



## **Status of the Illinois Muskie Fishery-2010**

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The following article is based on the Status of Muskie Fishery in Illinois (January 2010) produced by various regional biologists in Illinois. It has been updated to include muskie stockings by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, out of state sources and donated fingerlings purchased by the member organizations of the Illini Muskies Alliance.

### **Argyle Lake, Winnebago Co.**

Previously stocked with tigers since 1985, this 95 acre lake, located in McDonough Co., was added to the muskie stocking list in 2000. This lake was stocked with 186-11.2" muskie in 2007. There is a 10 H.P. and 36" minimum size limit at Argyle.

### **Busse, Cook Co.**

First lake to be stocked in the county with natural muskie by the IDNR, the main pool of about 400 acres was stocked with muskie fingerlings in 2007. Busse received 840-10.9" muskie in 2009. Just under 200 of the 2007 fish were implanted with PIT tags (Passive Integrated Transponders) to attempt to track these fish over time. Newly stocked fish won't be vulnerable to our sampling gear, in large numbers, until spring 2010 at age 3+ years old when males approach sexual maturity. Females should take another year reach maturity. Growth rates are expected to faster than in the Chain O' Lakes but not as fast as lakes further south where growing seasons are even longer. Part of the Forest Preserve District, Busse contains steep shorelines, downed timber, stumps and submergent vegetation. Gizzard shad should be the main forage. There is a boat launch available, a 36" size limit and electric trolling motors only restriction at this lake.

### **Canton Lake, Fulton County**

This 250-acre water supply lake, which has a gizzard shad forage base, was stocked with tiger muskies from 1985 through 1997. In 2000 Canton was added to the natural muskie stocking list. In a trap net survey during the spring of 2008, 30 muskies were captured up to 26". This lake was stocked with 1,247-6" muskie fingerlings in 2009. There is a concrete boat ramp, camping, various user fees, a 42" size limit and 85 HP limit at this lake. Canton has a maximum depth of 35 feet, housing developments on about half of its shoreline and wood as the main structural element in the lake. Call the Canton City Hall (309) 647-0288 for more information.

### **Canvasback, Perry Co.**

This former strip-mine lake is 60 acres in size with high visibility and depths approaching 100 feet. It is located in the Denmark Area of Pyramid State Park and was added to the muskie stocking list in 2002. This lake was stocked with 100-10.8" muskie in 2008. Muskie up to 37" have been captured at this lake There is a 10 H.P. and 36" minimum size limit at Canvasback. Fishing is prohibited from October 28 through February 28.

### **Carlton, Whiteside Co.**

This 76.7 acre lake was built in 1969 with a maximum depth of 27 feet and an average depth of

12 feet. Lake Carlton possesses high water clarity with visibility occasionally extending down 15 feet. The lake has numerous bays, points, and extremely shallow flats of submerged vegetation and water lotus beds. A survey concluded that Carlton receives 606 man hours per acre of fishing pressure. Lake Carlton, although only 77 acres, has been the number one muskie lake for almost every year since 1987. In 2009 6 trapnets resulted in the collection of 3 muskie of which two were greater than 40 inches. An angler captured a 45" muskie at Carlton last year. This lake was stocked with 76-11.1" muskie in 2009. The lake has steep shorelines, timber, vegetation, rip-rap along the dam and camping. There is a 10 H.P. and 36" minimum size limit at Carlton.

### **Deep, Peoria Co.**

Located in the Wildlife Prairie Park, Deep was formed in 1987 and is only 14 acres in size. This lake is 33 feet deep and 50% of the basin has flooded timber. Deep was stocked in 1992 with tigers and received natural muskies for the first time in 2001. This lake was stocked with 25-10.9" muskie in 2009. The lake has no boat ramp and is accessible by a trail system. Boats are allowed with electric motors only. The site has an entrance fee, concession stand, picnic area and restrooms. The site office can be reached at phone number (309) 676-0998. The current muskie regulation is a 42 inch minimum.

### **Double T, Fulton Co.**

Double T, at about 64 acres is the largest lake in the Double T State Fish and Wildlife Area, located about three miles northwest of Canton. Purchased by the state in 2001, this area was previously known as the Fulton County Goose Management Area. A former stripmine lake, Double T has steep shorelines and high visibility. The lake was created in 1983, is long and narrow and forms a T shape. Maximum depth is 65 feet. In 2002, Double T received its initial stocking of muskie. This lake was stocked with 64-10.9" muskie in 2009. The spring 2009 trapnet survey collected 9 muskies in 10 trapnet nights of effort. These fish ranged from 25 to 44 inches long. Gizzard shad are among the prey species at Double T. There is a 42" minimum size limit on muskie at Double T. Two concrete ramps were added to provide access in 2005 and only trolling motors are allowed. The site office can be reached at (309) 647-9184.

