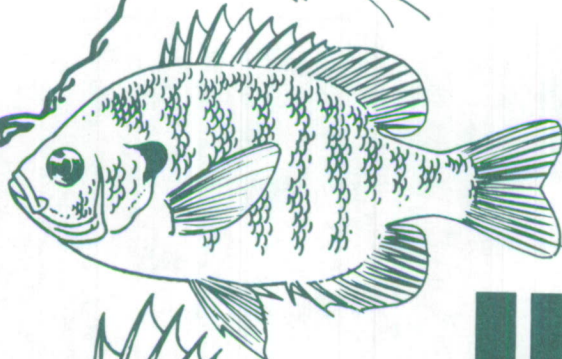
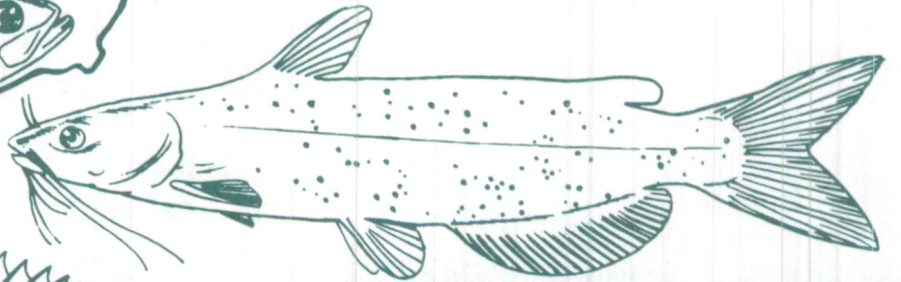
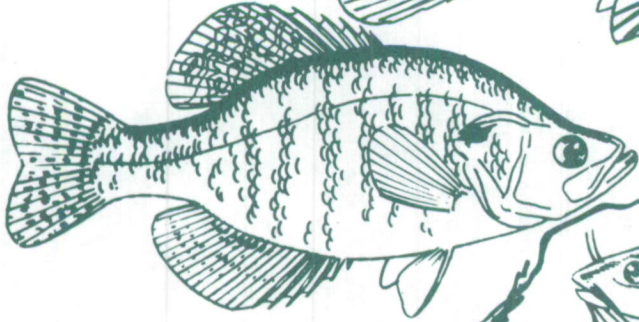
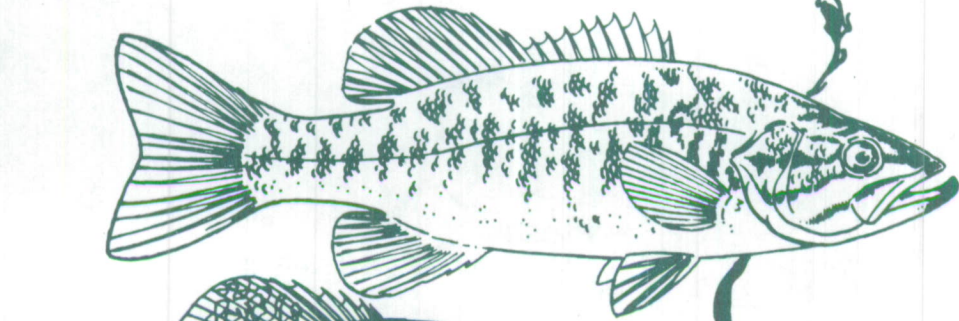
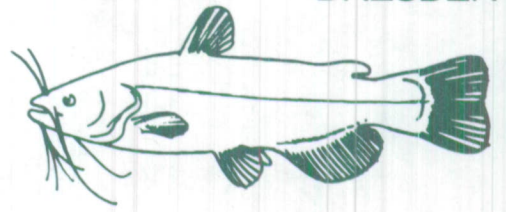
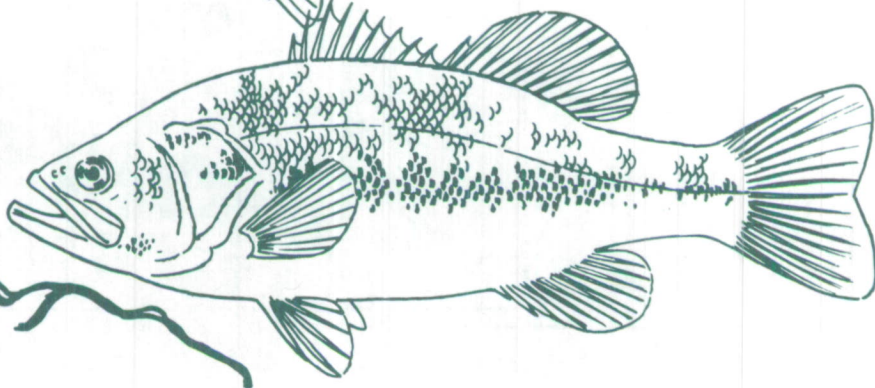


DRESDEN



# FISHING THE ILLINOIS

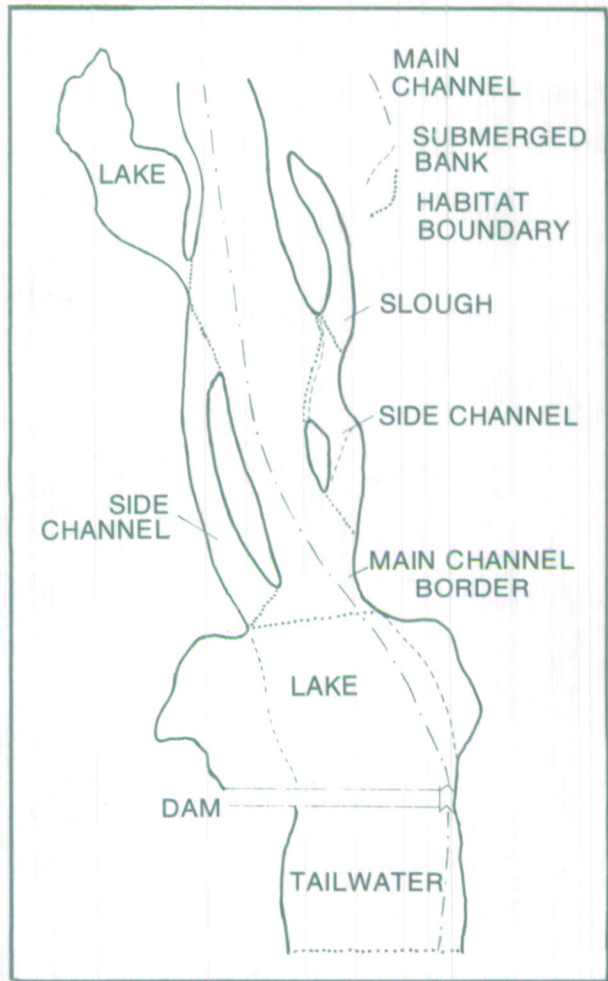
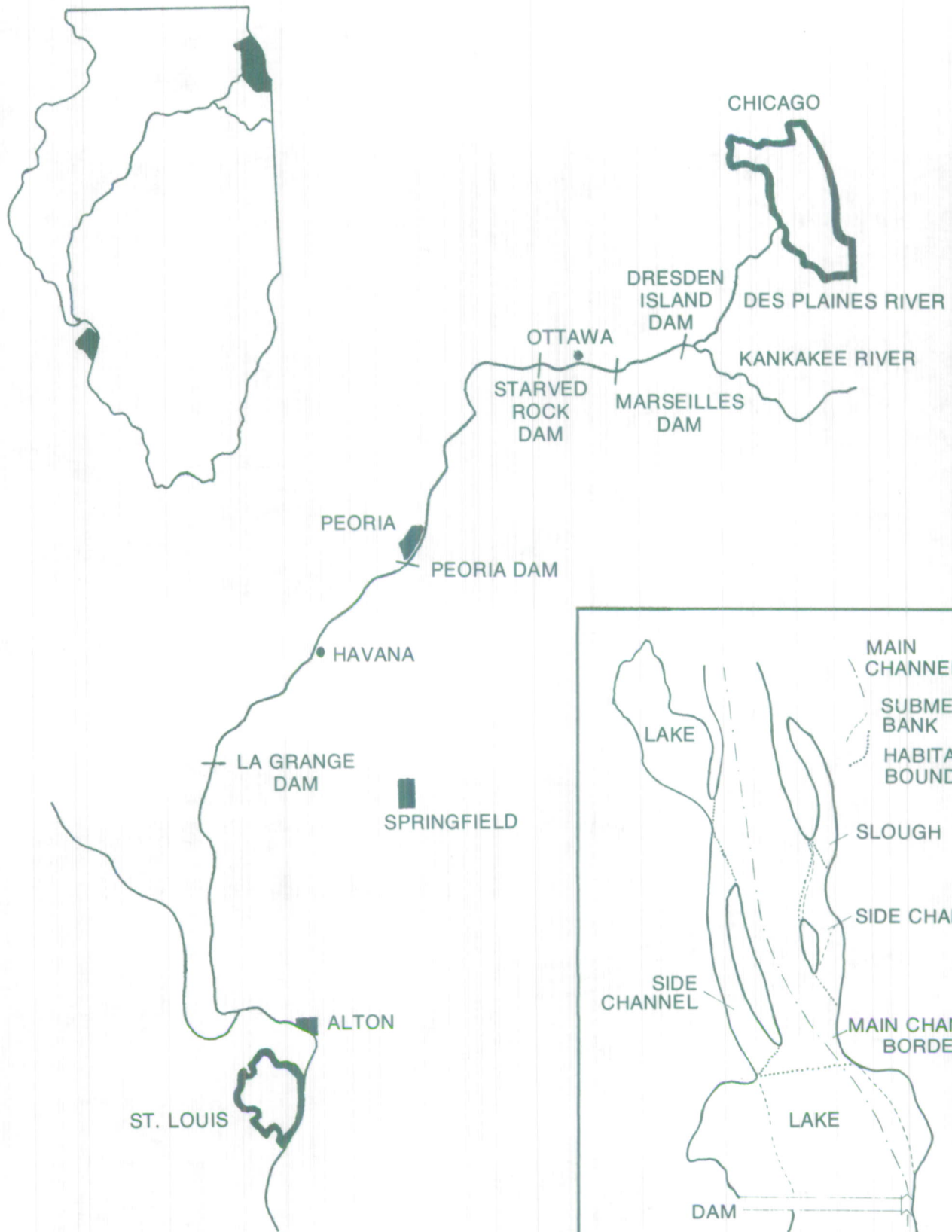


