

# Central New Jersey Warmwater Game Fish



## Largemouth Bass

One of the most sought after freshwater fish nationwide, largemouth bass can be found in almost every New Jersey lake, pond, slow moving river or stream.

### Where

New Jersey has a wide variety of excellent habitat for largemouth bass including deep clear lakes, shallow stained lakes, lakes with aquatic vegetation, tidal freshwater rivers, and small park ponds. Assunpink Lake, Farrington Lake and Round Valley Reservoir offer excellent largemouth bass fishing opportunities.

### When

Bass move into shallows in spring and remain through early summer and in late September and October feed heavily in shallow water prior to winter.

### How

Largemouth bass bite a variety of baits and lures throughout the year. Crankbaits, jerkbaits, jigs, plastic worms and fish imitations, spinnerbaits, and topwater lures are extremely effective. Live shiners fished with a float during the spring and summer can produce some giants.



## Smallmouth Bass

Best known for their airborne leaps and sudden deep dives, smallmouth bass are one of the most exciting species to catch.

### Where

Smallies prefer cool, clear, swift rivers and cool, deep, rocky lakes. Manasquan Reservoir has an excellent smallmouth bass fishery as well as Round Valley Reservoir. Spruce Run Reservoir also provides some limited opportunities for anglers.

### When

The best time is spring through fall, with fall probably the best when smallmouth begin to school up and feed heavily before winter.

### How

Minnows, worms, crayfish, and hellgrammites are common live baits. Crawfish imitators including tubes and jigs work well in addition to the same lures used for largemouth bass.



## Chain Pickerel

Chain pickerel can be found in many largemouth bass waters where like bass, they prefer vegetative and woody cover.

### Where

Chain pickerel live in a wide range of habitats and are one of the few game fish that are able to tolerate the low pH (acidic) waters. The majority of the year pickerel can be located in shallow bays and near shorelines.

### When

Chain pickerel bite year round and are commonly sought by ice anglers. Spring and fall are excellent times to target chain pickerel since they prefer cooler water.

### How

Chain pickerel will eat almost anything that moves at times. Live bait such as killifish, minnows and shiners are great baits. Lures such as in line spinners, spinnerbaits, jerkbaits, plastic worms and topwater lures are tops. In shallow weedbeds use plastic jerkbaits such as the Slug-go, Fin-S, Flappin' Shad, and Zoom Fluke.



## Muskellunge

This largest member of the pike family is a highly prized sportfish for many anglers. Reaching over 4 feet in length, Jersey muskies grow to trophy proportions that rival fish from many of the best waters in the country.

### Where

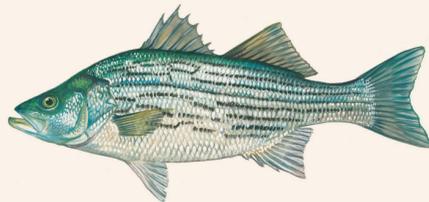
Central Jersey muskie waters include Manasquan Reservoir, D&R Canal and Mercer, Deal, Shenandoah and Carnegie Lakes. Muskies are generally a shallow-water fish, preferring areas of weeds, logs and other cover in both lake and river environments.

### When

Fishing is relatively consistent from late spring to mid-fall, with September and October considered two of the best months.

### How

Cast large, 5- to 9-inch, sucker or perch colored crankbaits and stick baits or 1/2 to 1 oz. bucktail spinners or spinnerbaits around available structure and edges of weed beds. Live baits such as large shiners and suckers are also popular.



## Striped Bass Hybrid

The striped bass hybrid is a cross between a white bass and a striped bass. The combined traits of these two species make it a hard hitting and strong fighting fish.

### Where

Manasquan and Spruce Run Reservoirs are two outstanding hybrid striped bass lakes. In Manasquan target primarily deeper areas of lake in warmer months. In Spruce Run, they are found in the top 10 feet of the water column during the summer. They will be located at more varied depth ranges in the fall and spring in both reservoirs.

### When

Summer is most productive for striped bass hybrids. Early morning and a couple of hours before sunset are prime times.

### How

Most popular techniques are drifting or anchored in a boat using herring or shiners with a weight or live-lined. Shoreline anglers fish night crawlers or chicken liver on bottom.



## Northern Pike

The northern pike is a very aggressive, hard fighting fish that prefers relatively shallow weedy areas of lakes and slow moving rivers. Although bony, their flesh is very tasty and makes excellent fish cakes.

