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2014 Early Trout Season Forecast by County

ADAMS COUNTY

Campbell Creek – A 2013 brown trout survey showed that brown trout are very abundant (972 fish per mile) compared to other trout fisheries in Adams County. The average size was 7.8 inches and largest fish caught was 14.2 inches. Of the fish that were of at least stock length (6 inches), 3 percent were at least of quality size (12 inches). Of the fish caught, 60 percent were equal to or greater than 7 inches (minimum length limit). Access information: Anglers have access to Campbell Creek through State owned land (Remnant Campbell Creek Fishery Area) off of County Highway A. Trout habitat work was completed in 2010 downstream of County Highway A. – Jennifer Bergman, fisheries biologist, Wisconsin Rapids

BARRON COUNTY

Brill River - There are three miles of stream near the village of Brill that are considered trout water and are home to a respectable brown trout population with good size structure. The electrofishing catch rate during the 2013 survey was 510 fish per mile, which is good for the area. The Brill River has the potential to grow some larger brown trout. In 2013, 30 percent of the fish measured were 10 inches or larger, with the largest fish 17.5 inches. Access information: Anglers can access the Brill River from the stream crossings at 29th Ave, County Highway V, 27 ½ Ave, and 26th Ave. – Aaron Cole, fisheries biologist, Barron

BUFFALO COUNTY

Area Trout Streams Buffalo, Jackson and Trempealeau counties - 2013 surveys found very fishable populations throughout our management area. Future monitoring will gauge further impact to our trout populations of drought conditions in summer and fall of 2013. Supplemental trout stocking from DNR and cooperative hatcheries may bolster the negative effects of last year's drought. Habitat restoration projects in 2013 improved stream conditions and angler access in Waumandee and Danuser creeks (Buffalo County), and North Branch Elk and North Branch Beaver creeks (Trempealeau County).- Dan Hatleli, Black River Falls

COLUMBIA COUNTY

Spring Creek (Lodi), Columbia County - Trout surveys along the length of Spring Creek in Columbia County produced brown trout electrofishing catch rates ranging from 175 to 1,426 per mile. The highest trout density was found in the segment running through Goeres Park in the City of Lodi behind the ball diamonds, including 125 brown trout per mile larger than 12 inches. The best chance for brown trout larger than 15 inches exists downstream from the second Highway 113 bridge crossing between the City of Lodi and Lake Wisconsin. Access to the creek is offered there through Spring Creek Fishery Area. Access information: Access to the fishable portion of Spring Creek is available primarily through Spring Creek Fishery Area, managed by the DNR. Good access is also available in Goeres Park, managed by the City of Lodi. Also, Bohlman Branch Creek on the east side of Lodi is part of Spring Creek Fishery Area, and provides public access to a mixed brook and brown trout fishery.

Rowan Creek runs through the village of Poynette and offers the best combination of easy public access and a quality brown trout fishery (2,000 trout per mile) in Columbia County. For the easiest access to water that is fishable both from the banks and by wading the stream, anglers might try Rowan Creek Fishery Area, specifically the access off of East Street, south of Tomlinson Road on the east side of Poynette. Stream banks will be snow covered, but the stream corridor was cleared of trees and brush in 2011, and the lack of recent runoff events has Rowan Creek running at base flow levels which makes for easy wading. - Nate Nye, fisheries biologist, Poynette

DANE COUNTY

Black Earth Creek - A legendary stream, Black Earth Creek rightfully earns its status as a premiere trout destination, regionally, statewide, and in the Upper Midwest. Surveyed annually, the 2013 assessment showed consistent good numbers of legal trout 9 inches and over. In the lower stream reaches, excellent numbers of fish over 14 inches exist. We sampled fish in excess of 20 inches in the Black Earth segment. Access information: DNR holds a minimum of 10 individually accessible parcels along the creek. These properties are mowed on a semi-annual basis to allow angler access and freedom of movement along the stream corridor. Specific maps can be found at : <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/fishing/anglereducation/wheretofish.html> An exotic invasive, the NEW ZEALAND MUD SNAIL, was sampled from the creek and anglers, specifically muddy waders and footwear, can spread the invasive to other streams. Anglers are advised to clean their gear before fishing other waters.

Beside the iconic Black Earth and Mount Vernon creeks, anglers enjoy many miles of recent habitat and access improvement in Southwestern Dane county: Kittleson Creek, West Branch Sugar River, German valley and Big Spring tributaries to the Gordon System all hold strong populations with good densities of quality sized fish. Maps showing public ownership and access can be found at the DNR <http://dnr.wi.gov/water/troutlist.aspx?code=dane> and Dane county site: <https://www.countyofdane.com/lwrparks/fishing.aspx>

Remember to take pictures and keep a fishing diary. Early season trout fishing provides for many good memories !