ALTON

ILLINOIS



DEPARTMENT OF  
NATURAL  
RESOURCES



**FISHING REGULATIONS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
DIVISION OF FISHERIES

STREAMS PROGRAM

# FISHING THE ILLINOIS

Revised June, 1995

## INTRODUCTION

Despite man's continuing manipulation and pollution the Illinois River still provides a fine sport fishery. Recent surveys even indicate improvement in sport fish populations is occurring. Sport species commonly occurring in the river include largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, channel catfish, drum, crappie species, bullhead species, bluegill and miscellaneous sunfish species. With the large metropolitan areas of Chicago at its head and St. Louis near its mouth and by cutting more or less centrally through the northern half of the state, the Illinois River is in an excellent position to provide quality fishing to a great number of Illinois citizens. Hopefully this guide will help these fishermen make use of the abundant resource the river provides.

## DESCRIPTION OF RIVER

The Illinois River is formed at the junction of the Kankakee and Des Plaines rivers and runs 273 miles west, southwest and south to enter the Mississippi 14 miles upstream of Alton. The river and adjoining backwaters provide an aquatic resource of some 87,000 surface acres. Besides the dam on the Mississippi at Alton in which pool the lower 80 miles of Illinois River is included, there are the LaGrange and Peoria dams on the lower 228 miles of sluggish river and the Starved Rock, Marseilles and Dresden Is-

land dams on the upper 45 miles of faster flowing river. Diverse aquatic habitats are the basis for the diversity of sport fish present, as each species favors certain habitats over others.

Tailwater habitat, found below each navigation dam, is fast turbulent water caused by the passage of water through the dam. Tailwaters receive heavy fishing pressure because fish congregate in these rough waters. White bass are particularly fond of tailwaters, and channel catfish and drum are often caught there.

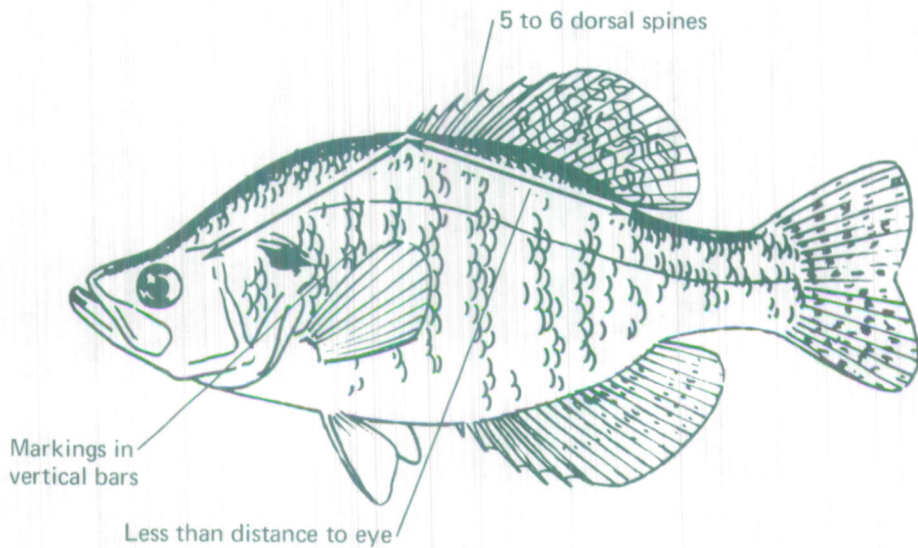
Lake and slough habitats have little or no current and may have aquatic vegetation. Lakes have greater average depths than sloughs. These areas are good for bullheads and sunfish species.

Side channels are departures from the main channel and may be as wide and deep as the main channel or so shallow that they resemble sloughs. All side channels have current in them during normal water stages. Channel and flathead catfish like side channels.

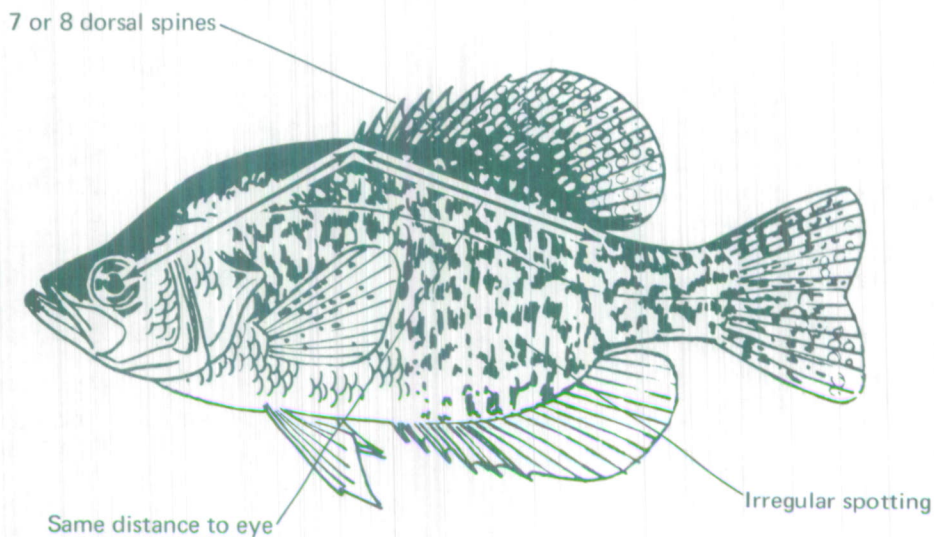
Main channel border habitat is the area between the edge of the navigation channel and the closest land or shallow water over submerged land. This is the most predominant habitat along the Illinois and is so varied that most sport species can be found in some type of main channel border area.

Largemouth bass, crappie, and bluegill or green sunfish are so common in the Illinois that they are taken from all habitats.

