

## 2010 U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS RESERVOIRS FISHING PROSPECTS



### LAKE SHELBYVILLE

**Largemouth Bass - excellent** - Recent large floods and a few well-timed smaller flood pulses have resulted in excellent natural recruitment of largemouth bass. It appears that strong year classes have been or will be recruited to the lake from spawns in 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009! Recruitment of the 2009 year class of bass appears to be potentially good, especially in the upper part of the lake. The strong year classes produced should sustain this fishery for many years.

This lake has become a very popular tournament destination due to the high quality of the fishery. Fishermen catch rates in 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009 were much improved over 2004 and 2005. Fishermen reported catching good numbers of bass both below and above the size limit through the 2009 season. Unlike 2008, high water levels in 2009 had little impact on catch rates for most gamefish species in the lake. Water clarity was much improved over 2008. The three greatest single day tournament total weights were 588, 619, and 814 lbs. Average weight of bass weighed into the larger tournaments ranged from 1.9 to 2.5 lbs. The largest bass weighed into the larger tournaments ranged from 5.3 to 6.3 lbs with the exception of the new lake record bass, caught in a tournament by Chuck Ditto in April, which weighed 8.55 lbs.

The number of bass collected in the 2009 fall survey (80/hr.) was well above the 2006, 2007, and 2008 survey results (24, 31, 22/hr). Collection rates were higher at mid lake and upper lake sights. Incidental sampling later in the season indicated the potential for high catch rates. The largest bass collected during the 2009 fall survey was 20 inches and weighed 4.3 lbs. The largemouth bass fishing prospects for 2010 remain good to excellent for numbers and good to excellent for size and should improve significantly in future years.

**Smallmouth Bass - poor** - A founding population of smallmouth bass was stocked in Lake Shelbyville in falls 2006, 2007, and 2008. Approximately 200 fingerling smallmouth, averaging 6.5", were stocked in 2006, 279 averaging 7.1" were stocked in 2007, and 366 averaging 6.4" were stocked in 2008. No smallmouth bass were stocked in 2009 due to the inability to collect broodstock from the Kaskaskia River due to high flows. All smallmouth bass were stocked into the lower part of the lake. Good recruitment of largemouth bass will allow for continued efforts to establish smallmouth bass in Lake Shelbyville. 1,435 smallmouth bass averaging 4.4" were stocked into the Kaskaskia River just above Lake Shelbyville in 2008 as well. No smallmouth bass were collected in the 2007, 2008, or 2009 fall fish population surveys. A few reports from fishermen indicate that the initially stocked fish are doing well. There has been no evidence of spawning success as of yet. Tournament fishermen are asked to release all smallmouth bass where caught and are not allowed to weigh them in tournaments on Lake Shelbyville. Fish fishing prospects for smallmouth bass are poor due to low stocking densities.

**Crappie - excellent** - Crappie fishing over the previous four years had been very disappointing for most fishermen up to fall 2008. Since fall 2008 crappie fishing has improved dramatically and was excellent in fall 2009. Crappie fishing in '09 has been very good with fishermen catching limits of fish, including fish up to 14". Fall fish populations surveys indicate that good numbers of legal size crappie were present.

The largest white crappie collected during the 2009 fall survey was 13.8 inches and weighed 1.4 lbs. The largest black crappie collected during the 2009 fall survey was 12.2 inches and weighed 1.1 lbs. The largest crappie reported from tournaments was 1.9 lbs.

The crappie regulation changed in April, 2007 and so far has been popular with fishermen. Fishermen will be able to keep ten (10) crappie, 10" and larger, PLUS an additional five (5) crappie less than 10". This regulation is designed to thin out the smaller crappie slightly to provide a small boost in growth rate. Given the population size structure, improved fishing, prospects for crappie should be excellent for both numbers and size in 2010 and for several years.

**Walleye - good - excellent** - Walleye fishermen and guides reported excellent fishing in late May, 2009 for walleye. Rising water levels impacted many walleye fishermen, but some were able to catch walleye throughout the summer. Catch rates of young-of-the-year walleye were very good in both the 2007 and 2008 fall standard fish population and supplemental surveys, and excellent in 2009. This is likely due in part to an increase in the number of fish stocked, however there is a possibility walleye may have spawned in the Kaskaskia River in spring 2009. Catches of young-of-the-year walleye in surveys and by fishermen were exceptionally high in upper reaches of the lake and Kaskaskia River in fall 2009. The catch rate of walleye in the fall stocking success survey was 64/hr, with the majority of the fish being young-of-the-year. The largest walleye collected during the 2009 fall surveys was 27+ inches and weighed 6.7 lbs. Fishing prospects for 2010 should be good for both numbers and good to excellent for size and should improve over the next several years.