### **Eagle, St. Clair Co.**

Located near New Athens, this 101 acre lake was added to the muskie stocking list in 2007. This former strip mine has a maximum depth of 100 feet, natural springs, clear water with little vegetation and a gizzard shad forage base. There is a gravel boat launch and special hours of 6 am to 9 pm (March-December) and 8 am to 4 pm (January-February). This is the first public lake stocked with hybrids (tiger muskie) in quite some time. Largely through the efforts of the Shawnee Muskie Hunters, Chapter of Muskies, Inc. and donations from the member organizations of the Illini Muskies Alliance, 200-13" hybrids were purchased from a Minnesota hatchery and stocked into Eagle in 2007. There is a 10 HP limit and a 36" size limit at this lake.

### **Evergreen, McLean Co.**

This 900 acre lake in McLean County received 926-10.9" muskie in 2009. In 2009, the IDNR collected 3.2 muskies per trap net. The seven-year average is 2.4 muskies per net. Approximately 92% of the muskies captured in 2009 were larger than 30 inches, 29% were larger than 38 inches, and 11% were larger than 42 inches. The largest muskie collected in 2009 was a female that was 46.8 inches long and weighed 32.5 pounds. Muskie exhibited ideal weights at all sizes in Evergreen Lake. Muskie have now been in Evergreen Lake long enough to allow them to reach a large size. The muskie population in this lake is developing nicely and starting to show its true potential. Muskies were collected over the current state record during spring netting surveys in 2006 and 2007. A 45" muskie was the largest angler captured fish in

the voluntary creel survey in 2009. The McLean Co. Parks and Recreation Department has worked with local anglers to erect a barrier below the spillway to lower the escapement potential of muskie downstream. When needed, muskie are collected below the lake and returned to the lake. In 2007, approximately 225 muskies were collected and put back in the lake. In an average year, there may be 30 to 40 muskie returned to the lake. However, heavy fall rains completely destroyed the barrier in 2009. Plans are underway to install a new barrier. Evergreen Lake has two boat ramps, a 48" minimum size limit and has a 10 horsepower limit on all boats. In order to launch a boat on Evergreen Lake, a sticker must be purchased. The stickers can be purchased at the boat ramps, Comlara Park Visitor Center, or by calling (309) 726-2022.

### **Fitch and Bond, Fulton Co.**

Located on the NW edge of Lakeland Park in the city of Canton in Fulton County, this 64 acre former strip mine lake was first stocked with hybrids from 1885-1991. It received the first stocking of 13" naturals in 2000 and was stocked again with 11" naturals in 2002. A spring 2005 trap net survey produced muskie to 38". The lake has a large basin (38 acres) connected to a long narrow section (26 acres). The main forage is gizzard shad. There is a concrete boat ramp, access fee, electric motor only restriction and a 42" minimum size limit. Call (309) 647-1345 for more information.

### **Forbes, Marion Co.**

Located in the State Park in Marion Co., this 525 acre lake received an initial stocking of natural muskie fingerlings in 1999. In the 2003 muskie survey, 7 fish from 20 to 39 inches were captured. The largest was 26.23 pounds. In 2004, Forbes was stocked with 500-11" Illinois, 101-9" Ohio River Strain, 238-7.5" Ohio River Strain and 57-12" Mississippi River Strain natural fingerlings as part of the Green Gene Project. In 2005, Forbes was removed from the Green Gene Project because of poor muskie survival when it was last stocked with 350-10" (IL) and 350-12.6" (IN strain). There is a 48" minimum size limit on this lake.

