

Top Iowa Fishing Spots for the Week of March 3

March Fishing Podcast

This weekly fishing report is compiled from information gathered from local bait shops, angler creel surveys and county and state parks staff. You can check the activity of your favorite lake or stretch of river within each district, including which species are being caught, a rating of the bite (slow, fair, good or excellent), as well as a hot bait or lure pattern.

For current information, contact the district fisheries office at the phone number listed at the end of each district report.

- NORTHWEST
- NORTHEAST
- MISSISSIPPI RIVER
- SOUTHEAST
- SOUTHWEST

NORTHWEST

Black Hawk Lake

The winter aeration system in Town Bay is currently operating. Large areas are starting to open up; the top several inches of ice is rotten. Ice thickness is around 11 inches near the Ice House Point boat ramp; the top several inches is rotten. Use caution; avoid areas of thin ice and open water in the middle portion of the lake around Lakewood Point and the east basin. **Black Crappie** - Fair. **Bluegill** - Fair. **Yellow Perch** - Fair.

Brushy Creek Lake

Ice conditions are extremely variable and are unknown in many areas. Use caution; ice

will degrade fastest near shore and around trees.

Storm Lake (incl Little Storm Lake)

Ice thickness is around 12-15 inches; the top portion of ice is starting to get rotten due to recent warm temperatures. Ice conditions are variable; use caution and check the ice thickness often. There is open water near the big and little islands. All walleye between 19 and 25-inches must be immediately released unharmed at Storm Lake; no more than one walleye longer than 25-inches can be taken per day. **Walleye** - Fair. **White Bass** - Fair. **Yellow Perch** – Fair: Anglers are picking up fish; sorting is needed. Try minnows fished near the bottom. Most action has been at the east end of the lake.

Ice conditions on area lakes vary from poor to fair. **Ice fishing is not recommended on lakes in the southern part of the district**. Some anglers are still making their way out on the bigger lakes. Use caution; precipitation over the weekend will further degrade the ice. For more information, contact the Black Hawk District office at 712-657-2638.

Beeds Lake

Ice thickness is 14 to 16 inches. **Black Crappie** – Slow. **Bluegill** - Fair: Try a small jig tipped with waxworms. **Yellow Bass** – Slow.

Blue Pit

Ice thickness is 14 to 16 inches. **Rainbow Trout** - Fair: Try a bright colored jigging spoon tipped with spikes. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout. The daily bag limit is 5.

Clear Lake

Ice thickness is 0 to 20 inches. Use caution at access areas; conditions can change fast with the warm weather and rain forecast. Clear Lake has a protected slot on walleye. All walleye between 17 and 22 inches must be immediately released unharmed. No more than one walleye longer than 22 inches may be taken per day. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Try a minnow or jigging spoon near the edge of rushes. **Bluegill** - Fair: Use a small jig tipped with a waxworm or a plastic bait near the edge of rushes. **Walleye** – Good: Use a jigging spoon tipped with a minnow or cut bait in 8 to 10 feet of water. Best bite is after sunset. **Yellow Bass** - Slow: Try a small jig tipped with bait in 8 to 10 feet of water. You have to stay mobile to find fish. **Yellow Perch** - Good: Use a jigging spoon tipped with bait in vegetation.

Lake Cornelia

Ice thickness is 18 to 20 inches. **Yellow Bass** - Good: Small yellow bass are biting on a variety of baits.

Lower Pine Lake

Ice thickness is 12 to 14 inches. Ice conditions have been deteriorating with the warm weather this week. Use caution and check ice thickness as you go. **Bluegill** – Slow.

Rice Lake

Ice thickness is 0 to 20 inches. **Bluegill** – Slow: Use a small jig tipped with waxworms. **Walleye** – Slow. **Yellow Perch** – Fair: Try a small minnow near vegetation.

Upper Pine Lake

Ice thickness is 12 to 14 inches. Ice conditions have been deteriorating with the warm weather this week. Use caution and check ice thickness as you go. **Black Crappie** – Slow.

Aeration systems are running at Clear Lake, Crystal Lake, Rice Lake and Silver Lake. Avoid any open water areas. For information on the lakes and rivers in north central lowa, contact the Clear Lake Fish and Wildlife office at 641-357-3517.

