

## LAKE SHELBYVILLE GENERAL FISHING & RECREATIONAL INFORMATION

Because of its size, beauty, variety of fish and proximity near large cities, Lake Shelbyville has become one of Illinois' popular summer recreation areas. Created in 1970 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the 11,100 acre reservoir, situated between Sullivan and Shelbyville in east-central Illinois, offers an excellent fishery from crappies and largemouth bass to walleyes and muskies.

Excellent facilities include three marinas and both private and government (state and federal) maintained and operated camp-grounds. It provides excellent playgrounds, swimming, beaches and similar attractions that make it popular with families.

Formed by a dam on the Kaskaskia River, Lake Shelbyville is situated between steep, rolling, wooded bluffs. The result has been a lake averaging about 19 feet deep with maximum depths of 67 feet. The lake is shaped like a lop-sided Y, lying in a southwest-northeast direction. The upper arms are formed by the West Okaw River to the north and the Kaskaskia to the east.

Since its 172 miles of shoreline is quite irregular, many bays and coves have been formed. This enables anglers to find a quiet spot even on windy days. The lake is about 20 miles long to the head from the dam and is about a mile across at its widest spot.

Several attractive islands are found north and east of the Bruce-Findlay Bridge. Their perimeters provide good fishing. Water depths drop quickly to 10-15 feet in the lower two-thirds of the lake. There is an abundance of creek channels, flooded plains and drop offs in this portion of the lake.

Extensive shallow flats, three to eight feet deep at normal pool, also provide good fisheries. They are found along Eagle Creek and Wolf Creek State Parks, Sand and Skull Creeks, the Findlay Marina area, the junction of the Okaw-Kaskaskia arms, northwest of the Wilborn Creek access area, Whitley Creek access area and the upper portions of the Kaskaskia arm east of the Fox Harbor Marina.

Many of the coves contain patches of flooded timber. In some areas the only openings are 100-foot wide boat clearings. There also are old roadbeds, numerous fence rows of trees and brush and similar structures, including man-made areas of rip rap.

Crappie fishing can be fantastic at times at Shelbyville with the best results occurring in May or early June when the fish go to the spawn beds. They can be caught at this time around brush, stumps and similar flooded areas in a foot to 12 feet of water. Jigs and small minnows produce most of these fish. In summer months, these tasty fish are taken in deeper water around areas like bridge pilings or creek channels.

Largemouth bass are probably the most popular at the lake. Many tournaments are held there during the year. Best spots in the spring for this species are shoreline stickups, rock rip rap or spawning areas; all of which lie near deep water. Points in deeper water produce well, as the water warms in the summer.

Two million walleye fry were stocked in 1971 as the lake filled, and since 1975 annual fry and fingerling stockings have been made to maintain a quality sport fishery for this species. Fish in excess of 14 pounds have been netted by

biologists in egg-taking operations, and many anglers feel this lake will produce the next state record. Twelve-pound walleyes are taken each year.

A few of these fish may spawn in the lake proper, but the major run occurs in the Kaskaskia River, and, to a lesser degree, the West Okaw River. The run usually begins in mid-March and lasts until mid-April. At this time, they can be caught in the rivers on minnows, jigs and small spinners.

The golden-sided fish then return to the main lake, for the most part, and are taken on flats, flooded ridge tops around the islands and around dropoffs. They seem to drop to deeper water, sometimes 10 to 20 feet, as the summer's heat arrives. A popular combination bait, then, is nightcrawlers attached to jigs.

White bass, which occasionally hit or surpass the two-pound mark, are perhaps the most exciting fish in the lake. They were introduced to the reservoir in 1971 and have done well. Thousands are caught annually, and when an angler catches one, he usually puts several dozen in the boat in a matter of minutes.

These fish usually spawn, beginning in late March, and run up tributary streams like the Kaskaskia River. This run may extend all the way up to Champaign County some years. "Stripes," as they often also are called, return to the lake after spawning and can be caught in deep water. They also, under ideal weather conditions, occasionally move onto shallow flats in May and early June, particularly after the first hatch of the gizzard shad. By mid-July, when the young shad school up and range near the surface, the white bass seek out schools of these bait fish and attack voraciously.

