**Lake Anna Fresh Water Rockfish (Striper) Fishing**

**(Also Largemouth Bass and Channel Catfish)**

(updated 27 Feb 2018)

General:

Lake Anna is located southwest of Fredericksburg and Thornburg.  It is about 1 hour, 40 or 45 minutes from Springfield.   Fishing trips are normally half-day, 6-hour, or 8-hour events unless we catch our limit earlier than that (current limit is four fish over 20 inches for each fisherman, plus we sometimes get extras from the guide).   If you catch a nice largemouth bass or catfish, that doesn’t count towards the limits. I check solunar tables in three or four popular fishing apps to pick the best dates to fish. Normally, I try to pick those days displaying very good or excellent ratings. These predictions can be reversed by weather conditions, e.g., barometric pressure changes. Sometimes, however, they don’t seem to match or work at all (unproven predictive technique).

The lake does have ice in the winter. Winter fishing isn’t normally recommended. March and April are the two months when you are more likely to catch “trophy size” rockfish. During the summer, you are most likely to catch rockfish in the 20-27 inch range, including a lot of throw-backs that are just under 20 inches.

We currently use Jim Hemby and a close associate, Tony Smith, as the guides. They use specially equipped pontoon boats with sophisticated fish finders. Other guides may use different kinds of boats. The boat, all fishing equipment, and fresh live bait (netted the same day) are provided by the fishing guide. Check out Hemby’s blog at  <http://blog.jimhemby.com/> . You can see how they’ve done yesterday, last week, etc. You can also see how the guides very effectively use their fish finders. The guides will show you the best techniques for ensuring that fish actually get into the boat. This year, we may also try a new guide that uses live bait but seems to focus on artificial trolling rigs during the warmer months.

While a guide will take out anywhere from two to six fishermen on a pontoon boat, the optimum arrangement is four fishermen per boat. With five or six fishermen, the boat becomes very crowded and confused, particularly when multiple fish are on the lines (up to 13 poles when trolling and about 8 to 10 poles if fishing straight down). The cost goes up or down based on the number of fishermen and the length of the trip. Last year, one boat with four fishermen costs $550 ($137.50 each) for 6 hours of fishing. Six hours of fishing still allows sufficient time to clean the fish and drive home.

In 2018, the DIA Rod & Gun Club is sponsoring at least three trips to Lake Anna. In order to increase participation in club activities, the Board has again authorized member subsidies ($15 per club-sponsored event for a maximum of two events). Non-members can participate in the trips, but the cost is $10 more per trip, they aren’t eligible for subsidies and the sign-up and confirmation process is different. Members will have priority over non-members. Non-members are encouraged to join the club. It is well worth the $40/year in dues.

Planning Process:

* I will notify the Rod & Gun Club Newsletter POC of a planned upcoming trip and the approximate time frame. When the newsletter is disseminated, the article will ask for members to notify me if they are interested. A reply or cut-off date will be included in the article (usually 10 days after the newsletter is sent). Those members who respond by that date will have first priority for the trip (in the order that I hear from them).
* The plan is to have the actual fishing dates locked down with the guide by or before the above reply or cut-off date.
* If there are still openings after the first reply or cut-off date, I will notify, by email, everyone (members and non-members) on my active list of interested fishermen. A second reply or cut-off date will be included in the notification (usually about 10 days after I send out the email).
* If you are a club member and definitely want to fish on the proposed day, notify me by email as soon as possible but not later than the second reply or cut-off date. If you aren’t sure about the date, and would at least like to be a “hot stand-by”, that is OK. Just let me know. If you are not a club member and definitely want to fish on the proposed day, I will list you as a “hot stand-by” for that day. The same applies for other family members, friends, or co-workers if they are not members. Members will be locked-in in the order that I receive their requests. If there are still openings (not filled by members) after the second reply or cut-off date, I will fill any remaining open slots from the “hot stand-by” list (members first; then non-members).
* Shortly after the second reply or cut-off date, I will send out another email. That email will provide information on who is confirmed (fisherman or “hot standby”) and request a check in a specific amount from all but the “hot stand-bys” by a payment due date (usually 10 days after the email goes out. Please send the checks to me at 3827 Farrcroft Drive, Fairfax, VA – 22030.  They should be made out to DIA Rod and Gun Club. I will forward your checks to the club treasurer who will deposit them in a club checking account. If you are identified as a “hot standby,” I will not ask for your check unless you are confirmed.
* If I don’t receive checks by the payment due date, the next “hot stand-by” will be confirmed to take your place, and your name will go to the end of the “hot stand-by” list.
* If it is necessary for a confirmed fisherman to cancel and sufficient time remains to notify and confirm a “hot stand-by”, the stand-by’s check will be sent to the fisherman who needed to cancel. If no “hot stand-by” is available to fill the vacant slot or if the original fisherman cannot find his own replacement, the original fisherman defaults and gets no refund.  A no-show also defaults and gets no refund. This prevents unfair situations where cancellations or no-shows cause the other fishermen to pay more.
* The best way to ensure that friends, relatives, and close fishing partners go out on the same boat is to make sure all are members and send in your checks early and at the same time. I’ll try to keep you matched up, but can’t guarantee it. Keep in mind that it is usually very difficult to keep you matched up if one of you is not a member.

