

STATUS OF THE STRIPED BASS/HYBRID STRIPED BASS FISHERY



**ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF FISHERIES**

MARCH 2011

STATUS OF STRIPED BASS/HYBRID STRIPED BASS FISHERY IN ILLINOIS REGION I

DISTRICT 2: ROCK ISLAND, HENRY, BUREAU, LASALLE, LEE, AND WHITESIDE COUNTIES

LASALLE LAKE - The 2,058 acre cooling lake in LaSalle County was opened for public fishing in 1987. Striped bass hybrids were initially stocked in LaSalle Cooling Lake in 1990 at five per acre. The cooling lake is stocked with striped bass hybrids almost annually at 5 - 10 fish per acre, depending on availability.

The striped bass hybrids have done very well in LaSalle Lake. The lake has a strong gizzard and threadfin shad population for the striped bass hybrids to feed upon, and as a result, rapid growth occurs. A creel conducted in 1996 reported striped bass hybrids ranked third in harvest behind only channel catfish and white bass. The lake has a fair population of striped bass hybrids between 7 and 11 pounds. A die-off of larger striped bass hybrids occurred in July of 2000 and 2001 when the water got too warm.

Remember when fishing LaSalle Cooling Lake that it is a perched lake and gets very rough when the wind picks up. LaSalle Lake has a daily creel of 10 fish of which up to three can be over 17 inches.

LAKE GEORGE - Lake George is a 167 acre lake in Rock Island County. The lake receives approximately 200 man-hours per acre fishing pressure. Striped bass hybrids were first stocked into Lake George in 1997 and have been stocked annually since then at 12 to 18 fish per acre.

The striped bass hybrids were stocked in Lake George because someone had stocked gizzard shad in the lake in 1990 and their population exploded. The fish have been purchased by Mississippi Valley Muskie, Inc. In 2006 Jake Wolf Fish Hatchery stocked 5,000, 2 inch fish. The 1997 stocking is averaging between 6 to 8 pounds. The 1998 year class is averaging between 4 and 6 pounds. The 2008 trap net survey resulted in the collection of 5 striped bass hybrids between 5 and 7 pounds and the fall electrofishing survey resulted in collection of 4 hybrids between 5 and 6 inches. The 2009 trapnet resulted in the collection of 3 striped bass hybrids between 7 and 8 pounds. The striped bass hybrid population is doing well in Lake George. The trap nets in 2010 resulted in the collection of 5 striped bass hybrids averaging 8 pounds.

The Lake has a 17 inch minimum length limit and a one fish per day creel limit.

STATUS OF STRIPED BASS/HYBRID STRIPED BASS FISHERY IN ILLINOIS REGION 2

DISTRICT 9: GRUNDY, KENDALL, WILL, AND KANKAKEE COUNTIES

HEIDECKE LAKE - Located in Grundy County just southeast of Morris and under an hour's drive from the Chicago metropolitan area, Heidecke Lake offers diverse angling opportunities including a variety of temperate bass. Impounded in the late 1970's, Heidecke Lake previously served as a cooling reservoir for Midwest Generation's Collins Station, a fossil fuel peaking plant. However, this generating station was decommissioned at the end of 2004 and subsequently demolished which has eliminated thermal loading and any current which was created by the circulation of cooling water through the plant. Heidecke Lake has produced state records for both pure and hybrid striped bass (12 records total) and receives annual stockings of striped bass hybrids to maintain the population of this popular and hard-fighting sport fish. Pure striped bass have not been stocked since 1994 and though reports of pure stripers being caught surface from time to time, none have been collected by IDNR for several years. The 2010 survey produced an all-time high number of hybrid stripers, eclipsing the previous record which was recently set in 2006. This was due in part to the gill net collection which rivaled the 2006 survey as the catch rate (CPE) for that gear type produced 10.8 fish/net night which is three times the long-term average for gill net catch rate. Electrofishing catch rates declined somewhat but at 4.7 fish/minute were more in line with the long-term average. The majority of the 2010 collection was comprised of young fish with nearly one-fourth exceeding 17 inches and 17% meeting or exceeding what is considered "memorable" size (20 inches). Over the years the stocking rate for hybrid striped bass had held steady at ten fish per acre. In 2007 the stocking rate declined by 49% as the rate fell to 5 fish/acre. This shortfall may have been offset by the number of fish stocked in 2008 which topped 39 fish/acre. For the last two years striped bass hybrids have been stocked at 2.5 times the traditional 10/acre rate as a total of nearly 51,000 were stocked in 2009 and close to 50,000 in 2010 (26 fish/acre). If these year classes recruit strongly, which is suggested by the 2010 data, anglers should expect improving opportunities in the coming seasons. Hybrid stripers were the second most frequently caught fish in the 2006 angler creel survey and were the top species kept by anglers, who harvested a total of 10,352 pounds (5.3 pounds/acre). The average size hybrid striper harvested weighed 2.26 pounds (which is roughly a 17 inch fish).

