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# Peak Fishing Time is Now

JUNE 25TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

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**Missouri** - One of the most catchable fish in Missouri waters, especially in the summer months, is the group known as panfish, and the peak catching time is now.

In late June and early July, concentrations of bluegills will be spawning along shallow lake or pond shores.

Look for craters of round light spots on the bottom, which are the nest sites.

Bluegills and sunfish relatives are excellent table fare, possibly better flavored than walleye. These panfish may be filleted or scaled, then rolled in seasoned flour and fried.

Jack Anderson and his wife of 42 years, Charlotte, settled in his boat and cruised to their favorite bluegill and crappie fishing hole. Anderson pointed out that his wife has matched casts with him ever since they made a honeymoon fishing trip to the Lake of the Ozarks back in 1973.

Like many Missouri anglers, the Andersons have been called panfish anglers, which is appropriate for people who primarily fish for bluegill, perch and crappie.

Charlotte said, " We like to fish for panfish because we like to eat what we catch. You can't get a better tasting fish than a crappie or bluegill."

On one of their latest fishing trips, the goal was to put enough fish in the boat for a couple of meals. In seconds after arriving at one of their favorite spots, they cast their hooks with earthworms. In less time it took to say, "I got one," Jack pulled in an 8-inch fighting

bluegill. As he spoke, his wife hauled in another big bluegill. In less than an hour, they had caught about two dozen fish including a one-pound crappie.

Anderson said, " I have done a lot of bank fishing in my life, particularly when I had trouble with my back. Like anyone who fishes for panfish from the bank the biggest problem is getting your line far enough out to catch fish. I found by using a small sinker and a bobber works best."

It doesn't matter if the couple are fishing from the bank or in a boat, they catch their share of panfish and then some.

A closer look at Missouri panfish:

**Green sunfish:** State record is 2 pounds, 2 ounces taken from Stockton Lake back in 1971. Its back is dark olive with lighter sides. The gill cover lobe is black, except for light colored red margin. Six years would be a long life for green sunfish.

**Bluegill:** State record is 3 pounds taken back in 1963 from a pond. Like most of the panfish, bluegills provide good table fare. They may be best when coated with seasoned flour and fried in butter. The bluegill's fighting qualities are excellent. They can be taken on a wide variety of lures and bait.

**White crappie:** The state record is 4 pounds, 9 ounces taken in 2000 from a pond. It has the same general appearance as a black crappie except slightly more elongated. It also has sides of silver with shades of purple and seven to nine vertical bars. It's good on the table, but a notch lower on the culinary scale than the black crappie. They generally don't fight as well as the black crappie.

**Black crappie:** The state record is 4 pounds, 8 ounces, taken from a farm pond in 1967. The black crappie can live 10 years or longer. It has dark specks on sides than are both yellow and green. It offers good table fare. Black crappie are good fighters who prefer clearer water than the white crappie.

## **Panfishing techniques**

For panfish, most anglers rely on small hooks tipped with minnows or worms. Spinners and small spoons work on panfish.

Fly fishing anglers have good luck with panfish species by casting small poppers to top feeding fish and using wet flies to drop into feeding zones.

Pan-fishermen will want to look for dropoffs during the summer. Still-fishing with a small jig or flyfishing with wet flies or small poppers is effective for bluegills.

With thousands of ponds, many large impoundments and streams to fish plus a season that never closes, Missouri pan-fishermen are ready for a summer of good fishing and great eating.

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