### **Fox Chain, Lake & McHenry Cos.**

The Chain received 3,000-11.1" natural fingerlings from the Jake Wolf Hatchery in 2009 and 1,200 10"-14" Leech Lake strain fingerlings donated by the South of the Border chapter of Muskies, Inc., at a cost of \$12,000. The Fox Chain has developed into an outstanding muskie fishery, thanks, in part, to the donations of larger than normal size Leech Lake strain fingerlings provided by the SOB chapter of MI. We haven't collected spotted muskie proportionate to their stocking numbers but survival and success is occurring with this program, with 12 fish of 50" or greater (all Leech Lake strain) reported in 2009. Catch rates have exceeded Management Objectives established by the Esocid Task Group for several years. The objective is 0.3 fish per trap net night, catches have hovered around 2.3 muskie per trap net night overall with catch rates up to 2.6 fish per trap net night at peak catches. Fishermen reported several catches in the 50" class and many more near legal length (48") in 2009. The average Chain muskie is about 36" long (from survey data) with males averaging 32.4" long and 9.6 lbs. and females averaging 39.3" long and 16.7 lbs. The largest fish collected to date was 49.5" long and the heaviest 36 lbs. Tagged fish have been reported from all lakes in the Chain and in the Fox River as far south as Yorkville and north into Wisconsin. The longest a floy tagged fish swam at large before being recaptured was 8 years! Most fish grow approximately 2 inches per year until they reach 36" to 38" then male growth rates slow dramatically and females continue to grow at just under 2" per year. A cleithra collected from a 47" dead muskie (in 2006) was estimated at 12 years old. Generally speaking, male muskie in the Chain only occasionally exceed 40 inches but females easily grow beyond 40 inches and make up almost all fish over

42". There is a minimum size limit of 48" on the Fox Chain from the Wisconsin line south to the Algonquin Dam.

#### **Fox Ridge, Coles Co.**

This 17 acre Coles County lake was added as a new designated muskie lake in 2007. In 2009 this lake was stocked with 100-10.9" natural fingerlings, as part of a research program by the Illinois Natural History Survey. There is an electric motor only, 36" minimum size limit and special site regulations enforced at this lake.

#### **Fulton Co. Recreation Area #3**

This 46 acre lake located south of Canton, near St. David, was added to the muskie stocking list in 2007. In 2008 this lake received 90-11.4" fingerlings. This long and narrow, former strip mine lake has two boat launches and camping in the County Park. There is an electric motor only restriction, entrance fee and a minimum 36" size limit enforced on this lake. This lake has two gravel boat ramps. Call (309) 668-2931 for more information.

#### **Fulton Co. Recreation Area #4**

This 19 acre lake located south of Canton, near St. David, was added to the muskie stocking list in 2007. In 2008 this lake received 36-11.4" fingerlings. This former strip mine lake is narrow, steep, deep and clear and has two gravel boat launches and camping right on the lake. There is an electric motor only restriction, entrance fee and a minimum 36" size limit enforced on this lake. Call (309) 668-2931 for more information.

#### **George, Rock Island Co.**

This 167 acre lake in Rock Island Co. was built in 1966 and has a maximum depth of 62 feet with an average depth of 24 feet. George was stocked with 167-11.1 muskie in 2009. In 2009, 6 trapnets resulted in the collection of 12 muskie of which 3 were greater than 44 inches. The lake has a good number of 40 inch plus muskie with several muskie collected near the Illinois state record. Fishing George can be tough due to the restricted trolling motor only access, abundant gizzard shad and an annual fishing pressure, estimated between 200 and 350 man hours per acre. However, George does have state record muskies swimming in her depths. There is a trolling motor only restriction and 36" minimum size limit at George.

#### **Goldeneye, Perry Co.**

This former stripmine lake is about 125 acres in size with high visibility and depths approaching 100 feet. It is located in the Galum area of Pyramid State Park and was added to the muskie stocking list in 2002. Muskies up to 39" have been captured at Goldeneye. This lake was stocked with 100-10.8" muskie in 2008. There is a 10 H.P. and 36" minimum size limit and seasonal fishing hours at Goldeneye. From October 28 through February 28 fishing is permitted in designated areas only and fishing hours are from ½ hour before sunrise to 2 pm.

#### **Heidecke, Grundy Co.**

This 1,955 acre cooling lake was added back to the muskie stocking list in 1999. This lake was last stocked with 390-10.8" and 1,565-11.2" muskies in 2007. Muskie catch rates have been increasing as the population grows in both number and size. With the success of recent stockings, it should not take long for this lake to produce 30 pound natural muskies, as it did in the past. Collins Station, the electrical generating plant, for which the lake was created, has been demolished. Without the warm water discharge from the plant, Heidecke has evolved into a more typical northern Illinois lake. The muskie population is evaluated by the biennial standardized survey, formal angler creel surveys, voluntary angler survey (green card) and via