Center Lake

Ice thickness is around 13 inches. **Caution**: The lake aeration system is currently in operation, creating a large open hole.

East Okoboji Lake

Most of the lake is fully iced with an average of 18+ inches of ice allowing for safe ATV traffic in most areas. Be cautious of the open holes and seams that still persist. Panfishing has been good out from the Ritz; some sorting is needed. Try heavy tungsten jigs, plastics and baits. **Black Crappie** - Fair. **Bluegill** – Fair: Try jigging with tube jigs or a tungsten jig and live bait. **Yellow Bass** - Good: With a little movement on the basin, you should be able find a decent bite and also catch a few other species.

Ingham Lake

Ice conditions very heavily around the lake; most areas have 16+ inches. **Caution**: The lake aeration system is currently in operation.

Lost Island Lake

Ice conditions vary with an average of 17+ inches. **Caution**: The aeration system is currently in operation on the east side of the lake out from the nature center. This creates a large open hole in the ice. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Lots of sorting may be needed.

Minnewashta Lake

Ice conditions are safe enough to venture with ATVs with an average ice thickness of 18+ inches. The panfish and crappie bite has been fairly good. **Black Crappie** - Fair: A nice crappie bite can be found with a little movement around the lake. **Bluegill** - Fair: Try jigging with tube jigs or a tungsten jig and live bait. **Pumpkinseed** - Fair.

Scharnberg Pond

Trout were stocked this winter; fish should be biting well. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout. **Brook Trout** - Good: Trout are biting on a variety of different baits. Try a worm or lure that imitates a minnow.

Silver Lake (Dickinson)

The lake has a large open hole along the eastern side, with an average ice thickness of 16+ inches. **Walleye** - Fair.

Spirit Lake

Ice thickness is 18+ inches in most places. There is a large open hole on the southwest side due to strong winds and a few days of warmer temperatures. The Marble Beach

access is in very poor condition due to ice heaving along the shoreline. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Mostly being caught along with perch; use tube jigs with wigglers or pilkies. **Bluegill** - Fair: Mostly being caught along with perch; use tube jigs with wigglers or pilkies. **Yellow Perch** - Fair.

West Okoboji Lake

Ice thickness is 18+ inches in most places; there still are a handful of seams usually running from points. Know where trouble areas are before you venture on or off the ice. Panfishing has slowed a bit; with a little movement on the north end near Triboji, Emerson and Smiths Bay you may be able to catch a good amount of fish. Try heavy tungsten jigs, plastics or baits. **Black Crappie** - Good: Try jigging with tube jigs or a tungsten jig and live bait. **Bluegill** - Good: Many anglers have been successful off Triboji on the north end of the lake. Try jigging with tube jigs or a tungsten jig and live bait.

The walleye season for the lowa Great Lake chain is closed. The season opens back up May 7th. Most area lakes have 16+ inches of ice. Ice conditions are relatively safe in most areas; access around many lakes has diminished Be sure you know a safe route on and off the ice. Bring safety essentials like flotation, ice picks and a friend. Area lakes have -2 inches of snow coverage. The forecast calls for highs above freezing most days. For current conditions, call the Spirit Lake District Office at 712-336-1840.

NORTHEAST

Cedar River (above Nashua)

Ice depths vary as snow melts and rivers begin to swell. Use caution when crossing areas with flow. Check ice thickness often. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Find off channel areas with woody structure. **Bluegill** - Fair: Try waxworms and spikes. **Walleye** – Fair: Use minnows under a slip bobber with enough weight to get your bait near the bottom.

Decorah District Streams

The 2022 trout stream stocking calendar is ready for download on our trout fishing website. Water levels are elevated and streams are off-color from snowmelt. Gravel roads are thawing. Use care when walking from site to site as ground conditions are highly variable from ice to mush. Brook Trout - Fair: Insect hatches are starting to take place on sunny afternoons. Use midge, minnow or scud patterns for fish looking to get more bang for their effort. Brown Trout - Fair: Melt water flowing into streams is bringing a fresh supply of foods for curious brownies. Try spinner or crankbaits near or around structure. Also try flies that look fishy. Rainbow Trout - Fair: Rainbow Trout are teasing anglers with soft strikes and nudges. Use small spinnerbaits, hair jigs or hooks tipped with imitation eggs floating past structure.