# FISHING



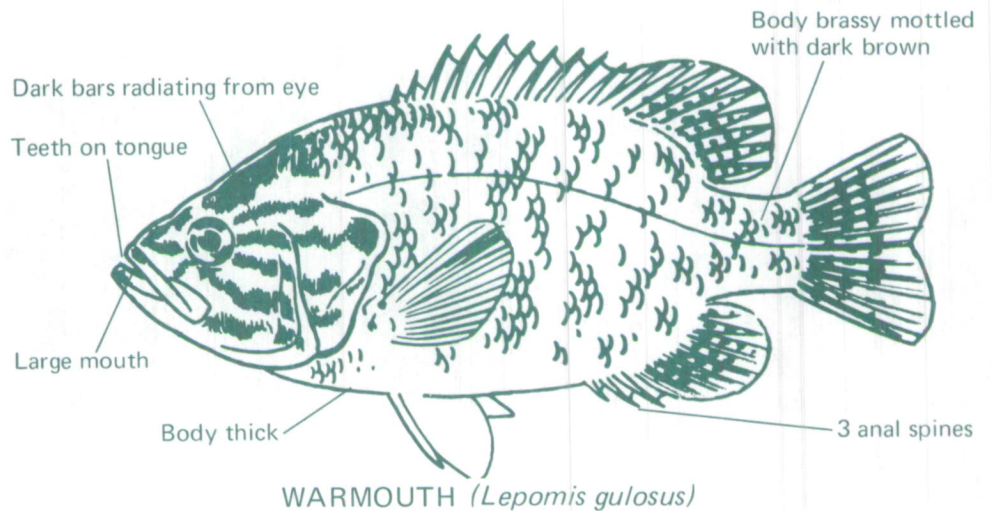
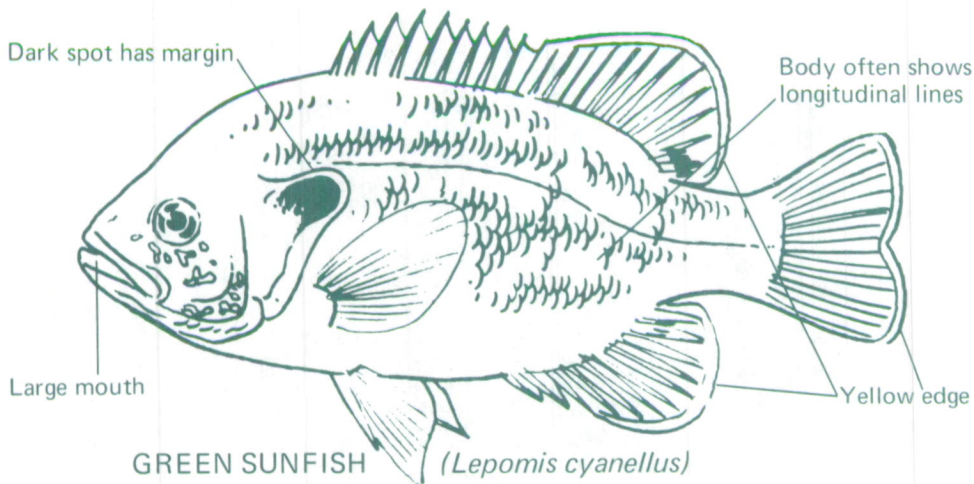
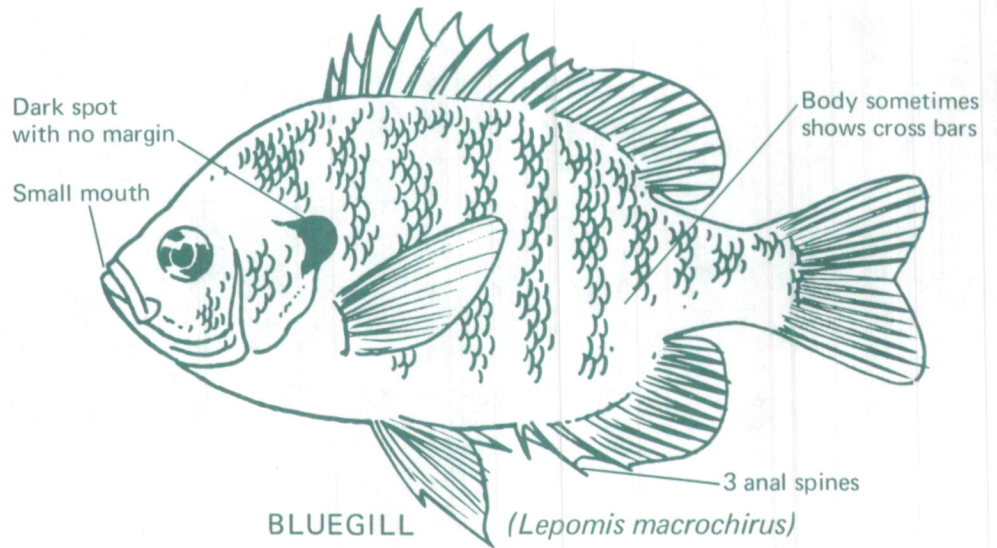
WHITE CRAPPIE  
(*Pomoxis annularis*)



BLACK CRAPPIE  
(*Pomoxis nigromaculatus*)

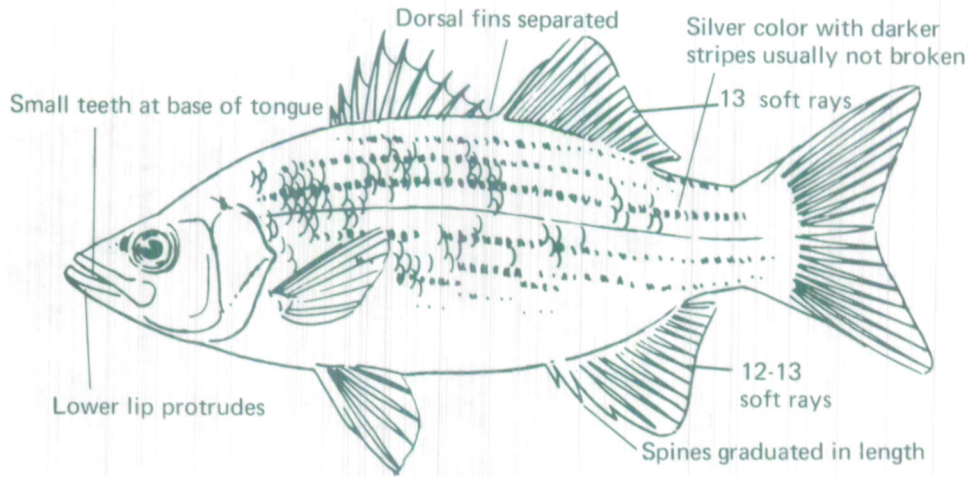
Two crappie species occur — the white crappie and the black crappie — but, there is no apparent difference in their bait preference or methods used to catch them. Fish near stumps, brush piles or other such shelter. Small minnows are the most common bait and these should be hooked high in the back on a small hook with a bobber 2 to 3 feet above the hook.

Nightcrawlers can also be used effectively in early spring. When crappie start schooling before spawning (April and May) leadhead jigs and spinners become productive and may be used in combination with a lip-hooked minnow. Usually the best months are March, April and May; then fishing picks up again in the fall.

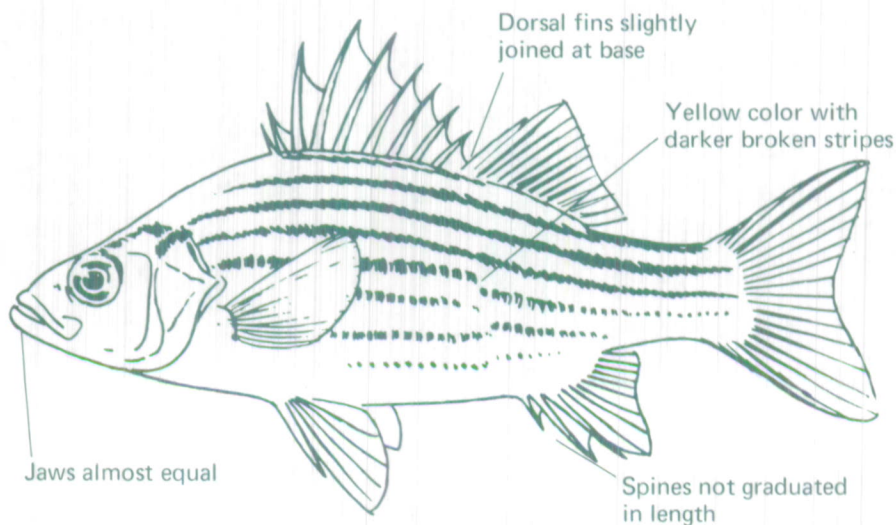


Sunfish occurring on the Illinois include bluegill, green sunfish, warmouth and occasionally pumpkinseed or rock bass. Fish near cover such as brush piles, stumps, or weed beds and drop your bait as close as possible to the cover. Use a small

bobber to keep the bait off the bottom. The most popular bait is the nightcrawler on a small hook, but crickets and grasshoppers work well during summer. For ice fishing wax worms or corn borers are quite effective.



