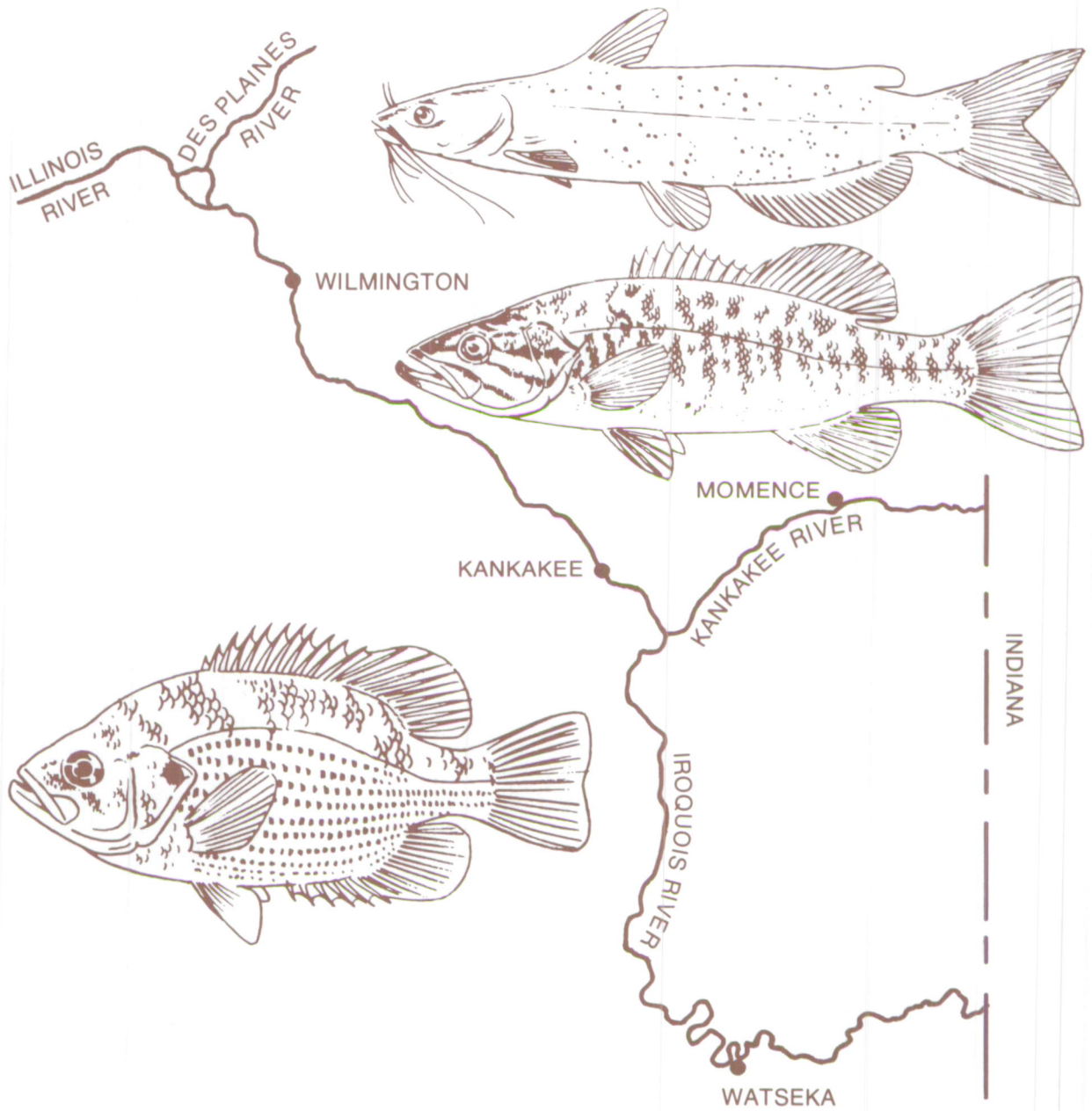


FISHING THE KANKAKEE AND THE IROQUOIS



Illinois
Department of
Natural Resources



ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF FISHERIES

FISHING THE KANKAKEE AND THE IROQUOIS

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Revised May, 1996

INTRODUCTION

The scenic Kankakee River and its primary tributary, the Iroquois, are streams offering excellent fishing opportunities in a section of the state where fishing areas are in high demand. Good populations of smallmouth bass, walleye, northern, rock bass, channel catfish and crappie are found in the system. Although public access is in short supply on the Iroquois, the fishery of this stream is of such quality that fishing may be good wherever access is attained. The value of this river system to the fishing public can hardly be overstated.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SYSTEM

The Kankakee River System has a watershed of 5,280 square miles of which 3,125 are in Indiana and 2,155 are in Illinois. The Illinois portion of the watershed comprises nearly all of Kankakee and Iroquois counties, about half of Will County and small parts of Grundy, Vermilion and Ford counties.

The Kankakee-Iroquois River System contains a rich assemblage of some 72 different species of fish. A very fine, diversified sport fishery composed of: smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, rockbass, walleye, northern pike, crappie, bluegill and channel catfish exist within the basin. Unusual species such as the ironcolor shiner, weed shiner, lake chubsucker, starhead topminnow, northern longear sunfish, least darter and the rare river redhorse and blacknose shiner occur within the system.

The Kankakee River rises in St. Joseph County, near South Bend, Indiana, a few miles south of the

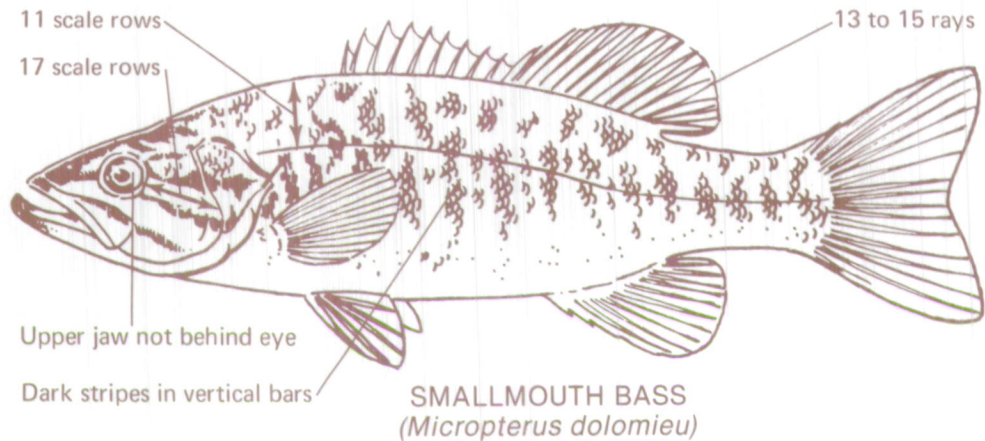
Michigan State Line. The Kankakee flows south westerly 121 miles to Aroma Park, Illinois, where it is joined by its largest tributary, the Iroquois River. The Kankakee then flows northwesterly for 38 miles to its junction with the Des Plaines River where the two form the headwaters of the Illinois River.

