



@ORC

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## Hooked on Fishing!

By Dan Stephenson, Fisheries Division

It's a solo sport. It's a team sport. It's a family and friends fun sporting event. It's FISHING!

Unfortunately, many Illinoisans, especially kids, do not have the resources or opportunity to experience fishing. This is especially true in urban areas. Studies show that most anglers under 35 years of age are not being introduced to fishing by their parents. And, as many as 20% of minorities who do not fish would like to but do not participate for various reasons. Studies show that kids are more likely to fish when they are adults if they experience fishing before reaching high school age.

### Illinois Urban Fishing Program

Next year, the state's Urban Fishing Program will celebrate 30 years of successfully reeling in new recruits to the sport of fishing.

Launched in 1985, the Illinois Urban Fishing Program began in the Chicago region and nine years later expanded state-wide. Emphasis is placed on youngsters 16 year of age or younger who live in urban areas, but the program welcomes anyone, any age, who is interested in acquiring basic fishing techniques.

Learning how to fish is fun, easy and free throughout Illinois thanks to IDNR's Urban Fishing Program. Each summer, thousands of kids and adults get an opportunity to experience the fun and excitement of fishing. Fishing clinic instructors present information on fish ethics, aquatic life, rules, regulations, and safety for fishing as well as basic instructions on tying a knot, baiting a hook, casting, important strategies on how to catch a fish as well as how to handle and return fish safely to water. As part of each clinic, participants are provided



**Dan Stephenson**, Assistant Chief, Fisheries Division. Dan started his career with IDNR in 1980 as a Life Science Career Trainee and has worked in many positions in Fisheries to where he is now. Part of Dan's responsibilities is to supervise the Statewide Urban fishing Program.

**Next Week:**  
**Heritage Division**

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with rods, reels, bait and tackle for 90 minutes of fun, catch-and-release fishing.

Most Urban Fishing clinics are provided by paid summer interns on weekdays, usually with morning and afternoon sessions throughout the summer. Many volunteers help out at various events throughout the year.

### The Numbers – FY 2013

- 33 sites where fish were stocked
- 9 locations in Chicago for fishing clinics
- 17 locations in Illinois (other than Chicago)
- 7 additional ponds stocked in Cook county
- 23,498 youngsters attended a fishing clinic
- 1,108 fishing clinics were held in the summer
- 22,200 pounds of channel catfish were stocked
- 120,512 hybrid sunfish were stocked
- 1,650 kids participated in fishing clinics at the IL State Fair
- 352 non-fishing educational programs
- 42,432 children and adults participated in the educational programs
- 27,500 people participated in “touch a fish” at the Illinois State Fair in 2013.

In addition, IDNR trained volunteers added to the numbers by :

- Conducting 246 fishing clinics and events
- Showing 16,092 children and adults how to fish



Youngster participating in the Urban Fishing Program



Urban fishing clinic instructor Sara Rauch helps Maggie Allen, 8, carefully hold a fish to release. Chris Young/The State Journal-Register

#### **URBAN FISHING PROGRAM:**

- Free Summer Fishing Clinics
- School Fishing and Non-fishing Education Programs
- Fishing and Education Programs at Scout and 4-H camps, City and State Parks, Church Camps, etc.
- Fishing clinic at the IL State Fair
- Fish Stocking, concentrated in urban areas, of catchable channel catfish and Hybrid sunfish



Stocking catchable channel catfish in an urban pond



Volunteers are a valuable asset for the Urban Fishing Program

The major objectives of the Urban Fishing Program include teaching kids to fish, stocking sufficient numbers of catchable-sized fish to maintain quality sport fishing for urban anglers, and introducing citizens to the outdoors and instilling an interest and appreciation for plants and animals.



*Herb Drier, retired Urban Fishing Program manager, helping a first-time fisherman take fish off the hook. Herb started the central Illinois Urban Fishing Program more than 20 years ago. Thank Herb!*

