquatic vegetation. Anglers can find small bluegills almost anywhere, but the quest is to find the best waters with bluegills longer than 8 inches. Summit Lake will be one of the best waters in the state in 2014 for bluegill anglers, but do not overlook city and park lakes, such as Yanney in Kearney or the ponds on the Keller Park State Recreation Area. Fishing for a variety of species has been excellent at Lake Wanahoo, and the

fishing for some 8-inch-plus bluegills will be good there in the coming year. Pits and ponds across the state offer some excellent bluegill fishing. One example is Jenny Newman Pond at Platte River State Park; the pond is open for fishing only for youth and adults fishing with youth, and all fish must be released. Another example is Kea Lake at the Kearney Interstate 80 interchange, which will provide anglers with some good-sized bluegills this year. Do not forget about the sandhills lakes, which have lower densities of bluegills, but make up for it by producing quality fish. Blue Lake north of Oshkosh will be an excellent sandhills lake again, as well as Frye Lake near Hyannis and Smith Lake south of Rushville.

CRAPPIES

Crappies are found in a variety of waters. Small- to medium-size reservoirs that will provide some excellent crappie fishing include Whitney in the Panhandle, and Stagecoach and East Twin in southeast Nebraska. Branched Oak Reservoir, Willow Creek, Wehrspann and Wanahoo also will have some good crappie fishing this year. Larger irrigation reservoirs tend to have water level fluctuations that hinder the production of crappies, but Sherman Reservoir is consistently the best large irrigation reservoir for crappies in the state. Sandhills lakes can produce some big black crappies and Blue Lake would be one of the best.

LARGEMOUTH BASS

Largemouth bass also are most successful in clean water with an abundance of shallow water cover. In Nebraska, small pits, ponds and reservoirs tend to be our best largemouth bass habitats and some of those waters can have very high densities of bass. However, those waters with lots of bass may not necessarily be the best waters for

anglers to catch fish larger than 15 inches. Anglers can find good numbers of 15-inch-plus largemouth bass in small reservoirs such as Grove, Hayes Center and Rock Creek lakes, as well as in community waters such as Holdrege City Lake and Papillion's Walnut Creek. Many sandhills lakes are ideal largemouth bass habitats and produce some beautiful bass; check out Smith Lake south of Rushville. Private pits and ponds produce some of the best bass fishing in the state. Some of those private pits and ponds have been enrolled in the Open Fields and Waters program and are open to the public. Refer to the Public Access Atlas for those waters. Interstate lakes and other public pits such as East Gothenburg, East Sutherland, Louisville No. 3, and Archway No. 1 near Kearney will also offer some excellent bass fishing.

CHANNEL CATFISH

Some of the best channel catfish waters will range from Sutherland, Swanson and Harlan in southern and southwest Nebraska to Zorinsky, East Twin and Branched Oak reservoirs in the eastern part of the state. Anglers looking for some big channel catfish to catch and release will want to spend some time on Wagon Train, Minatare and Sherman, in addition to some of the waters already mentioned. For some of the biggest channel cats in the state, do not forget about Box Butte and Merritt reservoirs. The Missouri, Platte, Elkhorn, and Niobrara rivers also are excellent catfish fisheries and there are some areas where public access is available for those waters.

OTHER SPECIES:

Anglers can expand their horizons by fishing for a variety of species. Besides the species highlighted in the fish sampling graphs, there are a variety of other fish that can be pursued.

SMALLMOUTH BASS

Lewis and Clark Reservoir and the Missouri River in northeast Nebraska, as well as War Axe SRA, will offer some of the state's best smallmouth bass fishing. Reservoirs such as Merritt, McConaughy and Johnson also have fishable populations of smallmouth bass.

BLUE CATFISH

Blue catfish can be found in the Missouri River, as well as Swanson, Wehrspann and Branched Oak reservoirs.

FLATHEAD CATFISH

Anglers can catch and release some trophy flathead catfish in Harlan, Sherman or Branched Oak reservoirs, as well as in the Tri-County and Loup canal systems.

SAUGER

Lewis and Clark Reservoir and the Missouri River in northeast Nebraska is the best sauger fishery in the state, but Johnson Reservoir and the canal system and associated reservoirs above Johnson also have some excellent sauger fishing.

