

2022

FISHING FORECAST

INFORMATION FOR:

- 2021 Fish Sampling Charts
- Guide to Fishing Nebraska
- Best Waters to Catch Larger Fish
- Forecast for 17 Fish Species

NEBRASKA
— GAME  PARKS —

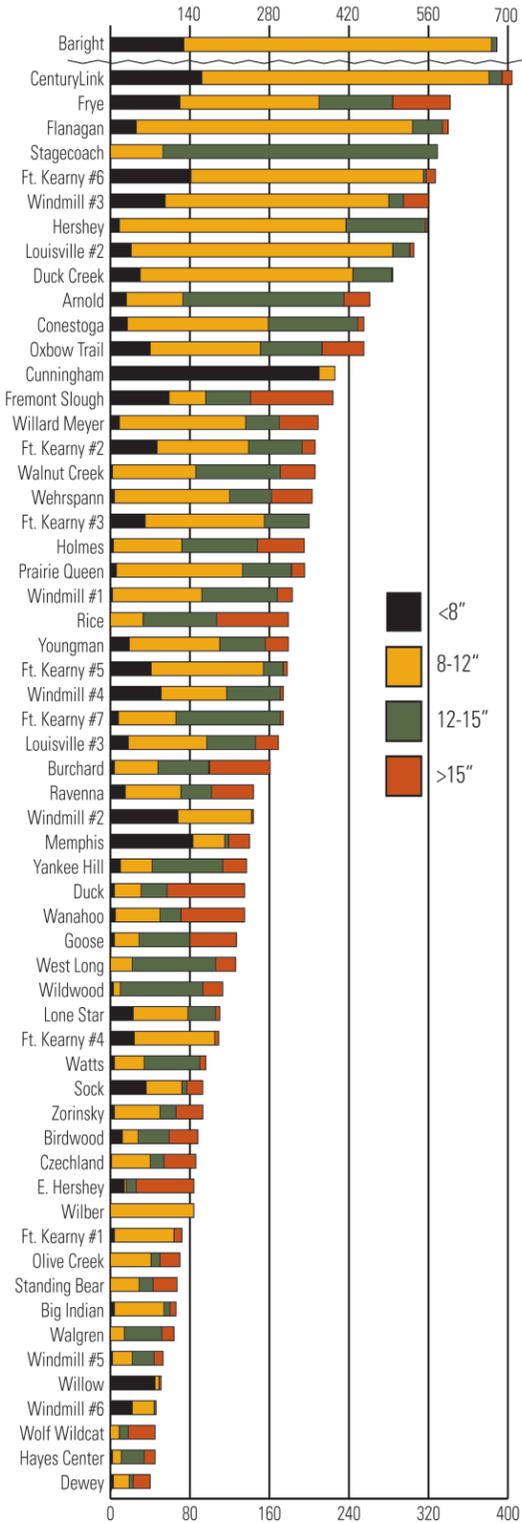


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2021 Sampling Charts

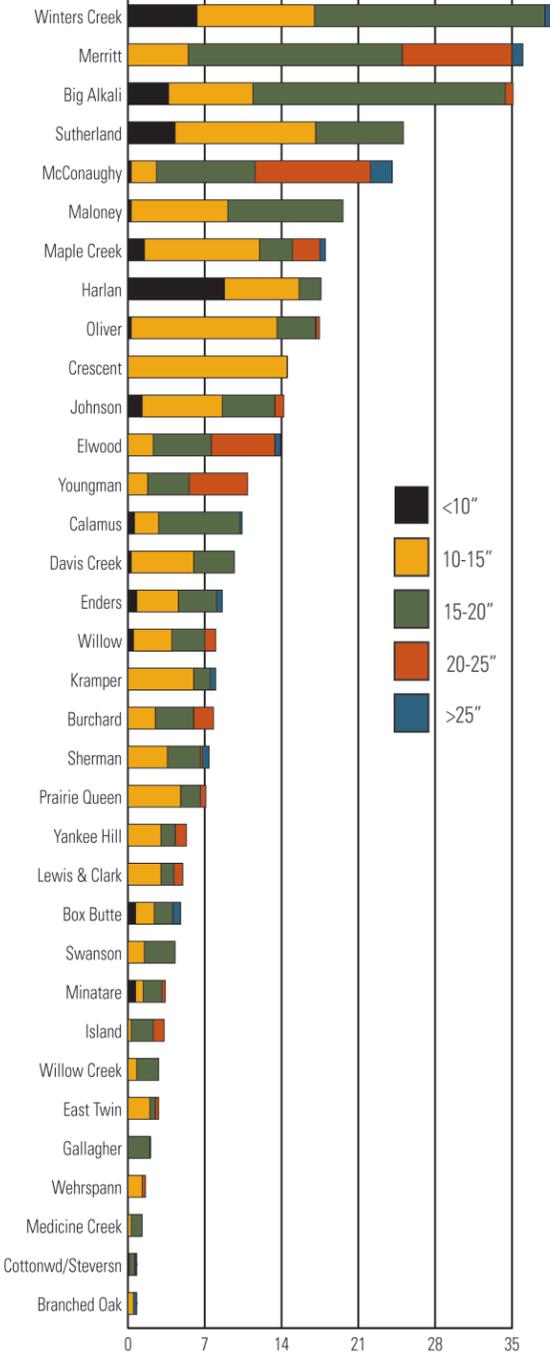
LARGEMOUTH BASS

Per Hour Electrofishing



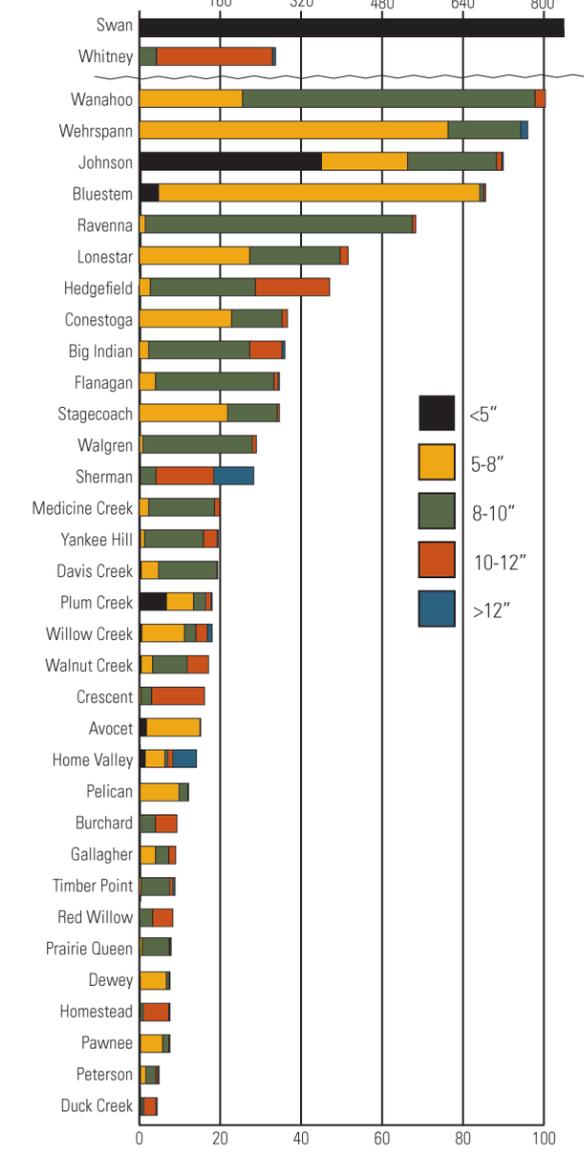