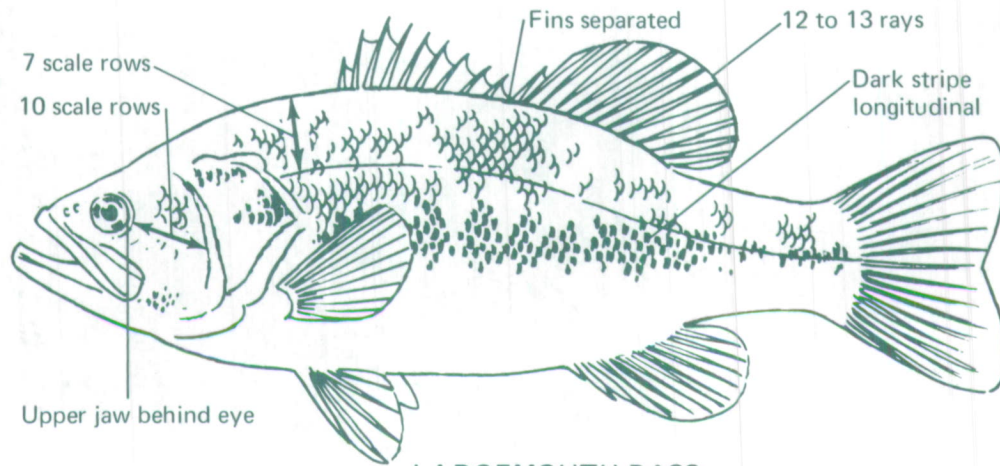
**WHITE BASS**  
(*Morone chrysops*)



**YELLOW BASS**  
(*Morone mississippiensis*)

The white and yellow basses are the true basses native to Illinois. Fishermen often call these fish "stripers", and this can cause confusion with a larger salt water cousin (striped bass) which has adapted to fresh water and has actually been taken from the Ohio River along Illinois. The white bass is generally more abundant than the yellow bass on the Illinois River except for localized areas in the Starved Rock pool. White bass grow larger than yellow, making them more desirable sport fish. These fish like current and turbulence as is shown by their abundance in tailwaters. They are taken on

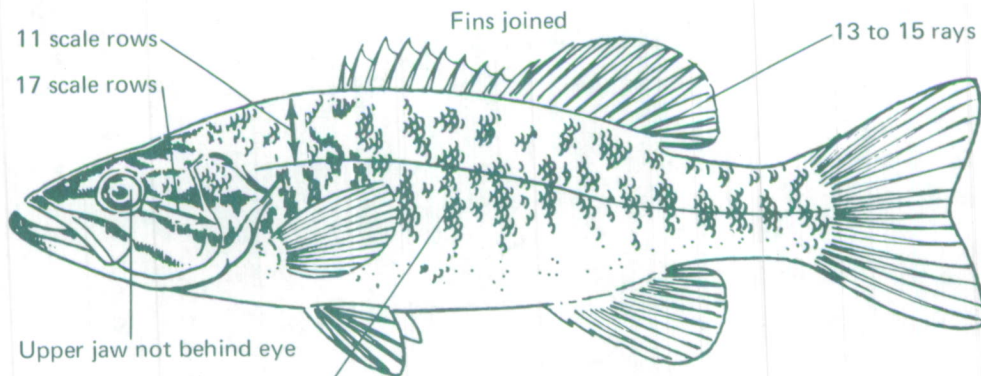
jigs cast into the rough water below dams or obstructions in the main channel border. Sometimes bass can be found in the quieter water along a sand bar or bank in the main channel border. Spinners with minnows or artificial lures resembling minnows are effective when a school of white bass are spotted by the furious surface activity of minnows trying to elude them. Best fishing seems to be in the morning or evening, but bass may be taken from deeper water during the day by retrieving the artificial lure or minnow a short way off the bottom. May and August have been the best months for bass.



LARGEMOUTH BASS  
(*Micropterus salmoides*)

Largemouth bass are taken most frequently in the main channel border and lake habitats. They like the cover of weed beds, brush, stumps, willows and fallen trees where they can hide from their prey. Since largemouth are sight feeders they are attracted by action and not by smell of the bait or lure. They succumb to the temptations of a variety of lures, plugs, and jigs which must each be retrieved

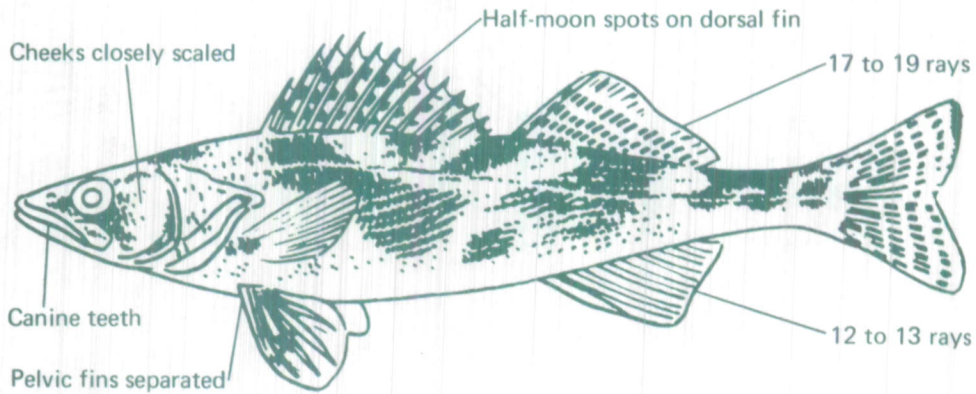
in the manner best suited to the lure. Common lures are Mepps spinners and plastic worms. Minnows hooked below spinners provide more attraction than the lifeless form of a minnow alone. The best fishing is in May, June and September; and once the weather warms to 75° or better, early morning or evenings are best.



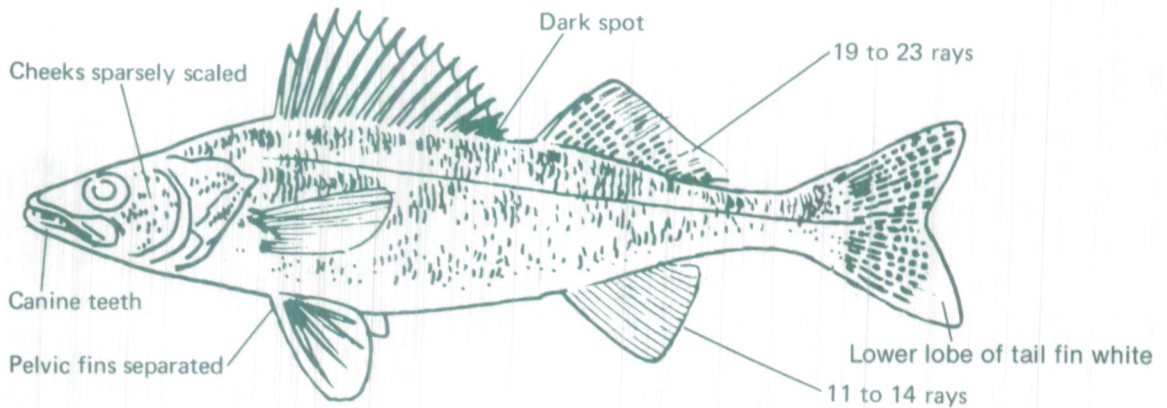
SMALLMOUTH BASS  
(*Micropterus dolomieu*)

Smallmouth bass populations are found in local areas above Peoria. Fish weighing better than 2½ lbs. have been collected by biologists sampling with electrofishing gear. Although the smallmouth does not attain the size of largemouth bass it is more of a scrapper and pound-for-pound provides more

heart-pounding action than any other stream species in Illinois. Artificial lures such as plastic worms, jigs, spinners, and spoons are most effective, but live frogs and crayfish are also successful. Fish in early morning or late evening.



