

KINKAID LAKE

2025 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 2024 spring survey, LMB were collected at a rate of 136 fish per hour. Of the 543 bass collected during the 2024 spring survey, 21% were over the minimum 16 inch size limit and 8% were over 18 inches. Seven percent of all largemouth bass collected were between 15-16 inches. The largemouth bass population continues to look very good. The largest bass collected in the 2024 survey was 5.8 pounds.

Smallmouth Bass (SMB) - IDNR stocked SMB into Kinkaid Lake from 2005-2015. 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 11 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

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. That crappie measured 18.1 inches in length and weighed 4.55 pounds. It represents the largest documented crappie ever caught in Illinois.

The 2024 WHC catch rate of 146 fish/hr represented a dramatic increase from the 34 fish/hr in 2023 and the 10-year average of 53 fish/hr. The 2024 catch rate represented the highest white crappie catch rate since 2005 when white crappie were collected at a rate of 197 fish/hr. Of the white crappie (WHC) collected during the 2024 electrofishing survey, WHC over 9 inches were collected at a rate of 19 fish/hr which was down from 86 fish/hr in 2019 and 32 fish/hr in 2021, but marked an increase from the 8 fish/hr in 2022 and 6 fish/hr in 2023. WHC over 10 inches were collected at a rate of 8 fish/hr. This rate was down from 75 fish/hr 2019, but represented an increase from the 7 fish/hr in 2021, 4 fish/hr in 2022, and 3 fish/hr in 2023. The 2024 WHC sample catch rate of crappie over 12 inches was 2 fish/hr which was a slight increase from the 1 fish/hr in the 2022 and 2023 surveys. There is a large year class (or two) of slower growing white crappie. The new regulation allowing harvest of fish under 9 inches (previous regulation included a nine-inch minimum length limit) is an attempt to remove some of these slower-growing white crappie. Eighty-three percent of the WHC collected were between 7-9 inches. Forty-percent of the WHC collected were between 8-9 inches.

The black crappie (BLC) catch rate was 34 fish/hr. The ten-year average BLC CPUE is 19 fish/hr. During the 2024 survey BLC over 9 inches were collected at a rate of 16 fish/hr which was the highest rate since 2018. During the 2024 survey BLC over 10 inches were collected at a rate of 4 fish/hr which was identical to the rates in the 2022-23 surveys. During the 2024 survey BLC over 12 inches were collected at a rate of 2 fish/hr which was identical to the rates in the 2021-22, and slightly above 2023 catch rate of 1 fish/hr.

Of the blacknose crappie (BNC) collected during the 2024 survey, BNC over 9 inches were collected at a rate of 1.5 fish/hr which was down from the 2023 rate of 3 fish/hr. BNC over 10 inches were collected at a rate of 0.5 fish/hr which was down from the 2023 rate of 1.3. The 2024 BNC sample catch rate was 2.3 fish/hr which was down from the 4 fish/hr in the 2023 survey.

Overall the crappie catch rate for fish >9 inches, >10 inches, and >12 inches were all above the 2023 rates. Of the 730 crappie collected, 80% were white crappie and 20 percent were black crappie. Of the black crappie collected 5% were blacknose crappie. Thirty-eight percent of the crappie collected were between 8-9 inches. There are a

very large number of white crappie from 1-2 year classes that are slow growing as a result of very strong reproduction. It is hoped that allowing the harvest of these slower-growing fish will allow the growth rate to increase and allow these year classes to exceed 9 inches within the next 1-2 years.

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 2024 spring survey 101 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 when water is exiting the lake via the spillway. One WAE (24 inches) was collected during 2024 sampling. If the collection of WAE in annual surveys remains low in the 2025 sampling year, Kinkaid Lake will no longer be stocked with WAE.

Catfish – Kinkaid Lake has an average channel catfish population. Four channel catfish (14-23 inches) were collected in the 2024 spring survey. Four flathead catfish (9-13 inches) were also collected.

Bluegill Sunfish – The bluegill population structure can only be described as poor. During the 2024 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 ^A	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.	

^ANew 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

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.