annual spring trap netting. Since 2005, a total of 68 muskellunge have been fitted with PIT tags (internal) which provide valuable age and growth data. A number of fish have also been marked with Floy tags (external). During mid-April 2009 a total of 15 trap nets (4-foot frames w/1-inch mesh) were deployed along the "natural" shoreline area of the lake. Total effort of 45 net-nights resulted in a collection of 19 muskellunge, a 45.7% decline from the previous year which continues the downward trend which started in 2008. Long-term data analysis indicates that surface water temperatures which range from 55/F to 60/F will produce the best results. Daily surface water temperatures during the 2009 survey ranged from 48/F to 52/F. The majority of the 2009 survey was conducted during a cold front which produced high winds from the northwest for most days. As a consequence most all net sets were pounded by heavy wave action which may have inhibited the near-shore movement of muskellunge. Of the 19 muskies which were actually collected, two were recaptures and one fish was caught twice during this sampling period. Four additional smaller fish escaped the nets during the first day. The recaptured fish were both males; the first was tagged in 2006 and had gained 5.2 inches while the other was tagged in 2007 and had increased in length by 1.5 inches. A total of 6 females and 15 males were processed, ranging from 730mm/29.2" to 1043mm/41.7" averaging 848mm/33.1". For the first time ever Heidecke Lake hosted a sanctioned muskie tournament, an event which was sponsored by the IMTT. This is an up-and-coming fishery which has the potential to produce fish of trophy caliber. A 27 pound muskie was caught from shore and released in 2009. Heidecke Lake is open to fishing from April 1st to mid-October, closing ten days prior to the opening of the North Zone waterfowl season. There is a 36" minimum size limit at Heidecke.

#### **Hennepin-Hopper, Putman Co.**

This is a new backwater lake off the Illinois River, first stocked with muskie in 2002. It's approximately 1,000 acres with extensive marshy flats and deep water areas. This lake was last stocked with 1,000-10" muskie in 2005. There is a minimum 42" size limit at this lake.

#### **Johnson, Peoria Co.**

Located in the Banner Marsh area, this 600 acre lake was added to the muskie stocking list in 2001. Johnson is a former strip mine and consists of a maze of deep water areas connected to shallow flats of flooded timber. Gizzard shad are among Johnson's prey species. This lake was stocked with 600-10.9" muskie in 2009. The Spring 2009 trapnet survey collected 19 muskies in 16 trapnet nights of effort. The fish ranged from 27 to 44 inches long. The lake has a concrete boat ramp, restrooms, handicap dock, picnic area, 25 HP limit and a 36" minimum size limit. For more information, call (309) 647-9184.

#### **Johnson Sauk Trail, Henry Co.**

This 58 acre lake is restricted to trolling motors only. This lake was stocked in 1976 with tigers (hybrid muskie) and in 1988 with naturals. In 2001, a 42# muskie was captured in the IDNR nets during the spring lake sampling. This lake was stocked with 116-11.2" muskie in 2007. There is a minimum 36" size limit at this lake.

#### **Kinkaid, Jackson Co.**

This lake was built in 1972 and first stocked with muskie in 1985. Muskie habitat at Kinkaid is abundant with high water clarity, good depth, and 82 shoreline miles of necks, bays, and points. Weed beds can be found in certain shoreline areas. Large numbers of spotted suckers are available and preferred as forage. Growth rates and conditions are exceptional. A spillway barrier net was installed in the fall of 1998 at this 2,750 acre lake. No muskies have been observed below the spillway since the net was installed. In fact, the average muskie collected at

Kinkaid has increased in size the last few years. Spring 2009 trap netting resulted in the collection of 230 muskies with the largest fish measuring 47 inches and the heaviest fish weighing 28 pounds. The 2009 spring trap netting was the best on record in terms of catch per unit effort. There are a "tremendous number of muskie in the 30-40 inch range" at Kinkaid. This lake produced the largest muskie in the Illini Muskies Alliance contest (51") in 2009. A muskie tagging study is being conducted at Kinkaid and a new fish attractor project is planned for 2010. Anyone catching a tagged fish should contact Shawn Hirst at (618) 687-4546 with the tag No. (DO NOT REMOVE THE TAG-If the number is covered with algae simply scrap the algae away with your fingernail or a knife). Anyone providing a tag number will receive the history of that particular fish. Kinkaid was stocked with 2,000-10.7" muskie in 2009. There is a minimum 48" size limit at this lake.

### **Lake of the Woods, Champaign Co.**

This 25 acre Champaign County lake was initially stocked with hybrids, between 1982 and 1997. In 1992 natural muskie were introduced. In 2007, this lake received 52-11.2" natural fingerlings as part of ongoing research by the Illinois Natural History Survey. A boat ramp and boat rentals are available. Forage species include gizzard shad, there are special site regulations and no motors are allowed. There is a minimum 36" size limit at this lake.