YELLOW PERCH

Yellow perch fishing should be good at Frye and Home Valley lakes in the Sandhills.

NORTHERN PIKE

The Sandhills lakes are some of the best northern pike habitats in the state, and once again lakes on the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge will be some of Nebraska's most popular pike fisheries. Do not overlook Box Butte Reservoir or Goose Lake for northern pike. Lake Wanahoo will offer anglers in southeast Nebraska a chance to catch-and-release some pike and large reservoirs such as Merritt and McConaughy have some pike, as well.

BULLHEADS

Bullhead fishing will be particularly good this year at Holmes, Czechland, Wanahoo and Wildwood reservoirs. Catchable-size bullheads also are stocked at following state recreation area lakes: Louisville No. 2A, Two Rivers No. 6, Two Rivers No. 7 and Fremont No. 3.

MUSKELLUNGE

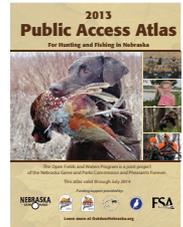
A further example of the great variety of fish species found in Nebraska would be muskellunge. Anglers can fish for this "king of freshwater sport fish" at Merritt, Calamus and Wagon Train reservoirs, Fremont No. 20 and Cottonwood-Steverson lakes.

TROUT

Nebraska also has waters capable of supporting cold-water fish year-round where anglers can find rainbow, brown and brook trout. Most of the cold-water trout streams are found in western and northern parts of the state; the East Branch of Verdigre Creek, Long Pine Creek, Soldier Creek and Ninemile Creek are perennial favorites among trout anglers. The rainbow trout fishing at Lake Ogallala will continue to be good, and anglers might even catch some cutthroat trout from Lake Ogallala or the White River.

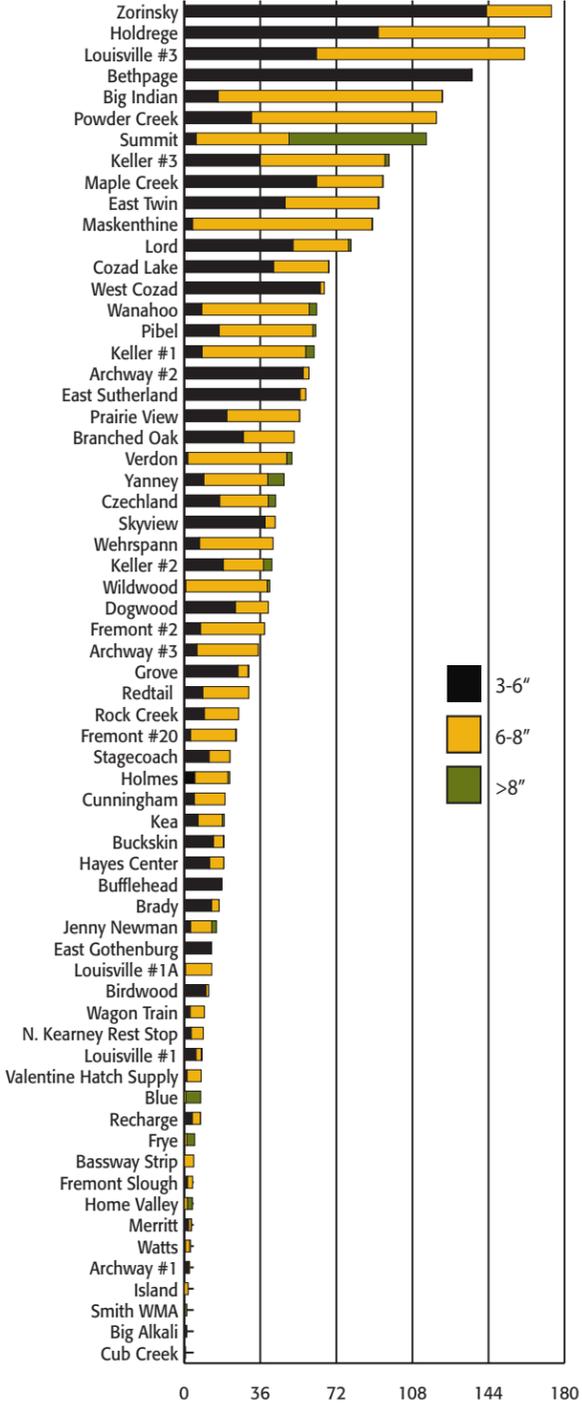
Public Access Atlas

Want more information on where to fish in Nebraska, including Open Fields and Waters sites? Check out the current Public Access Atlas, available at OutdoorNebraska.org or wherever fishing permits are sold.