Heidecke Lake also supports a naturally reproducing white bass population which factors in to the total "striped bass" anglers creel. The number of white bass collected increased by 38.9% from the previous survey. Average size has remained fairly consistent for the last four consecutive surveys, a 12-inch fish weighing nearly one pound. After declining in 2008 to numbers not seen since 1992, the yellow bass collection increased to unprecedented levels in 2010. Yellow bass were the most common species captured by gill netting and accounted for 35.7% of the total number of fish sampled by that gear type. Numerically, yellow bass were the third most commonly collected species behind gizzard shad and bluegill.

In 2006, yellow bass ranked in the top ten for species caught by anglers (at an average weight of 0.41 pounds) and were also the fourth-most common fish species harvested (0.21 pounds/acre). Approximately 38% of the yellow bass which were caught in 2006 were harvested.

To facilitate better utilization of the resource, anglers are allowed to keep a total of 10 “stripers” per day, three of which may exceed 17 inches. This category includes pure and hybrid striped bass as well as white bass. Yellow bass are not included and have no protected size or daily creel limits. Heidecke Lake is open to fishing from April 1st until ten days prior to the opening of the North Zone waterfowl season. The lake is open daily from 6:00 a.m. and closes at sunset. A concessionaire located at the boat ramp offers bait and tackle as well as boat and motor rentals. Heidecke Lake is a partially perched cooling lake and can become very hazardous in windy conditions. Water level fluctuations can restrict boat access to the north side of the lake due to restricted clearance beneath the trestle. There are no boat motor horsepower restrictions but boats must have a working gas-powered motor. The bank fishing area access is located at the eastern side of the lake and is handicapped accessible, featuring a barrier-free fishing pier.

STATUS OF STRIPED BASS/HYBRID STRIPED BASS FISHERY IN ILLINOIS REGION 3

DISTRICT 10: CHAMPAIGN, DEWITT, FORD, IROQUOIS, LIVINGSTON, MCLEAN, PIATT, AND VERMILION COUNTIES

CLINTON LAKE - This was one of the first lakes in the state to receive hybrid striped bass. Hybrid striped bass were first stocked in 1978. From 2008 to 2010, approximately 318,500 hybrid striped bass have been stocked into Clinton Lake. Increased stocking rates of hybrid striped bass have increased catch rates and have created a great fishery in a short period.

During the 2010 fall electrofishing survey, hybrid striped bass were collected at a rate of 2.1 per hour and was the second highest catch rate in the past 13 surveys. The eighteen-survey average catch rate is 2.1 hybrids per hour. Hybrid striped bass collected in 2010 ranged in size from 6 inches to 26 inches and the heaviest hybrid weighed 9.79 pounds. The average weight of the hybrids was 3.64 pounds. In the spring of 2010, a netting survey was completed for hybrid striped bass. During the netting survey, 80 hybrid striped bass were collected and ranged in size from 16.5 inches to 22 inches. The heaviest hybrid weighed 6.38 pounds and the average weight for the hybrids was 4.35 pounds.

White bass were introduced into Clinton Lake by an unknown source, but are producing a good fishing opportunity. During the 2010 fall fish survey, 30 white bass were collected ranging in size from 3 inches to 16 inches. The heaviest white bass weighed 1.88 pounds and the average weight for all white bass collected was 0.77 pounds.