Lake Hendricks

Ice thickness is about 14 inches with about 2 inches melt water on top. Water clarity is excellent to 9 feet. Areas around the aerator remain open; use caution. **Black Crappie** -

Fair: Try fishing in the sharp drop-offs. Finicky crappies may bite as you slowly raise the lure. **Bluegill** - Fair: Use a small jig tipped with waxworm or spike fished near structure.

Lake Meyer

Ice thickness is about 18-20 inches with water sitting on top. Fewer anglers have been out. Fish activity has slowed. **Black Crappie** – Slow: Be prepared to change lures often to trick those educated fish. **Bluegill** – Slow: Catching all sizes of bluegills. Anglers with cameras see lots of fish looking at bait, but not biting. **Largemouth Bass** - Slow: A few nice-sized bass are finding their way into the creel.

Volga Lake

Ice thickness is about 12 inches with water on top. Use caution when going on ice. **Black Crappie** - Slow: Bright colored ice jigs tipped with a waxworm works well, especially for light biters. **Bluegill** - Slow: Find fish around brush piles about 1-2 feet off the bottom.

Excellent chance for rain this weekend with temperatures ranging from 30's to 50's. Ice depths on most waterbodies is 12+ inches with some melt water on top. Use caution when going on waterbodies; ice conditions can change fast. For current fishing information, please call the Chuck Gipp Decorah Fish Hatchery at 563-382-8324.

Alice Wyth Lake

Anglers are catching a few crappies; some sorting may be needed. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Find structure and use electronics to locate suspended fish. Use a small ice jig tipped with a waxworm or a minnow on a dead stick.

Brinker Lake

Anglers are catching crappie; some sorting may be needed. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Locate structure and use electronics to find suspended fish. Try a small ice jig tipped with a waxworm or a minnow on a dead stick.

George Wyth Lake

Anglers are catching crappie; some sorting may be needed. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Locate structure and use electronics to find suspended fish. Use a small ice jig tipped with a waxworm or a minnow on a dead stick.

Heritage Pond

Trout were stocked in the fall; some of these stocked trout remain in the lake. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout. **Rainbow Trout** - Slow: Try jigging flashy jigs with a blade to entice rainbow trout to take your lure or jig.

Manchester District Streams

Trout streams are in excellent condition. Very clear water conditions; use subtle presentations and approach fish from downstream. Sunday could provide some runoff on our streams which can often be beneficial in catching brown trout. **Brown Trout** – Fair. **Rainbow Trout** – Fair.

Martens Lake

Anglers are catching bluegill, crappie, northern pike, largemouth bass and some yellow perch. Move often to locate fish; spots are hit-and-miss. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Locate structure and use electronics to find suspended fish. Try a small ice jig tipped with a waxworm or a minnow on a dead stick. The few crappie being caught are quality-sized. **Bluegill** - Good: Best bite is evenings or early mornings with small presentations. Use a small ice jig tipped with a waxworm fished just off of the bottom. **Northern Pike** - Fair: Try fishing tip-up rigs with a live shiner or chub. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Anglers are catching some 9- to 11-inch perch. Try a waxy on a jig or a jigging rapala.

North Prairie Lake

Trout were stocked in the fall; some of these stocked trout remain in the lake. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout. **Rainbow Trout** - Slow: Try jigging flashy jigs with a blade to entice rainbow trout to take your lure or jig.