### **Mallard, DuPage Co.**

At 89 acres, Mallard is the largest lake in DuPage County and became the only lake to be stocked with muskie, when it was initially socked in 2006. In 2008, this lake received 180-11.4" fingerlings. Mallard is a re-claimed gravel pit with a maximum depth of 25 feet and an average depth of 12 feet. Forage consists of large gizzard shad and yellow bass populations. The water is moderate to clear with some vegetation. Electrofishing during May 2008 produced a catch of six muskies from the 2007 stocking that had a mean length of 14.3 in. and a mean weight of 0.5 lbs. No juveniles from the initial stocking were sampled by electrofishing in 2007 nor were any caught during an early spring trap net survey. However, an estimated 150 juvenile muskie averaging 0.78 lbs. were caught and released by anglers from March through October 2008. This estimate was based on data from a stratified-random angler creel survey conducted for IDNR by the Illinois Natural History Survey. Most of the muskies caught by anglers were taken incidentally, as effort directed toward muskies was only 1% of the 22,493 angler-hours of total fishing effort. The plan is to survey anglers again in five years to determine effects of muskie introductions on the Mallard Lake fishery. Electrofishing and trap netting surveys also will be conducted annually to monitor survival and growth of the developing population. At this time, only shoreline fishing is allowed at Mallard Lake, but an extensive trail system and bridges to islands make for plenty of good fishing spots. Handicap accessible fishing piers are available and further access development is likely in the future.. A 48" minimum length limit is in effect at this lake.

### **McMaster, Knox Co.**

This 160 acre lake is located in the Snakeden Hollow State Fish and Wildlife Area. McMaster lake has a maximum depth of 65 feet with extremely high water clarity which occasionally extends to 25 feet. Physical characteristics include a central main basin with adjacent shallow gravel bars, abrupt drop-offs, numerous bays, points and islands, a standing timber area, extensive shallow flats of submerged vegetation and cattail flats. The management goal for muskies at this lake is to maintain a population density of 1 to 3 fish/acre that will produce a trophy fishery of healthy fish. To date, several muskie over 50" have been caught at Lake McMaster. This lake was last stocked with 270-11.2" muskie, provided by the IDNR in 2007. Spring trap net data for 2009 revealed a low catch rate of 0.50 muskie/net night (down from a 2008 catch rate of 1.87 muskie/net night and a historic high in 2006 of 2.96

muskie/net night). Water conditions at time of survey are speculated to have had a negative effect on the catch rate. Data from pit tagged muskie that were recaptured in the April survey revealed that the average female growth was 1.55 inches and 1.31 pounds/year. The average male growth was 1.13 inch and 0.63 pounds/year. Muskie anglers in 2010 can expect this unique lake to offer fish up to and over 50" and a satisfactory rate of catch for smaller muskie. There is a 42" minimum size limit and a maximum 10 H. P. size limit on this lake. This lake is also closed to fishing during waterfowl hunting season. (October-February)

### **Mill Creek, Clark Co.**

This 731 acre lake was first stocked in 1999. This lake was stocked with 366-10.9" muskie in 2009. Mill Creek has a maximum depth of 60 feet and an average depth of 22 feet with an abundant gizzard shad and white sucker population. Muskies of over 48" were reported in 2007. There is a 42" minimum size limit for muskie and an access fee charged at this lake.

### **Mingo, Vermilion Co.**

Located north of Danville, this 170 acre lake is the first body of water to be selected for Project Green Gene in 2002. This lake has a surface area of 731 acres, with a maximum depth of 60 feet, and an average depth of 22 feet. Mingo contains outstanding habitat, water quality, and abundant adult gizzard shad and white suckers for forage. Mingo received 170-10.9" muskie from the Jake Wolf Hatchery in 2009. The muskie in this lake is exhibiting great growth rates and survival. In 2009, a total of 63 muskies were captured in 6 nights of netting. The catch rate declined to 0.83 muskies per net-night. The largest muskie collected in 2009 was 38.8". High winds and bad weather hampered netting in 2009. There is a minimum 48" size limit at this lake. Public boat launching facilities are available and the Clark County Park District (217-889-3901) collects a boating access fee.

### **Otter, Macoupin Co.**

Located in Macoupin Co., this 765 acre lake is periodically stocked with threadfin shad to supplement the gizzard shad forage base. The IDNR has also been stocking adult spotted suckers in an effort to establish a self-sustaining population to supplement the sporadic shad reproduction. Due to two 100 year flood events that have occurred in recent years, surveys showed a substantial drop in overall muskie numbers at this lake. The IDNR has reinstated an annual stocking policy and installed a barrier net below the dam. Otter was stocked with 500-10.9" and 765-11.1" muskies in 2009. Information gathered from the 2009 spring netting evaluation hinted muskie numbers increased significantly from the 2008 survey (23 Muskie). Forty-seven fish were captured in March of 2009, which is more than two fold compared to 2008. These individuals measured 24.3" to 41.9", and weighed 3.6 lbs. to 22.8 lbs. in total weight. Once again, in discussing Muskie management with local anglers, and the Otter Lake Water Commission, this fishery is steadily improving since the floods. Fishermen/women are very happy with the population in place. These anglers have caught, and seen many year classes of muskie swimming in this impoundment. As usual, anglers have noted the excellent condition of these fish. With more stable water levels over time, this population should rebuild, and create improved fishing opportunities into the future. There is a 115 HP limit, 48" minimum size limit and a user fee at Otter.