GREEN COUNTY

For those who are willing to walk, Story Creek offers the lure of big fish, quiet, and solitude. Story Creek flows through the Brooklyn Wildlife Area and offers a more wild fishing experience. The creek lends itself best to bait and spinner fishing as dense streambank vegetation can make flycasting difficult. Due to its relative remote character, Story holds some truly large and robust browns. Fortunate anglers may also catch brook trout in the upper stretches above the county line. The stream below Highway 92 is easily wadeable and holds nice fish under the overhanging dogwood and elderberry that commonly line the bank. Access: Walk in accesses from Bellbrook Road on the north, Tipperary and Alpine roads on the east property boundary, State Highway 92 (the county line), and County Highway X on the downstream portion, western edge of the state ownership. – Kurt Welke, fisheries biologist, Fitchburg

DUNN, EAU CLAIRE COUNTIES

Trout Streams in the Eau Claire Area, Eau Claire, Chippewa, Dunn and Pepin counties - The combination of the 2012 drought as well as the long hard winter and late spring in 2013 seem to have impacted many class 2 trout streams in the Eau Claire Area. These streams, which depend on stocking to provide good fishing, have been providing very nice trout populations the past decade but densities of trout are down considerably at this time. Some examples of those streams are Bear, Arkansaw, Lower Plum and Lowes Creek. The good news is many of the Class 1 trout streams in the area which are not stocked and sustain themselves via natural reproduction seem to be holding their own with trout abundance in the 1,500-6,000 fish per mile range. Elk, Duncan, McCann and Hay creeks are the top Class I waters in the Eau Claire area. Each of these streams has a state fishery area present and public access is common to abundant. – Heath Benike, fisheries biologist, Eau Claire

FOND DU LAC COUNTY

Parsons Creek is a Class 2 brook trout stream and offers excellent public access via a Fond du Lac county park. Located about three miles south of Fond du Lac at N4197 Hickory Road, Hobbs Woods is a 60-acre county park devoted to hiking and nature study. Most of the park is thickly wooded, but several acres of prairie, planted in 1979-80, are coming along well. Parsons Creek carves a large ravine through the park, and harbors some naturally reproducing brook trout. About three miles of nature trails, which are keyed to a self-guiding brochure, wind through the park. – Travis Motl, fisheries biologist, Plymouth

GRANT COUNTY

Little Grant River - The Little Grant River supports a good population of brown trout. Recent surveys sampled 355 yearling and adult brown trout ranging from 6.5 to 18.3 inches with an average size of 9.5 inches. Thirteen percent of the brown trout sampled were 12 inches or greater. Access information: Access is walk in only. Public fishing easements starts 0.5 miles downstream of Badger Road and extends upstream for 2.8 miles upstream ending at Milner Road.- Bradd Sims, fisheries biologist, Dodgeville

GRANT, IOWA AND RICHLAND COUNTIES

The number of brown trout in the streams continues to be outstanding including a large number of quality fish and some memorable-size fish as well. There are some good brook trout fisheries in the far upper ends of some of the better streams but this really is not a brook trout area. The majority of these streams are now Class 1 naturally reproducing fisheries. Access information: There are a couple hundred miles of fishing easements on the streams. Use the DNR Managed Lands on the Internet to find these areas. If you fish trout out here now you will be able to say that you fish in what are the "Good Old Days." – Gene Van Dyck, fisheries biologist, Dodgeville

IRON COUNTY

Trout anglers seeking early season fishing opportunities in Iron and Ashland counties should try the larger stream systems nearby State Highway 77 between the Towns of Cayuga (central Ashland County) and Upson (North central Iron County) for the best accessibility. Those anglers willing to get off the beaten path for an adventure should look at some of the streams within the Chequamegon National Forest.- Lawrence Eslinger, fisheries biologist, Mercer

LA CROSSE, MONROE, VERNON, CRAWFORD COUNTIES

The upcoming catch and release trout season looks to be an interesting one. As snow continues to fall, access to area streams becomes more difficult, however for those willing to brave the elements a great bounty awaits. Class 1 streams like Timber and Rullands Coulee, Tainter Creek, and the West fork of the Kickapoo are teeming with trout. These streams also have large expanses of easement along the banks, ensuring public shoreline access for anglers. Lesser known waters like Richland Creek, Little La Crosse River, Dutch Creek and Mormon Coulee should also be explored. Trout anglers who haven't fished this area should definitely put it on their "bucket list" as trout populations in many streams are on the rise. Several good year classes of fish are available for the hardy angler. As the weather warms and snow melts fishing action should increase. In this area, the rule of thumb is: if there's water, there's trout! – Jordan Weeks, fisheries biologist, La Crosse

ST. CROIX COUNTY

Kinnickinnic River, St. Croix and Pierce counties - 2013 electrofishing surveys show the majority of Kinnickinnic River brown trout population ranks consistently above the 95 percentile for overall trout density and quality (12 inches and greater) in the state. Access information: Numerous access points are found within the Kinnickinnic River Fishery Area which lies upstream of the City of River Falls and along State Highway 65. Access downstream of River Falls is primarily limited to Glen Park in the City of River Falls and County Highway F in Kinnickinnic River State Park. – Marty Engel, fisheries biologist, Baldwin