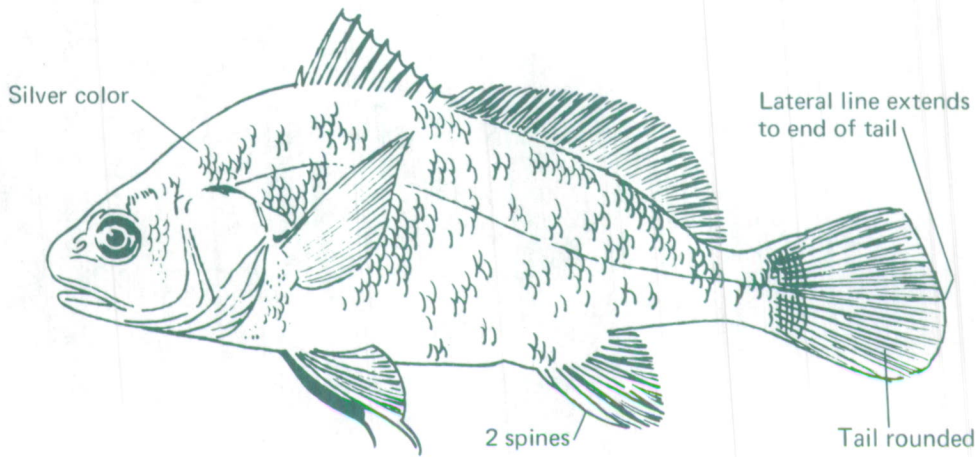
**SAUGER**  
*(Stizostedion canadense)*



**WALLEYE**  
*(Stizostedion vitreum)*

Walleye and sauger fishing on the Illinois has improved considerably the past few years. In the spring the tailwaters of Starved Rock Dam may be crowded with boats of fishermen after their favorite sport and table fish. Many of the fish taken are sauger, which may range in weight up to 5 pounds (the state record sauger was 5 lbs. 12½ oz. taken from the Mississippi). The walleye are generally larger, and reports of 7-8 pounders come in each year. A common lure is a jig-minnow com-

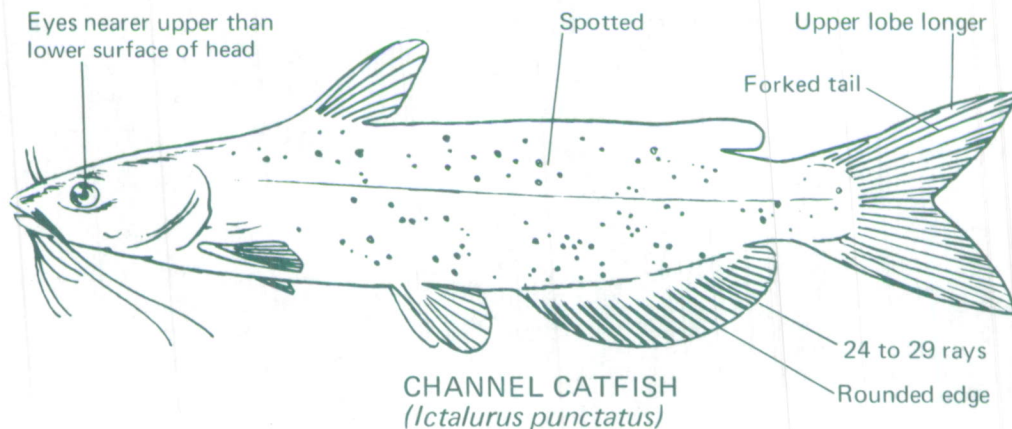
ination with the minnow hooked through the head and a weight attached via a three way swivel to fish the jig a foot or so off the bottom. Lead head jigs or minnows by themselves are also popular. The tailwaters can be fished through winter for walleye or sauger because the rough water keeps them free of ice cover. Reportedly the largest walleye are caught during winter and it takes the hardest anglers to fish for them.



FRESHWATER DRUM  
(*Aplodinotus grunniens*)

Drum (sheepshead, white perch, silver perch) seem to prefer areas with good current such as tailwaters and the main channel border. Worms, shrimp, or minnows are fished on the bottom over bars, mud flats, or off a gradual bank in areas with

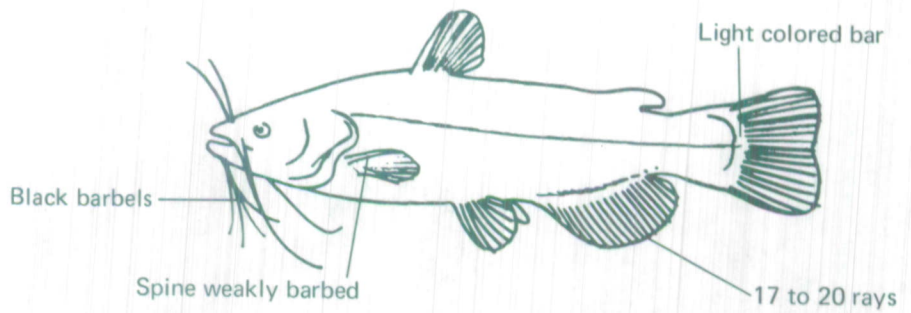
moderate to strong current. Although partial to current many drum are taken fishing on the bottom of larger lakes. They can also be caught on trotlines using natural bait. Spring and fall are the best seasons for drum.



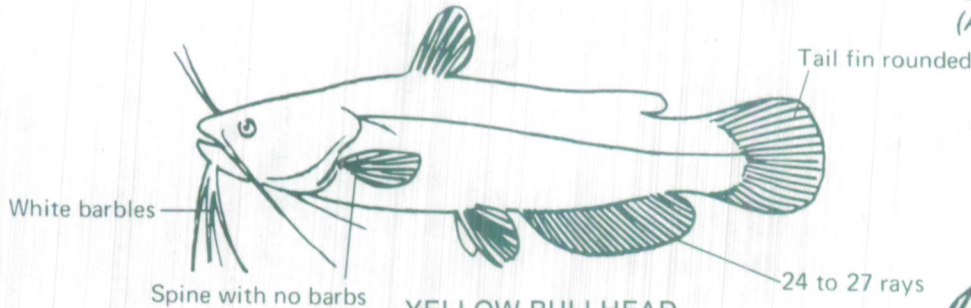
CHANNEL CATFISH  
(*Ictalurus punctatus*)

Catfish are the meat fish for many people who appreciate the occasional 10-15 pound channel or 20-30 pound flathead they catch along with the common 2-10 pounders. "Cats" like to hole up underneath old stumps, downstream of fallen trees, around log jams, and in washout holes along banks. Since these fish rely primarily on their olfactory sense to detect food, prepared baits with a strong odor are most effective. These include blood baits, cheese baits, and various homemade concoctions of an odor so rank that the fisherman can hardly handle them. Worms, liver, shrimp and an almost endless variety of goodies are successful at one time or another for catfish. The more solid prepared baits

can be balled around a treble hook and fished on the bottom with a tight line weighted by a sliding sinker. Pieces of sponge rubber are dipped in baits having a thinner consistency and placed on or before a hook. Around trees and log jams a bobber may be necessary to prevent loss of gear. Many catfish are taken on trotlines baited with crayfish or fish. If you're seeking flatheads use large hooks and big bait such as 6" carp on your trotline. Fishing picks up for catfish when it is slacking off for many species during the hot months of summer (July through September). Since sight (hence light) is not necessary for feeding catfish, some of the best fishing may be throughout the night.