**Sauger - poor** - Sauger were stocked "experimentally" into Lake Shelbyville for the first time in 2006 to attempt to establish a self-sustaining population. Additional sauger fingerlings (2") were stocked in 2007, 2008, and 2009. Thirty sauger, from what appears to be all age groups, were collected in the 2009 fall standard survey and stocking success survey combined. The largest in 2009 was 14.1 inches and weighed 0.89 lbs. A few legal-size sauger were reported caught by fishermen in summer 2009. Stocking densities have been low, and should not produce a significant fishery unless natural recruitment from spawning within the lake or the Kaskaskia River occurs. Although the stocked fish appear to be doing very well, fishing prospects for sauger are poor due to low stocking densities.

**Muskellunge - good - excellent** - Located in Shelby and Moultrie Counties in east-central Illinois. This lake has a surface area of 11,100 acres, with a maximum depth of 67 feet,

and an average depth of 18.9 feet. Public boat launching facilities are available, with a fee assessed on U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (217-774-3951) boat ramps, and free access on state park or Corp gravel boat ramps. A 48" length - 1 fish daily creel limit will remain in effect. The limit is in effect in the headwaters up to the Corps of Engineers project boundary and extends below the dam, downstream to the State Route 128 Bridge near Cowden.

Pure muskellunge were first stocked in Lake Shelbyville in 1978. It wasn't until 1988, however, that somewhat consistent year-to-year stockings of 5,500 fingerlings per year were initiated. Compared to the known potential longevity of this species, this fishery is still relatively young compared to the many well known fisheries in northern United States and Canada. In recent years this lake has developed into an outstanding muskie fishery; however catch rates in 2007, 2008, and 2009 have been depressed for unknown reasons. Floods may have been partially to blame in '08 and '09, allowing muskies to use heavy brush for cover which makes fishing for them more difficult.

Fishing for muskie was very poor during the spring and summer, both on the lake and below the spillway in 2007 and 2008, but improved slightly in 2009. Fall fishing improved the most below the spillway. An extended spawn is believed to be the primary stress causing an extensive muskie kill below the spillway in 2007. No evidence of a significant muskie kill was observed on the lake, although fish were reported later. Fishing results were slightly improved in fall of each year, including '07, '08, and '09 although again, high water hampered most fishermen's efforts.

The three major muskie tournaments held on Lake Shelbyville in fall 2009. The catch as reported was distributed as 7 fish (LSMC, 14 boats, biggest 39"), 13 fish (IMTT Fall Classic, 28 boats, biggest 45"), and 1 fish (IMTT Championship, 20 boats, biggest 36"). Highly variable weather and water levels may have had an affect on the outcome of these tournaments.

Muskie numbers remain good on the lake and low but somewhat improved in the area below the dam. Nine muskies up to 39+ inches and 16.1 lbs. were collected in the 2009 fall fish population survey. Fishing prospects for 2010 remain good for numbers and size on the lake and likely moderate below the spillway.

**White bass - excellent** - Unlike the previous four years, 2009 was a banner year for white bass fishing! Catch rates of 200+ fish per day of good sized fish resulted in a high quality fishery. Clearer water on the main lake helped fisherman success. Fishermen reported catching white bass up to 14 inches, with most keepers from 11 to 12 inches. Electrofishing results from the 2009 fall survey were average. The largest white bass collected during the 2009 fall surveys was 14 inches and weighed 1.4 lbs. The lake record white bass caught was 4 lb 2 oz. in spring 2002. Fishing prospects for 2010 should be excellent for numbers and size.

**Catfish - fair - poor** - Very low numbers of channel catfish were collected during the 2009 fall survey, with the largest being 29 inches and 11 lbs. As usual, few flathead catfish were collected as well, with the largest measuring 49 inches and 58 lbs. The lake record flathead, weighing 62 lbs. was caught in 2002. Channel catfish recruitment appears to continue to be poor with flathead recruitment variable, but apparently low. Fishermen report variable, but fair success. Fishing prospects for 2010 remain poor to fair for numbers and good for size.

**Bluegill - fair** - Most “keeper” size bluegill will range from 6.5 through 7.9 inches. A few bluegill in excess of eight inches are caught annually, although they are NOT common. Bluegill averaging 7.0 - 7.5 inches and 0.25 to 0.3 lbs are often caught by fishermen using nightcrawlers seeking other species. Fishing prospects for 2010 remain good for numbers and poor to fair for size.