### **Pana, Shelby Co.**

This 219 acre former tiger lake received hybrid stockings annually from 1985 to 1997, of anywhere from 1 to 3 times its acreage. These tigers ranged from 5"-10.5" at the time of stocking. Pana has been stocked with naturals since 2000. This lake received 440-10.8" muskie in 2008. There is a minimum 36" size limit at this lake.

**Pierce, Winnebago Co.**

This 162 acre lake was built in 1960. It was completely drained in 1970 due to a defective valve. Among the many prey species are gizzard shad, brook silversides, white suckers, and carp. This lake was added to Project Green Gene in 2003. Pierce was stocked with 162-11.1" muskies in 2009. Trap nets captured a 47.5" muskie in 2009 and an angler later captured a 47" fish last year. Good muskie population densities are indicated by this result. Of the fish collected, 56 were implanted with PIT tags as part of the genetics study. The Flatlanders Chapter of Muskies, Inc., working with the IDNR has introduced water willow to supplement the natural vegetation in this lake and help control erosion. From 1997 through 2002, 60 muskies were rescued below the dam with 25 of them taken during the wet 2000 year. This generated interest from the Flatlanders in installing a barrier net to prevent fish escapement. Initial planning and fund-raising began in 2001, but by mid-2002, the State Water Survey determined a net could not be installed due to possible dam failure. Retrieval of muskie below the dam will continue in future years. There is a 10 HP (no wake for larger motors) and a 48" minimum size limit on this lake.

**Prairie, Cass Co.**

Located in the Jim Edger Panther Creek Fish and Wildlife Area, Prairie is 210 acres and 45 feet deep. It was first stocked in 1999. This is a relatively small lake for muskies and has a sunfish forage base so growth rates and body conditions are a little lower than larger lakes with gizzard shad. On the other hand, the lake is a clear, deep, steep-sided, and has excellent woody cover and aquatic vegetation so the muskies have done pretty well. The spring 2009 electrofishing survey produced a record 20 fish. The largest however was only 41.5" and weighed just over 14 pounds. A 46.5" fish was reported on the Muskie Creel Survey Report Card that can be obtained from the site office. Many reports and pictures of large muskie, including at least one over 50" have been reported. Several reports of hybrids captured at this lake are in error. This lake was never stocked with hybrids and northern pike are not present. Prairie was last stocked with 300-10.9" muskies in 2009. There is a 48" minimum size limit on muskie and a no-wake rule for motors over 10 H. P. Two concrete ramps, campgrounds and rental cabins are available at this lake. For more information contact the site office 217/452-7741 or the district fisheries biologist's office at (309) 543-3316. 46" captured in 2009.

**Sam Dale, Wayne Co.**

This 194 acre lake was added to the Green Gene Project in 2005, replacing Forbes lake in the on-going study. This lake has a maximum water depth of 18 feet and a 1-2 foot water clarity. It has a shad forage base. Sam Dale has a 10 HP limit. This lake was stocked with 300-10.9" Illinois muskies in 2009. There is a minimum 48" size limit at this lake.

**Schuy-Rush, Schuyler Co.**

This 185 acre lake, located near Rushville, was added to the muskie stocking list in 2006. In 2007, this lake received 370-11.2" muskie fingerlings. The lake has a maximum depth of 35 feet, with an average depth of 20 feet. Stumps and deadfalls dominate the shoreline structure. Forage species are gizzard shad and small sunfish. There are two concrete ramps in the camping area and a 10 HP limit on the lake. A barrier net to prevent escapement is planned. There is a minimum 36" size limit at this lake.

