



SPRING LAKE NORTH

FISHERIES FACT SHEET

LARGEMOUTH BASS: SPRING LAKE (NORTH) - This lake is characterized by heavy growth of aquatic vegetation for much of the spring, summer and fall. There is an excellent population of intermediate to large bass, mainly in the 2 to 5 pound range. A window of opportunity for fishing exists from March 15 through April 30 or until aquatic vegetation becomes excessively abundant. At that time of year, largemouth bass fishing could be rated as excellent. In May, largemouth bass fishing becomes much more difficult due to the tremendous coverage of aquatic weeds and very clear water. Many bass fishermen select the hours of darkness to fish during the warm summer months. They catch a large number of big bass on weedless surface lures at that time. The extensive weed beds serve as a fish preserve, creating growth problems for intermediate and larger sized bass. The lotus and lily pad areas are very productive in mid-summer. Many tournaments for bass fishing are held on the lake each year.

As a result of the review of data generated by field surveys in 2014, fishing for largemouth bass should be excellent on North Spring Lake in 2015. The 2014 fish population survey showed, that 31.5% of the largemouth bass collected were 15 inches or longer. Condition and growth have been much improved over the past 3 years. Most lake management goals for largemouth bass were exceeded in 2014. A fish kill occurred in the northern-most 30 acres of Spring Lake in 2013-2014 due to the extremely cold temperatures and extended ice cover in the winter. We stocked numerous fingerling bass and brood-fish were able to spawn, producing many young-of-the year bass in this area of the lake in 2014.

A 3 fish daily limit and a minimum size of 15 inches is in effect. The best largemouth bass fishing at North Spring Lake occurs early, before weeds become a problem. Try fishing this Spring along the levees and around duck blinds using crank baits or after dark using surface plugs later in the summer. Also, the lily and lotus pads are a good bet later in the summer. All bass tournaments must register at least 60 days before the event.

MUSKIE: SPRING LAKE NORTH - In 1978, Spring Lake was divided into two distinct waters for the purpose of capital improvement and the restructuring of the fish population. Prior to 1916, Spring Lake was part of the Illinois River system as a lateral freshwater marsh. In 1916, it was separated from the river by a high levee and has remained a separate body of water. From 1916 until 1981, the quality of the fishery habitat and the fish population declined due to rough fish populations such as carp and bullheads. In 1981, the lake was treated with Rotenone to remove the existing fish population and encourage the growth of aquatic vegetation. The key to the rehabilitation was the re-establishment of lush aquatic vegetation which had occurred by summer of 1983.

Always a shallow water, Spring Lake today has an average depth of 2.9 feet. Of the 578 acres of water, at least 75% is covered with 17 different species of aquatic vegetation by late May of each year. The majority of this coverage now consists of Eurasian milfoil, lily and lotus. The tremendous spring recharge from the bed of the lake amounts to 52 acre feet a day, creating very cold water temperatures under the insulating layer of vegetation for the majority of the summer months. This is a unique situation and only occurs in Spring Lake within the State of Illinois. The

resulting temperature regime and water quality is excellent habitat for muskie. Because of its proximity to the Jake Wolf Hatchery, North Spring Lake has been used as a brood source for muskie the past ten years and has provided most of the early muskie stocks for statewide stocking each year. In an effort to collect fish for egg production, extensive population assessment data has been gathered since 1991. We know quite a lot about the size structure and age of the population, as well as growth. It appears that growth of female fish is excellent when compared to nation-wide populations. Growth of male muskie is in the normal range when making a similar comparison. There is a big difference in the length at age between sexes! A 32 inch female is usually 4 years old, whereas a 32 inch male is 5 years old, on average.

North Spring Lake is stocked every third year at a rate of between 2 and 3 fish per acre. It has been observed that significant cannibalism occurs if muskie are stocked every year. Young muskie are especially vulnerable to 1 and 2 year old male muskie at North Spring Lake.

A muskie tagging project was completed in 2012. We were able to gain information regarding growth of fish by sex and age as well as potential egg production data. This tagging project has answered many questions concerning muskie biology in Illinois.

Muskie trapping for brood fish was completed in March of 2014. All muskie collected were examined for weight, length and sex after being taken to Jake Wolf Fish Hatchery. We collected 151 females and 139 male muskie in three days of fishing effort. We were able to take 871,000 muskie eggs from these fish.

Fishing for muskie on North Spring Lake is a challenge. The water temperatures rise quickly and usually result in fish feeding actively in late March. Aquatic vegetation becomes thick and hard to fish no later than May 15th of each year and lasts until the lake closes for regular waterfowl season. The narrow window of opportunity between the middle of March and mid-May results in some excellent fishing. The fish are then refuged by the thick vegetation until the following year. Sometimes fishing the holes in the vegetation in June is quite effective. Sometimes, late winter is excellent muskie fishing if there is open water. There are a number of large fish in the population available to muskie fishermen.

North Spring Lake has three useable boat ramps and is accessible by the Manito Blacktop, 12 miles south of Pekin. No fuel or services are available, however, camping and food is. There is a 25 horsepower limit at Spring Lake. As with bass, a number of muskie tournaments are conducted on Spring Lake every year. These must be registered at the site office no later than 60 days before the tournament.

CHANNEL CATFISH - An excellent population of catchable sized channel catfish is found at North Spring Lake. Best fishing for these fish is found along the Northwest levee and on the outside of the aquatic vegetation beds. Best fishing for channel catfish is at night from May through July. Best baits are cut bait and minnows.

CRAPPIE - An excellent population of black crappie occurs in North Spring Lake. A good number of 9.0+ inch long fish are caught in net sampling gear during brood muskie collection every spring. These fish exhibit excellent growth and condition. Brook silversides and gizzard shad provide excellent forage for black crappie. Anglers are able to catch good numbers of crappie in the lotus beds in March and April.

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Sportfishing Prospects

Target fish	Image	Avg. Weight of catch (lbs)	Best Time to fish	Habitat areas to fish
Bullheads		2/3 lb.	June - August	Around S Shore
Channel Catfish		3 lb.	May - July	Along W Levee
Largemouth Bass		2 lb.	March - May	Aquatic weed beds
Muskellunge		10 - 20 lb.	June - Sept.	Weed beds & along East shore
Crappie		3/4 lb.	March - May	Lotus stick ups