Preliminary Directions (from Springfield):

* Take I-95 south to the Thornburg exit (about 9 miles south of Fredericksburg).  You’ll find motels, gas stations, a McDonalds, and a Burger King near the exit. McDonalds is open early in the morning in the warmer months if you need to make a stop.
* Go west on Morris Road (#606) following the Lake Anna Park signs.  You’ll go through the very small towns of Trap and Snell.
* Keep going straight west on #606 until you see #208 West (Courthouse Rd.); keep following #208 West. It will eventually make a left turn going towards Lake Anna. Proceed on #208 west after the turn for about 11.3 miles to just before the main bridge at Lake Anna.  The Highpoint Marina and motel is off to the right before you get to the bridge. There is a lit sign for the marina, but it is difficult to see in the early morning. If you cross over the bridge, you need to turn around.
* The remaining directions, if any (probably with geo coordinates), will be passed a few days before the fishing date.
* There is no cost for parking at a marina if you are fishing with a guide using that marina.

Preliminary Directions (from Richmond):

* Take #33 west/#522 north or just #522 north to Mineral
* At Mineral, take #522 north/#208 east until you get to an intersection with a light just south of the lake.   Turn right on #208 east and continue until you pass over the main bridge at Lake Anna.  The Highpoint Marina and motel are off to the left after you cross the bridge. There is a lit sign for the marina, but it is difficult to see in the early morning.
* The remaining directions, if any (probably with coordinates), will be passed a few days before the fishing date.
* There is no cost for parking if you are fishing with a guide using that marina.

Preliminary Directions (from Manassas):

* Take I-66 west to #29 south (towards Culpepper and Charlottesville).
* Proceed on #29 south to Culpepper.
* At Culpepper, take #522 south. As you near Lake Anna, you will see some of the far western portions of the lake.
* A few miles after seeing the first signs of Lake Anna, you’ll get to an intersection with a light that is just south of the lake. Turn left on #208 east and continue until you pass over the main bridge at Lake Anna.  The Highpoint Marina and motel are off to the left after you cross the bridge. There is a lit sign for the marina, but it is difficult to see in the early morning.
* The remaining directions, if any (probably with coordinates), will be passed a few days before the fishing date.
* There is no cost for parking if you are fishing with a guide using that marina.

Departure Points and Time:

Normally, we assume that departure time is between 6:00AM and 6:30AM and that we depart from Highpoint Marina. The actual time and departure marina won’t be determined until a few days before we fish.  The reason:  the guides assess daily where the greatest concentrations of fish are located, and they want to minimize the time needed to get to those areas of the lake.   I’ll provide the departure time and final directions to the designated marina as soon as I know.   I suspect everyone will drive directly down I-95 that morning and not stay overnight in a motel.  If not familiar with the two lane roads leading to Lake Anna in the dark, you may want to allow more time for the drive (normally about 1 hour, 40-45 minutes from Springfield).   If you do want to stay in a motel, Highpoint Marina Motel is an option.  The motels at the Thornburg exit off I-95.

What to bring:

* Poncho or other rain gear (they will fish in the rain, but not when it is lightening)
* Layers of clothing appropriate for the weather that day (e.g., heavier jacket in early morning and possibly down to shirt or light jacket by mid-day)
* Hat and sun screen (there is no protection from the sun on the boat)
* **Virginia fresh water fishing license** (very important; can be ordered on-line at:   <http://secure01.virginiainteractive.org/horf/>  );  if you are 65 or over, recommend a lifetime hunting and fishing (incl. trout) license.
* Lunch, snacks, and drinks (don’t bring bananas – long story, but it is a fishing superstition on Lake Anna)
* Small bag or cooler (leave medium-size coolers in your car;  too much stuff on the boat makes it difficult to fish)
* Three or four gallon-size, zip-lock freezer bags for fillets.
* Sharp filet knife
* $20 cash tip for the guide
* Small camera or smart phone for pictures

Note 1: There is no head or porto-potty on these pontoon boats. Men can pee off the back of the boat. Women get to use a bucket in the back of the boat. The McDonalds at the Thornburg exit and High Point Marina are open early. Both have bathrooms.

Note 2: You can buy ice for your coolers at the marina or nearby gas stations after the fish are cleaned.

Fairness rules:

* Trolling: This is usually in March or April. There is a good chance of catching trophy stripers. The fish are shallow and feeding prior to spawn. I will bring or have someone bring a few playing cards (ace – 4) so we can draw to determine the order (1 to 4) of which fisherman picks up the next pole with a fish on it.   Generally, if you hook and clearly begin fighting the fish, but it gets off, the next fishermen in the order grabs the next pole, etc.   If a fish hits, but isn’t hooked, you stay in the progression and get to grab the next pole.  The reason is that Rockfish frequently hit or grab larger live bait without getting hooked.   Always keep in mind that you may have two, three, or more fish on at the same time when they are schooling, so the next fisherman in the cue has to be ready.
* Straight Down fishing: This usually occurs in the warmer months (e.g., late May to mid Sep ) when the fish are schooling and deep. Each fisherman has two poles, and it can be “fast and furious” when we are on top of a school of rockfish. There is no order (like above). You fight the fish on your two poles. The guides encourage helping one another when you are able (e.g., grabbing one of the other fisherman’s poles when he is very busy with a fish or helping to get the hook out of a fish’s mouth). Sometimes, planer boards will be put out for trolling at the same time we are fishing straight down. At other times, planer boards and artificial lures will be used by certain guides. We typically don’t use any special order here and the guide will advise us.
* Filets: We filet and equally divide all rockfish and large or small-mouth bass at Lake Anna. If anyone desires to keep any channel catfish, it is unnecessary to share. Because there is only one small fish cleaning table, it becomes too hectic and dangerous for eight fishermen to be cleaning at the same time. For that reason, I’m now scheduling the two boats per fishing event a day apart (four fishermen each day).