The fishing regulation for white bass, striped bass, and hybrid striped bass is a 10 fish daily creel with a 3 fish 17" or longer daily creel limit. This allows anglers to harvest white bass and protects the large hybrids from being overharvested. Major access areas have bulletin boards with area rules, fish creel and size limit regulations and other visitor information posted. All state boating, hunting, fishing and park regulations remain in full force where applicable. Various portions of the lake are designated as no-wake, electric motor only, or no boat areas for safety and security reasons. Areas closed to public access include: the water intake area for the power plant, the spillway and dam areas east of the spillway, and the discharge flume (ditch). Boats and fishermen are not allowed in designated swimming areas when swimming is permitted. Please pay special attention to such areas designated by the maps, posted signs, and buoys. The entire portion of the lake between the DeWitt County Highway 14 Bridge and the Illinois Route 48 Bridge is designated as a fish and water fowl refuge and is closed to all public use for the period of October 10th through March 31. The land portions of the site in this designated area will still be open for authorized hunting activities (except waterfowl) during this time period. As on all large lakes, Clinton Lake can become very rough when the wind exceeds 15 m.p.h. All boaters are advised to be aware of the weather. Although there is no horsepower or speed limit on Clinton Lake, shallow areas and underwater hazards do exist in numerous portions of the lake. Boaters should operate their craft accordingly.

LAKE BLOOMINGTON - In 2010, a spring netting survey was completed for hybrid striped bass. During the survey, 26 hybrids were collected ranging in size from 17 inches to 28 inches and the largest hybrid collected weighed 13.25 pounds. The State Hatchery System stocks hybrid striped bass to sustain the fishery. From 2007 to 2010, a total of approximately 26,870 hybrid striped bass were stocked into Lake Bloomington. The fishing regulation for hybrid striped bass on Lake Bloomington is a 17" minimum length limit with a 3 fish daily creel limit. Lake Bloomington has one boat ramp and charges an access fee. Boats are limited to 40 horsepower. For information on fees and Lake Bloomington call 309/747-2615.

DISTRICT 11: CLARK, COLES, CUMBERLAND, DOUGLAS, EDGAR, MACON, MOULTRIE, AND SHELBY COUNTIES

LAKE DECATUR - Is located on the east side of the City of Decatur, in Macon County. The lake covers 3,093 surface acres with a maximum depth of 22 feet and average depth of six feet. Public boat launching facilities are available with the City of Decatur (217-424-2837) collecting boating access fees. Statewide regulations are in effect, with no limit for fish under 17 inches, but a maximum of only three striped bass hybrids over 17 inches can be kept. A strong white bass fishery exists in this lake. Fishermen should keep in mind that a maximum of only three white bass over 17 inches can be kept as well, which can be easy to exceed.

Very few striped bass hybrids are collected from Lake Decatur during fall surveys. However, four hybrids (13 - 19") were collected during the 2010 standard fall survey and two hybrids (25 - 28") during the 2010 stocking success survey. The largest from these two

surveys weighed 3.4 and 8.5 lbs., respectively. Although fishing success was poor in 2008 and 2009 due to excessive rains, an increased number of fishermen have reported catching hybrid striped bass on the lake in recent years. In addition, a viable fishery exists below the dam for both hybrids and true striped bass. Since the likely source of the stripers is Clinton Lake, some if not most of the hybrids caught below the dam could be coming from Clinton Lake as well. An angler creel survey conducted in 2006 found angler catch rates (0.03/hr.) to exceed stocking success goals, but harvest (0.20 lbs/acre) fell below standard goals. Fishing prospects in 2011 for striped bass hybrids on Lake Decatur are rated as fair. Fishing prospects for striped bass hybrids and striped bass below the Lake Decatur spillway are rated as good to excellent, especially in spring.

LAKE MATTOON - Is located approximately eight miles southwest of Mattoon and about 1.5 miles northwest of Neoga, in Shelby, Coles, and Cumberland Counties. The lake covers 1,050 surface acres with a maximum depth of 31 feet and average depth of 11.4 feet. Public boat launching facilities are available and the City of Mattoon (217-234-3611) collects a boating access fee which covers Lake Paradise as well. Statewide regulations are in effect, with no limit for fish under 17 inches, but only three striped bass hybrids over 17 inches can be kept.

Very few striped bass hybrids are collected from Lake Mattoon during fall surveys. However, increased stocking rates have boosted survey catch rates. In the 2010 standardized fall survey, 10 hybrid striped bass, ranging from 7 to 18" were collected. The largest fish weighed 2.8 lbs. An angler creel survey conducted in 2007 found angler catch rates (0.003/hr.) and harvest (0.15 lbs/acre) fell below standard stocking success goals. But again, increased stocking rates have resulted in many anglers catching a wide size range of striped bass hybrids and this fishery has recently been attracting anglers specifically fishing for hybrids. Fishing prospects for striped bass hybrids on Lake Mattoon are rated as good for both number and size 2011.