## CARLYLE LAKE

**Largemouth Bass - very good to excellent** - High water levels in the lake for the past few years created ideal conditions for successful bass spawns, and the flooded vegetation acted as a nursery for the young fish. At the same time, the Illinois Dept of Natural Resources stocked the lake with hundreds of thousands of fingerling bass. As a result, the bass population has experienced a fantastic increase in numbers. These young fish have had a dramatic effect on the density and size structure of the population. And because the water level in the lake was down to normal pool at the time of our population survey, we were able to see the positive results of these occurrences/actions.

From 2001 to 2008, we collected an average of 30 bass per hour during our population surveys. In 2009, we collected 102 bass per hour. Currently, forty-two percent of the adult population is 12 inches or greater in length, 30% is 14 inches or more, and 19% 15 inches or greater. While a large percentage of these fish are sub-legal, legal fish, which have a 14 inch minimum length limit, are abundant and should provide good fishing. Legal fish range in length from 14 to 21 inches, and weigh 1.7 to 5.8 lbs. Within this range is a strong class of 14 to 17 inch bass. The great number of young fish should continue to provide excellent fishing in the years to come. Growth and condition of all sizes classes are excellent, in part fueled by the tremendously successful gizzard shad spawn.

The best spring fishing will be in coves and other protected areas as the bass come in to spawn. The last week of April/first two weeks of May is a good time to catch some keepers. A 14" minimum length limit/6 fish per day creel applies.

**White Bass - good** - The white bass population is similar in numbers and structure to that of 2008. The fish were mostly offshore during our latest survey. We ran into more white bass when we took our electrofishing boats out onto the flats and made a few circles.

Even though numbers have declined in the last two years, the average size has increased substantially, and condition is excellent. During our population survey, we collected 15 fish per hour. Currently, forty-six percent of the adult population is composed of fish that are 12 inches or more in length, and 6% of the fish are 15 inches or greater. The largest white bass weigh just over 2 lbs. These are exceptionally high quality fish in terms of length and weight. 2010 should provide good fishing with perhaps an increase in numbers due to a better spawn.

**Crappie - good** - We were able to better assess the crappie population due to normal water levels at the time of our population survey. Currently, black crappie numbers are the highest since 2004. We collected 46 fish per hour during our survey. There are two strong classes of crappie present, one ranging in length from 4 to 7 inches, and the other from 9 to 11 inches. Twenty-one percent of the adult crappie are 9 inches or more in length, while 16% are 10 inches or greater. Growth rates and condition of the fish are excellent, so the young crappie should continue to provide good fishing in the future. The white crappie population is smaller than the black crappie. During our current survey, we collected 12 fish per hour, which is similar to the past 5 years. Thirty-seven percent of the adult fish are 9 inches or more in length, while 22% are 10 inches or greater. Fair numbers of fish ranged in length from 7 to 9 inches, and also at 11 inches. Condition of the fish is excellent, with good growth rates. The largest crappie collected was a black crappie that weighed 1.5 lbs. There is a 10 inch minimum/10 fish per day creel for crappie.

**Catfish - good to very good** - Our fisheries survey data show that the channel catfish population has remained very stable for the last 9 years in terms of numbers and size structure. Currently, channel catfish range in length from 15 to 29 inches, and weigh from 1.1 to 9.5 lbs. They are most abundant in the 18 to 22 inch length range, and within this range weigh 2.2 to 4 lbs. Condition and growth of channel catfish is good, but could be better. The flathead catfish population is almost as abundant as the channel catfish, and condition and growth of flatheads are and has been excellent for several years. Flatheads exhibit exceptionally good reproduction and recruitment in Carlyle Lake. We picked up many young fish during our surveys. Flatheads occur in all sizes, from fish weighing less than a pound, to monsters weighing 50 or more lbs.

**Sauger - good** - Sauger are doing well in the lake. Several year classes are present and condition is good. During our population survey, we collected fish ranging in length from 6 to 20 inches. Thirty-five percent of the adult fish are 15 inches or more in length. The largest sauger observed during our survey weighed 3 lbs. Most of these fish originally came from our annual spring fry stocking program. The spillway area has a dense concentration of sauger and offers excellent fishing. A 14 inch minimum length limit/6 fish per day creel applies.

**Bluegill – good to very good** - Due to the past high water years, the bluegill population has experienced a substantial increase in numbers as well as a better population structure.

During our current population survey, two hundred and twenty fish were collected per hour compared to a past average of 59. At present, forty-nine percent of the adult fish are 6 inches or more in length, which is a substantial gain from the past 4 years where the average was 34%. The majority of bluegill range in length from 4.7 to 7.1 inches, with a substantial number of fish just at or slightly below 7 inches. Bluegill condition remains good, and spring fishing should be better in 2010.