Ice thickness is 8+ inches on most lakes and ponds in east-central lowa, but will diminish fast with the extended forecast. Remain cautious while ice fishing; avoid areas with water current or discolored ice. Ice fishing is slow in and around the Cedar Falls/Waterloo area. Call area/local bait shops for the most up to date reports. Contact the Manchester Hatchery at 563-927-3276 for more information.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER

Mississippi River Pool 9

Lansing water level bumped up slightly over 8 feet. Ice conditions are changing daily. Use caution and avoid dark ice along shorelines and areas with current. **Bluegill** - Good: Ice anglers are drilling lots of holes and moving often to find bigger gills. Try a jig tipped with a waxworm in the weed edges of deeper backwaters. **Northern Pike** - Fair: The bite is picking up as pike start to feed to prepare for the March spawn. **White Crappie** - Good: The late ice crappie bite has picked up. Try minnows over woody structure in backwater lakes. **Yellow Perch** - Good: Late ice perch bite has picked up; fish are becoming more active pre-spawn.

Mississippi River Pool 10

Lynxville water level bumped up slightly over 614.3 feet. Ice conditions are changing daily. Use caution and avoid dark ice along shorelines and areas with current. **Bluegill** - **Bluegill** - Good: Ice anglers are drilling lots of holes and moving often to find bigger gills. Try a jig tipped with a waxworm in the weed edges of deeper backwaters. **Northern Pike** - Fair: The bite is picking up as pike start to feed to prepare for the March spawn. **White Crappie** - Fair: The late ice crappie bite has picked up. Try minnows over woody structure in backwater lakes. **Yellow Perch** - Good: Late ice fishing is picking up for perch on the pre-spawn bite.

Mississippi River Pool 11

Water levels in the tailwater have bumped up slightly to 6.2 feet. Ice conditions are

changing daily. Use caution and avoid dark ice along shorelines and areas with current. The Guttenberg ramp is still iced in, but rains may deteriorate conditions quickly. **Bluegill** - Good: Ice anglers are drilling lots of holes and moving often to find bigger gills. Try a jig tipped with a waxworm in the weed edges of deeper backwaters. **Northern Pike** - Fair: The bite is picking up as pike start to feed to prepare for the March spawn. **White Crappie** - Good: The late ice crappie bite has picked up. Try minnows over woody structure in backwater lakes. **Yellow Perch** - Good: Late ice perch bite has picked up; fish are becoming more active.

Upper Mississippi River levels are bumping up this week. Ice is breaking up in main channel areas. Use caution on ice along shorelines and areas of current. Walleye slot length limits now apply on the entire lowa border of the Mississippi River. All walleyes less than 15 inches long and between 20-27 inches must be immediately released. One walleye over 27 inches may be kept. Combined walleye/sauger daily limit 6/possession 12.

Mississippi River Pool 12

Water levels are 5.7 feet at the Lock and Dam and 8.3 feet at the railroad bridge. Water clarity is good. The water level is rising. Ice below the dam is starting to give way; boat ramps were still reported unusable. **Black Crappie** - No Report: Try using tip-downs in your favorite Pool 12 backwater. You may have to search a bit, but they can be caught. **Bluegill** - Slow: Poor catches have been reported; size has been small. Hopefully late ice will produce better results. **Sauger** - No Report: The ramps are iced in, but conditions are rapidly changing. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Expect to see more yellow perch; we have had excellent reproduction of yellow perch in the past few years.

Mississippi River Pool 13

The water level at the Bellevue Lock is rising at near 6.4 feet. The Bellevue Boat ramp is open. The viewing of bald eagles at the Bellevue Lock and Dam is spectacular as they are feeding on dead shad. Some eagles are on the move north; get out to see the show while you can. The city parking lot is an easy location to watch the action. Black Crappie - Good: Reports of nice catches of crappie. Use minnow rigs in 4 to 6 feet of water. Bluegill - Slow: Reports of slow winter fishing with brief periods of decent bites. Paddlefish - No Report: The Bellevue City Boat ramp is open; launching in the next few weeks will be subject to ice flows. Paddlefish season is underway; review all paddlefish rules before angling in lowa and Illinois waters. Rainbow Trout - Good: The kids' trout pond just north of the DNR station has been stocked with rainbow trout for the winter. You can only keep two trout per child. Sauger - No Report: The Bellevue City boat ramp is open; launching in the next few weeks will be subject to ice flows. Yellow Perch - No Report: Ice out catches of yellow perch are often found in the tailwaters. Late ice can be a prime time for larger yellow perch in the backwater areas.