**BLACK BULLHEAD**  
(*Ameiurus melas*)



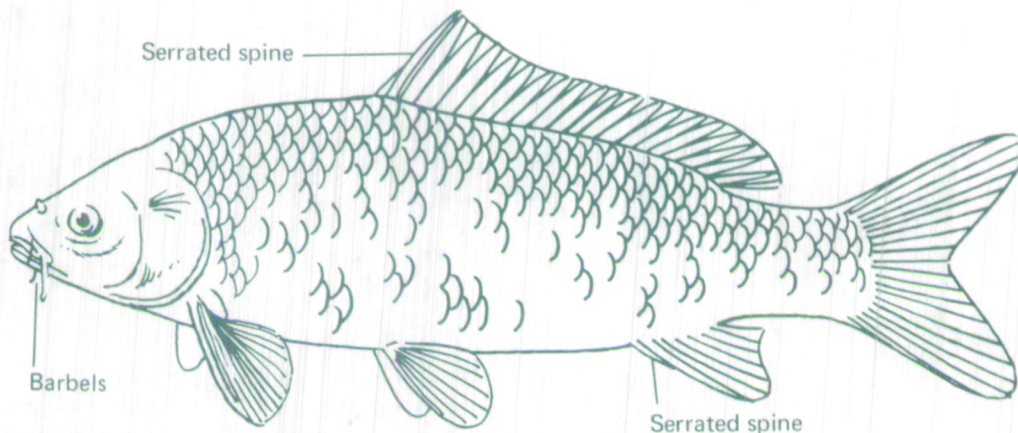
**YELLOW BULLHEAD**  
(*Ameiurus natalis*)



**BROWN BULLHEAD**  
(*Ameiurus nebulosus*)

Black, yellow and occasionally brown bullheads are found in the sloughs. Nightcrawlers are the most common bait, fished beneath a bobber or on the bottom without a bobber. Shrimp, grasshoppers, grubs, liver and prepared baits are among things

considered desirable by bullheads. As with their larger cousins bullheads will feed all night, tempting many fishermen to stay out until the wee hours of morning during the warm summer months.



**CARP**  
(*Cyprinus carpio*)

This discussion would not be complete without mentioning carp. Carp are not considered in the maps section, because they are so common that they can be caught almost anywhere. Their size and fighting strength are increasing the carps popularity every year. Next to the flathead catfish, carp are the largest fish regularly taken by anglers on the Illinois. Properly prepared, carp are a match for any fish in

palatability. So it is no wonder that more and more fishermen are actively seeking carp with worms, corn and doughballs among other baits. Doughballs can be made from flour, water, and a flaky breakfast cereal, which mixture is formed around a treble hook. Fish on the bottom or near the bottom with a bobber in shallow areas from May through October.



## SAFETY ON THE RIVER

A certain amount of respect for the river is only good judgment. Small boats are fine on quiet backwaters, but if a person intends to travel the side channels or main channel where he may encounter strong current, wakes from tows, or whitecap waves, a stable boat is needed. A wise person would use nothing smaller than a 14' jon boat or a 12' V bottom boat with a 5 or 6 horsepower motor to navigate the open river. Boats of this size and larger can still be easily swamped if overloaded or handled by an inexperienced or careless person. Here are some additional points to take note of:

1. pay *full* attention to navigation of your boat
2. stay well away from tows and large pleasure craft
3. watch for ripples on the water surface indicating underwater obstruction
4. wear life vests, at least while travelling to and from the place you fish
5. avoid the areas immediately below and above navigation dams — the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ask that you stay at least 100 yards downstream and 200 yards upstream of the dams.

Before operating a boat on any water of this state, a person should obtain and read the pamphlet on the boat registration and safety act. These are available from the Department of Natural Resources, Office of Law Enforcement, Lincoln Tower Plaza, 524 S. 2nd St., Springfield, Illinois 62701-1787.

## FISHING REGULATIONS

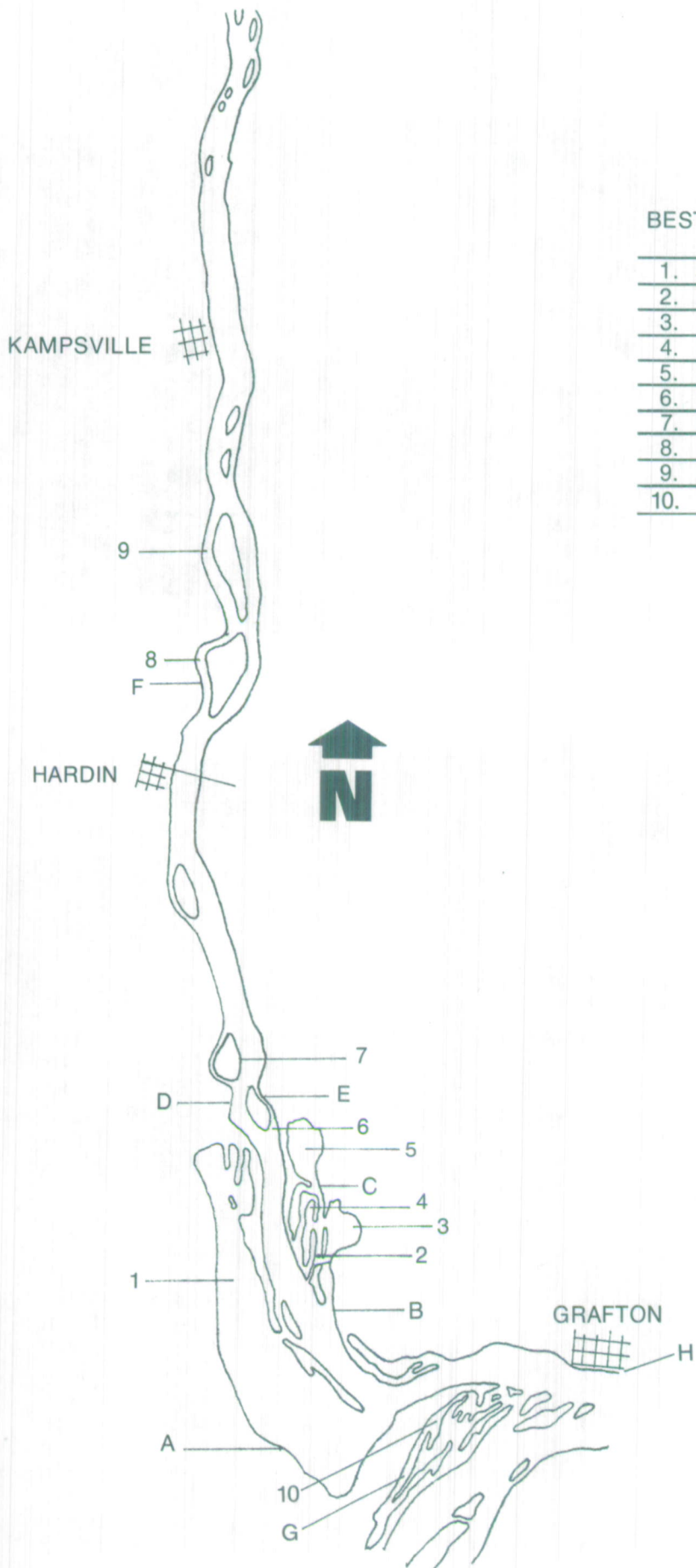
Copies of the current sport fishing regulations for the Illinois River may be obtained at local sporting goods dealers or by writing to: Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fisheries, Lincoln Tower Plaza, 524 S. 2nd St., Springfield, Illinois 62701-1787.

## ACCESS

In the following maps section some of the access areas available to the public are noted. Certain public areas and private areas open to the public are available only after paying a fee and such fees are usually posted. *Unless an area is known to be public or is posted as a public area, it should be assumed that it is private and permission from the owner is necessary to use that area.*

## SPECIFIC AREAS TO FISH

On the following maps areas have been marked that are known to have good sport fish populations. For each area marked and *numbered*, the sport fish most likely to be taken are checked in the box on the same page. It is realized that the areas marked represent only a portion of those occurring on the river, and as more fishing spots are discovered this guide will be updated. Access sites available to the public are *lettered* and listed in a second box with the basic facilities found at each site checked. No attempt was made to list all access sites, but only those nearest fishing areas marked on the map.



