

NEBRASKAland Magazine's

# Fishing the Metro

A Guide to Omaha's Lakes and Waterways

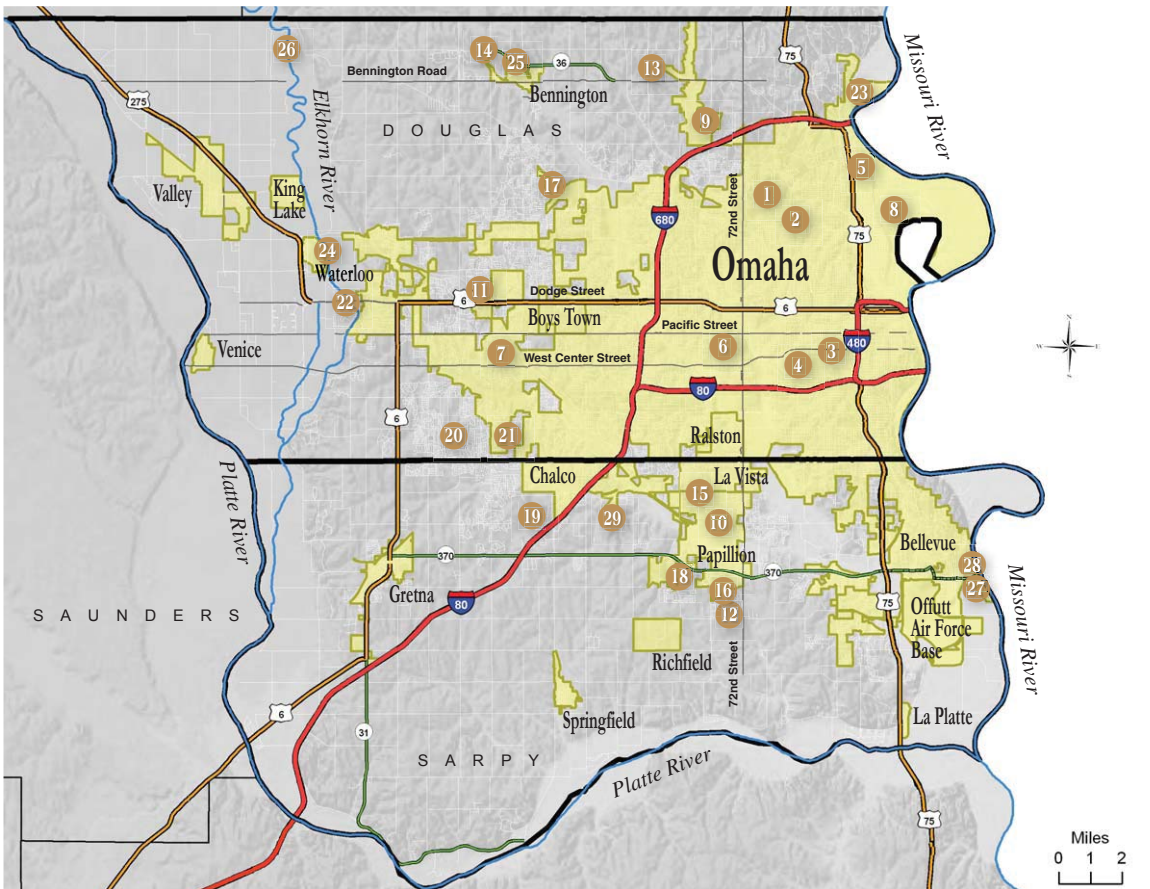
By Jeff Kuruš



**F**ishing excursions lasting multiple days are some of nature's most pleasureable activities. Yet sneaking out after a long day of work runs a close second. And since so many people live and work in or near Omaha, the purpose of this guide is to provide current and potential metro anglers information about locations where they can fish whenever they have a moment in their busy schedules. For a moment may be all one needs to provide a memory for a lifetime – especially with the excellent fishing in these waters.



Alex Gonzales with a largemouth bass caught on the fly at Walnut Creek Reservoir in Papillion.