The Kankakee is predominatnly a clear shallow stream with gravel-rubble riffles, sand-bottom pools and swampy-marshy areas along the upper portion. Larger pools are formed by the Momence, Kankakee and Wilmington dams and by the Dresden lock and dam on the headwaters of the Illinois River. The Kankakee provides an aquatic resources of some 3,338 acres.

The 94 mile long Iroquois River has its origin in Jasper County, southwest of San Pierre, Indiana. From south of San Pierre the river flows southwesterly to Watseka, Illinois, where it turns abruptly northward towards its union with the Kankakee River at Aroma Park.

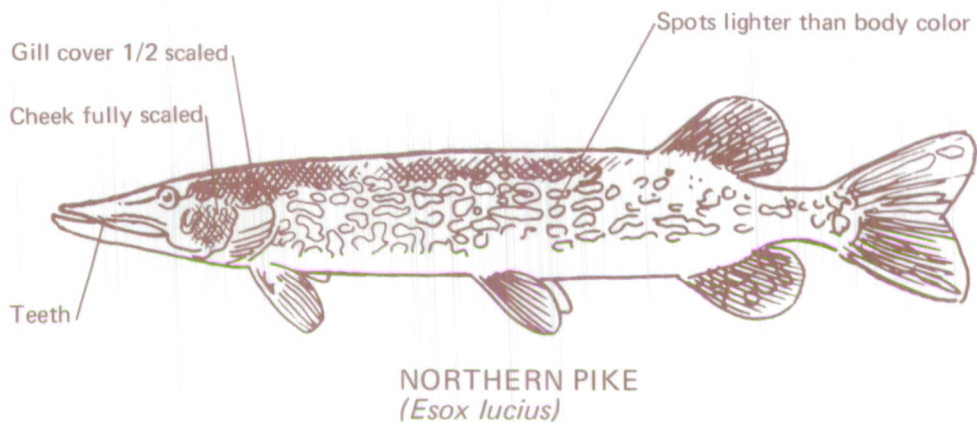
The Iroquois is rather sluggish, brushy and turbid along its 54 miles course in Illinois. A few fee access and picnic areas occur, but the primary recreation intensity is generally greater in the lower river sections. Motorboats can navigate a short distance up the Iroquois from the 6 mile pool formed on the Kankakee River behind the Kankakee Dam. As is the case with the Kankakee River, the Iroquois River has not been channelized in Illinois: consequently the river retains much of its native beauty and recreational value. This river provides an aquatic resource of some 1,547 acres.

FISHING



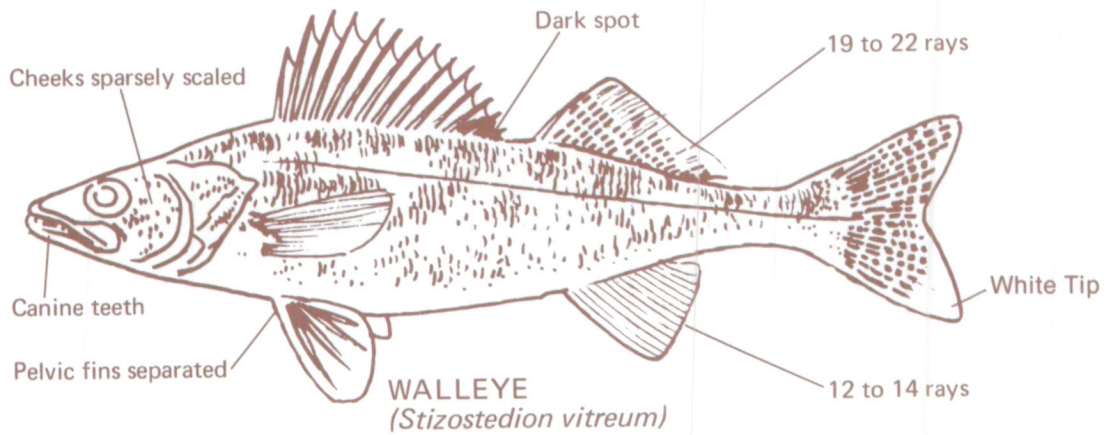
The smallmouth bass does not attain the size of largemouth bass, but it is more of a scrapper and pound-for-pound provides more heart-pounding action than any other stream species in Illinois. Artificial lures such as plastic worms, jigs, spinners, and spoons are most effective, but minnows,

worms, live frogs and crayfish are successful at times. A spinner and minnow combination is frequently used. These fish are often found in the deep pools adjacent to steep or undercut banks. Best fishing is generally in the early morning or evening.



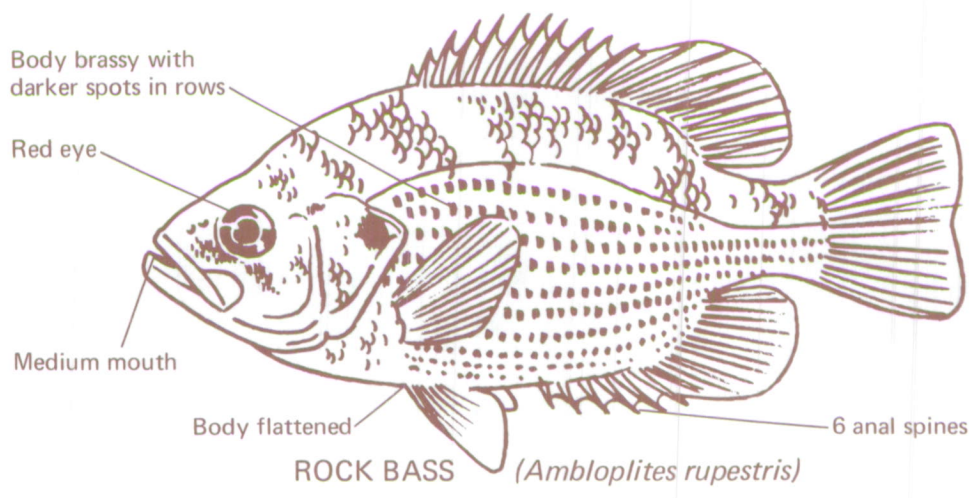
Northern pike are not abundant in any stream of this state, but they are commonly taken on the Kankakee. They spawn in the early spring (March - April) in shallow marshy areas, but are found in the summer in deep holes where they seek cooler

water. They are not particular what they strike at so long as it's presented close to them, and many of the artificial lures are successful. Large minnows are also well received.



