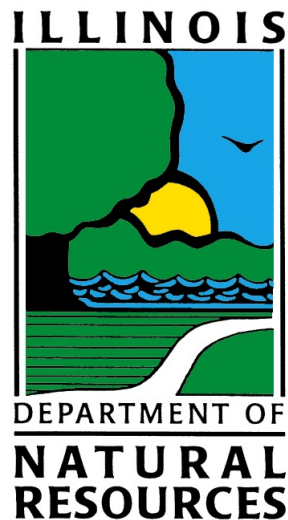


# **STATUS OF THE STRIPED BASS/HYBRID STRIPED BASS FISHERY**



**ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF  
NATURAL RESOURCES**

**DIVISION OF FISHERIES**

**MARCH 2007**

## **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 hybrid 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 hybrid 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 are averaging between 4 and 6 pounds. The striped bass hybrid population is doing well in Lake George.

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 which eliminated thermal loading and any current which was created by the circulation of cooling water through the plant. Heidecke Lake hosted state records for both pure and hybrid striped bass for many years (12 records in all) . Heidecke Lake receives annual stockings of striped bass hybrids to maintain the population of this popular sport fish. Pure striped bass have not been stocked since 1994 and any fish which remain are very large (40-pound fish have been recovered in IDNR sampling). A record collection of striped bass hybrids was made in fall 2006 as numbers far surpassed those which had been obtained in recent surveys. The 2006 collection was nearly four times greater than the previous survey which continues an upward trend in numbers. Gear efficiency far exceeded the ten-year averages of 2.2 fish/hour of electrofishing and 2.6 fish/net-night. Hybrid striped bass were collected at twice the frequency for electrofishing with gill netting collecting more than four times the average number of hybrids as usual. Combined sampling effort yielded a collection of 110 fish ranging in length from 5.5" to 28.3" and averaging 17.0". Hybrid stripers were the second most frequently caught fish in the 2006 creel survey and were the top species kept by anglers, who harvested a total of 10,352 pounds (5.3 pounds/acre). Results from the 1997 creel survey do not even approach the numbers which were estimated for 2006. The average size hybrid striper harvested weighed 2.26 pounds (which is roughly a 17 inch fish).

Yet another species which yielded increased numbers in the fall survey, the 2006 collection of white bass exceeded that of the previous survey by 59.0%. White bass collected in the 2006 fall survey ranged from 3.5" to 18.5" with an average length of 12.1". With the expansion of this species, the harvest of stocked hybrid striped bass could be lessened which will allow the hybrids a better chance to survive to the somewhat protected length of 17 inches. White bass were common in the 2006 creel, ranking fifth in the total number caught as well as number harvested. The average size white bass which was harvested by anglers in 2006 weighed 0.7 pounds which equates to approximately an 11 inch fish.

Yellow bass have become a main component of the Heidecke Lake fish population as well as the angler's creel. Yellow bass accounted for 19.7% of the 2006 fall survey collection and comprised 4.5% of the 2006 creel catch. Increasing from the previous survey by 78.3%, a total of 312 yellow bass were collected in the 2006 fall survey ranging in length from 2.8" to 15.7" at an average length of 9.4". Good densities of larger fish are present as indicated by the percentage of yellow bass which fall into the "memorable" length category (11 inches or greater). Trophy size yellow bass are also present and are frequently collected during spring trap netting. Yellow bass ranked in the top ten for species caught by anglers during 2006 (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 perched cooling lake and can become very hazardous in windy conditions. 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 stripers, being first stocked in 1978. The lake was also stocked with pure stripers starting in 1991. During the 2006 survey, pure stripers were collected at a rate of 1.3 per hour. The pure stripers ranged in length from 9 inches to 29 inches. During the 2006 survey, hybrid striped bass were collected at a rate of 1.1 per hour. The hybrids ranged in length from 13 inches to 25 inches. Fishing below the spillway at Clinton Lake gives anglers a great chance at a nice striper. A large number of stripers escape the lake and stay in the catch basin area. Several years ago white bass were introduced into Clinton Lake by an unknown source, but are producing an excellent fishing opportunity. 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 the white bass. 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 10<sup>th</sup>. 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** - Only a few individuals are collected during surveys, but anglers report catching hybrid striped bass. The hybrids collected during surveys are usually longer than 20 inches. The State Hatchery System stocks hybrid striped bass to sustain the fishery. 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. An increased number of fishermen have reported catching them on the lake and 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 could be coming from this source 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 for striped bass hybrids on Lake Decatur are rated as fair. Fishing prospects for striped bass hybrids below the Lake Decatur spillway are rated as good, 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. Anglers are 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 are rated as fair to good for 2007.

**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 south east corner of the lake. A strong fishery, attracting numbers of anglers, has developed. Two "Big Fish" Awards were submitted for hybrid striped bass in fall '04 by one angler. During the fall stocking success

survey, ten hybrids were collected ranging from 12 to 26 inches, with the largest weighing 10.5 lbs. Fishing prospects for striped bass hybrids are rated as good to excellent, but tend to be dependent on the amount of pumping activity.