MAP BY TRISHA SCHLAKKE, NEBRASKA GAME AND PARKS COMMISSION

Note: all locations are approximations

# For the Young and Young at Heart

*Each of the waters under this subhead have the following special restrictions: Children under 16, adults with a child actively fishing, and adults 65 and older permitted to fish. In addition, only bank fishing is permitted on these waters.*

*Also, while most waters in the Omaha metro have a 21-inch minimum on largemouth bass, refer to the fishing regulations for the most up-to-date guidelines.*

## 1 Benson Park Pond

4 acres- 72<sup>nd</sup> Street at Military and Ames Avenue intersection in Omaha. Bluegill, channel catfish, crappie, largemouth bass and seasonally stocked rainbow trout.

Notes: Even though Benson is fished pretty hard, light tackle, including small jigs and spinners, can keep the young ones interested for quite awhile with the panfish.

## 2 Fontenelle Park Pond

4 acres- 45<sup>th</sup> Street and Ames Avenue at Fontenelle Boulevard. Bluegill, channel catfish and largemouth bass.

Notes: Poor water quality brought on by filamentous algal growth due to high nutrients makes fish hard to catch, especially once temperatures rise during the late spring.

## 3 Hanscom Park Pond

1 acre- 32<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and Center Street. Bluegill, channel catfish, crappie and largemouth bass.

Notes: Excellent water quality and clarity make this a great little pond. Lots of small crappie and catfish are the norm, but some big bluegill can also be found.



Bluegill (pictured), channel catfish and largemouth bass are species usually stocked throughout Omaha. Some waters will also have crappie and seasonally stocked rainbow trout.

## 4 Hitchcock Park Pond

2 acres- 42<sup>nd</sup> and Q streets. Bluegill, channel catfish, largemouth bass and seasonally stocked rainbow trout.

Notes: This easy-to-find fishery off Q Street features an underwater shoal where big fish are frequently found, and good shoreline access for wheelchairs.

## 5 Miller Park Pond

4 acres- 30<sup>th</sup> Street and Redick Avenue in Omaha. Bluegill, channel catfish and largemouth bass.

Notes: This small pond in north Omaha has good water quality and solid panfishing for introducing youngsters.



Towl Park near West Center and 93rd streets is a small, scenic lake that offers good panfishing, making this destination a perfect spot to take children.

## 6 Towl Park Pond

1 acre- West Center and 93<sup>rd</sup> streets (enter at Paddock Road traffic light). Bluegill, channel catfish, green sunfish, largemouth bass and seasonally stocked rainbow trout.

Notes: Towl is a small, scenic lake that can't be seen from West Center Street. If you've never pulled into the parking lot you wouldn't even know it was there. Teach a young one fly rod basics at this lake where the panfish aren't too picky.

## 7 Walnut Grove Park Pond

1 acre- Q Street across from Millard South High School east of 156th Street. Bluegill, channel catfish and largemouth bass.

Notes: A beautiful setting amongst mature black walnut trees, this little pond is small but a sleeper you must fish.

## Fishing For All

*Many of the following waterbodies are Omaha fishing staples. However, consider some of the ones you haven't fished before, because there are some gems on this list. Each of these destinations is open to all anglers.*

## 8 Carter Lake

315 acres- In Levi Carter Park at Abbott Drive and Carter Blvd near Omaha's Eppley Airport. Bluegill, channel catfish, common carp and largemouth bass. Features concrete boat ramps, a wheelchair-accessible pier and a **lake contour map** available at [OutdoorNebraska.org](http://OutdoorNebraska.org). Open 5 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Special Restrictions- All boats allowed, but regulations specify that the east arm has a no-wake, 5 mph speed limit.

Notes: A rehabilitation project is in full swing at Carter Lake, but while under construction the fishery is already established and open. Carter will be a very productive fishery far into the future, with excellent water quality, improved angler access and increased aquatic vegetation.

Don't shy away from the vegetation during the summer months, however. While more challenging to fish, exploding bass and bluegill populations have made it very worthwhile.



Multiple breakwaters at Glenn Cunningham make this lake a perfect camp-and-fish destination for families in the metro.

## 9 Glenn Cunningham Lake

390 acres- 96<sup>th</sup> and State streets. Bluegill, bullhead, channel catfish, common carp, crappie, largemouth bass and walleye. Features concrete boat ramp, camping opportunities, and a **lake contour map** available at [OutdoorNebraska.org](http://OutdoorNebraska.org). Open 5 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Special Restrictions- Boats restricted to 5 mph (no wake).

