



# WHEEL LAKE

## BANNER MARSH STATE FISH AND WILDLIFE AREA

### FISHERIES STATUS SUMMARY

**LOCATION and DESCRIPTION:** Located in Central Illinois, the 5,524 acre Banner Marsh State Fish and Wildlife Area lies adjacent to the Illinois River, 4 miles north of Banner, Illinois, along Route 24. The former bottomland lake and marsh was leveed and drained for agricultural practice from 1910 through 1958. From 1958 to 1974 approximately 90 percent of the site was strip-mined for coal. The strip-mined areas have since been reclaimed and purchased by the State of Illinois. Under the management of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (1978 - present) the primary objective for the site is to establish a freshwater marsh providing fish and wildlife habitat in the Illinois River Valley.

Banner Marsh SFWA was characterized by narrow strip pits and upland ponds, but in 1994 the hydrology changed due to the intentional cessation of pumping operations in the levee district. The water level rose approximately 7 feet (435 M.S.L.) due mainly to groundwater recharge by seepage under the existing 1-100 year flood-tight levee with the Illinois River. The total surface water acreage for the site increased from 530 acres to approximately 2400 acres and created a large vegetated littoral zone.

**Wheel Lake** (approximately 350 acres) is a deep final cut lake which is connected to a large series of strip mine wheel cut lakes. The wheel cut portion contains points, islands, flooded brush and diverse aquatic vegetation, while the final cut portion has little littoral zone and gravel substrate. The maximum water depth is 60 feet. Water clarity averages 4 feet in the summer.

The East Point access area has a concrete boat ramp, 50 vehicle and trailer parking lot, restrooms and a picnic pavilion. The lake has a 25 h.p. motor limit. The site is open 24 hours a day, except for the Central Zone Duck Season. At which time only shoreline fishing is allowed after 1 p.m.

#### **HISTORY & STATUS of the SPORT FISHERY:**

**Largemouth Bass:** The largemouth bass population was evaluated by 173 bass from electrofishing and 39 bass from trapnets in 2014. The largemouth bass population indices showed a high percentage of fish from 5 to 20 inches with good relative weight values

The 2014 electrofishing survey indicated a size structure that is continuing to maintain a good level and stability since 2001. In the sample, 29% of the fish were over 16 inches and 8% were over 18 inches.

The goal of the protected slot length limit was to create a high density bass population that is composed of fish large enough to be efficient predators upon the high density of slow growing panfish and the rough fish population. The benefit to bass anglers will be more fish surviving past 14 inches to catch, and for the anglers wanting to harvest bass will be the opportunity to harvest more fish.

**Bluegill:** The bluegill population was sampled by 56 stock size fish in 2014. The bluegill population continues to have a poor size structure and body condition. No fish were over 7 inches in length and the average Wr value was 85. The food and space competition with gizzard shad and common carp have continued the slow growth of the bluegill.

**Crappie:** In 2014, 86 black crappie and 50 white crappie were sampled. Both of the crappie populations have seen a decline in size structure and body condition over the last 5 years. Approximately 30% of the crappie population sampled was over the minimum size limit of 9 inches in 2014.

**Channel Catfish:** The channel catfish population was represented by 76 fish. These fish were in good body condition and 75% of the fish were over 18 inches in length. An annual stocking of up to 700 non vulnerable channel catfish occurs each year.

**Walleye:** A limited population of large fish is present from a single stocking.

**Muskie:** Muskie have been stocked annually in Wheel lake since the fall of 1996 at a rate of 350, 10 inch fish per year. In 2014, 39 fish were sampled by spring trapnetting and 3 by fall electrofishing. The maximum length was 46 inches. The collection rate was 2.4 fish per net night. Illinois (Jake Wolf) muskie strain appear to be doing very good in this lake.

<b>FISHING REGULATIONS:</b> Site specific angling regulations. Two pole and line fishing only except carp may be taken by bow and arrow devices, gigs or appears during May through August, all other statewide regulations apply. <b>Species</b>	<b>Daily Creel Limit</b>	<b>Minimum Length Limit</b>
<b>All Fish</b>		<b>2 pole and line only</b>
<b>Largemouth/Smallmouth Bass</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12-18" protected slot length</b>
<b>Channel Catfish</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Walleye</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>14" minimum</b>
<b>White and Black Crappie</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>9" minimum</b>
<b>Muskie</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>42" minimum</b>

**CONTACT INFORMATION – Rice Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area:** 309/647-9184.

IDNR Fisheries County Fish Biologist: 309/446-9143.

Illinois Fishing Information booklet and IFISHILLINOIS website <http://www.ifishillinois.org/>