

2012 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 10 of the last 11 years, including 2011! Recruitment of the 2011 year class of largemouth bass appears to be especially good, 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 over the past five years were much improved. Fishermen reported catching good numbers of bass both below and above the size limit through the 2011 season. One tournament recorded 53 limits of five fish brought to the scales. The three greatest single day tournament total weights were 502, 507, and 658, which is somewhat lower than 2010 and 2009. Average weight of bass weighed into the larger tournaments ranged from 1.5 to 2.7 lbs. The largest bass weighed into the larger tournaments ranged from 4.6 to 6.9 lbs. The lake record bass was caught in a tournament by Chuck Ditto in April 2009, which weighed 8.55 lbs.

The number of bass, age 1+ and older, collected in the 2011 (45/hr.) was similar to 2010 (49/hr.), but well below the 2009 average (80/hr.), but above the 2006, 2007, and 2008 survey results (24, 31, 22/hr). Collection rates were similar throughout the lake. The largest bass collected during the 2010 fall survey was 21 inches and weighed 5.3 lbs. The largemouth bass fishing prospects for 2011 remain good to excellent for numbers and good to excellent for size.

Smallmouth Bass - poor - There has been a recent attempt to establish a foundling population of smallmouth bass in Lake Shelbyville through small stockings in falls 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2010. No smallmouth bass were stocked in 2011 due to the inability to collect broodstock from the Kaskaskia River due to high flows. No smallmouth bass were collected in recent fall fish population surveys. A few reports from fishermen indicate that at least a few of 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 was excellent in fall 2009 and has been improving ever since. Crappie fishing in 2011 has been very good with fishermen catching limits of fish, including fish up to 15". Fall fish populations surveys indicate that good numbers of legal size crappie were present.

The largest white crappie collected during the 2011 fall survey was 13 inches and weighed 1.0 lbs. The largest black crappie collected during the 2011 fall survey was 10 inches and weighed 0.7 lbs. The largest crappie reported from tournaments was 2.0 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. Fishing prospects for crappie should be excellent for both numbers and size in 2012 and for several years.

Walleye - excellent - Walleye fishermen and guides reported excellent fishing in late April through May in 2009 thru 2011 for walleye. Catch rates of young-of-the-year walleye were very good in the 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2011 fall standard fish population and supplemental surveys. 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 springs 2008 and 2009. The catch rate of walleye in the fall stocking success survey of 2009 was 64/hr.; while only 17.7 in 2010, then 33/hr in 2011. The largest walleye collected during the 2011 fall surveys was 23+ inches and weighed 5.0 lbs. Fishing prospects for 2012 should be excellent for both numbers and size.

Sauger – fair - 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, 2009, 2010, and 2011. The number stocked in 2010 was significantly increased to 102,000+ from a previous average of 16,500. Sauger were collected at the rate of 29 per hour during the 2011 fall stocking success survey. The largest sauger collected in 2011 was 14 inches and weighed 0.9 lbs. Legal-size sauger have been reported caught by fishermen annually in recent years since 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 in 2012 are good.

Muskellunge – fair - good - 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 produced an outstanding muskie fishery; however catch rates since 2007 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, however water levels were close to normal in fall 2010 and 2011. Fishing for muskie was very poor during the spring and summer, both on the lake and below the spillway in 2007 and 2008, but much improved in 2011. Fishing improved the most below the spillway.

Without extensive sampling it is difficult to assess muskie numbers on Lake Shelbyville. A few muskies were collected in the 2011 fall fish population survey by the IDNR crew. Illinois Natural History Survey employees collected several muskie in subsequent surveys

while collecting fish for a diet study of muskie. Although collection rates were poor, muskie numbers likely remain fair to good on the lake and improved in the area below the dam. Fishing prospects for 2012 are expected to be fair for numbers and fair for size on the lake and fair to good for both numbers and size below the lake in the spillway area.

White bass - excellent - 2009 thru 2011 were banner years 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. The largest white bass collected during the 2011 fall survey was 14 inches and weighed 1.25 lbs. The lake record white bass caught was 4 lb 2 oz. in spring 2002. Fishing prospects for 2012 should be excellent for numbers and size.

Catfish - fair - good - Very low numbers of channel catfish were collected during recent surveys, with the largest in 2011 being 29 inches and 10.3 lbs. As usual, few flathead catfish were collected as well, with the largest measuring only 19 inches and 3 lbs. The lake record flathead, weighing 62 lbs. was caught in 2002. Channel catfish recruitment appears to have improved though, as good catches of harvestable fiddler catfish were reported by fishermen in fall 2010. Flathead catfish recruitment appears to be variable, but apparently low. Fishermen report variable, but fair success. Fishing prospects for 2012 are improved to good for numbers and fair 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 2012 remains good for numbers and poor to fair for size.