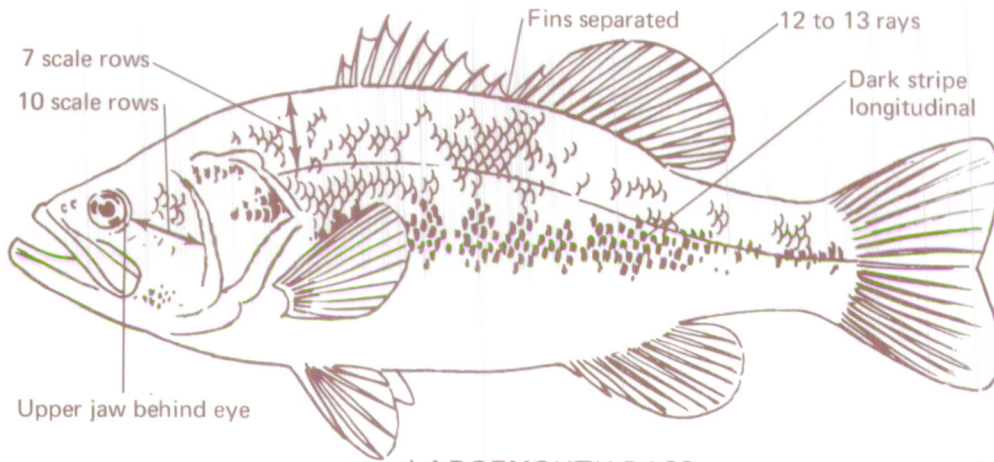
Walleye are excellent sport and table fish and are avidly sought wherever they occur. Each year 10 to 11 pound walleye are taken from the Kanakee River. Walleye fishing starts soon after ice-out and the fish are taken in the rapid waters below dams

and in riffles using minnows, spinners or jigs fished a ways off the bottom. The summer months are typically slow but success picks up again with cooler weather in the fall.



The rock bass is found primarily in northern streams in Illinois, where it is a bonus fish addition to populations of its cousins the largemouth and smallmouth. As is common for the rest of the sun-fish family, rock bass prefer areas providing shelter or cover such as stumps, branches, roots,

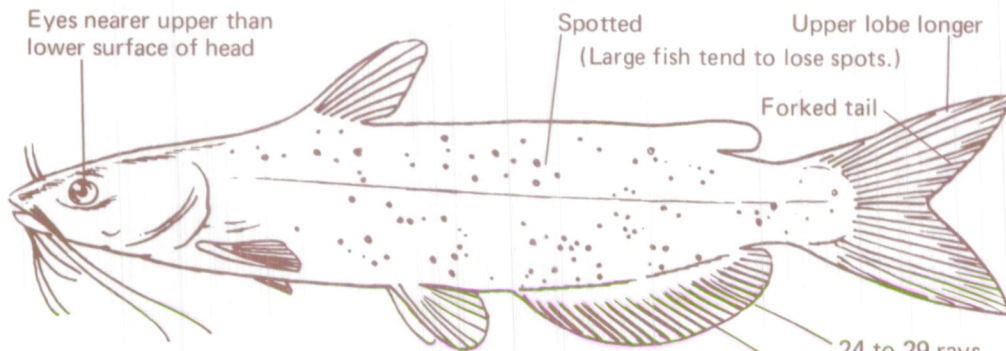
and holes along banks. They do not have the small mouth of a bluegill so they can take larger bait such as minnows or lures used for bass. On the Kankakee they are caught on worms and minnows most often.



LARGEMOUTH BASS
(*Micropterus salmoides*)

Largemouth bass prefer the cover of weed beds, brush stumps and fallen trees where they lay in wait for their prey. They succumb to the temptations of a variety of lures, plugs, and jigs which must each be retrieved in the manner best suited to

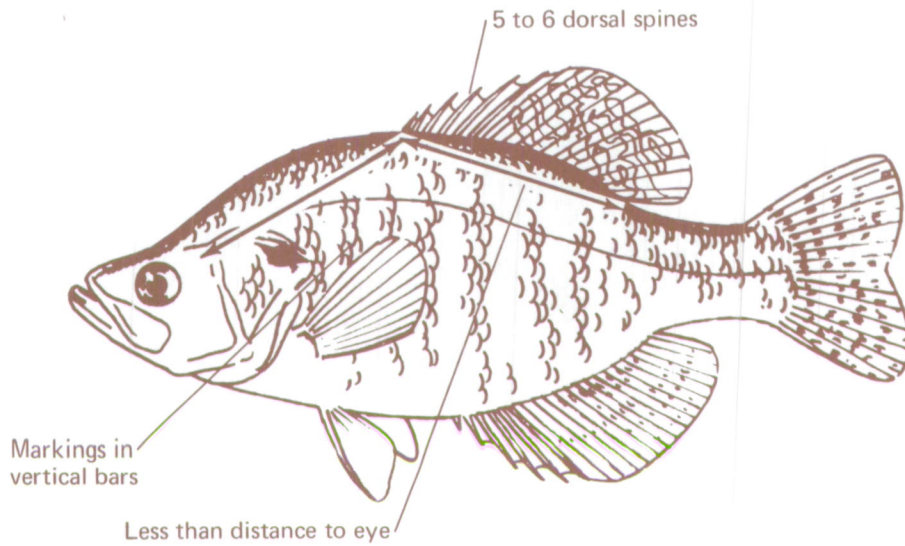
the lure. Mepps spinners and plastic worms are frequently effective. Some of the best spots for largemouth bass include the backwaters of the Des Plaines Conservation Area, and the Kankakee River between the state line and Momence.



