

## The Lake Anna Hat Trick of Fishing

When people come to fish Lake Anna they usually pursue one of three species; crappie, largemouth bass or striper. While it's not a sure bet, you do have good odds to catch all three in one day, if you know where to look. Here are some annual patterns you might find helpful during your visit.

Crappie invade the shallow coves and shores of the lake usually around the end of March. First they feed and then they spawn. Spawning takes place over the course of a month or so throughout the lake, with the up lake fish finishing last. Once the crappie complete the spawning ritual they will move out to structure in deeper water like the ends of docks, brush piles, rocks and bridge pilings. They will move progressively deeper as the water warms into the summer. By late September, they will come back to the docks one more time before overwintering once again in deep water.

A Virginia citation crappie is 15" or two pounds.

Largemouth bass fishing on the lake has been consistently good for many years. It's not uncommon to catch a bucketmouth weighing five to six pounds at any time of the year.

Like crappie, largemouths move shallow to spawn in the spring, usually by mid April. At this time you can spot them on their beds and sight fish for them, casting lures.

Once the spawn is over the bass will leave the shallows to recover then return and feed heavily into June. This is a great time to use a topwater plug to catch a big bass.

In the summer, many largemouth's seek refuge from the heat. You'll find them in the willow grass lines in the upper end of the lake or on deep structure in areas where the water is clear and deep.

By September, they are back in the shallows in great schools and feeding on herring or shad before moving

offshore into deep water winter haunts. Vertical jigging for them is most productive November through January.

A Virginia citation largemouth is 22 inches or eight pounds.

The striped bass (a.k.a. – striper or rockfish) that are stocked into the lake each year are the same fish that inhabit the Chesapeake Bay. Each year over 180,000 striper fingerlings are released into Lake Anna. In about four years they reach “keeper” size of 20” and top out around four pounds.

Anglers have caught striper up to 26 pounds from the lake, though the average fish is about six pounds. You can cast to them with artificial lures, pull live baits and even bottom fish with cut bait.

The top fake offerings are a Zara Spook topwater, a swimbait, a multi-arm rig and a spoon. Live bait anglers will use blue back herring and gizzard shad caught from the lake with a cast net when possible. Jumbo minnows are worth trying, too, if you cannot catch your own bait.

Striper make an annual run into the upper end of the lake in both the North Anna River branch and Pamunkey Branch of the lake. They feed in shallow water often from the end of February until May and spawn sometime in April/May. Once they spawn, the fish migrate back down into the mid lake region and remain there for most of the summer. In the fall they move up lake a bit and intercept large schools of threadfin shad. By winter, they are mostly back into the mid lake region.

The Dike III region also draws striper, especially when the temperature differential from “hot” side to “cold” side is greatest. The VDGIF maintained Anglers’ Catwalk at the Dike is the best place to fish from the bank on the entire lake.

So let’s say you land a whopper bass, striper or crappie, what next?

To certify a trophy catch, take it alive to a marina where they will weigh and witness it. If you have a trophy, the marina will provide a citation form you can mail to the Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries (along with a check for \$4) to receive your citation form suitable for framing.

So where does one find out more about fishing Lake Anna?

Marinas around the lake cater to anglers eight months out of the year. They want you to catch fish, purchase lures and live bait, so the advice they offer on where-to-go and how-to is a good place to start.

Marina websites and blogs can be good sources of information for Lake Anna fishing. See the list of good ones at the end of this article.

Hiring a fishing guide is a popular way to enjoying fishing Lake Anna. The lake has a number of guides with McCotter's Lake Anna Guide Service at the senior position.

The guide service has been in operation since 1993 and now offers visitors five guides and half/full day trip options for crappie, largemouth and striper.

The best way to reach them is via email at [mcfish9144@gmail.com](mailto:mcfish9144@gmail.com) or visit [www.mccotterslakeanna.com](http://www.mccotterslakeanna.com). You can monitor their daily fishing adventures at [www.mccotterslakeanna.blogspot.com](http://www.mccotterslakeanna.blogspot.com).