

# KINKAID LAKE

## 2024 FISHERIES FACT SHEET

**LOCATION/DESCRIPTION:** Kinkaid Lake is located in Jackson County three miles northwest of Murphysboro off of State Route 149. There are 3 public boat launching facilities around the Lake. Kinkaid Lake is 2750 acres in size, has a shoreline length of 82 miles, and a maximum depth of 80 feet. The NW portion of the Lake consists of a 3 mile no wake zone.

**STATUS OF THE SPORT FISHERY** – The following is a brief summary of the major sport fish species based the Illinois Department of Natural Resources annual fish population surveys.

**Largemouth Bass (LMB)** - During the 2023 spring survey, LMB were collected at a rate of 83 fish per hour. Of the 333 bass collected during the 2023 spring survey, 25% were over the minimum 16 inch size limit and 11% were over 18 inches. Six percent of all largemouth bass collected were between 15-16 inches or just below the minimum length limit. The largemouth bass population continues to look very good. The largest bass collected in the 2023 survey was 5.5 pounds.

**Smallmouth Bass (SMB)** - IDNR stocked SMB into Kinkaid Lake from 2005-2015. During 2012 numerous legal-sized SMB were caught with the largest reported fish measuring 18 inches. SMB do not appear to be recruiting in Kinkaid Lake and no additional SMB stockings are planned. No SMB have been collected during the last 10 annual surveys. If you catch a SMB at Kinkaid Lake please contact IDNR Fisheries Biologist Shawn Hirst at 618-559-5009 or email at [Shawn.Hirst@illinois.gov](mailto:Shawn.Hirst@illinois.gov)

**Crappie** – Kinkaid Lake is known for producing large crappie. Crappie over 2 pounds are caught each year. In March 2017 a new state record hybrid crappie was caught at Kinkaid Lake. The crappie measured 18.1 inches in length and weighed 4.55 pounds. It represents the largest documented crappie ever caught in Illinois. However, the number of legal-sized crappie collected in the 2023 survey was down markedly from the 2019 and 2021 surveys (no survey was conducted in 2020 as a result of COVID restrictions).

Of the white crappie (WHC) collected during the 2023 survey, WHC over 9 inches were only collected at a rate of 6 fish/hr (down from 86 fish/hr in 2019, 32 fish/hr in 2021, and 8 fish/hr in 2022). WHC over 10 inches were collected at a rate of 3 fish/hr (down from 75 fish/hr 2019, 7 fish/hr in 2021, and 4 fish/hr in 2022). The 2023 WHC sample catch rate was 36 fish/hr (down from 72 fish/hr in 2022). The 2023 WHC sample catch rate of crappie over 12 inches was 1 fish/hr (down from 11 fish/hr in 2019, 6 fish/hr in 2021, and equal to the 2022 rate of 1 fish/hr).

The black crappie (BLC) catch rate was 19 fish/hr. The ten-year average BLC CPUE is 19 fish/hr. Although the catch rate of BLC was very similar to the ten-year average, the number of larger fish dropped from the 2019, 2021, and 2022 surveys. During the 2023 survey BLC over 9 inches were collected at a rate of 6 fish/hr (down from 15 fish/hr in 2019, 12 fish/hr in 2021, and 14 fish/hr in 2022). During the 2023 survey BLC over 10 inches were collected at a rate of 4 fish/hr (down from 13 fish/hr in 2019, 5 fish/hr in 2021, and equal to the 2022 rate of 4 fish/hr).

Of the blacknose crappie (BNC) collected during the 2023 survey, BNC over 9 inches were collected at a rate of 3 fish/hr (compared to 4 fish/hr in 2019, 2 fish/hr in 2021, and 4 fish/hr in 2022). BNC over 10 inches were collected at a rate of 1 fish/hr (compared to 3 fish/hr 2019, 0.5 fish/hr in 2021, and 1 fish/hr in 2022). The 2023 BNC sample catch rate was 4 fish/hr (down from 9 fish/hr in 2022, but equal to the 4 fish/hr rates in 2019 and 2021).