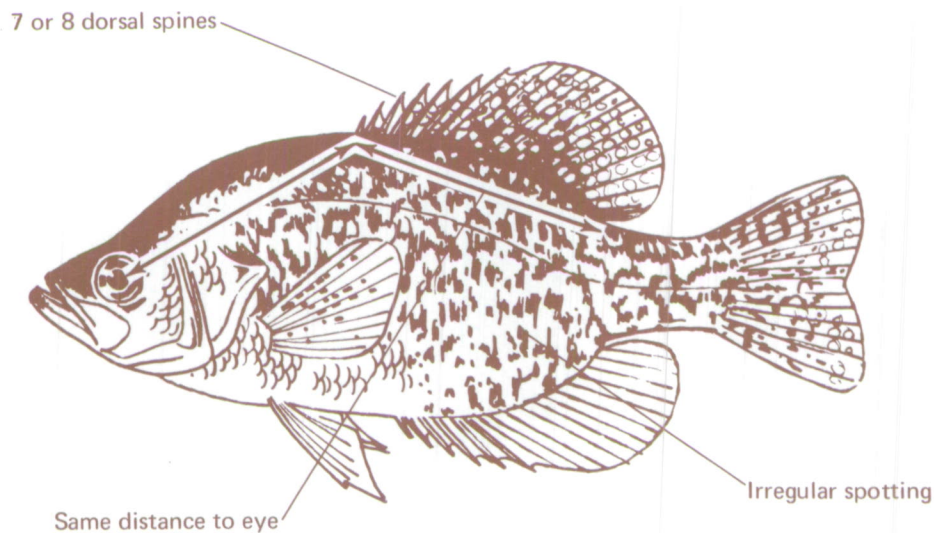
CHANNEL CATFISH
(*Ictalurus punctatus*)

Catfish can be taken almost anywhere on the Kankakee and Iroquois. Flatheads lurk in the deeper holes. Channel catfish like drop-offs and are found where riffle meets pool with a sharp drop in water depth. They also hole up underneath old stumps, downstream of fallen trees, around log jams and in washout holes along banks. Catfish

sense food more by smell than sight, so strong smelling prepared baits are most effective. Worms, liver, shrimp, crayfish and almost any other bait are successful at times. Some of the best catfish fishing is during the hot summer months when other fish aren't biting, and often night fishing is most productive.



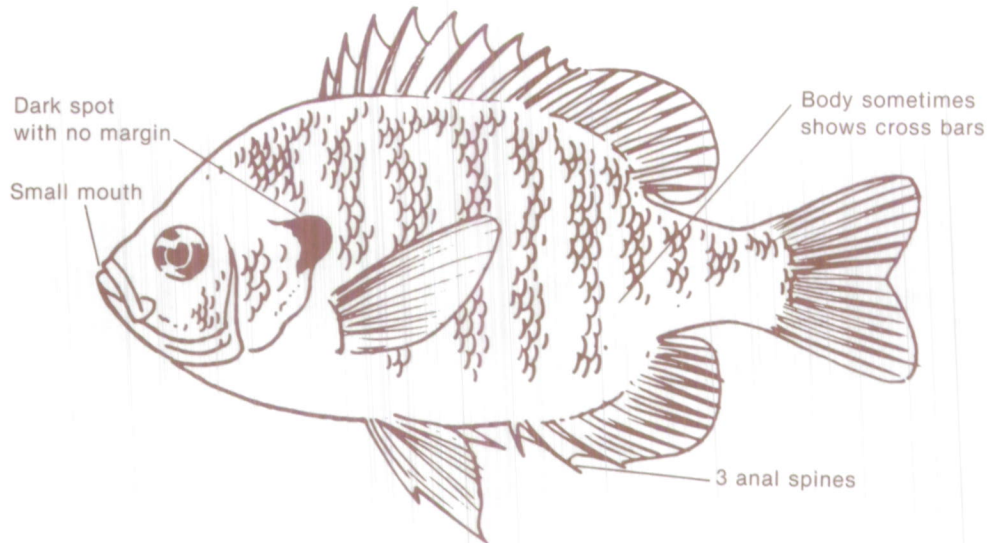
WHITE CRAPPIE
(Pomoxis annularis)



BLACK CRAPPIE
(Pomoxis nigromaculatus)

As with most streams in Illinois, crappie are an important sport fish in the Kankakee. Two species occur — white crappie and black crappie — but, there is no apparent difference in their bait preference or method used to catch them. They prefer the quieter waters, where they hide near stumps,

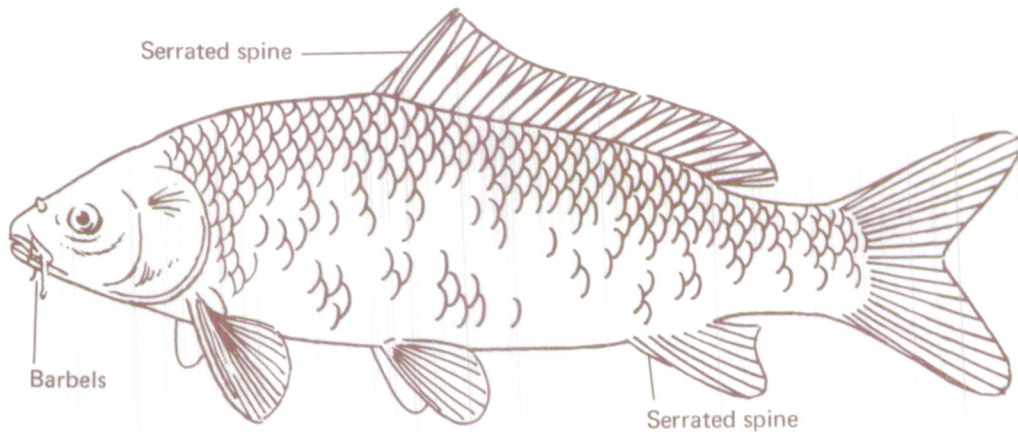
brush piles or other types of shelter. Small minnows are a preferred bait, but leadhead jigs and spinners, are also effective. The best fishing for crappie occurs during the late spring and early fall.



BLUEGILL
(Lepomis macrochirus)

Bluegill can be taken during the summer months on a variety of baits. The most popular is the night-crawler on a small hook, but crickets and grasshoppers work well. Fish near cover such as brush piles,

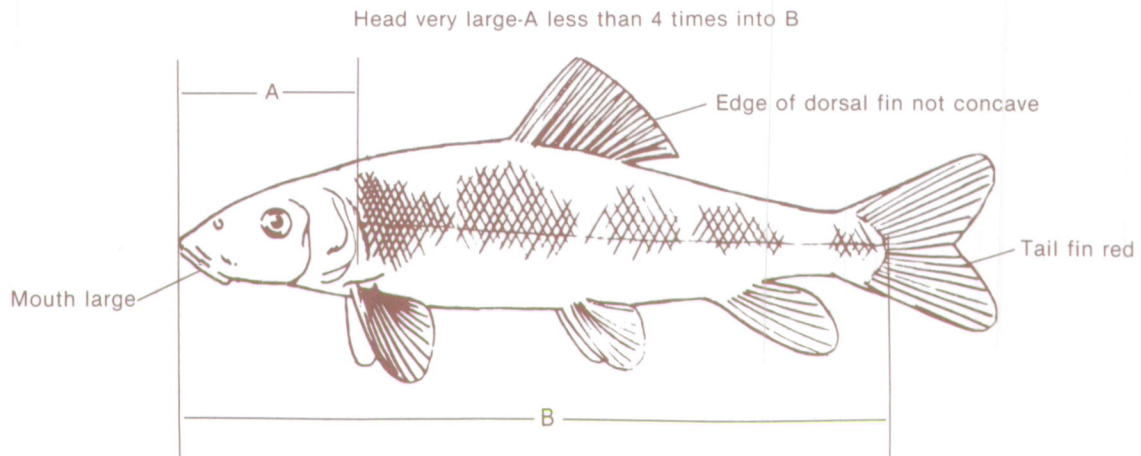
stumps or weed beds and drop your bait as close as possible to the cover. Use a small bobber to keep the bait off the bottom. Bluegill fishing is best during the evening, June through September.