**BEST FISHING AREAS**

	Largemouth Bass	Bluegill	Crappie	White Bass	Catfish	Bullheads	Drum	Warmouth
1. Swan Lake		X	X					
2. Long Lake	X	X	X			X	X	X
3. Stump Lake	X	X						
4. Flat Lake	X	X	X			X		X
5. Fowler Lake		X				X	X	
6. Twelve Mi. Is.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
7. Hembold Is.			X		X		X	
8. Dark Chute	X	X	X		X			
9. Hurricane Is.	X	X	X		X			
10. Pohlman Slough	X	X		X				

**ACCESS AREAS**

	Ramp	Table	Toilet	Camp
A. Swan Lake	X			
B. Pere Marquette	X	X	X	X
C. Long Lake	X	X	X	
D. Hadley Ldg.	X	X	X	X
E. Glades	X	X	X	X
F. Godar-Diamond	X	X	X	X
G. Pohlman Slough	X	X	X	
H. Grafton	X		X	

LA GRANGE DAM

F  
5  
E  
4

MEREDOSIA

NAPLES

3  
C



2  
B  
FLORENCE

MONTEZUMA

BEDFORD

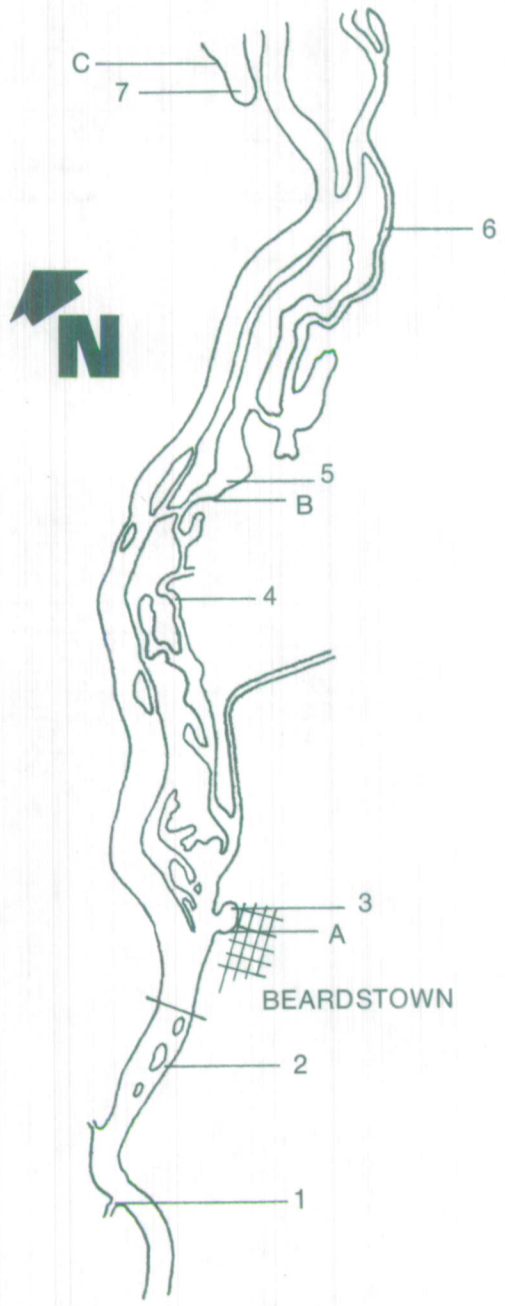
PEARL  
A  
1

BEST FISHING AREAS

	Largemouth Bass	Bluegill	Crappie	White Bass	Catfish	Drum	Warmouth	Smallmouth Bass
1. East Pearl	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
2. Big Blue Is.	X	X		X	X	X		
3. Naples		X			X			
4. Meredosia Lake	X	X	X			X	X	
5. LaGrange Dam	X	X	X	X		X		

ACCESS AREAS

	Ramp	Table	Toilet	Camp
A. Pearl	X		X	
B. Florence	X			
C. Naples	X		X	
D. Meredosia	X		X	
E. Meredosia Lake	X			
F. LaGrange Dam	X	X	X	X

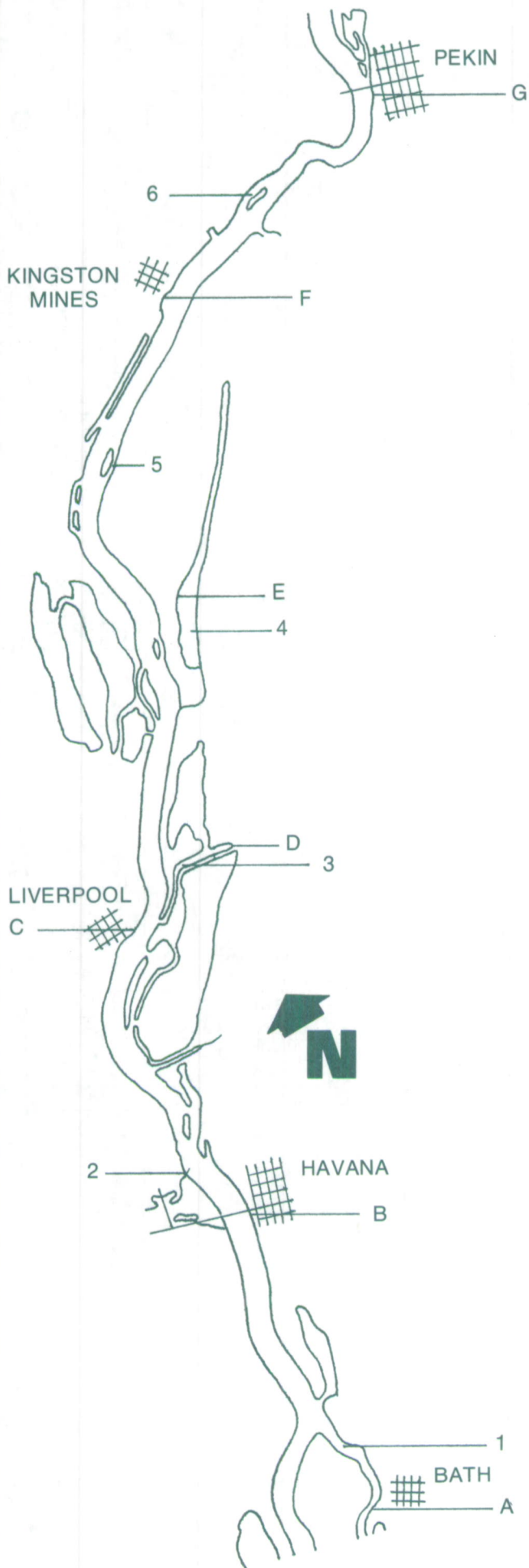


BEST FISHING AREAS

	Largemouth Bass	Bluegill	Crappie	White Bass	Catfish	Bullheads	Drum	Warmouth
1. LaMoine River		X	X	X	X		X	
2. Bar-Grape Is.				X	X			
3. Meyers Bay	X	X	X				X	X
4. Bach Slough		X	X			X		
5. Chain Lake	X	X	X					
6. Snicarte Slough	X	X	X					
7. Anderson Lake		X	X		X	X		

ACCESS AREAS

	Ramp	Table	Toilet	Camp
A. Beardstown	X	X	X	
B. Sanganois	X			
C. Anderson Lake	X	X	X	X