**Shabbona, DeKalb Co.**

This lake was built in 1974 and first opened to fishing in 1977. Prey species include gizzard shad. Two state record tiger muskie were claimed from Shabbona Lake; the first in 1982 and the second in 1986. Two muskies estimated at over 49 pounds have been captured during

IDNR surveys. A new barrier net was installed on July 9, 2008, after an 11 inch rain the nets collapsed. The nets were repaired on 9-23-08. Members of the Quad County Hawg Hunters chapter of Muskies, Inc. periodically rescue muskies below the spillway barrier on this 319 acre impoundment. A muskie salvage in the tailwaters after the net was repaired resulted in the collection of 102 muskie. There is a study underway to install a barrier in the lake itself. In 2009, 6 trapnets resulted in the collection of 20 muskie of which all were greater than 30 inches and 12 were greater than 36 inches. The largest was 30.4 pounds. This lake was stocked with 319-11.1" muskie in 2009. There is a 48" minimum size limit and a 10 HP limit on this lake.

#### **Shelbyville, Shelby & Moultrie Cos.**

2009 stockings in this 11,100 acre impoundment were 43,000-5", 5,480-10.7" and 998-10.9" muskie fingerlings. In recent years, this lake has developed into an outstanding muskie fishery. Shelbyville also produced the state record of 50.75"-38#-8 oz., below the dam in 2002. In 2007 however, an extended spawning season resulted in an extensive muskie kill below the spillway. Catch rates have been down the last three years. However, catch rates have improved somewhat in 2008 and 2009. Nine muskies up to 39+ inches and 16.1 lbs. were collected in the 2009 fall fish population survey. Fishing prospects for 2010 remain good for numbers and size on the lake and likely moderate below the spillway. A 48.5" muskie was captured below the dam in 2009. There is a minimum 48" size limit at this lake. Public boat launching facilities are available, with a fee assessed on U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (217-774-3951) boat ramps, and free access on state park or Corp gravel boat ramps.

#### **Shovel, Peoria Co.**

Added to the muskie stocking list in 1999, Shovel is a former strip mine lake located in the Banner Marsh area. Shovel Lake was enlarged to over 200 acres in 2000. It is a "T" shaped final cut strip mine lake (74 acres) with a maximum depth of 65 feet that was attached to approximately 100 acres of littoral zone surrounding deep water pockets (25 acres of strip mine ponds). Gizzard shad are among Shovel's prey species. This lake was stocked with 200-10.9" muskies in 2009. The Spring 2009 trapnet survey collected 9 muskie in 18 trapnet nights of effort. The fish ranged from 25 to 42 inches in length. The lake has a concrete boat ramp, restrooms and picnic area. There is a 42" minimum length limit and a 25 H. P. limit on this lake. Call (309) 647-9184 for more information.

#### **Spring, McDonough Co.**

This 277 acre lake originally received its first muskie stocking in 1985. This lake was stocked with 277-11.4" muskie in 2008. There is a 10 H P and 36" minimum size limit on the lake. Access at Spring was scheduled to be improved with the addition of a concrete boat launch with docks, a restroom, concession stand, a parking lot and a fish cleaning station.

#### **Spring (North), Tazewell Co.**

This 578 acre lake, with an average depth of 2.9 feet, is used for brood stock for the muskie rearing program in Illinois. This lake is usually at least 75 percent covered by 17 different species of aquatic vegetation (mostly Eurasian milfoil) by late May each year. Under lake bed springs recharge the lake with cool water, making for a unique fish environment. Because of its proximity to the Jake Wolf Hatchery, North Spring Lake has been used as a brood source for muskie the past ten years and has provided most of the early muskie stocks for statewide stocking each year. In an effort to collect fish for egg production, extensive population assessment data has been gathered since 1991. We know quite a lot about the size structure and age of the population as well as growth. It appears that growth of female fish is excellent when compared to nation-wide populations. Growth of male muskie is in the normal range when

making a similar comparison. There is a big difference in the length at age between sexes! A 32 inch female is usually 4 years old, whereas a 32 inch male is 5 years old, on average. North Spring Lake is usually stocked every third year at a rate of between 2 and 3 fish per acre. It has been observed that significant cannibalism occurs if muskies are stocked every year. Young muskie are especially vulnerable to 1 and 2 year old male muskie at North Spring Lake. A muskie tag reading project is in its 8th year on North Spring Lake. It is important to gain information regarding growth of fish by sex and age as well as potential egg production data. This tagging project should answer many questions concerning muskie biology in Illinois in future years. In 2009, 301 muskies were collected by trap nets in March. Of these fish, 110 were females and 19 were flowing eggs when captured. All fish were taken to Jake Wolf hatchery for processing and then were returned in good condition to the lake. There were 83 recaptures of muskie tagged in previous years, resulting in excellent growth data information. This lake was stocked with 151,149 Fry, 381-10.9" and 775-11.1" muskies in 2009. Spring is stocked every three years to cut down on predation of 1 and 2 year old fingerlings. Two 48" muskies were captured at Spring Lake in 2009. North Spring Lake has three useable boat ramps and is accessible by the Manito Blacktop, 12 miles south of Pekin. No fuel or services are available; however, camping and food is. There is a 48" minimum size limit on muskies and a 25 HP limit at Spring. There are state record muskies at Spring.