CARP
(Cyprinus carpio)

Carp are not considered in the maps section, because they are so common that they can be caught almost anywhere. Their size and fighting strength are increasing their popularity every year. Next to the flathead catfish, carp are the largest fish regularly taken by anglers. Properly prepared,

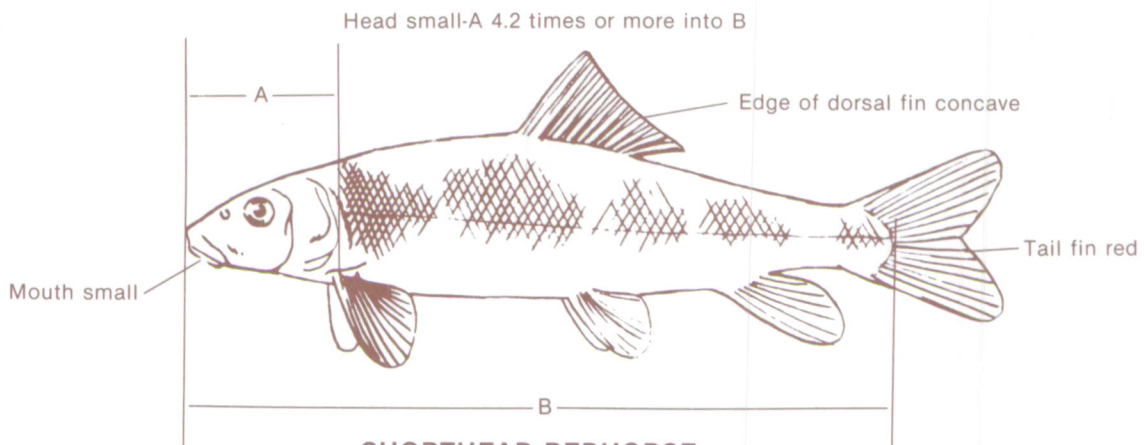
carp are a match for any fish in palatability. It is not surprising that more fishermen are actively fishing for carp with worms, corn and doughballs among other baits. Fish on the bottom or near the bottom with a bobber in shallow areas from May through October.



RIVER REDHORSE
(*Moxostoma carinatum*)

The river redhorse occurs only in the Kankakee mainstream and a very few select tributary streams. This species has large molar-like throat teeth that distinguish the river redhorse from other Illinois redhorses. These large molar teeth are an adaptation for crushing the shells of molluscs. The river redhorse inhabits the pools and riffles of the Kankakee where gravel or rocky bottoms and con-

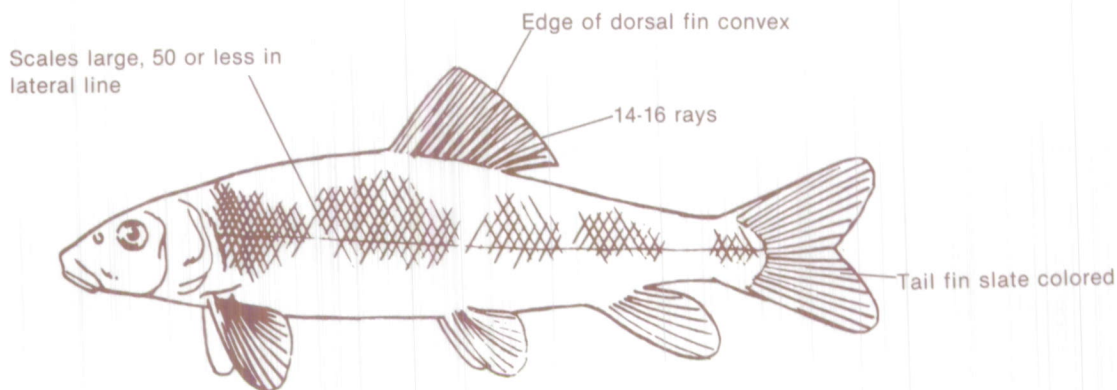
tinuous strong flows are prominent. Spawning is believed to take place in late April and May over the shallow riffles and shoals in the Kankakee. Adults are commonly 12 to 28 inches long and weigh 1 to 11 pounds. If caught by the angler, this species of redhorse should be returned to the waters of the Kankakee-Iroquois River System.



SHORthead REDHORSE
(*Moxostoma macrolepidotum*)

Shorthead redhorse are commonly taken at 2 pounds and range up to 6 pounds in size. Spawning takes place in late April and May over riffles in the mainstream of the Kankakee and its tributaries. The shorthead's primary food consists almost entirely of immature aquatic insects. This species is

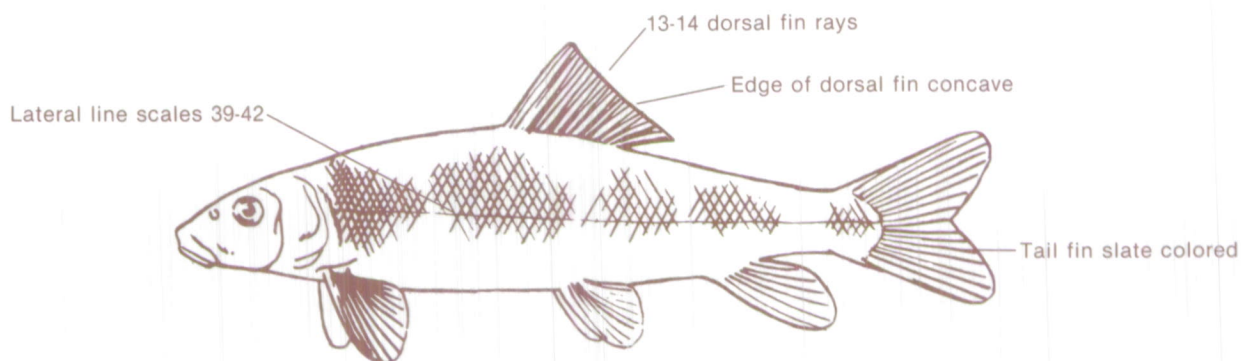
avidly sought after for its palatable flesh which is prepared by smoking or cooking. The shorthead redhorse is not considered in the map sections, because they are so common that they can be caught almost anywhere in the Kankakee Basin.



