

Early Summer Fishing Can Be Good In Ponds

First there's a splash and then rings of ripples move outward. Ponds and lakes become lively places in early summer as bluegills and bass chase bugs and minnows, a good thing for anglers. June and early July are good months to fish from shore in small waters. Insects, frogs and small fish are moving about in the shallows. Skillet-worthy fish are feeding on them and within casting distance.

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) manages many small impoundments to provide good fishing for those who fish from shore as well as with boats. Many areas also have docks or trails easily accessed by those who use wheelchairs or who have mobility challenges. Fishable waters are found close to home or within easy driving distance for those who enjoy daytrips.

For example, Pony Express Lake Conservation Area offers two lakes. This venerable area in DeKalb County west of Cameron has hosted anglers from the Kansas City and St. Joseph regions since the 1960s. The 245-acre Pony Express Lake opened to fishing in 1966, and MDC opened the 45-acre Buffalo Bill Lake in 1990. Building a lake is just a first step, though. Area managers monitor fish populations and lake conditions. For example, they sometimes add fish habitat such as underwater brush piles as lakes age.

"The best bets at Pony Express are probably channel catfish because they are regularly stocked," said Jerry Wiechman, an MDC fisheries management biologist, "and largemouth bass are found associated with brush piles and stumps."

Casting lures or bait to standing trees or brush piles is a good technique at any MDC lake, though fish may roam along any banks in early summer. In late summer they may move to deeper water with cooler temperatures.

The James A. Reed Memorial Wildlife Area is an old standby fishing destination in the Kansas City metro area with a history dating to the 1950s. Area managers keep the lakes fishy with improvements such as vegetation management or adding underwater habitat such as brush piles. The Reed Area has 11 fishable lakes and anglers might catch largemouth bass, channel catfish, crappie, bluegill, green sunfish, redear sunfish, and bullheads. Some lakes are stocked with striped bass hybrids, a powerful fish that can test your tackle when hooked. The Reed Area borders Lee's Summit and Greenwood in eastern Jackson County and the front entrance is on Southeast Ranson Road, almost a mile south of U.S. 50.

Both the Kansas City and northwest regions offer many other lakes and ponds open to the public for fishing. Some are at conservation areas. MDC also partners with cities and counties to manage community lakes for good fishing.

MDC's Find MO Fish application for mobile digital devices helps anglers find public fishing areas, locate maps for areas, check for services such as fishing docks or launch ramps, get fishing reports and buy permits. Check out the app at <http://mdc.mo.gov/mobile/mobile-apps/find-mo-fish>. Information is also available online at <http://www.mdc.mo.gov>. The conservation areas tab on the home page is a quick link to find a place to fish in your community. Whether you travel near or far to whet a line, June is a fine time to go fishing.