

Lake Erie 2003 Forecast

by
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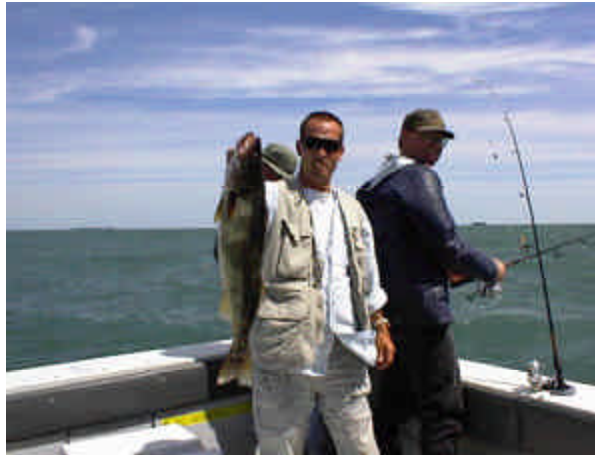
There's not too much talk of Global Warming with 12 inches off ice on Lake Erie. The Midwest has had one of it's coldest winters in a long time. At this writing, mid February, only Mother Nature will determine when the spring thaw will be.

Walleye anglers are excited because most of the limits that will come in will be from the 1999 hatch. The 1999 hatch was the 4th best hatch in the recent history of the lake. They will be from 18 to 21 inches and weigh in at nearly 3 pounds.

Last year the P.W.T. set record catches in the 2nd week of April. The conditions were perfect until about a week after they left. Then the weather turned horrible and the water resembled chocolate milk. The Ohio Division of Wildlife stated that bad weather just about devastated the 2002 hatch. This will hurt our fishing in a few years.

As the water warmed up in late May the big schools of walleye near West Sister Island turned on. These good eating 2 pound fish filled the anglers coolers that casted weapons. Weapons are merely No. 3 spinners with a 16 to 20 inch leader with a small hook tipped with a worm. Once again

gold chartreuse, orange and chartreuse, silver colors worked the best. The trollers also had great success.



Fishing stayed good thru June and July as the fish moved to the east toward the Bass Islands. There were some good catches in the Canadian waters but not as good as the 2001 catches. The Canadians still are allowed to net walleye but have quotas. Some of these nets seem to be a mile long and do a number on the fish.

The smallmouth bass has continued to be very good. There was some catch and release jig fishing in May, but the best time was late July, August, September and October. The summer and later fishing was fantastic using softcraws.

The walleye returned in late September from the east and were caught from Lorain to Huron. Most of this fishing was trolling but some casters did well also. October brought some high winds and shut the fishing down for a while. Most anglers pulled their boats early because of low water.

The yellow perch fishing in 2002 was super from April thru October. Around the island areas many jumbo's were caught on minnows and worms in 30 feet of water.

I spoke with Doug Johnson from the Ohio D.N.R. and he feels that the 2003 season should be as good as or better than 2002. The final results weren't in yet so I can't give you the 2002 figures. The walleye should be good again in late May, June and July.

The bronzeback fishing should be super again as it was in 2002.

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science and years of just plain hard work,” said Gary Isbell, executive administrator for fish management with the Division of Wildlife. “With the recent success of this program, we are looking at the possibility of stocking even more Lake Erie tributary streams with steelhead in the future.

Are you hooked yet? If you’re a serious Ohio angler and you’ve never fought a Buckeye steelhead, you owe it to yourself to give it a try.

State Record Steelhead

Ohio’s state record steelhead trout was caught in Lake Erie on October 2, 1996, by Mike Shane of New Middletown, OH. It weighed 20.97 pounds and measured 36.5 inches long!

Stream Etiquette

To ensure a quality fishing experience for everyone, fishing etiquette should be kept in mind when fishing rivers or streams. For instance, if someone is already fishing a particular stretch of river that you want to fish, it is common courtesy to ask if they mind before you join them. Another unwritten rule of the river is that once a fish is hooked all other anglers fishing in that stretch should reel in their lines, giving the lucky angler room to fight and land the steelhead. Anglers are reminded that it is illegal to fish or trespass on private property without permission of the landowner. Littering, including leaving items as small as spawn-bag material and cigarette butts, is also illegal.

Steelhead Fishing Regulations

Anglers fishing the Ohio waters of Lake Erie and its tributaries are reminded that steelhead must be at least 12 inches in length before they are of legal size. The bag limit for steelhead and salmon is five, either singly or in the aggregate, from May 1 through August 31. From September 1 through April 30 no more than two steelhead or rainbow trout may be taken per angler per day.

Free Fishing Publications

Many public fishing areas are open to anglers on northeast Ohio rivers and streams. For a list of these areas and more steelhead information, contact a wildlife district office and ask for any or all of the following free Division of Wildlife publications:

- Fishing Prospects - Northeast Ohio
- Trout Fishing in Lake Erie (Publication 34)
- Lake Erie Fishing Guide (Publication 276)
- Ohio Fish Identification Guide (Publication 334)

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Many 5 pound “jumpers” were caught. There’s lots of food for these sport fish so they remain “fat and sassy”.

The perch fishing was super last year and should be as great in 2003. There’s many good sized perch available because the Division of Wildlife limited the net and catch limits. These limits really worked with positive results.

Plan ahead to come to this vacation area. There’s lots of charters, ramps for your own good sized boat and motels to stay in. These areas get booked up months in advance. Don’t wait till March or April unless you can come up during the week which is a little slower but not much. Weekends seem to be a zoo with the population doubling or even tripling. Traffic is congested and it seems everyone’s in a hurry to get out in the lake.

You might try calling 1 800 BUCKEYE and ask for information on Ohio’s northern shore from Toledo thru Huron this summer. Port Clinton seems the central area for anglers to flock to. If you want to talk fishing you can e mail me at capt.phil@cadez-charters.com.
GOOD FISHIN!

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