#### **Staunton City, Macoupin Co.**

Staunton City Lake is located in Macoupin Co. (North of St. Louis). This lake was stocked for the first time with muskies in 1999. This lake was stocked with 84-10.9" muskies in 2009. There is a minimum 36" size limit at this lake.

#### **Sterling, Lake Co.**

This 74 acre lake is managed with the cooperation of the Lake County Forest Preserve District. Muskie fingerlings have been stocked by the Department since 1990. Survey data from spring 2009 yielded three muskie electrofishing with a D/C rig and one fish from two trapnets. The big fish was a 45" fish weighing 23 lbs. Both sampling methods exceeded Management Goals established for the lake. Sterling Lake has produced fish exceeding 48 inches long but none of these monsters have been collected by the IDNR, yet. There are no concession facilities at the lake though it offers ample picnic, pit toilets, and shore fishing access. A 48 inch length limit and 1 fish per day creel limit exist on the lake for muskie. This lake was stocked with 150-10.8" muskie in 2008. Sterling has a 48" minimum size limit.

#### **Storey, Knox Co.**

Located in Knox Co., this 133 acre lake was first stocked with tigers in 1976, which resulted in a 20 pound 13 ounce state record in 1982. Despite heavy annual fishing pressure, estimated at 300-600 man hours/acre for all species, Storey has the potential to produce 30 pound muskies. A fall water level drawdown of 5' to 6' for the purpose of predator-prey balance is an annual fish management practice. The management goal for muskie at Lake Storey is to maintain a population density of 1 to 3 fish/acre that will produce a trophy fishery of healthy fish. To date, several muskie over the 50" trophy size have been caught. This lake was last stocked with 270-11.2" muskie provided by the Jake Wolf Hatchery in 2007. Spring trap net data for 2009 at Lake Storey revealed a favorable muskie catch rate of 1.53 fish/net night (down from the historic high in 2006 of 4.78 fish/net night). Water conditions at time of survey are speculated to have had a negative effect on the current catch rate. Data from the pit tagged muskie that were recaptured in the April survey revealed that the average female growth was 2.59 inches and 1.79 pounds/year. The average male growth was 1.13 inches and 0.94 pounds/year. Muskie anglers in 2010 can expect a satisfactory rate of catch with individual fish up to the 50 inch trophy size.

There is a 42" minimum size limit at Storey for both tiger and pure muskie. Only trolling motors are allowed on this lake

**Sule, Ogle Co.**

This 77 acre lake is owned by the city of Rochelle and is managed cooperatively by the park district and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to provide a public fishery. Lake Sule is a large barrow pit that was created when Interstate route 39 was built in 1981. Located just to the East of Rochelle, Lake Sule is uniform in shape with a maximum depth of 20 feet and an average depth of 12 feet. One of the tributaries of Kyte Creek outflows from Lake Sule. The lake has a large number of "rough" fish that have existed in the basin since it first filled. They include suckers and redhorse as well as buffalo, gizzard shad and carp. Muskellunge have been stocked at Lake Sule on a regular basis since 1992 to provide additional predator pressure on the large number of forage fish present in the lake. A good population of larger sized individuals now exists in the lake. In 2008 231-11.4" muskie were stocked. Sule has a 10 H P limit. There is a minimum 36" size limit at this lake.

**Super, Perry Co.**

This 230 acre former strip mine lake is located in Pyramid State Park and was added to the muskie stocking list in 2008 when it received 460-10.8" muskie fingerlings. This lake has a 10 HP motor limit. Fishing is prohibited from October 28 through February 28.

**Wheel, Peoria Co.**

Located in the Banner Marsh area, Wheel is composed of a series of former strip mine lakes with a 60 foot deep rocky section (70 acres) and a shallow portion in the shape of a wheel (280 acres). This larger portion is a maze of points, islands, flooded brush and diverse vegetation. Wheel has a forage base which includes gizzard shad. This 350 acre lake was last stocked with 131,325 Fry and 350-10.9" natural muskie fingerlings in 2009. The spring 2009 trapnet survey collected 10 muskies in 16 trapnet nights of effort. The fish ranged from 23 to 45 inches long. There is a concrete boat ramp, 25 H P limit and a 42" minimum size limit on this lake. Call (309) 647-9184 for more information.