



In this project area you will learn about conservation, fish habitat and the fundamentals of catching common freshwater fish.



Exploring 4-H Sportfishing

Spark Activity: Aquatic Food Chain Challenge

Some new lakes and ponds are stocked with 10 bluegill for every 1 bass because bass eat bluegill for food and that controls the population. So, what does a bluegill eat? They aren't picky! They will eat any organism smaller than a person's small fingernail.

To catch a bluegill, start by going out and finding or catching a small organism that you can use as bait on a small hook. Look under rocks and logs to catch a worm or grub. Or use a net to explore the organisms in the lake you intend to fish in and find an insect or bug to put on your hook! Try fishing with various organisms as bait and keep a record of what works well and what doesn't work as well. By doing this, you'll explore the aquatic food chain from the bottom up to the fish!



4-H Project Levels and Goals

Beginner

- Tie multiple fishing knots
- Identify popular local sport fish
- Properly cast a fishing pole
- Learn basic fishing tackle and bait rigs
- Learn the anatomy and handling of live fish in different situations
- Know basics of the water cycle and aquatic food chains
- Discover how the senses of sight, feel, and hearing work in a fish and how understanding those senses can help you catch fish

Intermediate

- Identify a fish you want to catch and where it lives in different seasons
- Prepare your own fishing rig and then explain the reasons you rigged it that way
- Find what a fish eats, then go to a tackle shop and try to find a lure that matches that forage
- Catch, clean and cook your own fish

Advanced

- Demonstrate what a responsible angler does when they catch a fish
- Design and demonstrate use of a fishing lure you built or designed
- Go out to a local body of water to identify/catch different species of the lake

Put Your Project Into Action

Show Your Skills

- Video tutorial of a fishing technique
- Diagram of fishing reel
- Make a lure and take a picture of the fish you caught with your own lure
- Diagram of different fishing habitats
- Examples of different fishing knots

Service and Leadership

- Learn about state and federal regulations related to fish habitat and harvest
- Keep the bodies of water clean – pick up trash
- Create a fishing group/club
- Do a talk or demonstration on fish habitat and different bodies of water
- Demonstrate proper conservation as a responsible angler

Entrepreneurship

- Create your own lures to sell
- Create a fishing YouTube channel
- Create a fish guiding business
- Start a fishing tournament club

Technology Connection

- Fish finders – How to properly read the information that it gives
- Technology in fishing rods – How the newest materials give both sensitivity and strength of the rod
- Facebook groups – Connect with a fishing group and participate in tournaments and discussions

Connecting with a Mentor

- Local tackle and bait shops
- Local sportsman's clubs
- Conservation officers (they give great detail and know the most up-to-date information on various bodies of water)

Events

- Illinois 4-H Fishing Fun-Fest
- Local fishing tournaments
- Fishing Facebook groups



Careers for People Interested in Sportfishing

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Conservation Officer | Lure Designer |
| Fish Hatchery Worker | Fishing Retail Worker |
| Park Ranger | Outdoor Industry |
| Professional Fisherman | Ambassador |

Start a Conversation

Can fish of the same species and the same length have different weights? Why or why not?

How could you find out what colors a fish actually sees underwater?

Want to learn more?

go.illinois.edu/4Hsportfishing

Explore more at Illinois 4-H!

4-H.extension.illinois.edu



Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences

University of Illinois | U.S. Department of Agriculture | Local Extension Councils Cooperating.
University of Illinois Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.

Credits: Austin Weidhuner, Fishing & Marine Product Specialist, Tournament Angler | University of Illinois Extension staff that contributed to this resource include Curt Sinclair and Kaitlyn Prehoda | 4-H Spark Sheets are a collaborative effort of 4-H staff, volunteers, alumni and teens from across Illinois. A big thanks to the many contributors and reviewers!