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

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

**LAKE JACKSONVILLE** - In 2004, the striped bass hybrids collected during the annual fall fish population survey exhibited average body condition . Slightly over 50 % of the hybrid striped bass collected ranged in length from 24 to 29 inches. Fish in the 24 inch length class weighed 6.5 pounds with 29 inch individuals weighing up to 13.0 pounds. In 2005, the gill nets were not deployed and zero (0) hybrids were collected. In 2006, one (1) striped bass hybrid was collected in the gill nets measuring nearly 26 inches and weighing 8.5 pounds. Lake Jacksonville did not produce an acceptable gizzard shad spawn in 2004 and 2005. The hybrids prefer gizzard shad as their forage in Lake Jacksonville. Unfortunately, good, annual shad spawns do not always occur. In years of poor shad spawns, the hybrids are not as robust. However, in 2006 an excellent shad spawn was observed during the survey. Hopefully the hybrids will utilize this opportunity to add to their size. This species is somewhat overlooked in this lake. Tournament anglers target largemouth bass not the hybrids. This large, hard-fighting species has attracted a new “niche” of anglers pursuing these predators providing additional sport fishing opportunities.

**PITTSFIELD LAKE** - In 2005, the average individual measured 20.5 inches and weighed 4.9 pounds. During 2005 and 2006, there was exceptional gizzard shad spawns. The hybrids collected in 2006 were all collected in one, 150 foot, 3 inch gill net. A total of 76 fish were collected during 7 lifts for an average of 10.8 fish/lift. Eighty-four percent (84%) of the individuals collected ranged from 19 - 22 inches in length and weighed 3.2 to 6.6 pounds. Seventeen percent (17%) of the hybrids collected during 2006 were greater than 23 inches. The largest individual collected measured nearly 28 inches in length and weighed 12.0 pounds. This supplementally stocked species provides anglers with an additional sport fish to pursue that has the potential to reach exceptional size. Most hybrids are caught while trolling minnow look-a-likes deep along the western shelf.

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

**OTTER LAKE** - 50 Striped Bass Hybrids were collected during the April 2006 netting evaluation. This value ranks low as compared to previous years, and the overall average of fish caught per survey. The mean number of fish caught since 1995 (11 years) is 60.5 fish per sample. The reduction in densities is twofold. Firstly, this species has only been stocked 7 years since 1994 (7 of 12- 58 %). Secondly, two one hundred year flood events

occurred over the last five years. Spillway escapement was definitely a major problem during these high water episodes.

The fish captured measured 15.7" to 28.5", and weighed 3.3 lbs to 14.1 lbs. 42 individuals (84%) exceeded 5 lbs, and 15 (30%) topped 10 lbs in total weight. Due to overall densities being subpar, I would rate this population average for this time frame.

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

**BALDWIN LAKE** - Baldwin Lake received a stocking of 20,000 2" hybrid striped bass on July of 2006. Prior to this, the lake had not been stocked since 2002 due to production limits at our hatcheries. As a result, the population had declined substantially due to angling pressure, high natural mortality from accelerated growth rates/short life spans, and summer fish kills. We did not find any stripers in our survey in 2006 though anglers still catch a few. Since growth rates of hybrid stripers are very fast in Baldwin Lake due to the heated water, a good population should develop by the winter of 2007, with some reaching 17". Spring of 2008 will see fish in the 3 pound range, and there will still be some older fish in the population that should weigh 5 to 6 lbs. Projected fishing success is rated as poor in 2007 until late in the year when I would rate it as fair.

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

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

**FORBES LAKE** - The fishery for hybrid striped bass appears to be doing well if angler accounts are reliable, though surveys conducted in both spring and fall yielded relatively few fish which is not unusual for striped bass or hybrid striped bass. A supplemental stocking of 5,250 fingerlings averaging 1.8 inches was made in 2006. Fish from three year classes were collected with most ranging from 23 to 26 inches. Anglers report catching many this size and larger, up to 16 lbs. The largest collected was 26 inches and 9.1 lbs.

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

**CEDAR LAKE** - Cedar Lake is located five miles southwest of the City of Carbondale in Jackson County off of Route 51 South. There is a 17 inch minimum length limit and 3 fish daily creel limit on this lake. There is also a 10 HP motor limit on this lake. Little information is available on the striped bass population of this lake. During spring 2006 gill netting, one 8 pound striped bass was collected. Another attempt will be made during spring 2007 to sample striped bass. Most information is from anglers catches which range from 5-23 pounds.

#### **Stocking History (since 1990)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Size</b>

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"

## **DISTRICT 22: FRANKLIN, JOHNSON, MASSAC, AND WILLIAMSON COUNTIES**

**CRAB ORCHARD LAKE** - Crab Orchard Lake is a 7,000 acre federal impoundment located in Williamson County approximately one mile south of Carterville. Striped bass hybrid fishing prospects for the 2007 season are projected to be fair at best. A federal striped bass hybrid stocking program for Crab Orchard was stopped in 1991 due to their apparent negative influence on the white bass population, and individuals from that program have not been collected for a few years. After IDNR entered into a cooperative fisheries management agreement with USFWS in 1998, the lake was submitted as a candidate for state-provided striped bass hybrids and received 25,000 2-inch fish in 1999 (3.6/acre), 14,000 in 2001 (2/acre), and 1650 in 2003 (0.2/acre). These fish exhibited good growth due to the presence of abundant gizzard and threadfin shad, and hybrids ranging in length from 9 to 25 inches were collected in the fall of 2004. However, no hybrids were collected during the fall surveys of 2005 or 2006. If a hybrid striped bass population is to be maintained in Crab Orchard Lake, it is apparent that a stocking of reasonable density (2 to 4 per acre) scheduled on a one to three year time interval will be required.

A portion of Crab Orchard Lake east of Wolf Creek Road is closed to boat traffic October 1 to March 15 to reduce disturbance of resting waterfowl. All fish-offs and tournaments are required to be pre-registered with the refuge, and all anglers must purchase a refuge user pass. Write USFWS, Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge, 8588 Rt. 148, Marion, IL 62959 or call 618/997-3344 for information.