WALLEYE

Per Gill Net



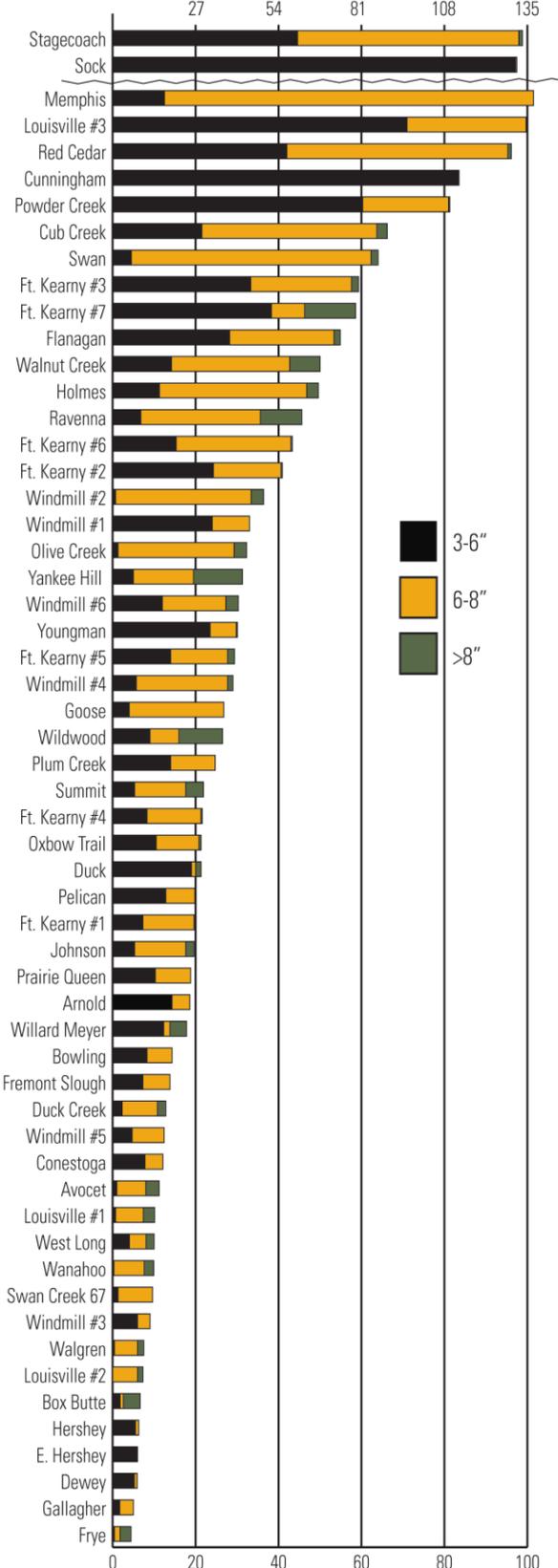
CRAPPIE

Per Trap Net



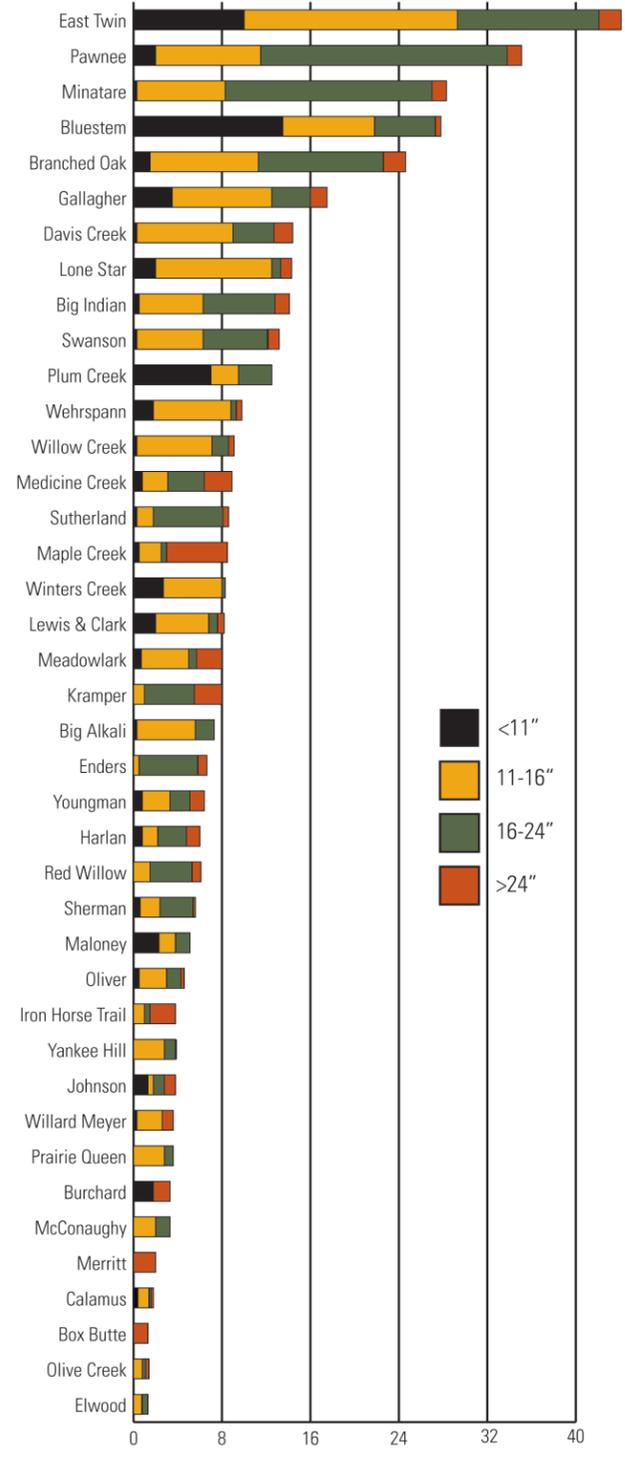
BLUEGILL

Per Trap Net



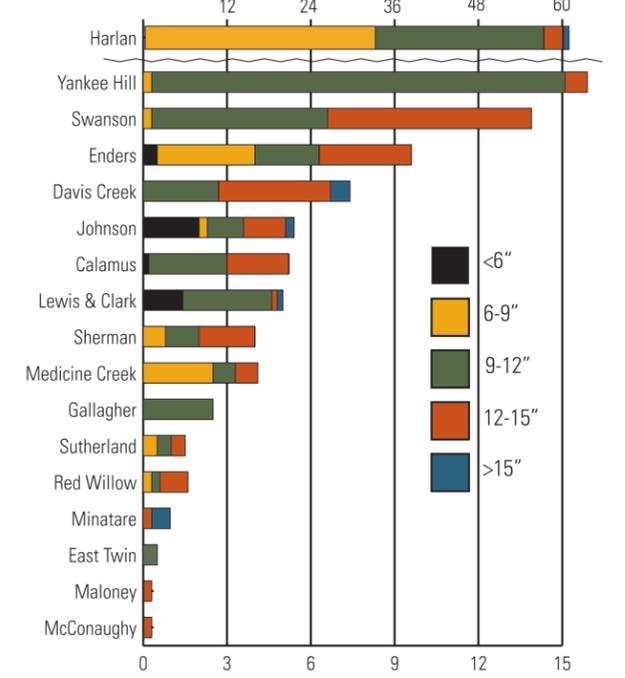
CHANNEL CATFISH

Per Gill Net



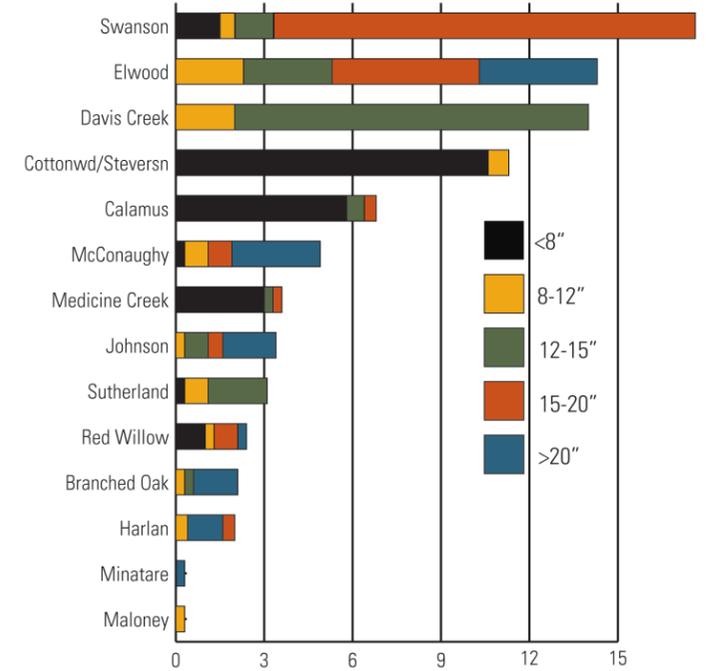
WHITE BASS

Per Gill Net



WIPER

Per Gill Net



A GUIDE TO FISHING NEBRASKA IN 2022

By Daryl Bauer, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, fisheries outreach program manager

WALLEYE

Nebraska's largest waters are the state's best walleye habitats and consistently provide the best fishing. The highest total sampling rates of walleyes in the fall of 2021 were at **Winters Creek, Merritt, Big Alkali, Sutherland, and McConaughy**. **Big Alkali, Winters Creek, Maloney, and Sutherland** will be particularly good for eating-size, 15- to 20-inch walleyes in 2022. Anglers targeting big walleyes should plan trips to **McConaughy, Merritt, Box Butte, Sherman, and Elwood** reservoirs. Smaller waters are less ideal as walleye habitats, but several of those will at least offer some walleye opportunities this year. **Youngman, Burchard, and Maple Creek** will offer anglers a chance to catch walleyes in eastern Nebraska while anglers in western Nebraska should check out **Oliver**.