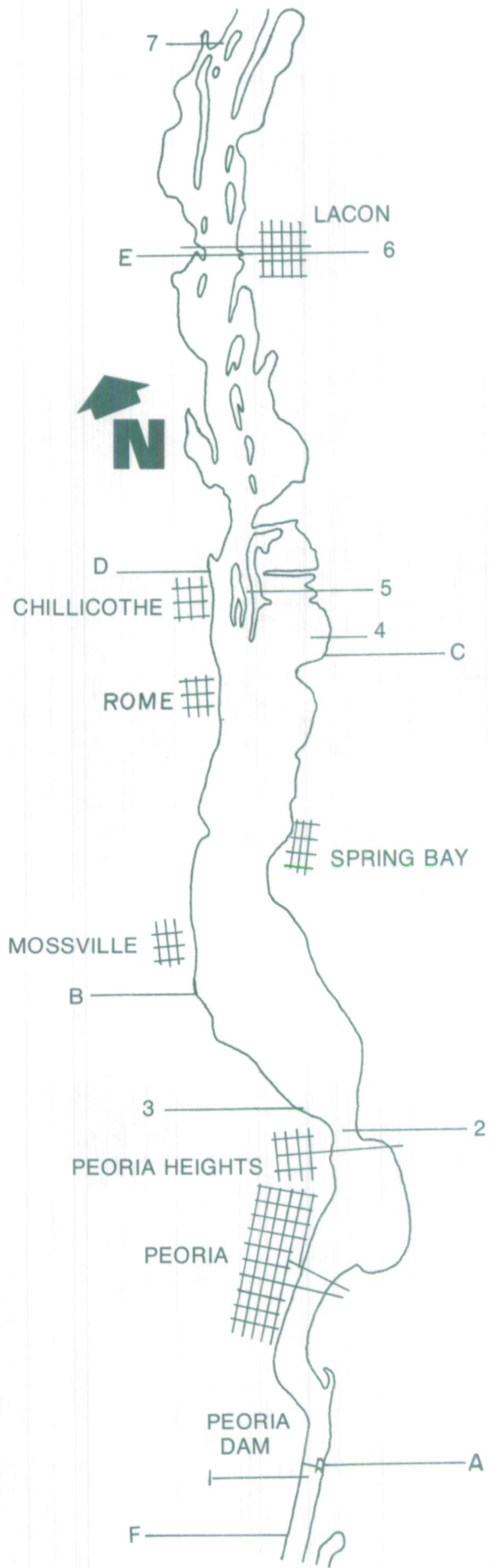


### BEST FISHING AREAS

	Largemouth Bass	Bluegill	Crappie	Catfish	Drum
1. Bath Chute		X	X	X	X
2. Spoon River	X	X	X	X	
3. Meyer's Ditch	X	X	X		X
4. Spring Lake	X	X	X		X
5. Coon Hollow Is.		X		X	
6. Turkey Is.	X	X	X		

### ACCESS AREAS

	Ramp	Table	Toilet	Camp
A. Bath	X			
B. Havana	X	X	X	
C. Liverpool	X	X		
D. Goofy Ridge				
E. Spring Lake	X	X	X	X
F. Kingston Ldg.	X			
G. Pekin	X			

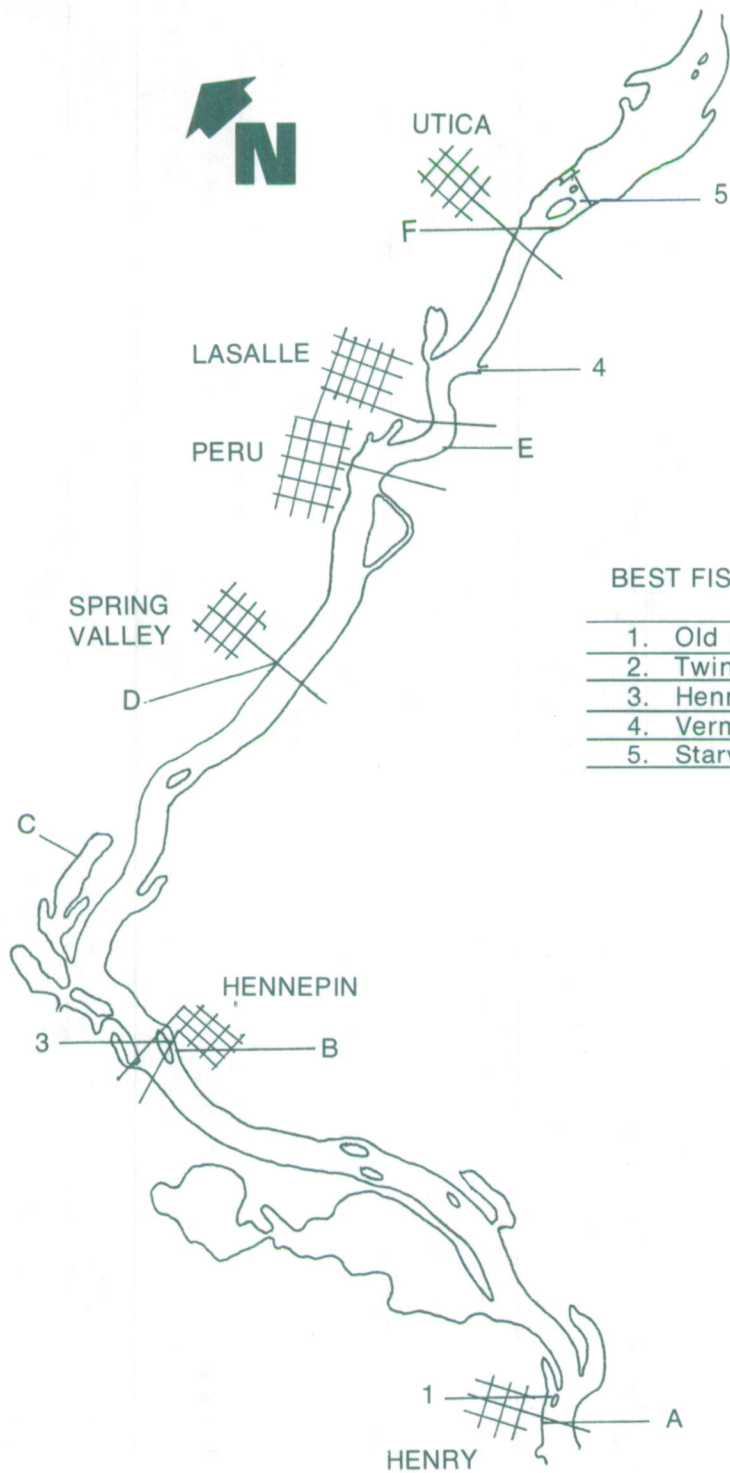


BEST FISHING AREAS

	Largemouth Bass	Bluegill	Crappie	White Bass	Catfish	Green Sunfish	Smallmouth Bass	Walleye - Sauger
1. Peoria Dam		X	X	X			X	X
2. Peoria Narrows	X			X	X	X		
3. Peoria Lake	X		X		X	X		X
4. Woodford Conv.	X	X	X			X		
5. East River	X	X	X		X	X		
6. Lacon Harbor	X	X	X			X		
7. Henry Is.	X		X					

ACCESS AREAS

	Ramp	Table	Toilet	Camp
A. Peoria Lock	X	X		
B. Detweiler Park	X		X	
C. Woodford	X	X	X	X
D. Chillicothe	X	X		
E. Lacon	X		X	
F. Bartonville	X			



**BEST FISHING AREAS**

	Largemouth Bass	Bluegill	Crappie	White Bass	Catfish	Drum	Green Sunfish	Smallmouth Bass	Walleye - Sauger
1. Old Henry Lock	X					X	X		
2. Twin Sisters Is.			X	X					
3. Hennepin	X	X			X				
4. Vermilion River			X	X					
5. Starved Rock Dam	X			X	X	X		X	X

**ACCESS AREAS**

	Ramp	Table	Toilet	Camp
A. Henry	X	X	X	
B. Hennepin	X	X	X	X
C. DePue	X	X		
D. Spring Valley	X	X	X	
E. Peru	X		X	
F. Starved Rock	X	X	X	X

DES PLAINES RIVER

KANKAKEE RIVER

DRESDEN ISLAND DAM



MORRIS

Largemouth Bass  
Crappie  
White Bass  
Catfish  
Bullheads  
Green Sunfish  
Yellow Bass  
Smallmouth Bass  
Walleye

BEST FISHING AREAS

1. Sheehan Is.		X	X		X	
2. Covel Creek				X	X	
3. Fox River			X		X	X
4. Marseilles Dam		X	X		X	X
5. Ballard Is.				X	X	
6. Dresden Dam	X		X			X

SENECA

MARSEILLES

MARSEILLES DAM

OTTAWA

ACCESS AREAS

	Ramp	Table	Toilet	Camp
A. Allen Park	X	X	X	X
B. Illini	X	X	X	X
C. Wm. G. Stratton	X	X	X	
D. Dresden Dam				



ILLINOIS



DEPARTMENT OF  
NATURAL  
RESOURCES

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources receives federal financial assistance and therefore must comply with federal anti-discrimination laws. In compliance with the Illinois Human Rights Act, the Illinois Constitution, Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended, and the U.S. Constitution, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age or disability. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility, please contact the Equal Employment Opportunity Officer, Department of Natural Resources, 524 S. Second St., Springfield, IL 62701-1787, (217) 782-7616 or the Office of Human Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. 20240.

Department of Natural Resources information is available to the hearing impaired by calling DNR's Telecommunications Device for the Deaf: (217) 782-9175. The Illinois Bell Relay Number is (800) 526-0844.

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1031403—20M—7-00  
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Governor