Notes: Renovated in 2007, Cunningham offers anglers the opportunity to catch numbers, with an occasional big fish. Breakwaters (jetties) allow bank anglers to take advantage of fishing-holding structure on both sides of the lake. Walleye and aggressive largemouth bass are available, and the lake is known as a great carp fishery, making Cunningham a great multispecies option in the metro.

There is also an adjacent wetland to Cunningham on the north side of Highway 36. While shallow and sediment-laden, there is bank and john boat/float tube access just north of the Highway 36 and 92<sup>nd</sup> Street intersection. Lastly, Papio D-4 is also nearby, located on the west side of 92<sup>nd</sup> Street across the street from the wetland.

## 10 Lake Halleck

4 acres- East of South Washington (84th) Street on East Lincoln Street in Papillion. Bluegill, channel catfish, largemouth bass and seasonally stocked rainbow trout.

Special Restrictions- Bank access only.

Notes: Halleck is the perfect walk-around lake for folks of all ages. Frequent Nebraska Game and Parks Commission-sponsored family fishing nights are held here due to accessibility and ability to catch fish.



Quality largemouth can be found at multiple Omaha hotspots.

### 11 Lawrence Youngman Lake

60 acres- 192<sup>nd</sup> Street and West Dodge Road in west Omaha. Bluegill, channel catfish and largemouth bass. Features concrete boat ramp and fishing pier.

Special Restrictions- Boats restricted to 5 mph (no wake).

Notes: Officially opened in the spring of 2011, Youngman allows bass anglers to catch a large number of small fish right now with a rare big fish mixed in. However, aquatic vegetation during the spring and summer does make the shallow edges difficult to fish more than a foot beneath the surface. Counter this by looking for fish in deeper water or working weedless baits on or near the surface.

### 12 Midlands Lake

11 acres- North of Washington and Capehart roads in Papillion's Shadow Lake subdivision. Bluegill, channel catfish and largemouth bass.

Special Restrictions- Boats restricted to 5 mph (no wake).

Notes: Parking is available on portions of the streets adjacent to the lake. While there is no boat ramp, john boat or float tube access is available by a short walk to the lake's edge. Midlands is also adjacent to Shadow Lake.

### 13 Papio D-4

30 acres- ¼ mile north of Highway 36 and 98<sup>th</sup> Street in northwest Omaha. Bluegill, channel catfish, green sunfish and largemouth bass.

Special Restrictions- Walk-in access only. Electric and non-powered boats allowed.

Notes: Located just north of Cunningham Lake and Highway 36, Papio D-4 is a newly renovated lake fed by Papio Creek. A perfect float tube lake, D-4 can also be accessed by boat if one is inclined to make the 250-yard drag from the road to the water's edge. Featuring aquatic vegetation, rip rap, flooded timber and excellent water quality, that drag might just be worth it. Or fish it from D-4's two jetties or the walking path surrounding the lake.

### 14 Prairie View Lake

42 acres- 2 miles west of Bennington at 180<sup>th</sup> Street and Highway 36. Bluegill, channel catfish and largemouth bass. Features concrete boat ramp and a **lake contour map** available at [OutdoorNebraska.org](http://OutdoorNebraska.org). Open 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Special Restrictions- Boats restricted to 5 mph (no wake).

Notes: Gets a lot of boat pressure every day but there are also lots of nooks to find fish by water or walking. A definite largemouth gem just north of the Omaha city limits.

### 15 Schwer Park Pond

2 acres- West Centennial Road west of 84<sup>th</sup> Street in Papillion. Bluegill, channel catfish, crappie and largemouth bass.

Special Restrictions- Bank access only.

Notes: Schwer has some nice crappie and largemouth bass,



Because of Lake Halleck's abundant shoreline access, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission frequently uses this lake for its family fishing nights. For more information about this program, visit [OutdoorNebraska.org](http://OutdoorNebraska.org) and click on Fishing.



Newly re-opened Zorinsky Lake features a wheelchair-accessible fishing pier.

and nearly all of them are accessible by those willing to walk in the short grass around the lake.

### 16 Shadow Lake

30 acres- North of Washington and Capehart roads in Papillion's Shadow Lake subdivision. Bluegill, crappie and largemouth bass.

