

Rock River 2018 Flathead Catfish Survey

A general basin survey of the Rock River was conducted in the summer of 2018. Thirteen sites along the Rock River from South Beloit to Moline were sampled for overall diversity and community structure. These sites were all sampled using an electrofishing boat, which is generally less effective at collecting catfish due to their propensity to dwell near the bottom of the river. However, even though electrofishing generally doesn't target catfish, a total of 108 flatheads were still collected. Included in this total were 72 adult fish (greater than 11") and 36 young fish (less than 11"). The largest of the adult fish was over 40" in length, with a total of 6 fish in the trophy range (greater than 36")! This amounts to 8% of the total adult flathead catfish collected!

In addition to the large number of trophy size fish, 58% of the fish over 11" were also over 16" in size (quality size). This is quite good and at the top of the acceptable range, with 19% of the adult also over 24" (preferred size) and 15% over 28" (memorable size). These results are quite good and bode well for fishermen in all areas of the river.

The majority of the flathead catfish collected were found in the lower end of the Rock River, from Castle Rock State Park to Moline, with the largest number collected near Prophetstown State Park. The average size of the adult fish collected was 20".

Rock River Smallmouth Bass – 2018

Smallmouth Bass data from the 2018 basin wide survey of the Rock River were analyzed to determine the overall health and condition of the Smallmouth Bass fishery in the Rock River. A total of 465 Smallmouth Bass were collected in 780 minutes of total collection time which calculates to an overall catch rate of 0.6 fish /minute. This is actually quite good since bass were not the primary target of this survey, but the overall fish diversity was the goal, so all species were collected. The data were collected at 13 stations ranging from South Beloit to Moline.

The Catch/Unit of Effort (CPUE) for stock size fish (those over 7") was 0.5 fish/ minute, which is also good since as stated, bass were not the primary target. The Proportional Stock Density (PSD) was 37, which is within the acceptable range of 30-60, and indicates that the strong year classes of 2014 and 2015 are now maturing into the population. The RSD14 (relative number of fish over 14") was also within the acceptable range, indicating good numbers of preferred size fish. The relative number over 16" was 3%, indicating good numbers of memorable fish for fishermen to catch. The Young/Adult ratio was 2.6 young to 1 adult, very good and in the acceptable range of 1-10

The largest individuals collected were over 18" in length and were collected near Prophetstown, as well as near Grand Detour. These two areas of the Rock River have held the

largest number of bass along with the largest individuals for several years of sampling. Other good areas are below the dams in Rockford, Dixon and Oregon.

The Rock River currently has a 14" size limit with a creel limit of 3 fish/day for smallmouth bass. At this time the regulation appears to be adequate for maintaining the population.