WHITE BASS

White bass also are open-water predator fish that thrive in Nebraska's largest reservoirs. The most white bass in 2022 will be found at **Harlan, Yankee Hill, Swanson, Enders, and Davis Creek**. Most of the white bass at Harlan will be less than 12 inches this year, but that big year-class should produce great fishing in years to come. Also, **Calamus, Minatare, Johnson and Lewis & Clark** will offer fewer white bass overall, but bigger white bass: fish larger than 12 inches and even some larger than 15 inches.

WIPERS

Wipers are white bass X striped bass hybrids, and, like their parent species, they also are most successful in open-water habitats – Nebraska's largest reservoirs. **Swanson, Elwood, Davis Creek, Calamus, and McConaughy** reservoirs will offer the most wipers in 2022. **Harlan and Red Willow** also will offer some good wiper fishing this year. Anglers looking for trophy wipers in 2022 will find **Elwood and McConaughy** hard to beat, but **Johnson and Branched Oak** have some big fish, too. All wipers caught at Branched Oak must be released immediately.

BLUEGILL

Anglers can take their kids to catch some "sunnies" on just about any small body of water in Nebraska. The best waters always are the ones that produce numbers of 8-inch-and-larger bluegills. Small- to medium-size reservoirs across

Nebraska offer some of the best bluegill fishing every year, with **Yankee Hill, Wildwood, Walnut Creek, Summit, Box Butte** and **Willard Meyer** topping the list in 2022. Nebraska's Sandhills lakes offer lower densities of bluegills but can produce some trophy bluegills, with the biggest fish exceeding 1 pound. The best Sandhills lakes in 2022 will be **Avocet, Frye and Watts**. Anglers should remember that bluegills that big are rare fish and worthy of having a picture taken and then returned to the water. Pits, ponds and oxbows like **Fort Kearny No. 7, Ravenna, Windmill No. 2** and **No. 6** and **Louisville No. 1** also will produce some quality bluegills this year.

CRAPPIES

Crappies are another panfish that can be found throughout Nebraska, with the quest being finding waters that will produce fish larger than 10 inches. **Whitney Reservoir** is a perennial favorite and again will be in a class by itself in 2022. Other reservoirs that will be good for crappies this year will be **Hedgefield, Sherman, Big Indian, Homestead, Burchard, Walnut Creek and Red Willow**. Sandhills lakes tend to have lower densities of panfish like crappies, but can offer some of the biggest, fattest, black crappies in the state. **Crescent** and **Home Valley** lakes will be the best of the Sandhills lakes this year.

LARGEMOUTH BASS

Water bodies that offer stable water levels, clean water and an abundance of shallow-water cover, especially aquatic vegetation, are those in which largemouth bass thrive. In Nebraska, small reservoirs, Sandhills lakes, pits, and ponds tend to provide the best of that habitat. Some of those waters can have high densities of bass, which tend to produce excellent panfish fishing as largemouth bass keep panfish numbers in check. However, waters with lots of bass may not necessarily be the best for producing big bass. When looking at the sampling data for the best bass waters, those with the highest numbers of bass may not offer opportunities to catch fish larger than 15 inches. On the other hand, lower densities of largemouth bass can offer anglers the best opportunities to catch bass larger than 15 inches. Some small- to medium-size reservoirs that will be particularly good this year include **Wanahoo, Burchard, Holmes, Oxbow Trail** and **Wehrspann**. Pits, ponds and

oxbows are some of the best bass fisheries in the state, **Fremont Slough, East Hershey, Ravenna, Birdwood** and **Arnold** will offer some excellent bass fishing in 2022. Sandhills lakes should be particularly good for some pretty, chunky bass this year. **Duck, Rice, Frye, and Goose** lakes will be good bets for some 15-inch-and-larger bass. Private waters always produce some of the best bass fishing in the state, and many Nebraska anglers have permission to fish at least one of those privately-owned waters. In addition, some private pits and ponds have been enrolled in the Open Fields and Waters Program and are open to public, walk-in access. Refer to the Public Access Atlas for those waters (outdoornebraska.gov/publicaccessatlas).