Special Restrictions- Boats restricted to 5 mph (no wake).

Notes: Shadow features a concrete walking trail

surrounding the entire lake with nearby access to the water. The grass surrounding the lake is tall, but there are some foot trails leading to the water's edge. There is also parking on the northeastern and northwestern sides of the lake. While there is no boat ramp, dropping a small john boat or float tube in it would be ideal for this urban fishery. Rip rap, aquatic vegetation and bank structure can be found.

### 17 Standing Bear Lake

135 acres- 132<sup>nd</sup> and Military streets in north Omaha. Bluegill, channel catfish, common carp, crappie, freshwater drum, largemouth bass, walleye and seasonally stocked rainbow trout. Features concrete boat ramp and a **lake contour map** available at **OutdoorNebraska.org**.

Special Restrictions- Boats restricted to 5 mph (no wake).

Notes: Standing Bear is on the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's list for future renovation projects. In the meantime, old-timers familiar with the fishery catch some really nice fish here.

### 18 Walnut Creek Reservoir

100 acres- South of 96<sup>th</sup> Street and Highway 370 in Papillion. Bluegill, channel catfish, largemouth bass and redear sunfish. Features concrete boat ramp and a wheelchair-accessible fishing pier and island. Open 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Special Restrictions- Boats restricted to 5 mph (no wake).

Notes: A lake in its prime, it can give up large numbers or large fish. Early mornings and late afternoons can be spent catching bass on scum frogs and other topwaters, as



A largemouth bass angler fishes multiple cover options at Walnut Creek Reservoir in Papillion.

well as redear sunfish on a variety of small tackle options. Meanwhile, late risers can target the deep woody structure throughout the lake for multiple species. In addition, deep water structure is available near the wheelchair-accessible locales. This lake was designed for fish habitat and for anglers, and it's a treasure because of this design.

### 19 Wehrspann Lake

245 acres- 156<sup>th</sup> Street and Giles Road in southwest Omaha. Blue catfish, bluegill, bullhead, channel catfish, crappie, largemouth bass and walleye. Features concrete boat ramp and wheelchair-accessible pier. Open 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Special Restrictions- Boats restricted to 5 mph (no wake).

Notes: It is no surprise that Wehrspann is one of the Metro's most popular fisheries. With seemingly unlimited shoreline access and fish-structure features, the opportunity to catch multiple fish species at Wehrspann is available during each visit. Plus, a sediment dam on the upper end of the lake provides strong water quality all year long.

There is also an adjacent wetland to Wehrspann on the north side of Highway 370 at the Gretna exit where bank, john boat or float tube access is available for multiple species, including the possibility of bluegill, bullheads, green sunfish and largemouth bass.

### 20 Whitehawk Lake

30 acres- 192<sup>nd</sup> and F streets in west Omaha. Bluegill, channel catfish and largemouth bass.

Special Restrictions- Walk-in access only from a small parking lot southeast of the lake.

Notes: Whitehawk is a fishbowl of sorts, with very little structure above or beneath the water. Fish the visible contour breaks around the entirety of the lake for active fish. Lots of smaller largemouth are present, but Whitehawk also has a big fish or two in its waters. A perfect bank lake for the kids, a float tube angler, or two buddies wanting to carry a john boat 200 yards to the water's edge.

### 21 Zorinsky Lake

255 acres- 156<sup>th</sup> and F streets in west Omaha. Bluegill, channel catfish, common carp, crappie, largemouth bass, redear sunfish and walleye. Features concrete boat ramp and a wheelchair-accessible fishing pier. Open 5 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Special Restrictions- Boats restricted to 5 mph (no wake).

Notes: Zorinsky is on its way back after a zebra mussel outbreak closed its gates from fall of 2010 to its official re-opening on April 28, 2012. For the next several years, Zorinsky should have a life similar to other rehabilitated lakes – large numbers of small fish early transitioning to an overall excellent fishery, with the chance to catch all species and sizes within a few years.

## River Access

*This guide would be incomplete if it didn't mention river access for those looking to wet a line in moving water. Below are the put-in locales for Omaha's rivers, including those fish species most commonly caught and any special regulations at each.*



Allysa Beyersdorf shows off a largemouth bass caught from Wehrspann Lake as dad Gary looks on.