SILVER REDHORSE
(*Moxostoma anisurum*)

The silver redhorse is widespread throughout the Kankakee basin. It inhabits the larger, deeper, rocky, gravelly bottom pools and riffles of the Kankakee. Spawning usually takes place in April and May with adults gathering in large schools over shallow gravelly riffles. The silver redhorse's diet consists principally of immature aquatic insects

and is not notably different from that of the golden redhorse and shorthead redhorse. Adults range in length from 12 to 25 inches with the largest Kankakee River specimen examined weighing 6.0 pounds. The silver redhorse is less abundant than the more common shorthead redhorse.



GOLDEN REDHORSE
(*Moxostoma erythrurum*)

The golden redhorse lives in large schools that commonly forage slowly over the bottom in riffles or the adjacent parts of pools. The individuals in the feeding school are all oriented into the current and each leaves a trail of muddy water as it sucks in bottom materials and selectively rejects silt and other material unsuitable for food. Spawning takes

place in late April and May over riffles in the main-streams of the Kankakee and its tributaries. Adults range in length from 9 to 18 inches, with the largest Kankakee River specimen examined weighing 3.0 pounds. The golden redhorse is probably less abundant than both the shorthead redhorse and silver redhorse.

SAFETY ON THE RIVER

A certain amount of respect for the river is only good judgment. Small boats are fine on quiet backwaters, but if a person intends to travel on the main river where he may encounter strong current, or wakes from large pleasure craft, a stable boat is needed. A wise man would use nothing smaller than a 12' jon boat or V-bottom boat with 6 to 10 horsepower motor to navigate the main river. Boats of this size and larger can still be easily swamped if overloaded or handled by an inexperienced or careless person. Here are some additional points to take note of:

1. pay full attention to navigation of your boat
2. stay well away from large pleasure craft
3. watch for ripples on the water surface indicating underwater obstructions
4. wear life vests, at least while travelling to and from the place you fish

Before operating a boat on any water of this state, a person should obtain and read the pamphlet on the boat registration and safety act. These are available from the Department of Natural Resources, 600 N. Grand Ave. West, Springfield, Illinois 62706.

FISHING REGULATIONS

Fishing regulations for the Kankakee River are the same as for the rest of the state. Copies of the current regulations may be obtained at local sporting goods dealers or by writing to: Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fisheries, Lincoln Tower Plaza, 524 S. Second, Springfield, IL 62706.

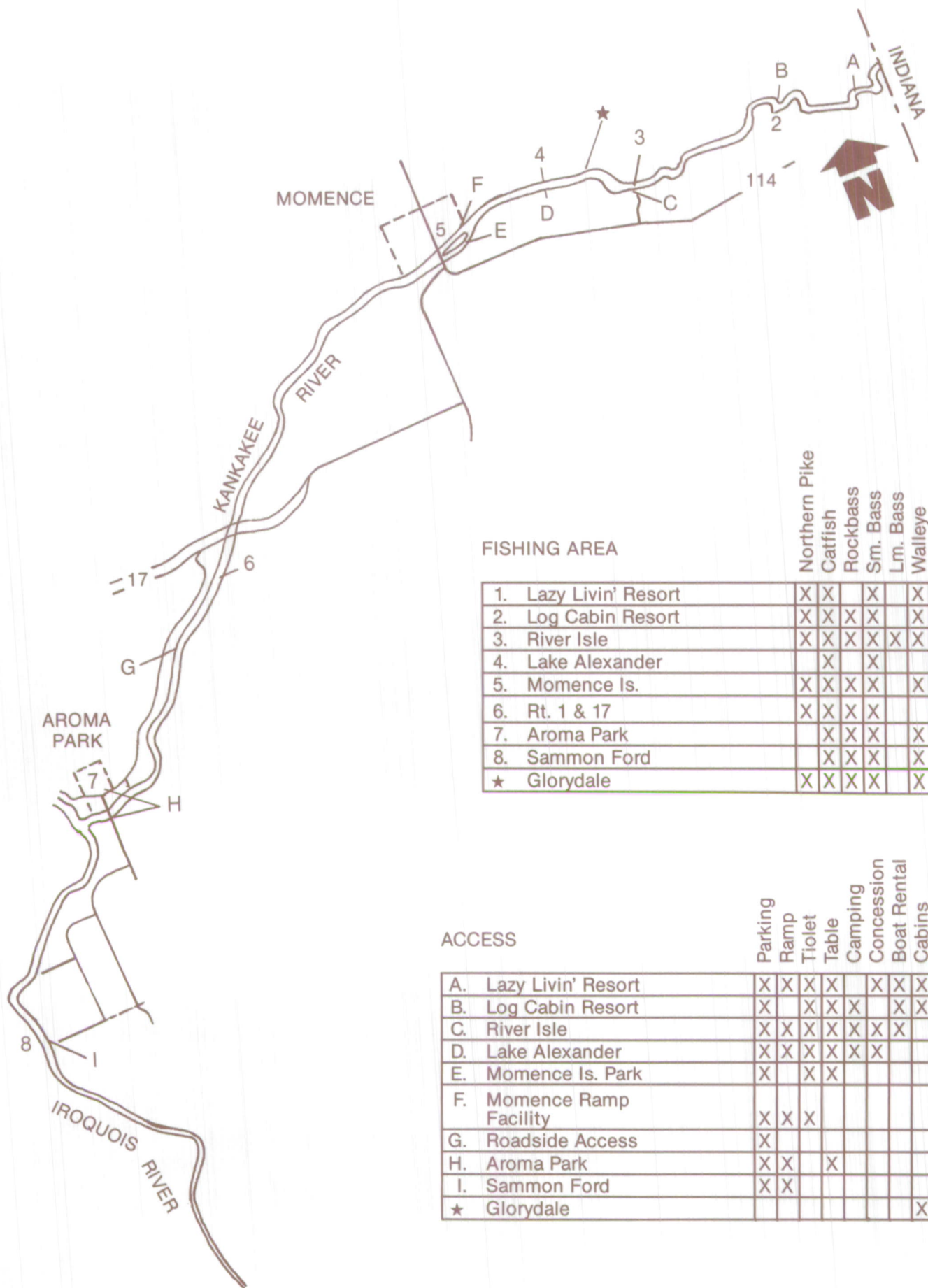
ACCESS

In the following maps section some of the access areas available to the public are noted. Certain public areas and private areas open to the public are available only after paying a fee and such fees are usually posted. *Unless an area is known to be public or is posted as a public area, it should be assumed that it is private and permission from the owner is necessary to use that area.*

SPECIFIC AREAS TO FISH

On the following maps areas have been marked that are known to have good sport fish populations. For each area marked and *numbered*, the sport fish most likely to be taken are checked in the box on the same page. It is realized that the areas marked represent only a portion of those occurring on the river, and as more fishing spots are discovered this guide may be updated. Access sites are *lettered* and listed in a second box with the basic facilities found at each site checked. No attempt was made to list all access sites, but only those nearest fishing areas marked on the map.