Mississippi River Pool 14

The water level is rising at 5.0 feet at the Fulton Lock and Dam, 9.6 feet at Camanche and 4.5 feet at Le Claire. Water temperature is around 34 degrees in the main channel.

Water clarity is good. Ice conditions along the main channel are rapidly changing; the 25th Avenue ramp is open water all the way to the dam. **Black Crappie** - Good: Try tip-downs or other minnow rigs in Rock Creek or Cattail Slough by Fulton. **Bluegill** - Slow: Reports of spotty catches out of Rock Creek and Catfish Slough; most anglers report poor catches. **Paddlefish** - No Report: The Bellevue City Boat ramp is open; launching in the next few weeks will be subject to ice flows. Paddlefish season is underway; review all **paddlefish rules** before angling in lowa and Illinois waters. **Sauger** - No Report: Ramps are opening up soon; expect good conditions for early season sauger. **Yellow Perch** - No Report: Lots of small perch are in the system; the future looks bright for yellow perch fishing in Pool 14. The tailwaters can be a great early spot for perch when the ice recedes.

Mississippi River Pool 15

The water level at Rock Island is rising at 4.7 feet. The water temperature is near 35 degrees. Water clarity is good. **Bluegill** - No Report: Not a lot of backwater bluegill habitat exists on Pool 15 outside of marina areas.

Conditions are changing on the River; ice is starting to give way below the Locks and Dams. Ice fishing continues in backwaters; have a safety plan as ice recedes in these habitats. The main channel water is low and clear. If you have angling questions please call the Bellevue Fisheries Station at 563-880-8781.

Mississippi River Pool 16

Tailwater stage is 4.85 feet at Lock and Dam 15 in the Quad Cities and has been fairly steady. There has been some tailwater fishing for walleyes and saugers. **Unsafe ice conditions**. **Sauger** - Fair: Some saugers have been caught below the Lock and Dam in the Quad Cities. Use hair jigs and minnows or nightcrawlers; mostly small saugers have been caught.

Mississippi River Pool 17

Tailwater stage is 3.85 feet at Lock and Dam 16 in Muscatine and has been fairly steady. There has been some tailwater fishing for walleye and saugers. **Unsafe ice conditions. Sauger** - No Report: Look for saugers below the Lock and Dam. Try vertical jigging with minnows or crawlers. **Walleye** - Fair: Some anglers were out this past week. Try vertical jigging with minnows or crawlers.

Mississippi River Pool 18

Tailwater stage is 4.03 feet at Lock and Dam 17 at New Boston and has been steady. There has been some tailwater fishing for walleye and saugers. **Unsafe ice conditions**. **Sauger** - Fair: Try vertical jigging with minnows or crawlers. **Walleye** - Slow: Try vertical jigging with minnows or crawlers.

Mississippi River Pool 19

Tailwater stage is 1.79 feet at Lock and Dam 18 above Burlington and has been steady. We have not received any reports on tailwater fishing for walleye and sauger. **Unsafe ice conditions.**

There has been some tailwater fishing for walleyes and saugers below the Locks and Dams. **Unsafe ice conditions**. If you have questions on fishing Pools 16-19 contact the Fairport Fish Hatchery at 563-263-5062.

SOUTHEAST

Big Hollow Lake

Lots of slush and water on top of gray ice. Some open water areas.

Lake Belva Deer

Ice has turned gray with open water around the trees and the north side. Forecast weather doesn't look to improve ice conditions.

Lake Darling

Ice has turned gray with a good layer of slush and water on top; several open water areas along the shoreline. Ice conditions are getting worse every day.

Lost Grove Lake

Ice conditions are deteriorating fast; slush and water on the ice. Watch the edges - they are melting away from the shoreline.

For more information on the above lakes call the Lake Darling Fisheries Office at 319-694-2430.

Central Park Lake

lce thickness is about 12 inches. **Black Crappie** – Slow. **Bluegill** - Slow: Find fish on the bottom in the basin, not necessarily on structure. **Channel Catfish** – Slow. **Largemouth Bass** – Slow. **Redear Sunfish** – Slow.