### 22 Graske Crossing

Southeast corner of Elkhorn River and West Dodge Road (Skyline Drive exit), accessing Elkhorn River.

Common species caught: buffalo, bullhead, channel catfish, common carp, flathead catfish and shovelnose sturgeon. Features canoe launch area. Open April 1 to November 1, 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.

### 23 NP Dodge Park

11000 North River Road, accessing Missouri River.

Common species caught: buffalo, channel catfish, common carp, crappie and flathead catfish. Features concrete boat ramp available for Missouri River access. Open 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily.

### 24 Waterloo River Access

Southeast corner of Elkhorn River and West Maple Road, accessing Elkhorn River.

Common species caught: buffalo, bullhead, channel catfish, flathead catfish and shovelnose sturgeon. Features canoe launch area.



Throughout the Omaha area there are multiple fisheries with scenery as nice as the fishing, including Papillion's Schwer Park Pond.

## Very Limited Access

*Despite its size, the public water jetty at Bennington Lake receives a lot of local fishing attention, and for good reason.*

### 25 Bennington Lake

Public access only permitted on jetty located ½ mile west of 168<sup>th</sup> Street at the intersection of Highway 36 and Newport Landing. Bluegill, channel catfish and largemouth bass.

## Check Back Soon

*For the most up-to-date information on the following destinations that are either under construction or repair, visit [OutdoorNebraska.org](http://OutdoorNebraska.org).*

### 26 Elkhorn Crossing River Access

252<sup>nd</sup> Street and Bennington Road, accessing Elkhorn River. Common species caught: channel catfish, common carp, flathead catfish, and shovelnose sturgeon. Features camping area and canoe launch area. Open April 1 to November 1, **but currently closed for repair.**

### 27 Haworth Park Pond/River Access

1 acre- Payne Drive north of Highway 370 in Bellevue adjacent to Missouri River. Bluegill, channel catfish and largemouth bass in pond. River access is also present, with the following species commonly caught: buffalo, channel catfish, common carp, crappie and flathead catfish. Features camping area and concrete boat ramp owned by City of Bellevue.

Notes: As of publication date, **Haworth Park is closed** until further notice because of flood damage. Visit the City of Bellevue web site at [Bellevue.net](http://Bellevue.net) for the latest information.

### 28 Kramer Park Lake

7 acres- North of Highway 370 at Missouri River bridge. Bluegill, channel catfish and largemouth bass.

Notes: As of publication date, **Kramer Park Lake is closed** until further notice because of flood damage. Visit the City of Bellevue web site at [Bellevue.net](http://Bellevue.net) for the latest information.

### 29 West Papillion No. 5 Lake

135 proposed acres- 126th and Cornhusker Road in Papillion.

Notes: **Construction begins** in summer/fall of 2012 and the fishery is expected to open in 2014. Will feature concrete boat ramp, various breakwaters, underwater shoals, fish attractors, standing trees and abundant shoreline access for anglers. Planned to be a 5-mph no wake lake, this fishery will be stocked with bluegill, channel catfish and largemouth bass.

*With reporting by Daryl Bauer, Jeff Chin, Lindsey Chizinski, Jeff Jackson, Jo Momsen, Mark Porath, Steve Satra, Katie Stacey, Dave Tunink and Greg Wagner.*

*For families wanting a list of Omaha city parks that have picnic shelters, open space and other activities for youth, visit [CityofOmaha.org/parks](http://CityofOmaha.org/parks) and click on Find a Park.*

*In addition, while fishing throughout the Metro consider staying at E.T. Mahoney SP, Louisville SRA, Platte River SP, or Two Rivers SRA. While there, take the little ones fishing at waters locaat each of these camping and/or lodging destinations.*

*Fishing the Metro* was printed in the July 2012 issue of *NEBRASKAland Magazine*, which is published by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. Text and photos by Jeff Kurrus. Design by Tim Reigert.

For more information, contact the Commission's Omaha office at 402-595-2144 or Greg.Wagner@nebraska.gov. Additional copies of this publication can be requested by calling the Commission's Fisheries Division at 402-471-5552.

*Cover photo: Lawrence Youngman Lake, Omaha*