## **REND LAKE**

**Largemouth Bass - good** - Supplemental stocking efforts have helped to improve and stabilize the Rend Lake bass population. Over 473,000 bass fingerlings have been stocked in the last eight years including over 88,000 this year alone. These fish have had a significant impact on the density and size structure of the population, and population indices have improved significantly. Data from the most recent population survey show all population indices met the target goals, and the condition of all sizes of fish is excellent (mean Wr 100). Bass numbers remain strong, and growth rates continue to be good. Excellent sampling conditions and persistent stocking resulted in a 21 percent increase in catch per effort. The total number of bass collected in the recent population survey was at a six year high with a catch rate of 121 bass per hour of electrofishing. Overall, the size structure of the population remains very similar to last year. The PSD and RSD 15 declined slightly due in part to the large number of smaller fish entering the population. However, the percentage of the total population exceeding the 14" minimum length limit remained almost identical to the previous year. Currently 31% of the adult bass population exceeds the 14-inch minimum length limit. This number should further improve over the next two years. The number of bass over 20" in length also remains low but stable and if growth rates remain good and mortality low this number should also improve next year. Overall, bass fishing in the coming year should be similar to last year with significant improvements in 2011. Tournament permits are available at Wayne Fitzgerald State Park, 618/629-2320.

**Crappie - good** - The length and creel regulations enacted in 2002 have had a significant impact on the size structure of the population. In the 7+ years since the regulations went into effect, the crappie population has improved dramatically and remained stable. However, data from the 2009 population survey show some changes in the size structure of the population for the coming year. A large year class of two year old fish have entered the population. These fish averaged just over 7" in length in the fall of 2009, and comprised a significant portion of the population. As a result, population indices have declined. Only 19 percent of the adult crappie were greater than 10 inches in length and the percent of fish exceeding 12" in length has declined by 50% from its 10 year high. A similar situation occurred in 2005. These fish grew rapidly and as a result the size structure of the population recovered the following season. Regulations will remain unchanged next season, but this latest large year class will be watched closely and if

growth rates decline future changes may be necessary. For 2010, crappie 10"-14" in length and averaging 1/2 to 1+ pound will make up 22% of the population, and will provide excellent angling opportunities. Crappie 8"- 10" are also abundant (28% of the population) and should contribute to the creel.

**White Bass - fair** - The number of fish collected in the fall 2009 electrofishing survey declined sharply. The significant decline in CPUE was unexpected due to good recruitment in 2007 and 2008, and may be. Most of the fishery in 2009 will be comprised of fish from the 2007 and 2008 year classes. These fish are in excellent condition, will range from 10" - 20" in length, and weigh from 0.5 to 1.5 pounds.

**Hybrid Striped Bass - fair** - The number of hybrid striped bass remains low. Due to short supply, a total of only 3,400 hybrid stripers were stocked in Rend Lake from 2001 - 2007. To improve the status of this fishery, approximately 51,800 hybrids were stocked in June 2008 and another 37,800 in June of 2009. These fish were only 1- inch long when stocked, but are growing rapidly with some of the 2008 year class already 14" in length. As they continue to grow they should significantly improve significantly over the next 2-3 years. Establishing an annual or semi-annual stocking regime is essential to developing and maintaining a quality fishery for this species, and this is dependant on availability.

**Channel Catfish / Flathead Catfish - excellent** - The fishing prospects for channel catfish remain excellent for the coming year. Natural reproduction and recruitment continue to be very strong, and are responsible for maintaining the large population of fish in the lake. Data from the 2009 population survey show catch rates for channels remain above the 10 year average. Channel catfish from 1 - 2 lbs are abundant, and larger fish up to 7 lbs are common. The condition of these fish remains fair and growth rates are good. This lake remains one of the premier channel catfish waters in southern Illinois, and should be on your list of places to fish for channels in 2010.

The catch rate for flathead catfish was up by 55% from last year and was the highest in over 13 years. Recruitment has been excellent the last few years, and this has led to a significant increase in the number of fish up to two pounds. The size structure of the rest of the population remains stable with fish up to 20 lbs not uncommon. Flatheads over forty pounds are also present. The large number of smaller flatheads should help to keep the population stable and provide excellent fishing in the coming years.

**Bluegill - good** - The size structure of the bluegill population showed improvement for the second consecutive year. Bluegill will be abundant in the coming year with most keepers 6"- 7.5" in length and averaging 1/3 lb or less. The number of fish over 8" in length has improved slightly with some reaching 1/2 lb. These improvements are encouraging, and with the above average growth rates and excellent condition for fish over 5" inches in length, the size structure of the population could improve significantly in the coming year.