FISHING AREA

	Northern Pike	Catfish	Rockbass	Sm. Bass	Lm. Bass	Walleye
1. Lazy Livin' Resort	X	X		X		X
2. Log Cabin Resort	X	X	X	X		X
3. River Isle	X	X	X	X	X	X
4. Lake Alexander			X	X		
5. Momence Is.	X	X	X	X		X
6. Rt. 1 & 17	X	X	X	X		
7. Aroma Park			X	X	X	X
8. Sammon Ford			X	X	X	X
★ Glorydale	X	X	X	X	X	X

ACCESS

	Parking Ramp	Toilet	Table	Camping	Concession	Boat Rental	Cabins
A. Lazy Livin' Resort	X	X	X	X		X	X
B. Log Cabin Resort	X		X	X		X	X
C. River Isle	X	X	X	X	X	X	
D. Lake Alexander	X	X	X	X	X		
E. Momence Is. Park	X		X				
F. Momence Ramp Facility	X	X	X				
G. Roadside Access	X						
H. Aroma Park	X	X		X			
I. Sammon Ford	X	X					
★ Glorydale							X



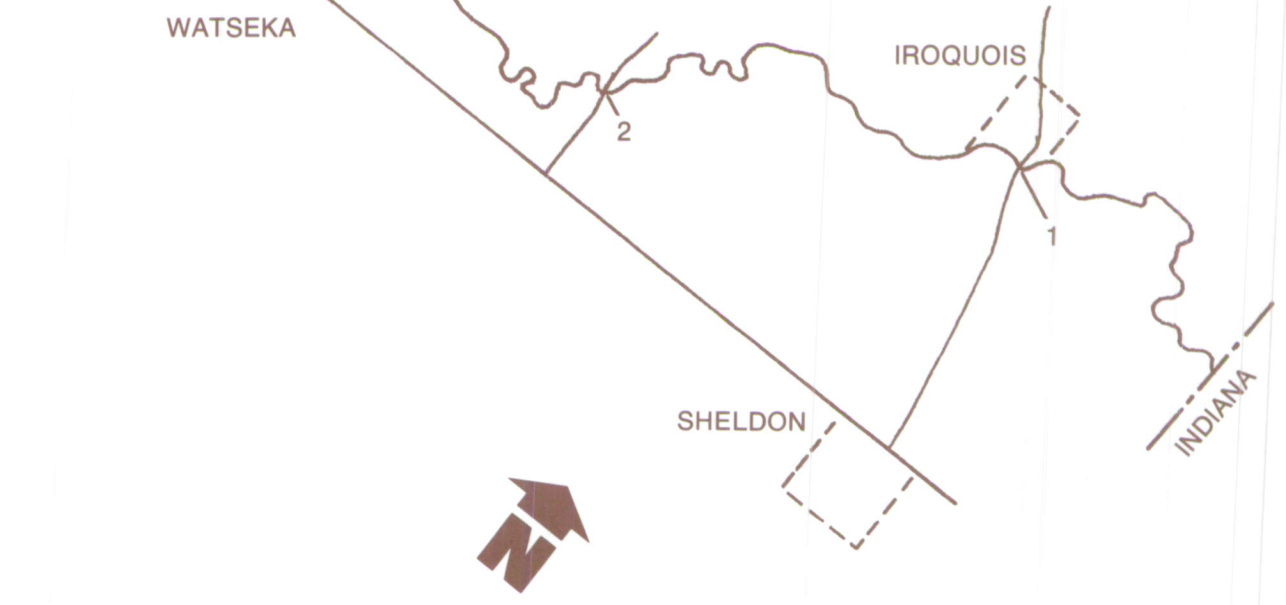
FISHING AREA

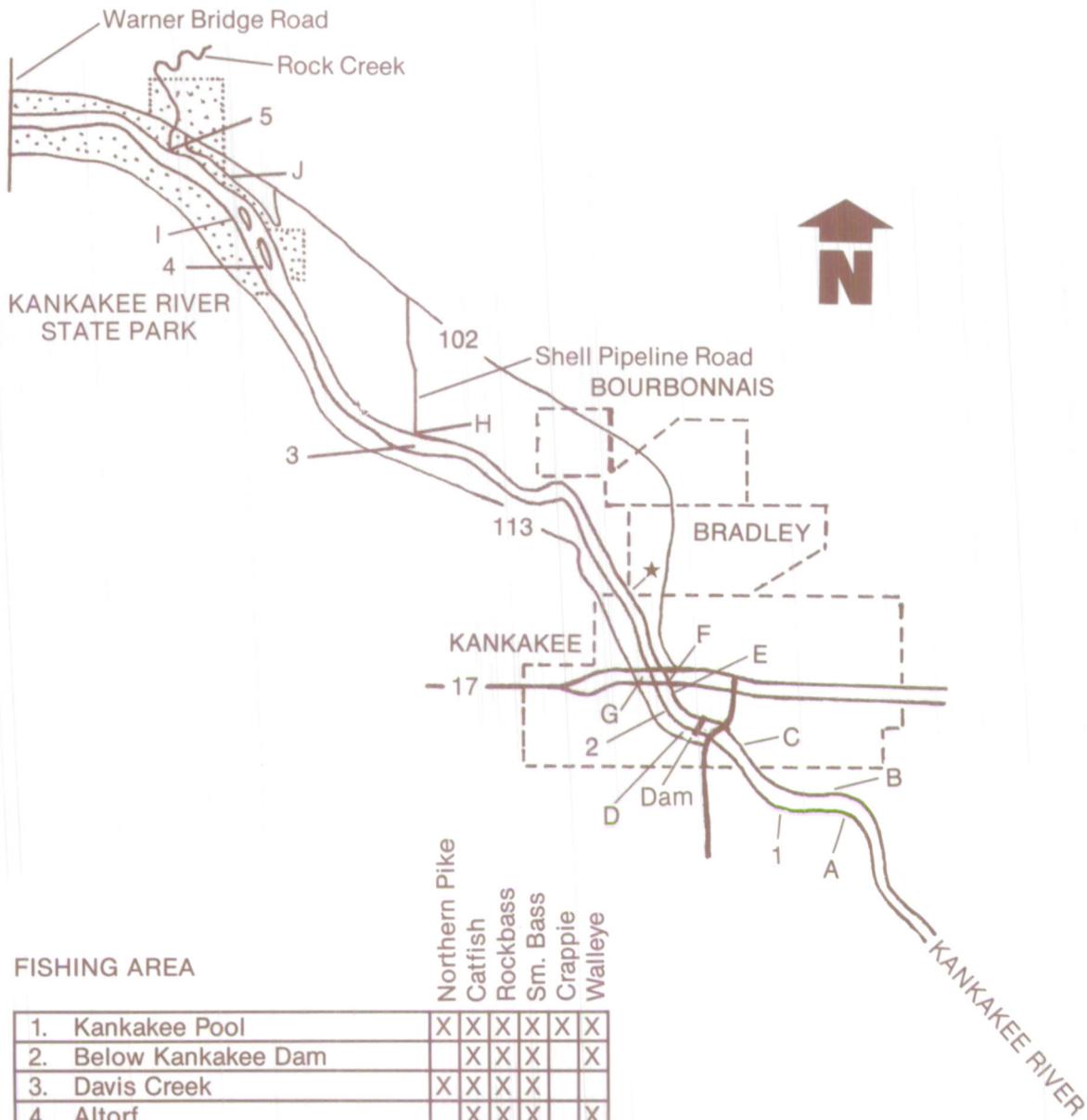
	Northern Catfish	Rock Bass	Sm. Bass	Crappie	Walleye
1. Iroquois	X	X	X	X	X
2. Texas Bridge	X	X	X	X	X
3. Watseka	X	X	X	X	X
4. Plato Bridge	X	X	X	X	X



