

Florida Fish Busters'

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Top Freshwater Fishing Destinations in Florida for 2009

By Bob Wattendorf, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

If you are like me, you've probably heard "you should have been here yesterday—the fishing was great," more times than you can count. Well, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission biologists continue to give anglers advice upfront that will help them find some of the best honey holes into which to cast a line in the hope that you'll be the next one bragging about a whopper of a day fishing.



Meghann and Doug, a couple of fishing enthusiasts show off a trophy redear from Lake Talquin.

Fisheries biologists used a variety of clues including the recent fishing history of various lakes and rivers based on creel surveys, Big Catch angler-recognition records, electrofishing results and evaluating habitat conditions, water flow and young-of-the-year survival from the previous year to suggest the top destinations for 2009. Lists of the best places to go for bass, crappie, bream, catfish and stripers are posted at MyFWC.com/Fishing/Forecast. In addition, regional biologists check with local fishing guides and bait-and-tackle shops quarterly (January, April, July, October) to get insights into how major fisheries are producing and what anglers are using to find success on a variety of lakes and rivers throughout the year. The

same Web site will give you access to that information, along with local contact numbers that you can call for up-to-minute updates.

Here’s a brief overview of the sites FWC biologists are recommending to the angling public for 2009, but remember at any day the bite can be on in a different time and place from a small community pond to 470,000-acre Lake Okeechobee.

With over 7,700 named lakes in Florida and 12,000 miles of fishable rivers, streams and canals, you’re never far from an opportunity to relax and wet a line—time that is always well spent communing with nature.

Site	Size and Counties	Featured species
Apalachicola River/Lake Seminole	106 miles/37,500 acres, Gulf, Liberty, Franklin, Jackson, Gadsden, Calhoun	Striped bass, channel, flathead and blue catfish
Blackwater/Yellow Rivers	58/ miles, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa	Striped bass
Choctawhatchee River	96 miles, Bay, Holmes, Walton, Washington	Striped bass, bream, channel and flathead catfish
Clermont Chain-of-Lakes	11 lakes totaling 8,692 acres, Lake	Channel and white catfish
Crescent Lake	15,960 acres, Flagler, Putnam	Crappie
Deer Point Lake	5,000 acres, Bay	Bass
Eagle Lake	541 acres, Hamilton	Sunshine bass
Escambia River	231 miles, Escambia	Striped bass, channel, flathead and blue catfish
Everglades Conservation Areas 2 and 3	210 square miles, Palm Beach, Broward, Dade	Bass
Haines (Haynes) Creek	6 miles, Lake	Channel and white catfish, bullheads
Lake George	46,000 acres, Putnam, Volusia	Bass
Lake Harris	13,800 acres, Lake	Bream
Lake Istokpoga	28,000 acres, Highlands	Bass, crappie, bream
Lake Kissimmee	35,000 acres, Osceola	Bass, crappie, bream, channel and white catfish, bullheads
Lake Marian	5,700 acres, Osceola	Crappie, bream

Lake Marion	2,990 acres, Polk	Crappie
Lake Monroe	9,400 acres, Seminole, Volusia	Bass
Ochlockonee River	300 miles, Leon, Liberty, Franklin, Gadsden, Wakulla	Channel, flathead and white catfish, bullheads
Orange Lake/Lochloosa Lake	12,550/5,700 acres, Alachua	Crappie, bream
Lake Osborne/Ida Chain-of-Lakes	356 acres, Palm Beach	Sunshine bass
Lake Panasoffkee	4,460 acres, Sumter	Bream
Lake Talquin	8,800 acres, Gadsden, Leon	Striped bass, crappie, bream
Lake Trafford	1,500 acres, Collier	Crappie
Lake Tarpon	2-500 acres, Pinellas	Bass
Lake Weir	5,685 acres, Marion	Crappie
Lake Weohyakapka	7,500 acres, Polk	Bass
Mosaic Fish Management Area	1,000 acres, Polk	Bass, bream
Rodman Reservoir	9,500 acres, Putnam	Bass
St. Johns River	310 miles, Brevard, Flagler, Lake, Orange, Putnam, Seminole, St. Johns, Volusia	Striped bass, channel and white catfish, bullheads
St. Mary's/Nassau River	90 miles, Baker, Nassau	Striped bass
Suwannee River	213 miles, Suwannee	Bass, bream
Tenoroc Fish Management Area	7,300 acres, Polk	Bass, crappie, bream
West Lake Tohopekaliga	18,810 acres, Osceola	Bass, crappie, bream



William and Zack proudly show off their Big Catch of the day.

So grab a friend or relative and try out one of these sites, or investigate a local water hole to create your own list of top fishing destinations. Then pass it on to whoever will listen and let them know how great the fishing was. Always remembering that a bad day fishing beats a great day at work.

*Instant licenses are available at MyFWC.com/License or by calling 1-888-FISH-FLORIDA (347-4356). Report violators by calling *FWC or #FWC on your cell, or 1888-404-3922. Visit MyFWC.com/Fishing/Updates for more Fish Busters' columns.*