

outdoors

State has campgrounds near home

By Lem Messer
outdoors writer

If you like to spend your scarce cash on fishin' bait and charcoal instead of gasoline, try camping in southern lower Michigan.

Several state parks within 90 minutes' drive have excellent camping and picnicking facilities (though I recommend against trying to get into a campground the Fourth of July weekend without a reservation). Here are the spots, directions, facilities and phone numbers:

• Brighton State Recreation Area in Livingston County — Take I-96 west to exit 147 (Spencer Road), go left on Spencer through the town of Brighton about six miles, turn left on Chilson Road 1.8 miles to park entrance. Complete camping facilities, boat launch, picnic facilities, hiking and bridge trails. Call 823-6556.

• Highland State Recreation Area, Oakland County — Take I-94 west to US-23, go north to M-59 Pontiac-Howell exit, then east 10 miles to park entrance. Camping more primitive; picnic facilities, hiking and bridge trails. Call 887-5135.

• Island Lake State Recreation Area, Livingston County — West on I-96 to Kensington Road exit, quarter-mile south to park entrance. Primitive camping, no boat launch, plenty of picnic facilities, hiking trails. Call 222-7067.

• Maybury State Park, Wayne

County — on Eight Mile Road a couple of miles west of Northville. No camping; picnicking, no beach, good hiking, bicycling, bridge trails. Call 949-8350.

• Proud Lake State Recreation Area, Oakland County — Take I-96 west to Wirom Road exit, turn north, follow signs five miles to park entrance. Camping facilities, boat launch, picnicking facilities, hiking and bridge trails. Call 685-2433.

• Sterling State Park, Monroe County — Take I-75 south to exit 19 at Monroe, go east on North Dixie Highway one-half mile to park entrance. Camping facilities, boat launch to walleye hotspots on Lake Erie, picnicking facilities. Call 289-2715.

PONTIAC LAKE, which was drained down last year for dam repairs, is being restocked, DNR reports.

In mid-June some 30,000 pounds of channel catfish were stocked into the popular northern Oakland County lake. The average was more than two pounds, and some topped 10 pounds.

"The catfish should provide good angling through 1992 and a natural, reproducing population will persist through the years," the DNR announcement said. "Besides being a good sport fish, catfish make excellent table fare."

"Other species are being stocked as they become available, and a good overall fishery is expected in 1993."

That will be good news to the devotees of the largemouth bass. To them, Pontiac Lake was a preview of heaven.

HOTTEST WALLEYE spot near these parts is not in the north county or even famous Lake St. Clair.

Brest Bay, Stony Point and Bolles Harbor in Lake Erie off Monroe County are the sites of the action, according to our observers in the state Department of Natural Resources.

"The reports we get indicate the walleye are averaging 13-15 inches and weigh as much as five or six pounds,"

says fisheries biologist Ron Spittler.

"That kind of catch has been water depth of 15-20 feet. The walleye seem to favor the Erie-Dearie and Hot N'Tot lures right now."

In Lake St. Clair, perch, walleye and muskies are showing up only in small numbers. The mid-June bass opener there was slow.

Panfish are hitting in most Oakland County lakes.

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