We are blessed with an abundance of recreational quality lakes, rivers and streams in our region. Due to the combined efforts of multiple environmental and natural resource agencies over the years, these water bodies now support an unbelievable assortment of quality fish and other aquatic life. But how do you catch fish in these various environments?

**Two Basic Fishing Techniques: Active and Passive**

There are two primary methods of fishing: active and passive. Active fishing techniques involve movement: using a man-made lure to mimic a natural food type (such as a small fish, frog, crayfish, bug, etc.); casting it, usually from a boat toward the shoreline; and retrieving it, hoping that a fish sees it as an easy meal.

Passive techniques entice fish with known, natural food such as small fish, minnows or worms, or with man-made baits such as catfish and carp baits. These natural foods or man-made baits can be suspended beneath a bobber in shallow water or allowed to lie on the bottom in shallow or deeper water, hoping that fish will find them and eat them. Either fishing technique, active or passive, can be successful and enjoyable in our lakes and rivers.

**Active Fishing**

Active fishing is usually conducted from a boat, kayak, canoe, raft or power boat, with anglers casting various lures toward shore and retrieving them. There are a variety of lures to entice fish into striking. Some lures float on the surface; some dive below the surface to various depths; and some bounce along the bottom. All lure types and styles can be successful. Much depends on the time of year, weather, water clarity, temperature, habitat and species of fish targeted.

**Passive Fishing**

Passive fishing can be done from the shore line or a boat. It's most commonly conducted during the summer and targets smaller panfish such as bluegill sunfish in lakes and ponds, but it can also be done in rivers targeting larger, bottom-dwelling species such as catfish and carp that can weigh upwards of 20 pounds. (Someone caught a 96-pound blue catfish from the Ohio River near Cincinnati in 2009!) Passive fishing can be great fun, but it takes patience and perseverance.

**WANT TO LEARN MORE?**

State resource agencies in our Tri-State area have excellent resource materials to help beginner fishers:

- **Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife**
  https://ohiodnr.gov/

- **Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife**
  https://fw.ky.gov/Fish

- **Take Me Fishing, Indiana**
  www.takemefishing.org/indiana/fishing/

As always, observe all fishing regulations and license requirements.
FISH OF THE OHIO RIVER

LARGEMOUTH BASS
The largemouth bass is one of the most common sport fish in the Ohio River. Throughout the recreational season, participants in organized bass tournaments on the Ohio River pursue this prized species. Fishers return all fish caught during such tournaments to the river alive. Per their name, largemouth bass have a very large mouth that helps them catch and consume smaller fish along with other prey items in their diet including frogs, crayfish and large insects.

SMALLMOUTH BASS
The smallmouth bass is another prized sport fish frequently caught in the Ohio River. Somewhat smaller than the largemouth bass, what it gives up in size it more than makes up in fight! The smallmouth bass is characterized by a much smaller mouth than its large-mouthed cousin and has more of a bronze color than the green-hued largemouth. The current record for smallmouth bass caught in the Ohio River is 6 1/4 pounds and 21 ½ inches in length!

THE BIODIVERSITY IN THE OHIO RIVER MIGHT SURPRISE YOU. GET ACQUAINTED WITH THESE FISH THAT ALSO CALL OUR REGION HOME.
SAUGER
More sauger are caught in the tailwaters of Ohio River dams than any other species. Anglers take sauger during early spring spawning runs when they congregate near swift shoals, near the mouths of streams or in tailwaters of dams. Sauger are in the same family as walleye and yellow perch and are excellent table fare. Some people call them “jack salmon.” Adults are typically 9-15 inches long and weigh less than one pound, but they can reach 24 inches and 7 pounds.

CATFISH
Another popular Ohio River sport fish is catfish. There are several species of catfish in the Ohio; the channel, flathead and blue catfish are the most commonly caught and pursued. Blue catfish are the largest; one caught near Cincinnati weighed 96 pounds! Flathead catfish come next, with individuals weighing in at 50+ pounds not uncommon. Channel catfish in the 5- to 10-pound range are common, but they can also exceed 10 pounds.

PADDLEFISH
Paddlefish are one of the oldest, largest and most unique fish species found in the Ohio River. Also called “spoonbill catfish,” they have a large, flat snout or rostrum that extends forward from their head. They use it to detect densities of plankton, which they eat, in the water column. Paddlefish can grow up to 5 feet long and weigh as much as 200 pounds, but they are more commonly found in the 2- to 4-foot length and weighing 5-20 pounds. Paddlefish are a commercial species harvested from the Ohio River using large nets. Their eggs are marketed as caviar.
Have you wanted to go fishing but are unsure what to do once you reel in your catch? Read over these simple, helpful tips for catch and release fishing.

**Consider barbless hooks.**
Unhooking your fish will be easier with a barbless hook. You can flatten the barbs on smaller hooks with a set of pliers. Avoid multipoint and treble hooks for catch and release as they are trickier to remove without damaging the fish.

**Use the right tools.**
A pair of needle-nose pliers or a similar tool will protect your hands when removing a hook, especially when dealing with toothy fish. Grasp the hook with your tool and twist to remove it.

**Know when to leave a hook.**
If you’re fishing with live bait, there’s a chance the fish swallows the bait and lodges the hook in the gut or gills. In this case, it’s often best to cut the line, leave the hook in and release the fish. The hook will deteriorate over time. Attempting to dislodge these hooks can cause severe damage to the fish.

**Release gently.**
Return your fish to the water with care. You can slowly slide the fish back and forth, moving water over their gills to revive them. If you’re fishing in a river, face the fish with the current to get the same effect.
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