

# Fall is fine for fishin'

By TED SULLIVAN

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**If you've put your fishing reel away for the winter, you may want to consider dusting it off one more time. Janesville Gazette reporter Ted Sullivan went on the water to meet with those who love fall fishing. Kyle Geissler reports. You can read more in Wednesday's Janesville Gazette.**



Photo by [Dan Lassiter](#)

Phil Symons, left, and Jim Cruse of Janesville fish on the Rock River near Blackhawk Island as the leaves begin to turn fall colors.



Photo by [Dan Lassiter](#)

**Arleigh Swanson of New Glarus keeps an eye on his line while fishing the Rock River near Blackhawk Island with fishing guide Shawn McCarten.**



Photo by [Dan Lassiter](#)

Fishing guide Shawn McCarten of It's A Keeper Guide Service works two rods while fishing with his client Arleigh Swanson on the Rock River near Blackhawk Island.



Photo by [Dan Lassiter](#)

Jim Cruse of Janesville displays a 22-inch walleye moments after reeling it in on the Rock River near Lake Koshkonong.



Photo by [Dan Lassiter](#)

Shawn McCarten of It's A Keeper Guide Service has a pair of fish finders and GPS in his boat.

Shawn McCarten drifted his 17-foot boat along the banks of the Rock River, jigging a leach along the bottom of the river.

It was a brisk morning in the headwaters above Lake Koshkonong. Fog slowly lifted, revealing leaves turning colors and a blue heron perched near the bank.

McCarten, a Janesville fishing guide with It's a Keeper Guide Service, and Arleigh Swanson, a regular client from New Glarus, were hunting walleyes.

"C'mon, big fish," McCarten said, jigging his pole. "Let's go, buddies."

Anglers such as McCarten and Swanson appreciate fishing in the fall, saying the season has cooler weather, fewer mosquitoes and no jet skis or speedboats buzzing the water.

The fish also receive less pressure, tend to be bigger and are more attracted to lures because other foods aren't as plentiful, said Don Bush, the Department of Natural Resources fisheries supervisor for the Rock River basin.

"It's just a great time of year to be out," Bush said. "The fishing should be pretty good right now."

Although other seasons are popular, fall fishing is underrated. Anglers don't have to sweat in the humidity. And they don't need to sit on ice in subzero temperatures.

"The best thing about fall fishing is there is very little competition," Bush said. "People have been out for most of the season and have gotten their fill. A lot of people have taken their boats out of the water, so you might have the whole lake to yourself."

It's hard to say whether the fishing is actually better in the fall, he said.

Fish are cold blooded and require less energy and food as the water temperature lowers, he said.

But the water has less food available to fish as the season progresses, making fish more attracted to lures, Bush said.

The water also is clearer, he said, and fish have an easier time seeing bait.

In McCarten's boat, he and Swanson had several poles in the water. They were fishing with night crawlers, minnows and leaches. A fish locator, sonar system and GPS were on board.

They slowly drifted in 7 to 9 feet of water. They dropped lines off the boat's edge and cast toward the banks. A few other fishing boats were nearby, but it was a quiet day.

"It is absolutely beautiful," McCarten said, surveying the water and partly cloudy sky. "If you can be out in a nice flannel shirt on cool days, it sure beats 90-degree days and the hot summer."

Swanson, who typically likes summer pan fishing, said he wanted to fish the Rock River because of its walleye population. He also wanted to get out in the cooler weather.

"Today, I mean, light shirt, partial sun, it's excellent for comfort," Swanson said. "You're not really sweltering."

The men had several bites after a couple hours of fishing, but no one caught anything. After talking with people on other boats, they learned only one man caught a fish.

"If they're not biting, they're not biting," Swanson said.

But the weather was beautiful.

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