### Where

Northern pike waters in central Jersey include Spruce Run Reservoir, Farrington Lake, Deal Lake and the Millstone River. Fish the pockets in weedy areas and along the weedline in lakes and around fallen trees and deeper holes in rivers.

### When

Best during the cooler seasons of spring, fall and winter. Pike feed entirely in daylight with morning considered to be the best fishing period.

### How

Large shiners fished on the bottom or with a bobber are effective in both lakes and rivers. A light wire leader is recommended when using live bait. Cast or trolled large spoons and spinners are also very effective.



## Channel Catfish

The largest member of the catfish family found in New Jersey, this nonnative grows to trophy proportions and is a popular food fish. It is found in the Delaware River and in over 70 waters stocked by the Division of Fish and Wildlife.

### Where

Usually found in clear, warm lakes and moderately large to large rivers over clean sand, gravel or rock-rubble bottoms. The Division stocks approximately 70 waters and many provide excellent fisheries.

### When

Early spring to early fall, with summer the most consistent period. Although channel catfish can be caught at any time of day, nighttime is the most productive.

### How

They feed mostly at night but can be caught anytime. The most productive method and baits are those described for brown bullheads.



## Brown Bullhead

This native catfish is found in numerous waterbodies, large and small, throughout the state. It is a bottom dweller and tolerates very warm water, and low oxygen levels.

### Where

Widely distributed in a variety of waters from small urban ponds to larger lakes and rivers. Good brown bullhead fishing opportunities can be found nearly everywhere.

### When

Can be caught at any time of day but most active at night. Summer evenings are the most popular time to fish for them.

### How

Fishing technique for bullheads is very simply a bottom rig consisting of a hook and sinker. Popular baits are night crawlers, chicken liver, cut fish and commercial stink and cheese baits.



## Crappie

Though two species of crappie are present in New Jersey (black and white), the black crappie is more widespread and sought after. Black crappies are excellent table fare. A schooling fish, crappie fishing can be fast paced when located.

### Where

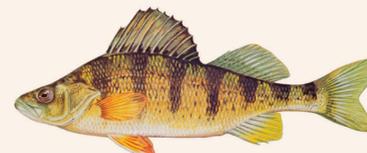
Crappies love structure! They have a tendency to school in open water, relating to stumps, standing timber and artificial structure such as brush piles. Assunpink Lake and Spruce Run Reservoir are popular locations among anglers.

### When

In early spring many fish move from the deep areas of a lake to shallow vegetated areas where spawning will occur. Crappies begin to move to slightly deeper, cooler water in early summer. Caught in greater numbers in the colder months with November and March being the two best months.

### How

Small plastic jigs or hair jigs in a variety of colors. Live bait, such as minnow, killifish, small shiners and worms, can improve catches. Crappies are not always on the bottom so the use of a bobber can be important. Small spinners also work well.



## Yellow Perch

Yellow perch are known for their excellent fight on light tackle and flavorful taste. Perch are one of the premier species targeted by ice anglers.

### Where

Lake anglers will find yellow perch around edges of aquatic vegetation and near stumps. Waters below spillways can produce good size perch.

### When

Yellow perch are active all year long, however the cooler months of September through May are best.

### How

Small minnows and worms on hook and sinker or bobber in shallow water. Small hair jigs, plastic tubes, twister tails and small spinners and minnow imitators work well.



## Carp

A member of the minnow family, carp are long-lived, hard fighters and grow to over 30 pounds.

### Where

Can be found in almost every reservoir, lake, pond, river or stream in New Jersey. D & R Canal, Raritan River and Spruce Run Reservoirs are popular among carp anglers.

### When

Spring and summer are the most productive times for catching carp by rod and reel.

### How

Use kernels of nibblet corn or dough balls (find recipes on Internet) rigged on a single bronzed #8-#14 bait holder hook on fish-finder style rig with the least amount of weight possible.



## Sunfish

The sunfish is one of the most widespread and abundant freshwater fish in New Jersey. The most commonly sought species are bluegill, pumpkinseed and redbreast sunfish.

### Where

Sunfish are found in most freshwaters throughout the state. Good populations of bluegill and pumpkinseed can be found in municipal, county and state park ponds and lakes.

### When

The months of May through October are most productive when water temperatures are between 60-80 degrees.

### How

The most popular method is hook and bobber with worms or grubs. Any department store or sports shop has inexpensive rod and reel combos, tackle and bait needed to catch sunfish.