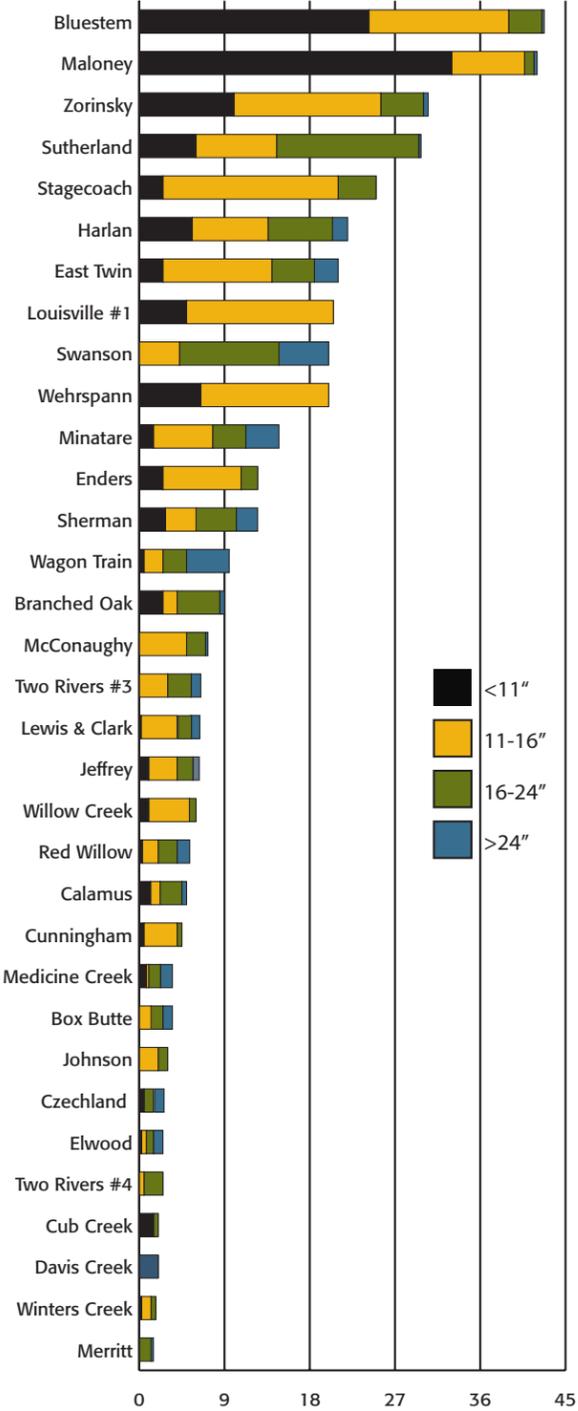
BLUEGILL

Per Trap Net



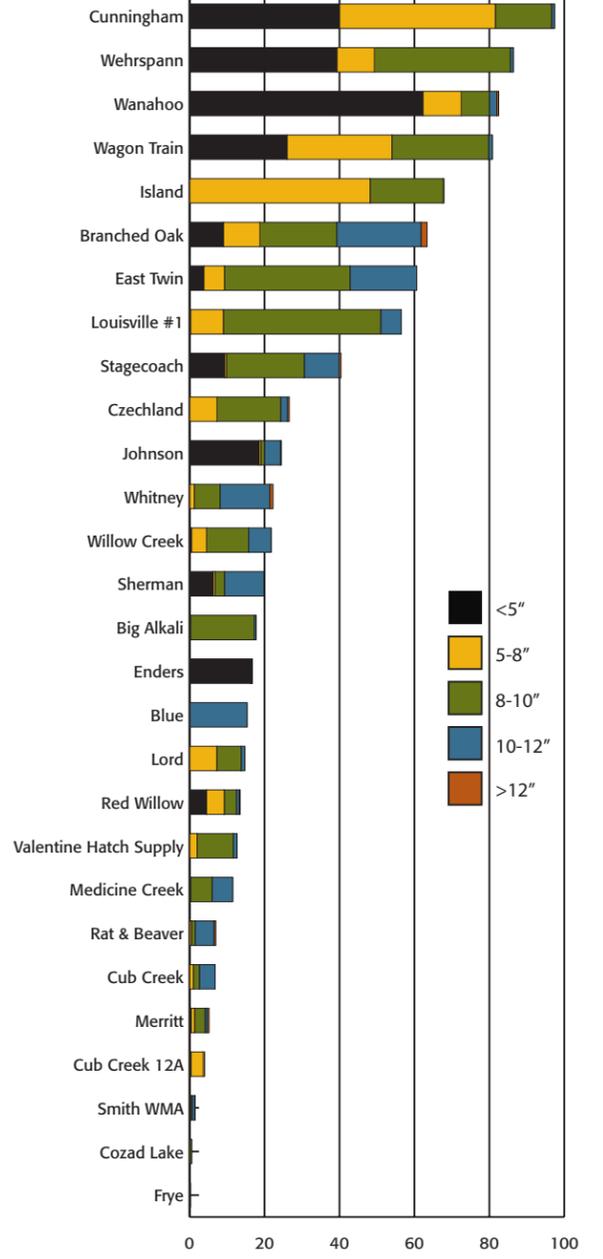
CHANNEL CATFISH

Per Gill Net