ACCESS

	Parking	Ramp
B. W. Main St.	X	X
C. Plato Bridge	X	X



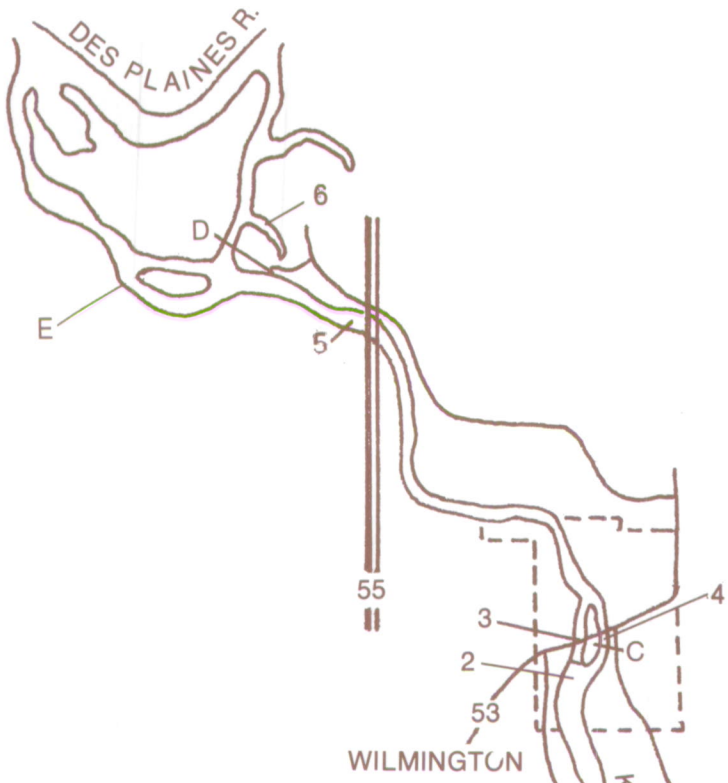


FISHING AREA

	Northern Pike	Catfish	Rockbass	Sm. Bass	Crappie	Walleye
1. Kankakee Pool	X	X	X	X	X	X
2. Below Kankakee Dam		X	X	X		X
3. Davis Creek	X	X	X	X		
4. Altorf		X	X	X		X
5. Rock Creek	X	X	X	X		X

ACCESS

	Parking	Ramp	Table	Toilet	Camping	Concession	Boat Rental
A. River Rd. Park	X	X	X	X			
B. Beckman Park	X	X	X	X			X
C. Cobb Park	X		X	X			
D. Jeffers Park	X		X	X			
E. Legion Park	X						
F. Alpiner Park	X		X	X			
G. Bird Pk. Quarry	X	X	X	X		X	
H. Kankakee St. Pk.	X	X	X	X	X		
I. Kankakee St. Pk.	X		X	X	X	X	X
J. Kankakee St. Pk.	X		X	X	X	X	X
★ LeVausser Park	X			X			

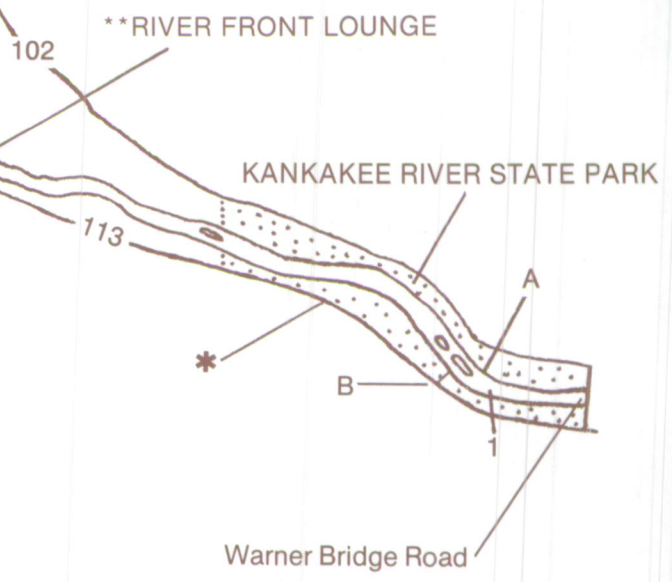


FISHING AREA

FISHING AREA	Northern Catfish	Sm. Bass	Lm. Bass	Crappie	Walleye	Rockbass	Bluegill
1. Kankakee State Pk.	X	X		X	X	X	
2. Above Wilm. Dam	X	X	X			X	X
3. Below Wilm. Dam	X	X	X			X	X
4. Wilm side channel	X	X		X	X		X
5. Below I-55	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
6. Kankakee R. cutoff	X	X		X	X		X

ACCESS

ACCESS	Parking Ramp	Table	Toilet	Camping
A. Kankakee St. Pk.	X	X	X	X
B. County Road Access	X			X
C. Wilmington Is.	X		X	X
D. Des Plaines Cons. Area	X	X	X	X
E. Marina Boat Ramp	X	X		X
* Kankakee State Park	X	X	X	X
** River Front Lounge (Fee Ramp)	X	X	X	X





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