Anglers move on the outside edges of the boiling water and cast spoon-type or bright-bladed spinning lures in the direction of the commotion. Fishing, at times, can be fantastic. Anglers call this method of fishing as "castin' the jumps."

A relaxed bass or crappie fisherman also may receive the surprise of his life on Lake Shelbyville. Muskies there now have reached trophy size and could latch onto a small minnow or an artificial lure. These large predators first were stocked in 1978 as large fingerlings. Another release was made in 1980.

Channel catfish are very popular with Illinois fishermen, and the population at Shelbyville seems to be increasing yearly. They are sought both by trotliners and pole-and-line fishermen. A variety of baits are used from stink baits to shrimp, liver and leeches. Check with local bait shops to learn what they prefer during different times of the year.

Bluegills, bullheads, jumbo flathead catfish and carp also are taken by many anglers.

Lake Shelbyville offers a superb tailwater fishery below the dam. Winter and early spring fishing for walleyes has been very productive. Good catches of white bass and crappies also are made in spring.

If cold winters prevail, ice fishing sometimes is available. Crappies are probably the most abundant fish taken through the ice.

## Lake Shelbyville Profile

**Location:** Lake Shelbyville lies in Shelby and Moultrie Counties between Sullivan and Shelbyville in east-central Illinois, about 25 miles southeast of Decatur. The dam is located along Illinois Route 16 at Shelbyville. Access also is available from Route 32 on the east and 128 on the west.

**Facilities:** There are both private campgrounds and those operated by the state and federal agencies. Fifteen concrete launch ramps and parking lots are found around the lake at developed recreation areas. Additional launching facilities for small boats or canoes are located both in the Okaw and Kaskaskia River Wildlife management areas. These gravel ramps are utilized by fishermen during early spring when spawning runs of walleyes and white bass occur. Later in the summer, this area is a popular fishing spot for channel cat and carp.

Additional facilities at recreation spots include playgrounds, picnic tables, swimming beaches, dump stations, laundry facilities, fish cleaning stations and hiking trails. Three complete service marinas also are operated at various spots on the lake.

**Corps-Operated Campgrounds:** Four of the seven campgrounds (Coon Creek with 226 sites, Bo Wood with 84, Lithia Springs with 124 and Fox Harbor Marina with 180) offer both electrical hookups and shower facilities. No electricity but showers are available at Lone Point (85 sites) and Whitley Creek (76 sites) as well as day-use areas where swimming is available (Sullivan and the Dam West Area).

**State Park Campgrounds:** Two state parks, Eagle Creek on the west side and Wolf Creek on the eastern shore, virtually across from each other, are found on the central portion of the lake. Both facilities provide launching ramps, showers and electrical hookups.

Eagle Creek, situated three miles southeast of Findlay, consists of 2,200 acres and offers 150 campsites. There is a self-guiding nature trail and three hiking trails located within boundaries of the park. Wolf Creek is located eight miles northwest of Windsor and offers 378 tent and trailer camping sites. There also is a 15-mile equestrian trail and four hiking trails within the park.

**Private Campgrounds:** Additional camping is available at the following commercial operations: Arrowhead and Swings Camp-grounds, both one-half mile from the Lone Point access area; J & J Trading Post north of Coon Creek; Robin Hood Woods and Lithia Resort east of Shelbyville; the Horseshoe Campgrounds south of Shelbyville on the east side of the Kaskaskia River; Kaskaskia River Campgrounds south of Shelbyville on the east side of the Kaskaskia River.

**Marinas:** Three full-service marinas are available: Fox Harbor on the Kaskaskia River arm near Sullivan; Findlay, two miles east of Findlay, and Lithia Springs close to the dam which is situated one-half mile east of Shelbyville. These facilities offer boat and motor rentals, gas and oil, baits and tackle, boat dockage areas, snacks and some food and beverage and other grocery items.