CHARLESTON SIDE CHANNEL LAKE - Is located approximately three miles southeast of Charleston, in Coles County. The lake covers 330 surface acres with a maximum depth of 16 feet and average depth of 7.7 feet. Free public boat launching facilities are available. There is a no wake regulation in effect on the entire lake. A 17-inch minimum length limit with a three fish daily creel limit is in effect.

Many anglers have reported catching hybrids from 2 to 12 pounds with fish up to 15 pounds collected during fish population surveys. Fishing is especially good in spring when fish congregate near a pumping station in the southeast corner of the lake. During the past three years stocking rates for hybrid striped bass have increased and catch rates have increased as well. During the recent fall stocking success surveys, catch rates have increased annually from 15 (6 – 13") in '08, to 25 (12 – 15") in '09, and 56 (8 – 23") in '10. There will be a wide variety of sizes of hybrid striped bass available to anglers in 2011, with some of the fish exceeding the 17-inch minimum length limit. The largest hybrid collected in 2010 was 23" and weighed 6.1 lbs. Fishing prospects for striped bass hybrids are rated as good to excellent for number and fair to good for size in 2011.

PARIS TWIN LAKES - Are located on Route 1 on the north edge of the City of Paris in Edgar County. The two lakes have a combined surface acreage of 220 acres. Public boat launching facilities are available and the City of Paris (217-465-7601) collects a boating access fee. Statewide regulations are in effect, with no limit for fish under 17 inches, but only three striped bass hybrids over 17 inches can be kept.

Paris Twin lakes were stocked for the first time in summer 2010. These fish are expected to grow well with a diversity of forage available. Fishermen should start to see them in 2011. Fishing prospects are rated as poor until the population has a chance to develop.

STATUS OF STRIPED BASS/HYBRID STRIPED BASS FISHERY IN ILLINOIS REGION 4

DISTRICT 12: ADAMS, BROWN, CALHOUN, HANCOCK, MORGAN, PIKE, AND SCHUYLER COUNTIES

PITTSFIELD LAKE - On April 6 and 7, 2009, a spring, gill netting survey was conducted on Pittsfield Lake. A very small sample was collected. The weather at the time of the survey was not conducive to collection. Water temperatures fluctuated between 42 degrees and 49. The first day of the survey experienced moderate to strong Northwest winds and snowing. It is believed fluctuating cold temperatures held the hybrids in deep water limiting movement thereby avoiding capture in the traditional gill net sets. In 2009, only four individuals were captured. These fish averaged 24 inches in length and weighed 7.8 pounds. The largest individual measured nearly 27 inches and weighed almost 12 pounds. In 2009, a total of #4820, 1 inch fingerlings were stocked by the Illinois Hatchery System.

In 2008, a total of 116 striped bass hybrids were collected during the survey, establishing 2008 as the survey year with the most hybrids collected since the original, supplemental stocking in 1982. In 2007, 28 hybrids were collected; whereas, in 2006, 112 were captured.

Most striped bass hybrids are caught either by bass fishermen tossing spinner baits into schools of gizzard shad busting the surface or by catfishing anglers tight-lining chicken livers for channels or flatheads.

There is a 17 inch minimum on striped, white or hybrid striped bass on Pittsfield Lake. There is a three fish daily creel limit, singly or in aggregate for striped, white or hybrid striped bass. The City of Pittsfield has established Pittsfield Lake as a "NO WAKE" lake with a maximum of a 25 horsepower outboard motor. Any motors larger in horsepower **MUST** remove the propeller.

LAKE JACKSONVILLE - The Striped Bass Hybrid population in this heavily fished impoundment is difficult to evaluate. Annual fall surveys have failed to produce sufficient numbers to properly evaluate the population. Lake Jacksonville is a well-utilized largemouth bass fishery and it appears that most hybrid striped bass are caught

incidentally by bass fishermen throwing silver minnow-look-a-likes. The main forage is gizzard shad in Lake Jacksonville; however, strong, annual spawns do not always occur.

DISTRICT 13: CASS, CHRISTIAN, MASON, LOGAN, MENARD, AND SANGAMON COUNTIES

LAKE SANGCHRIS - Striped bass population surveys have been remarkable in their variability. There are so many biases that make collecting them difficult, primarily power plant operations. If the plant is circulating water creating a current, it starts striper movement and makes them much more vulnerable to gill netting. The 2010 survey was one of the better in the history of collections dating back to their initial stocking in 1983 insofar as numbers of fish per net. The down side remains the lack of large fish. Again in 2010 no fish were collected over 20 pounds. This is the fifth consecutive year for no fish over 20 pounds in the survey. Anglers report the same information, no large fish. There were excellent numbers of fish up to 12 pounds and a few just over but the largest was only 17 pounds. The 2007-2009 surveys have yielded good numbers of 10-12 pounders so there should be fish now be approaching 20 or even over that, so fishing for this trophy should be good in 2011 but given the past several years. The Division of Fisheries will continue to stock 21,000- 2" fingerlings on the odd years and did receive a half-stocking in both 2009 and again in 2010, so the program is considered viable. However, the numbers of trophy sized fish are just not there. No reason can be given for this problem.

