



# HEIDECKE LAKE

## FISHERIES STATUS SUMMARY

**LOCATION** – Heidecke Lake is located in Grundy County approximately 1 mile south and 8 miles east of Morris, between Illinois Route 47 and Interstate 55 on Lorenzo/Pine Bluff Road.

**DESCRIPTION** – Formerly a cooling reservoir, Heidecke Lake has 1,955 surface acres of water with 75% of shoreline comprised of rock rip-rapped dikes. A "safe harbor" created by breakwaters was constructed in 1993. No horsepower limitations; maximum speed is 40 mph except in designated "no wake" areas; working gasoline engine required as main propulsion unit; boats under 14' are not recommended. A recently refurbished three-lane concrete boat ramp with fully blacktopped 100+ car/trailer parking is available. Boat launch is handicapped accessible. **Zebra mussels have been found in Heidecke Lake and boaters should take appropriate measures upon departure.** Shore angler access is located on the east side of the lake off Dresden Road with portions of the north, center and east dike open to bank fishing. A handicapped fishing pier is located on the east side of the lake as well.

**MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES** - The fishery is evaluated via biennial major surveys and annual species-specific surveys. Attempts to introduce aquatic vegetation have generally failed. Bass spawning habitat has been installed at various locations and other habitat enhancement projects are planned.

**STATUS OF THE SPORT FISHERY** – Heidecke Lake receives annual stockings of walleye, black crappie and hybrid striped bass. Pure muskellunge are stocked every third year. *A special mercury advisory is in effect for smallmouth bass 18" and larger which limits consumption to one meal per week for the most sensitive populations.* Below is a brief description of the major sportfish species in this water body.

**LARGEMOUTH and SMALLMOUTH BASS** – The collection of smallmouth bass was down slightly from the previous survey (-7.6%) but total numbers remained high and continue to rival those large collections of the late 1990's and early 2000's. Smaller fish remain elusive in these surveys. The large contingent of fish falling within the protected slot range has caused an increase in competition for forage and likely, slowed growth. Body condition shows a decline beginning at 13 inches and fall steadily thereafter. The percentage of fish 18 inches and larger is slowly increasing. Round gobies, which were collected in 2014, were absent from the 2016 survey and it is possible this is due in part to predation on these fish by a fairly robust smallmouth bass population. The collection of largemouth bass continues to decline as the 2016 collection fell by 38% from the previous survey. The 2016 survey rates as the fewest largemouth bass ever collected in a major IDNR fall survey. Length frequency distribution is very sporadic with some consistency up to approximately 10 inches after which point numbers decline. Young-of-the-year bass were non-existent in this survey which points to poor or failed spawning success and/or poor survival of young bass. The absence of rooted aquatic macrophytes likely plays a role in this situation. The number of largemouth bass 12" and larger has been declining for several years. This is despite a protected slot limit of 12 to 18 inches. The largemouth bass population at Heidecke has been poor for the last 10+ years. Angler catch rates for largemouth bass are substandard and the long-term catch rate for electrofishing is just 15 fish/hour.

**WALLEYE** – Following the record-setting years of 2012 and 2014, the walleye collection declined somewhat in 2016 although catch rates were not far from the long-term averages. Size distribution was fairly consistent which indicates good survival and recruitment of stocked fish. Walleye stockings have been conducted annually, except for 2010, with stockings generally averaging 35 fish/acre. Smaller walleye were not well represented in this survey and 83% were legal size. The average size walleye collected in 2016 was 19.5" while nearly 8% of the 2016 collection exceeded 25".

**HYBRID STRIPED BASS** – Following an extremely poor showing in the 2014 survey, the striped bass hybrid collection increased dramatically in 2016. All population indices exceeded the previous survey as well as long-term averages. The majority of the hybrid striped bass collected in 2016 exceeded 17 inches, which should help to reduce angling mortality somewhat. NOTE: anglers are allowed 10 fish per day with only 3 of those equal to or larger than 17 inches.

**MUSKELLUNGE** – Collection numbers in the 2016 spring trap netting survey declined somewhat but this belies the fact that Heidecke Lake supports a very strong muskellunge population. Larger fish are becoming more prevalent in spring surveys with fish commonly exceeding 30 lbs. Several fish were also collected during the fall survey, the largest measuring 45”.

**CRAPPIE** – Poorly represented in the fall survey, spring trap netting provided a larger collection with fish up to 11” collected. Despite the poor returns in IDNR surveys, angler reports indicate excellent catches of crappie during the 2016 season.

**CHANNEL CATFISH** – Since 2008, there has been little evidence of reproduction and/or recruitment for channel catfish. The average size for channel catfish collected in IDNR surveys has steadily increased and in 2016 the average size catfish collected reached an all-time high, surpassing the long-term average by nearly 3 inches.

**ADDITIONAL FISH SPECIES** – Heidecke Lake is maintained by periodically pumping water from the Illinois River. As a result, the lake supports a variety of fish species which include sunfish (bluegill and green sunfish), common carp, bullheads, freshwater drum and others. Heidecke Lake is supported by a thriving gizzard shad forage base as well as various other minnow species. Round gobies have been recently discovered as well.

**2016 IDNR Fall Survey Results (except \* Spring)**

Species	Number of Fish Collected in each Length Category (Inch)								
	0-5	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30+	Total
Largemouth Bass	4	16	13	5	6	0	0	0	44
Smallmouth Bass	8	30	28	108	57	0	0	0	231
Walleye	0	0	3	11	48	35	6	0	103
Hybrid Striped Bass	0	5	1	16	21	110	17	0	170
White Bass	1	63	12	61	4	4	0	0	145
Yellow Bass	17	67	51	0	0	0	0	0	135
Muskellunge	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	14	21
Bluegill	89	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	121
Channel Catfish	0	0	0	0	0	24	7	1	32
Crappie*	0	5	76	4	0	0	0	0	86
Freshwater Drum	0	1	5	32	91	16	0	0	145

**FISHING REGULATIONS** – Statewide fishing regulations apply at this lake (see current Illinois Fishing Information booklet and IFISHILLINOIS website <http://www.ifishillinois.org/> for specific details).

Additional Site Specific fishing regulations:

Open daily from 6:00 a.m. to sunset from April 1 to ten days prior to the opening of the waterfowl season.

Boaters are required to have operational gasoline motors. No horsepower limitations.

All fish species - Two pole and line fishing only.

Largemouth or Smallmouth Bass – 12” to 18” protected slot, 2 fish under 12”, 1 fish over 18”

Hybrid Striped Bass – 10 fish daily creel/3 fish 17” or longer

Crappie – 15 fish daily creel

Muskellunge – 48” minimum length limit

Walleye – 16” minimum length limit, 3 fish daily creel

**CONTACT INFORMATION** – Heidecke Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area: 815/942-6352.  
IDNR Fisheries County Biologist: 630/553-6680.

**Heidecke Lake Map**