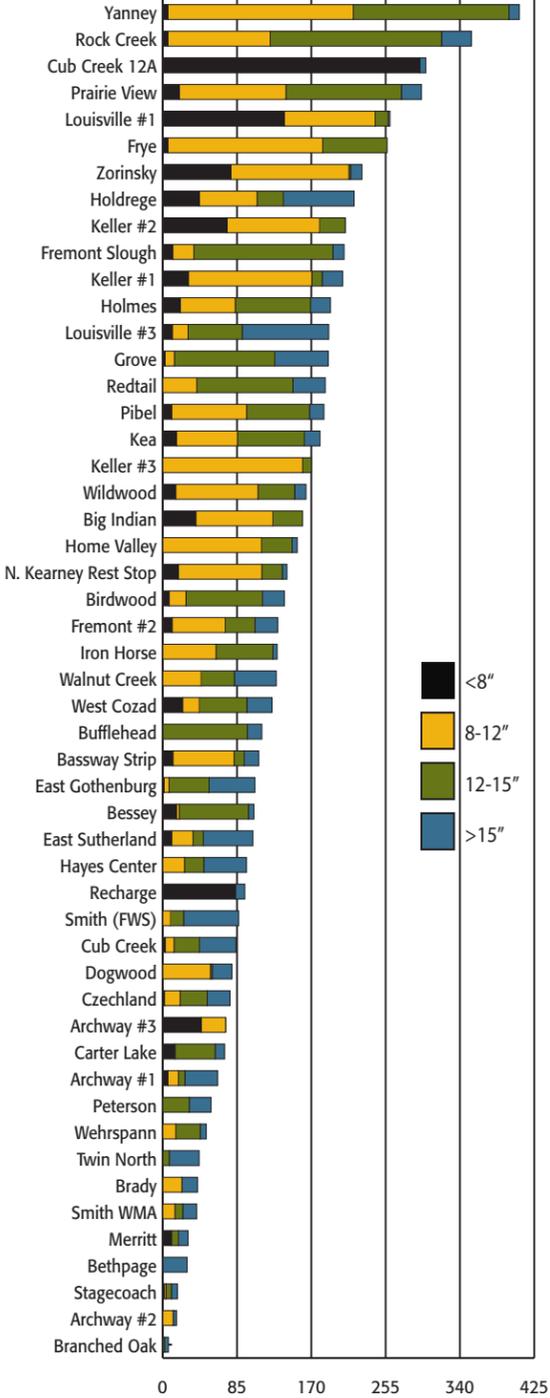
CRAPPIE

Per Trap Net



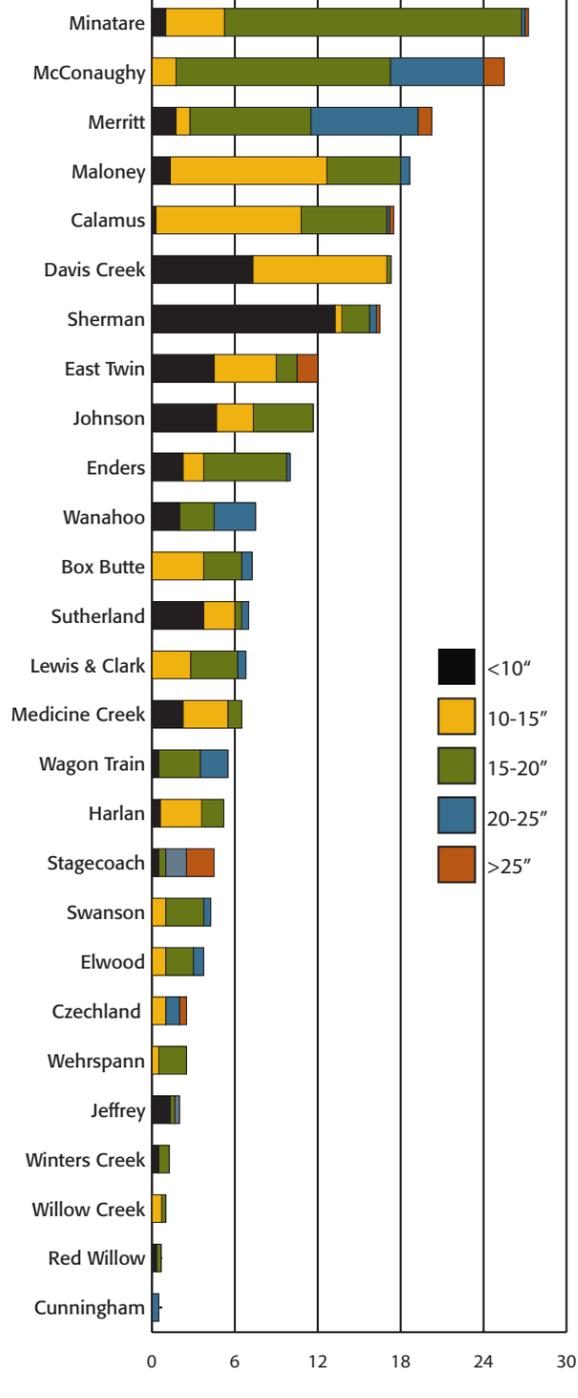
LARGEMOUTH BASS