DISTRICT 14/15: GREENE, JERSEY, SCOTT, MACOUPIN, AND MONTGOMERY COUNTIES

OTTER LAKE - Only 22 striped bass hybrids were collected during the March 2010 netting evaluation. This value declined dramatically compared to 2009 (61), and the 5 year mean catch of 44.4. Catch has been variable over the last 6 years dependent upon factors out of our control. A solid population still resides in this water body for the following reasons: 1) The IDNR-Fisheries stocking program which has been ongoing since the early 1980's (fish have been stocked 7 out of the last 10 years). 2) Good Gizzard Shad spawns for most years in this lake. 3) The construction of a temporary barrier net by IDNR-Fisheries with aide from the Otter Lake Water Commission, as well as, volunteers. 4) The posted regulation of 3 Striped, Hybrid or White Bass >17"; 10 fish per angler per day which has limited harvest, and spread catch/harvest over more anglers. 5) Excellent water quality which is monitored, and maintained by the Otter Lake Water Commission, and various other entities.

The fish captured measured 18.5" to 29.9", and weighed 3.3 lb. to 15 lbs in total weight. Twenty-one individuals (96%) exceeded 5 lbs, and 6 (27%) topped 10 lbs in weight. For 2011, I would rate this population as good for this evaluation year.

DISTRICT 17: CLINTON, MONROE, RANDOLPH, AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES

BALDWIN LAKE - Baldwin Lake received a stocking of 10,000 6" hybrid striped bass in September of 2010, and 7,500 fish in 2009. Prior to this, the lake had not been stocked since 2006. As a general rule, hybrid striped bass in Baldwin grow very fast and disappear from the population once they reach 5 or 6 pounds. This is probably a result of mortality from an accelerated life cycle due to thermal lake conditions, and/or from excessive heat during the summer months which often kills many larger bass. I would rate fishing for this species in 2011 as good, assuming a decent percentage of the stocked hybrids survive. A 17 inch minimum length limit/3 fish/day applies. Contact the site office (618 785-2555) for park opening and closing times.

STATUS OF STRIPED BASS/HYBRID STRIPED BASS FISHERY IN ILLINOIS REGION 5

DISTRICT 18: CLAY, EFFINGHAM, FAYETTE, JEFFERSON, MARION, AND WAYNE COUNTIES

FORBES LAKE - Based upon reported catches the fishery for hybrid striped bass appears to be doing fairly well, despite fewer fish having been collected during sampling in recent surveys. Fish collected in the spring ranged from 11 to 17 inches in length, and two year-classes were observed also yearlings from the 09 stocking were abundant and ranged from 5 to 6 inches in length. Several catches of fish from 8 to 12 lbs. were reported by anglers. Since reproduction is not expected 10,500 fingerlings 2.0 inches in length were stocked.

DISTRICT 21: ALEXANDER, JACKSON, PERRY, PULASKI, AND UNION COUNTIES

CEDAR LAKE - Cedar Lake (1750 acres) is located five miles southwest of the City of Carbondale in Jackson County off of Route 51 South. The striped bass regulations on this lake are as follows: 17 inch minimum length limit and 3 fish daily creel limit. There is also a 10 HP motor limit on this lake. Because of the difficulty in sampling striped bass in this lake, little information is available on Cedar Lake's striped bass population. During spring 2006 gill netting, one 8 pound striped bass was collected. Another attempt to sample striped bass will be made during spring and/or fall of 2011. No striped bass were collected during the 2010 gill netting survey. Anglers have caught striped bass from this lake up to 28 pounds.

Stocking History (since 1990)

Year	Number	Size
1990	17,500	1.0"
1992	10,000	1.5"
1993	8750	1.5"

1994	8000	1.5"
1996	8750	2.5"
1997	8750	1.5"
2002	6000	2.0"
2005	14,542	1.5"
2007	4550	2.8"
2008	8750	1.2"
2010	8750	2.4"