

**Summary Report on the  
2009 Illinois Muskie Creel Survey**  
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This year, the Illinois Voluntary Muskie Creel Survey was supplemented by additional data provided by the Muskies, Inc. members only contest. The MI data provided information on 919 muskies from 30" to 50.5" in 2009. After sorting duplicate entries, a total of 1,261 (the most ever) muskies were used as the data base for the annual report. This year's survey has a great shot of Scott Bartell, a fisheries technician with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources holding a 51.25" muskie netted from the Fox Chain of Lakes.

Actually, the survey gives information on a total of 12,193 muskies from 1987 through 2009, from 66 bodies of water. This article will concentrate on the 2009 results and a comparison of the top Illinois muskie bodies of water for the past twenty three years. To obtain a free copy of the fact-jammed, 22 page, complete study, write the Illinois Department of Natural Resources at One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271.

Typically, the reported catches have increased each year as the fishery has developed, since 1987, when the survey started. The average number of hours fished between muskie catches has also decreased. In 2009, time between catches averaged a little over 13 hours. Overall, the fishery continues to improve, largely due to the practice of catch and release, which started at 75% in the late 1980s and has increased to around 100% for the last several years.

When analyzing the survey, you must remember that participation is voluntary. Many fish go unreported, due largely to ignorance of the survey, or personal efforts to keep catches secret from the public. The IMA continues to support and promote the survey through education and articles like this one. The IMA has asked for participation by its member organizations in reporting Illinois muskie catches for their members. We have also asked the IMTT and PMTT professional muskie tournaments held in Illinois waters to mandate creel survey participation in their contest rules. In 2009 the IMA, with a generous donation from Tri-Esox, provided 100 Creel aluminum survey signs for posting at boat ramps, concessions, etc.

Participation in the survey is easy. Funds are partially provided by the IMA. Simply fill out a postage paid "Green Card" for any size muskie captured, available at local concession stands, bait shops or state park offices and drop it in the mail. The following year, you'll receive an updated copy of the report, a certificate, suitable for framing and a muskie release pin. If you can't locate a "Green Card", write the IDNR, or contact one of the eleven IMA member organizations.

Each year the IMA recognizes the angler who catches, releases and registers the largest entry in the creel survey. The anglers catch must be recognized by one of the IMA member organizations. The IMA decided several years ago to honor the biggest entry each year in order to promote the survey and the IMA organizations. Unfortunately, the angler with the largest muskie captured in Illinois is not always the recipient of the trophy. The IMA trophy for the largest verified muskie capture in 2009 went to Colby Simms for his 51"- Kinkaid Lake release.

The report lists 31 bodies of water reporting muskie captures in 2009, as compared to 29 in 2008. Of those, 26 of the bodies of water produced 36" or larger muskies, 21 produced 42" or larger muskies, 12 produced 45" or larger muskies, 4 produced 48" or larger muskies and 2 produced 50" or larger muskies.

The following bodies of water reported muskies in the 2009 survey:

Banner Marsh  
Carlton  
Chopper  
Countryside  
Crystal  
Double T  
Evergreen  
Fox Chain  
Fox River  
Galena  
Heidecke  
Independence Grove  
Indian Creek  
Island Lake  
Kaskaskia River  
Kinkaid  
Linden  
Loon  
McMaster  
Mingo  
Otter  
Pana  
Pierce  
Prairie  
Shabbona  
Shelbyville  
Spring (North)  
Sterling  
Storey  
Waterford  
Not named

The top bodies of water (for all size fish) followed by the percentage of all fish reported in the survey, in order of productivity were:

Fox Chain-41.8  
Kinkaid-20.9  
Spring (North)-5.6  
Kaskaskia River-5.4  
Pierce-4.8  
Shabbona-4.7

The top bodies of water followed by the percentage of all fish 36" or larger reported in the survey were:

Fox Chain-44.7  
Kinkaid -20.0  
Kaskaskia River-8.0

Shabbona-4.5  
Spring (North)-3.1  
Shelbyville -2.0

The top bodies of water followed by the percentage of all fish 42" or larger reported in the survey were:

Fox Chain-31.5  
Kinkaid-31.5  
KaskaskiaRiver-10,3  
Shabbona-3.6  
Shelbyville -3.0  
Spring (North)-3.0

The top bodies of water followed by the percentage of all fish 45" or larger reported in the survey were:

Kinkaid-41.3  
Fox Chain-31.0  
Kaskaskia River-6.8  
Prairie-5.1

The top lakes followed by the percentage of all fish 48" or larger reported in the survey were:

Fox Chain-50.0  
Kinkaid-30.0  
Kaskaskia River-10.0  
Shabbona-10.0

The following lakes produced 50" or larger muskie reported in the survey:

Kinkaid-51"  
Fox Chain-50.5" & 50"

Finally, the data provided in the survey yielded the following information for the six most productive Illinois muskie lakes from 1987 through 2009.

**Illinois Top Muskie Lakes**  
**(Based on the 1987-2009 Voluntary Muskie Creel Survey for Fish 36" or Greater)**

| <b>Lake Total (%)</b> | <b>Time of Year (%)</b>                | <b>Type of Lure (%)</b>                   | <b>Lure Color (%)</b>                  | <b>Presentation (%)</b> |
|-----------------------|--|---|--|-------------------------|
| Kinkaid-25            | October-24<br>May-14<br>March-13       | Crankbait-60<br>Spinner-19<br>Jerkbait-9  | White-23<br>Red-18<br>Shad-10          | Casting-72              |
| Fox Chain-22          | June-23<br>July-19<br>August-16        | Crankbait-48<br>Spinner-23<br>Jerkbait-12 | Black-19<br>Firetiger-10<br>Orange-9   | Casting-67              |
| Shelbyville-13        | September-23<br>April-19<br>October-14 | Crankbait-58<br>Spinnner-25               | Black-19<br>White-17<br>Shad-15        | Casting-72              |
| Kaskaskia River-7     | July-18<br>April-17<br>June/Sept-12    | Jig-40<br>Crankbait-29<br>Jerkbait-11     | Shad-23<br>Black-19<br>Silver-11       | Casting-99              |
| Carlton-6             | May-26<br>June-17<br>September-12      | Crankbait-32<br>Jerkbait-22<br>Spinner-16 | Black-34<br>Green-10<br>Firetiger-9    | Casting-82              |
| Shabbona-5            | May-24<br>June-19<br>September-15      | Crankbait-42<br>Jerkbait-26<br>Spinner-15 | Black-24<br>Brown-12<br>Red/Sil/Grey-9 | Casting-73              |

On behalf of the IDNR and the IMA, I'd like to thank MI for their assistance in providing the additional data.