CHANNEL CATFISH

Channel catfish are a popular fish in Nebraska and are found widely across the state. **Pawnee, Minatare, East Twin, Branched Oak, Big Indian** and **Sutherland** reservoirs will all offer good numbers of 16-inch-and-larger channel cats in 2022. For cats longer than 24 inches, fish **Maple Creek, Kramper, Medicine Creek, Meadowlark, Iron Horse Trail** and **Merritt** this year. Voluntary catch-and-release of large, trophy catfish is a practice that should be considered by anglers on any Nebraska water as it takes years to grow channel cats that large. Special regulations apply to channel catfish caught at Merritt. For a different experience, do not overlook Nebraska's warm-water rivers like the **Missouri, Platte, Elkhorn** or **Niobrara** as they also are excellent catfish fisheries. There are some areas where public access is available on Nebraska rivers. In addition, check out the Open Fields and Waters Program for additional access to warm-water streams and rivers on private lands.

OTHER SPECIES

Nebraska is known for its diverse fishing opportunities. Besides the species highlighted in the fish-sampling graphs on the reverse side, there are a variety of other fish that can be pursued.

In addition to bluegills, Nebraska offers opportunities to catch other sunfish species, like **REDEAR SUNFISH**, at **Louisville SRA, Prairie Queen, Bowling** and **Walnut Creek**.

SMALLMOUTH BASS can be caught at **Johnson** and **McConaughy**, as well as the **Missouri River** in northeastern Nebraska.

BLUE CATFISH can be found in reservoirs like **Pawnee**, **Branched Oak**, **Medicine Creek** and **Swanson**, but look to the **Missouri River** in southeastern Nebraska for the biggest blue cats – some fish weighing triple digits.

FLATHEAD CATFISH can be found in the **Missouri River** as well as in reservoirs like **Harlan**, **Sherman**, **Branched Oak** and the **Tri-County canal** system. All flatheads at Branched Oak must be released immediately after capture and anglers also should consider releasing big flatties on other fisheries.

SAUGER fishing will be best on **Lewis & Clark Reservoir** and the **Missouri River** in northeastern Nebraska, but **Johnson Reservoir** and the **Tri-County canal system** also have good numbers of sauger.

SAUGEYE are a walleye X sauger hybrid and stocking is producing some excellent angling opportunities for them at **Big Indian 11a**, **Willard Meyer**, **Olive Creek**, **Red Willow**, and **Meadowlark**.

YELLOW PERCH always are a tasty and popular panfish; in 2022 some of the best yellow perch fishing will be found at **Avocet**, **Dewey** and **West Long** lakes in the Sandhills.

Sandhills lakes are some of the best **NORTHERN PIKE** habitats in the state, as well; **Dewey** and **Crescent** lakes will be best, along with **Box Butte Reservoir**. Reservoirs in southern and eastern Nebraska typically are too warm for cool-water northern pike, but **Wanahoo** and **Flanagan** are relatively new and currently



have some pike habitat and pike fishing. All pike must be released at Wanahoo and all fish must be released at Flanagan.

MUSKELLUNGE also can be found in Nebraska. To catch this trophy, toothy predator, anglers should target **Merritt**, **Calamus** and **Zorinsky** reservoirs, as well as **Mormon Island West** and **L.E. Ray Lake**. **Cottonwood-Steverson**, deep in the Sandhills, also has an excellent population.

Nebraska also has waters that support cold-water fish year-round where anglers can pursue a **TROUT** Slam by catching rainbows, browns, brooks, and possibly even cutthroats and tigers (brown trout and brook trout hybrids). Most of these cold-water streams are in western and northern parts of the state; the **East Branch of Verdigre Creek**, **Long Pine**, **Soldiers**, and **Ninemile** creeks are favorites among trout anglers. In 2022, the rainbow trout fishing at **Lake Ogallala** will continue to be good, and anglers might even catch some cutties from the **White River** and **Soldier Creek** in the Pine Ridge.

Photo: Nebraskaland Magazine/NGPC