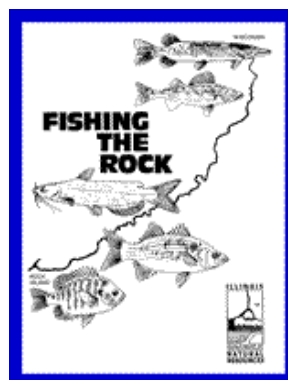


THE ROCK RIVER



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[CANOEING MAP](#) (752 kb)

The Rock River, which winds 155 miles through northwestern Illinois, is one of the main tributaries to the Mississippi River and provides a diverse fishery. An angler may tie into a sturgeon or northern pike along its route, but channel catfish are "kings" in this stream.

The river provides an aquatic resource of about 12,400 acres as it glides past towns like Rockford, Oregon, Dixon, Sterling and Rock Island before spilling into the Mississippi. Dams at Rock Island, Milan, Sterling, Dixon, Oregon, Rockford and Rockton produce fast, turbulent water, and these tailwaters are good spots for walleyes, sauger and white bass.

There is a scarcity of lake and slough habitats along the Rock, thus species like bluegills, bullheads, largemouth bass and crappies are not as abundant as some of the other sport fish. A relatively large portion of the Rock is main channel habitat, the deepest, swiftest part of a stream. This area is an excellent spot for channel catfish, the most abundant species in the river. Northern pike also are taken with early spring, being the best time to catch them. Northern reaches of the stream are best for this species, especially below dams and where tributaries enter.

The river generally averages about 15 feet in depth in the main channel, but between Dixon and Sterling, depths may drop to 50 feet.

The bottom is largely bed rock, but there are extensive gravel areas and some places where the bottom is covered with a layer of mud or silt.

From where it departs, Wisconsin to the mouth of the Kishwaukee River, the prime fishing spots are the dams at Rockton and Rockford and the tributary streams which include the Pecatonica River and Willow Creek. Ramps are located in the Forest Preserve at Rockton, at Harlem Road south of North Park and at Blackhawk Park south of Rockford. There is a small forest preserve just upstream on the south bank of the Kishwaukee.



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Pools where the Leaf River enters south of Byron is a good fishing spot as is the water above Oregon and at the dam there. Ramps are located at Byron and Lowden State Park at Oregon where there also is camping with electrical hookups.

Good channel catfish action is found north of Dixon around Pine Creek and the stretch of water downstream at the Dixon Dam and Fluck's Slough south of Dixon.

Ramps are available at Lowell Park on the west bank along Ill. Route 2 north of Dixon, at Page Park in Dixon and Oppold Marina north of Sterling.

From Sterling to Erie, the two dams at Sterling, Elkhorn back-waters about midway between Rock Falls and Lyndon and the Indian Island area south of Prophetstown are good fishing spots. Ramps are located in Sterling, Rock Falls, at a roadside park downstream along Route 2, at Prophetstown State Park where camping and electrical hookups are available, and at the Erie Boat Club.

There are a few access areas south of Erie, and anglers will find many small islands as the stream flows through low farmland. Fishing should pick up where the Green River enters below Green Rock.