A WORLD OF UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITY

FISHING NEW HAMPSHIRE’S URBAN LANDSCAPES

BY JAY MARTIN
The Merrimack Valley of New Hampshire is home to the state’s three largest cities: Manchester, Nashua, and Concord. The Capital Region around Concord is about 34 miles from the Gate City (Nashua), with Manchester located almost equidistantly between them. Within this half-hour drive you will pass through New Hampshire’s most developed and densely populated corridor, and while the term “metro” doesn’t truly apply to this trifecta, these municipalities are home to almost 244,000 Granite Staters.

New Hampshire boasts some 12,000 miles of flowing rivers and 975 lakes that accent its landscape, providing seemingly endless opportunities for anglers to get a line in the water. But some of the best fishing is located in urban areas. With the state’s biggest cities so convenient to each other, a whole world of urban fishing opens up for anglers of all ages and experience levels. The fishing is diverse, you don’t need a boat, and exciting opportunity is close to home and easy to access. All you need to know is what you want to catch, the seasons and limits for each species, and how to properly release a fish after it has been landed if you are not going to bring it home for dinner. Here’s a city-by-city breakdown of the best locations, and the species found at each, to help you start successfully fishing in urban New Hampshire.

**Concord and the Capital Region**

The Capital City is the third largest in the state with a population of over 42,000 and is located fifteen minutes north of Manchester along Interstate 93. With rivers and ponds situated within city limits or close by, residents of both Concord and Manchester’s northern suburbs have easy access to a diversity of fisheries and environments to enjoy.

*Turkey Pond (1)* is populated with a variety of warmwater species, but this 332-acre water body is one of the area’s best places to target trophy-sized largemouth bass and black crappie. Launch your canoe or kayak from the Clinton Street access point.

*Sewalls Falls Multi-Use Recreation Area (2)* covers approximately five miles of the Merrimack River, its shoreline, and some of the associated upland. The banks are steep in some places and densely vegetated in others. A boat ramp and parking lot are located off Sewalls Falls Road. Car-top access and more parking is located off Second Street. Ease of access and annual trout stocking make this a premier destination.

Hannah Dustin Memorial Park (3) in Boscawen is located at the confluence of the Contoocook and Merrimack rivers and is a bounty of smallmouth bass, sunfish, yellow perch, and trout. This park offers the angler easy access and plenty of shoreline opportunity.

From the ease of shoreline access to the Merrimack River near either the *Everett Arena (4)* or the *New Hampshire Technical Institute (5)* to the specialized fly fishing opportunities of *Archery Pond (6)* located in Bear Brook State Park, Concord and its surrounding towns have much to offer the area angler—or those who are just visiting for the fishing!

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* Refer to the map on page 18 for corresponding location numbers.
Opportunities Around Manchester

The Queen City is the Granite State’s largest with a population of about 110,000 and has experienced an inspiring resurgence, much like Concord, in its city center. An influx of industry to the city’s Millyard district has helped fuel economic and population growth regionally, yet opportunities for amazing angling exist amid the urban revitalization, providing life-long residents and those newly relocated with opportunities to get out and enjoy a diversity of fisheries within minutes of home.

Massabesic Lake is the area’s finest resource for the angler looking for convenience and the ease of shoreline access. Because the lake is the main water source for the region, wading and swimming are not permitted. Be sure to follow all posted protocols and regulations. Dirt roads skirt the shoreline, and there are a number of great locations around the lake for fishing. **Front Park (7)**, located off of Route 101’s Exit 1, on Bypass 28, is a large park with ample parking and plenty of shoreline access. **Deer Neck Bridge (8)**, sited a bit further south on Bypass 28, also offers a number of shoreline fishing prospects, and **Clair’s Landing (9)** in the town of Auburn, located on Route 121, is a great spot to bring the family with a variety of fishing sites along the shore.

The Merrimack River runs through the heart of Manchester and offers shoreline fishing access in several locations. Some of the spots to explore include **Riverfront or Arms Park (10)**, which offers not only a kayak launch but access to some great smallmouth bass fishing, and **Moore Falls (11)** in Litchfield, which is a great fishing spot just minutes from the city that has a wilder “off the beaten path feel.”

And definitely check out the shoreline below the Amoskeag Bridge—named after the Penacook People’s word for “good fish place.”

Another river you won’t want to skip in Manchester is the Piscataquog, a spring and early summer destination for trout anglers and unique because of the presence of other warmwater fish. **The Kelley Street Bridge (12)** offers shoreline access below, and you will find that the fishery transitions as you work your way downstream toward the Merrimack, angling for trout under the bridge and then both small and largemouth bass the further downstream you travel. **Piscataquog River Park (13)** is accented with a growing trail system on both sides of the river that offers dozens of spots to cast a line for both warmwater

If you are angling for an afternoon of fun, not dinner, be sure to learn the art of responsible “catch-and-release.” Visit [fishnh.com/fishing](http://fishnh.com/fishing) for more information about these locations, download the regional fishing guides from our publications page at fishnh.com/fishing.

A view of the Notre Dame bridge from Arms Park in Manchester © JON BILOUS / DREAMSTIME.COM
and coldwater fish. The park entrance off of Douglas Street has a boat launch, while the entrance adjacent to Precourt Street provides easy access to the walking trails.

**Nashua, The Land Between Two Rivers**

Nashua’s name is Native American in origin and translates as “the land between two rivers.” Located between the Merrimack and Nashua rivers, the Gate City is home to almost 88,000 people, borders Massachusetts, and offers some amazing angling. **Mine Falls Park (14)** is just a few minutes from downtown Nashua and known for its extensive network of recreational trails that follow the Nashua River. Several miles of paths located between Mine Falls Dam and downtown create seemingly endless opportunities for anglers to cast from the shoreline with the chance to reel in small and largemouth bass, bluegills, and even carp. **Mill Pond (15)**, also located within the park, has a boat launch and easy access from the shore to largemouth bass, bluegills, and yellow perch.

No matter which city you call home, or your angling expertise, there are so many close-to-home fishing spots to explore that it may take you all of this spring, and a good part of the summer, to pick the one that’s officially “yours.” So get outside, enjoy some time on the water, and be sure to bring the kids.

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**WHAT TO BRING WHEN HEADING OUT**

Your urban fishing adventure will be even more fun if you pack the right gear. Novice anglers will have their best day with a fishing rod outfitted with a spin-casting reel, and everyone should remember to dress for changing weather. Bring sunblock, a hat, sunglasses, water and snacks, bug repellent, and don’t forget your fishing license! Be sure to include in your tackle box the basics, such as hooks, bobbers, non-lead sinkers, artificial baits, pliers, and some essential first aid supplies. If your catch is also your protein, a cooler with ice for storing your prize is always wise.

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![The rapids at Mine Falls Park, Nashua](image)

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Abundant numbers of smallmouth bass throughout the urban fishery always make for plenty of exciting fishing action. On warmer summer days set your bait in deeper waters off of rocky outcrops to tempt this hard-fighting fish to bite.
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