The decrease in the number and percentages of larger crappie collected in the 2023 survey continues a trend that suggests overharvest of larger (> 9 inch) crappie, and could be result of increased fishing pressure/harvest and advances in fisheries electronics (depth finders). In an attempt to protect the existing Kinkaid Lake crappie

population, a more restrictive crappie regulation went into effect on April 1, 2023. The previous regulation of 25 fish per day, nine-inch minimum length limit was changed to 15 fish per day of which no more than 10 can be over 10 inches. The Kinkaid Lake crappie population will be sampled annually to determine the results of the new regulation.

**Muskie (MUE)** – Kinkaid Lake is one of the premier muskie lakes in Illinois. Muskie are stocked annually and many are caught each year in excess of 40 inches. During the 2023 spring survey 127 MUE were collected with the largest measuring 44 inches in length. Anglers are encouraged to **NOT** fish for MUE in the warmer summer months as angling mortality is believed to be very high especially for larger MUE. Please report tagged MUE to IDNR Fish Biologist Shawn Hirst at 618-559-5009. Anglers reporting a tagged MUE will receive information on the history of that fish. If the tag number is covered with algae simply remove the algae with your fingernail or a knife. Please provide tag number (5 digits), length of MUE and catch date. If possible, please do not remove the tag.

**Walleye (WAE)** – IDNR annually stocks WAE into Kinkaid Lake. Walleye up to 11 pounds have been collected in previous netting surveys. Walleye numbers are not high but some larger fish can be caught. The best areas are in front of the dam and spillway during the spring especially at night. One WAE (22 inches) was collected during 2023 spring trap netting. The best WAE net is set in front of the spillway barrier. As a result of inclement weather forecasts and high water flows IDNR was not able to set a net at this location during the 2023 survey.

**Catfish** – Kinkaid Lake has an average channel catfish population. Six channel catfish (14-22 inches) were collected in the 2023 spring survey. One flathead catfish (11 inches) was also collected.

**Bluegill Sunfish** – The bluegill population structure can only be described as poor. During the 2023 spring electrofishing survey no bluegill over 8 inches were collected.

**Redear Sunfish** – The redear population is average. A few redear sunfish over 8 inches are present.

**Fishing regulations:**

Species	Creel Limit	Minimum Length Limit
Largemouth or Smallmouth Bass	3	16"
Muskie	1	48"
White, Black, Hybrid Crappie <sup>A</sup>	15	Only 10 ≥ 10 inches
Walleye	6	14"
Live Bait	All live bait in excess of 8" must be rigged with a quick set rig.	

<sup>A</sup>New crappie regulation of 15 fish per day (no more than 10 can be ≥10 inches) went into effect 4/1/2023.

**FISHING TOURNAMENTS:** Any fishing tournament over 39 boats and/or 78 anglers must obtain a permit from the Kinkaid-Reed's Creek Conservancy District (618-687-1722) in addition to the required IDNR permit. No tournaments over 40 boats are allowed during June-July-August.

**FISH ATTRACTORS** – A map of the 50 permanent Kinkaid Lake fish attractor locations can be obtained via email by sending a request to [Shawn.Hirst@Illinois.gov](mailto:Shawn.Hirst@Illinois.gov)

**GENERAL FISHING INFORMATION** – Kinkaid Lake receives a tremendous amount of recreational boat traffic during the hot summer months especially on the weekends and holidays. To avoid the crowds, anglers may consider fishing early in the morning and/or during the week. The upper NW portion of Kinkaid Lake is referred to as the Johnson Creek Area. About 3 miles of this area is a no wake zone that gets very turbid for multiple days after heavy rain events.

**PHONE NUMBERS:** IDNR Fish Biologist – Shawn Hirst 618-559-5009. Kinkaid Lake Fish and Wildlife Area 618-684-2867. Kinkaid-Reed's Creek Conservancy District 618-687-1722.