



United States Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

Hoosier National Forest
811 Constitution Avenue
Bedford, IN 47421
Web: www.fs.usda.gov/hoosier

Hoosier NF Highlights

Media Contact: Teena Ligman or Judi Perez

Voice: (812) 275-5987

Cell: (812) 675-3826

tligman@fs.fed.us or japerez@fs.fed.us



Contact: Teena Ligman, 812-275-5987

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Fishing Opportunities on the Hoosier National Forest



By Len Kring, Fish Biologist

There are many fishing opportunities throughout the Hoosier National Forest for angling enthusiasts of all ages and experience. From large lakes with concrete boat ramps and road side ponds with easy access, to small and medium lakes off the beaten path; prospects for catching fish are excellent.

Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) has been doing fish surveys on many Hoosier lakes for 40 years or more. Most, if not all of the fishable lakes on the Hoosier are managed for bluegill/redear sunfish and largemouth bass populations. This predator-prey relationship is the typical pond and small lake fishery found throughout much of the Midwest. There are other species present in many of the ponds and lakes on the HNF. Species such as black and white crappie, yellow bullhead, warmouth, longear sunfish, and grass pickerel may occasionally be caught by anglers.

The following paragraphs summarize some of the most recent IDNR surveys on the larger Hoosier lakes. The information was provided by Dan Carnahan, IDNR District 6 Fisheries Biologist.

Tipsaw Lake

Tipsaw Lake was last surveyed on May 1, 2013. Six species, with 371 individual fish were collected in the survey. A total of 183 bluegill was sampled with the largest specimen being 8.4 inches. Sixty redear were collected, the largest specimen was 9.3 inches. Ninety-seven largemouth bass were sampled with the largest specimen at 17.7 inches. The other three species collected were black crappie, warmouth and yellow bullhead. The largest crappie was 11.1 inches and the largest warmouth was 8.1 inches.

Fishing at Tipsaw Lake is generally good for all game species. Sunfish species and largemouth bass have good abundance and size. Tipsaw Lake falls into a rare category that has quality fishing for both predator and prey species.

Saddle Lake

Saddle Lake was last surveyed on May 15, 2013. The same six species found at Tipsaw were collected. A total of 107 bluegill were collected with a large specimen of 8.8 inches. Sixty-nine redear were collected with a maximum length of 10 inches. Sixty-six largemouth bass were captured with the largest specimen at 12.1 inches. Saddle Lake was showing a stockpiled bass population with slow growth, while the bluegill population was showing larger fish. IDNR recommended at the time that more small bass outside of the 12-15 inch slot limit need to be harvested.

Springs Valley Lake

A general survey was conducted on May 4 and June 1-2, 2009, at Springs Valley Lake. A total of ten species and 551 individual fish were collected. Seventy-four percent of the redear and 12 percent of the bluegill were 8.0 in or longer. Largemouth bass ranked first in both number and weight collected; however, the number of quality fish was low. Sixteen channel catfish were collected with the largest specimen being 23.2 inches. Other species collected included warmouth, black crappie, white sucker, and brown bullhead. Historical species collected at Springs Valley Lake include: green sunfish, grass pickerel and black bullhead.

Springs Valley Lake provides an excellent panfish and catfish fishery with adequate shoreline access for family outings. The lake also has a concrete boat ramp for electric motor boats only. Springs Valley Lake is scheduled to be surveyed again in 2015.

This is just a small sampling of the recreational fishing opportunities on the Hoosier. The new Forest fish biologist intends to continue the partnership with the IDNR to maintain and enhance the quality of fisheries provided.

A Fishing Pond and Lake Guide is available on the Forest website:

http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5351732.pdf

For more information on the Hoosier's fisheries program, contact Len Kring at 812-547-7051 or lenmkring@fs.fed.us.



Grass pickerel caught by Glenn Leone at Springs Valley Lake.



Fisheries Survey underway. Photo courtesy of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.