SAUK COUNTY

Honey Creek – This creek offers anglers access to 1.3 miles of stream bank via easement along State Highway 23 north of the village of Plain. Anglers can park in designated parking areas to access the stream, located just east of Hwy. 23 on Leland Rd., Hickory Road, and Valley View Road. This is Class II brown trout water, supporting about 1,500 trout per mile. Parking areas are immediately adjacent to Honey Creek, which is experiencing base flow conditions following a winter with no major runoff events. – Nate Nye, fisheries biologist, Poynette

SAWYER COUNTY

Namekagon River basin in Sawyer and Bayfield counties - A trout fishing paradise, no matter what kind of experience anglers are looking for. The main river from Hayward to Lake Namekagon is premiere brown trout water that consistently produces 20-inch fish. Access points are abundant and the river is great for wade fishing or floating. The adventuresome angler may be interested in exploring some of the coldwater tributaries and springs that feed the Namekagon to hunt big brook trout. Cap Creek, Big Brook, Mosquito Brook, and McDermott Creek all hold high density brook trout populations. – Max Wolter, fisheries biologist, Hayward

SHEBOYGAN COUNTY

Onion River and its tributaries - Onion River is a quality Class I brown trout stream that has many stretches of habitat improvement. State owned property is located within three townships: Plymouth, Lyndon and Mitchell, less than three miles west of the city of Plymouth and less than two miles northwest of the village of Waldo. This property is bordered by County Highway Z to the north and county highways U and N to the south. It is located within minutes of the Kettle Moraine State Forest – Northern Unit. Within the project boundary flows about 9.5 miles of stream from the Onion River, Ben Nutt Creek and Mill Creek. The most popular access is from the bridge crossing at County Highway E, there are also a number of parking areas along County Highway U. Two significant headwater properties, Kamrath and Silver Springs (former fish hatcheries), were acquired with the assistance of Windway Capital Corporation and purchased with Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program funds in 2000 and 2001. Major restoration projects were accomplished on these properties with funds acquired from the Great Lakes Protection Fund and the Trout Stamp program. These properties now offer a unique outdoor experience with scenic views of trout spawning and nursery areas. 2013 surveys yielded an average length of 8.5 inches, with a maximum length of 15 inches. We saw catch rates of up to 992 fish per mile which puts it around the 87th percentile when compared with other all other brown trout waters statewide.

Nichols Creek is a Class 1 Trout Stream with naturally producing brook and brown trout. The Nichols Creek Wildlife Area is a 651-acre property located in the southwest portion of Sheboygan County about 4-miles southwest of Plymouth and just northwest of the Village of Cascade. The main access is a parking area located along County Highway N about 2 miles west of County Highway E. The property includes several coldwater seeps and spring runs which combine to form Nichols Creek. The creek becomes the North Branch of the Milwaukee River before flowing off of the property at the southeast corner. The Wisconsin Wetlands Association has designated the properties complex of coniferous swamps, sedge meadows, seeps, spring runs and the waters of Nichols Creek and the North Branch of the Milwaukee River as a “Wetland Gem.” This portion of the North Branch has also been recognized by the State as an “Outstanding Resource Water.” Waters designated as such are surface waters which provide outstanding recreational opportunities, support valuable fisheries and wildlife habitat, have good water quality, and are not significantly impacted by human activities. - Travis Motl, fisheries biologist, Plymouth

WAUKESHA COUNTY

Waukesha County continues to provide quality early season trout fishing opportunities close to the Milwaukee metro area.

Rosenow Creek - A recent stream shocking survey revealed brook trout up to 11 inches. Access information: Access can be found at the Oconomowoc high school property off of North Lapham Street. This small cold-water stream has consistent natural reproduction of brook trout providing good action.

Mason Creek - Located near the North Lake area, Mason Creek has good abundance of brook trout with excellent size structure. Access can be found near Hwy 83 just north of the Oconomowoc River crossing.

Genesee Creek - Recent stream shocking surveys revealed Genesee Creek continue to support healthy, naturally reproducing populations of brown trout. Genesee Creek can be accessed off of Hwy 59, Old Village road or Hwy 83 near the town of Genesee located west of Waukesha.– Ben Heussner, fisheries biologist, Eagle

WAUPACA COUNTY

Waupaca River - In the special regulation section of the Waupaca River, recent surveys indicate wild trout populations have been holding steady with electrofishing catch rates of large (>15 inch trout) above 25 per mile. Anglers fishing this section of water have a very good chance of catching a trophy-sized brown trout. Access information: Riverview and Riverside Park in the City of Waupaca have great access. A fishing trail for physically challenged anglers is located upstream of the Water Street bridge that has a hard service for easy access and several spurs to access the stream. The Waupaca River Fishery Area is comprised of DNR managed lands off County Hwy Q. The downstream reach of trout water on the Waupaca River is managed primarily as a put and take fishery with annual stocking of harvestable sized brown and rainbow trout. Anglers looking for good action early in the season may want to try this water. – Al Niebur, fisheries biologist, Shawano

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