Diamond Lake

Bluegill - Fair: Use jigs or waxies around brush piles. **White Crappie** - Fair: Most fish are 8 inches; a few bigger fish have been mixed in.

Iowa Lake (Iowa Co.)

Best bite is mornings and evenings. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Catch 8- to 11-inch crappie in deeper trees or in the basin in 16-18 feet of water. **Bluegill** - Fair: Catch 6- to 8-inch bluegill in trees or in the basin in 16-18 feet of water.

Lake Macbride

There is still about a foot of ice in most areas. **Black Crappie** - Slow: A few fish are being caught on minnows primarily at sunset. **Bluegill** - Fair: Try jigs or waxies fished near structure. Size is marginal at best. **Wiper (Hybrid Striped Bass)** - Slow.

Otter Creek Lake

The lake is drained for a restoration project.

Pleasant Creek Lake

Black Crappie - Slow. **Bluegill** - Fair: Smaller fish have been caught on any structure in 15 feet of water or less.

Union Grove Lake

The aeration system is on; there is open water near the dam area. Best bite is afternoon or evening. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Try fishing in the brush piles in 10-15 feet of water. **Bluegill** - Fair: Try fishing around brush in 10-15 feet of water. **Largemouth Bass** - Slow: Most fish are smaller.

Most lakes still have good ice; edges may start getting soft, especially on smaller bodies of water. Use caution and check ice thickness often when venturing out. For more information, contact the Lake Macbride Fisheries Station at 319-624-3615.

Hawthorn Lake

Ice condition is poor: warm weather has started to melt the ice around the shoreline.

Lake Miami

Warmer temperatures have deteriorated the ice.

Lake Miss (Tug Fork West)

Warm weather has caused the ice to be in poor condition.

Lake Sugema

Warm weather has deteriorated the ice. There are some open water areas.

Lake Wapello

Warm weather and wind have deteriorated the ice.

Rathbun Reservoir

The current lake level is 904.55 feet msl; 904 feet msl is recreation pool. Warmer weather and wind has deteriorated the ice and caused thin ice around the shoreline. Some areas of open water have developed. Lake Rathbun has zebra mussels; make sure you properly drain, clean and dry equipment before transporting to another waterbody. **Channel Catfish** - Slow: There is some open water around the bridge at Bridgeview that would allow for some early catfishing. Try dead chubs or shad sides.

Red Haw Lake

Warm weather has deteriorated the ice and has caused open water areas.

Ice conditions are poor; ice conditions have deteriorated with the warm weather. Contact the Rathbun Fish Hatchery at 641-647-2406 with questions about fishing in south central lowa.

Big Creek Lake

Ice conditions are changing rapidly; ice thickness is 12 inches. The quality of the ice has deteriorated from the previous week. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Target crappies in the early morning and evenings over brush piles and roadbeds in the middle part of the lake; use glow jigs with waxworms or live minnows. **Wiper (Hybrid Striped Bass)** - Fair: Catch wipers mid-lake over the creek channel with jigging spoons with minnows.

Des Moines River (Saylorville to Red Rock)

Walleye - Slow: The Des Moines River is open downstream of the Center Street dam. Catch walleye in March and April with twister tails, swimbaits or live minnows on jigs.

Central lowa ponds and lakes have a wide range of ice conditions from fair to poor. **Ice fishing is not recommended on small ponds.** For information on Central lowa lakes and rivers contact Ben Dodd at 641-891-3795 or Andy Otting at 515-204-5885.

Littlefield Lake

Ice fishing is not recommended.

Prairie Rose Lake

Ice fishing is not recommended.

Ice fishing is not recommended. For information on lakes in the Southwest District call the Cold Springs office at 712-769-2587.

Green Valley Lake

There is a large area of open water between the beach and campground.

Three Mile Lake

Open water reported along the shorelines and concrete boat ramps.

Twelve Mile Creek Lake

Open water along the shoreline and concrete boat ramps. Lots of open water on the south side of lake.

Ice conditions continue to deteriorate; **ice fishing is not recommended**. There is open water along shorelines, boat ramps, and other areas of Mount Ayr district lakes. For more information, call the Mount Ayr Fisheries office at 641-464-3108.