Per Hour Electrofishing



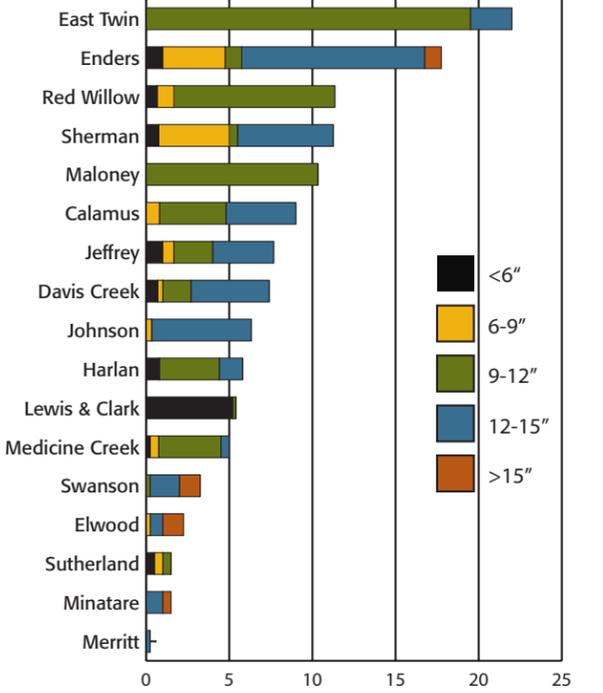
WALLEYE

Per Gill Net



WHITE BASS

Per Gill Net



WIPER

Per Gill Net

