



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

2024 Black River Gamefish Survey Report Jackson & Clark Counties Waterbody Code 1676700

Introduction And Objectives

The Black River is 198 miles long and stretches from its headwaters in Taylor County to where it dumps into Lake Onalaska/Mississippi River in La Crosse County. The river below the Black River Falls dam is known as the Lower Black River, the river above the Black River Falls dam is known as the Upper Black River. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) fish management annually surveys multiple stations on both sections of the river to assess gamefish populations. The 2024 fisheries survey sampled two Lower Black River stations and two stations on the Upper Black River. The number of stations annually sampled is dependent on river conditions. The main objectives of this survey were to assess gamefish size structure and abundance.

DNR Contact

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Regulations

See current Guide to Wisconsin's Fishing Regulations Booklet

SURVEY INFORMATION

River Section	Survey Station	Survey Date	Station Length (miles)	Temperature (° F)	Flow (ft3/s)	Target Species	Gear
Lower Black River	Perry Creek Landing	9/23/2024	1	65	393	Gamefish	Miniboom Shocker
	Mason's Landing	9/23/2024	1	62	400	Gamefish	Miniboom Shocker
Upper Black River	Opelt Avenue	9/10/2024	0.63	66	175	Gamefish	Miniboom Shocker
	Paddy's Rest	9/10/2024	0.64	66	180	Gamefish	Miniboom Shocker



Survey Method

- All stations were sampled according to DNR non-wadeable streams monitoring protocols using a miniboom shocker.
- Two stations were surveyed above the Black River Falls dam (Upper Black River) and two stations were surveyed below the Black River Falls dam (Lower Black River).
- All gamefish were counted and measured.
- Metrics used to describe gamefish populations include average length, catch per unit effort (CPUE) and length frequency distribution.

Metric Descriptions

- **Catch per unit effort (CPUE)** is an indirect method of measuring fish population relative abundance. For this fish survey we quantified CPUE by the number and size of gamefish species captured per one mile of river.
- **Length frequency distribution** is a graphical representation of the number of fish captured by one inch size intervals.



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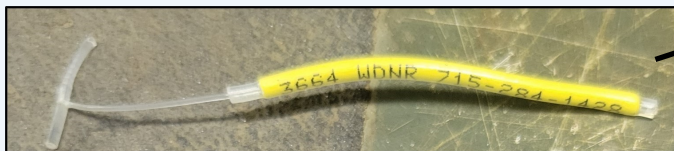
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2024 MUSKELLUNGE SIZE AND ABUNDANCE (CPUE) METRICS							
River Section	Station	Total Number Sampled	Average Length (inches)	Length Range (inches)	Catch Rate (fish per mile)	% ≥ 34"	% ≥ 40"
Lower Black River	Perry Creek Landing	2	30	18-41.2	2	50.0	50.0
	Mason's Landing	2	33.6	26.1-41	1	50.0	50.0
Upper Black River	Opelt Avenue	1	28.5	28.5	1.6	0.0	0.0
	Paddy's Rest	1	29.5	29.5	0.78	0.0	0.0

2015-2024 MUSKELLUNGE SIZE AND ABUNDANCE (CPUE) METRICS						
Year	Lower Black River Catch Rates (fish per mile)			Upper Black River Catch Rates (fish per mile)		
	#/mile	#/mile ≥ 34"	#/mile ≥ 40"	#/mile	#/mile ≥ 34"	#/mile ≥ 40"
2015	0	0	0	3.9	0.8	0.8
2016	13	2	1	7.1	1.6	0
2017	4.5	3	1	1.6	1.6	0
2018	1.5	0.5	0	1.7	1.6	0.8
2019	0.5	0	0	0	0	0
2020	0.5	0	0	2.4	1.6	0.8
2021	3	1	1	3.2	1.6	0.8
2022	2	1.5	0.5	3.2	2.4	0.8
2023	2	0.5	0	4.7	1.6	0.8
2024	2	1	1	1.6	0	0

Summary

- The Black River has a very healthy and robust muskellunge fishery. Annual survey results show a consistent population abundance with a moderate size structure. Due to the difficulty of electrofishing in current, not all muskies were captured during surveys and like all fish stories the biggest ones got away. Anglers can expect an action type fishery with trophy potential. Anglers should also be aware of WDNR FLOY tags hanging near the dorsal fin. If a tagged muskie is caught please record the length, approximate catch location and four digit tag number and call the phone number on the tag to report it.



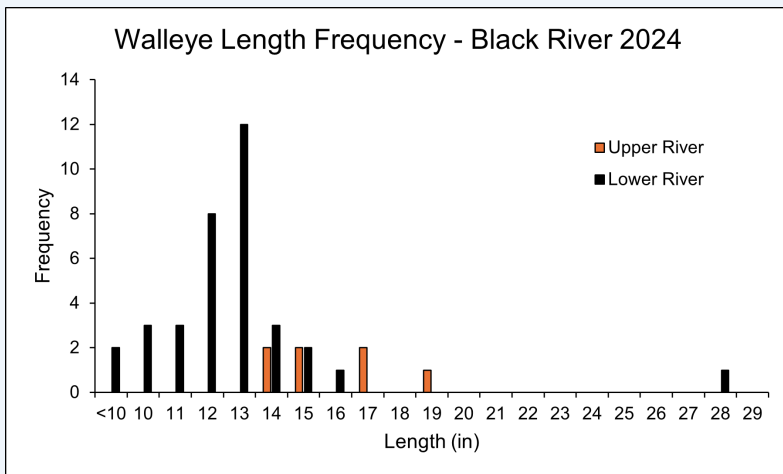


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2024 WALLEYE SIZE AND ABUNDANCE (CPUE) METRICS							
River Section	Station	Total Number Sampled	Average Length (inches)	Length Range (inches)	Catch Rate (fish per mile)	% ≥ 15"	% ≥ 20"
Lower Black River	Perry Creek Landing	10	15.0	10.6-28.4	10	30.0	10.0
	Mason's Landing	25	12.6	9.1-16.6	12.5	8.0	0.0
Upper Black River	Opelt Avenue	4	16.3	14.8-19.6	6.4	75.0	0.0
	Paddy's Rest	3	16.4	14.1-17.8	2.3	66.7	0.0

2015-2024 WALLEYE SIZE AND ABUNDANCE (CPUE) METRICS						
Year	Lower Black River Catch Rates (fish per mile)			Upper Black River Catch Rates (fish per mile)		
	#/mile	#/mile ≥ 15"	#/mile ≥ 20"	#/mile	#/mile ≥ 15"	#/mile ≥ 20"
2015	12	2	0	7.1	2.4	0
2016	6	0	0	24.4	7.9	0
2017	15	0.5	0	4.7	3.9	0
2018	40	3	1	16.5	3.9	0.8
2019	14.5	1	0.5	3.1	0	0
2020	9	1	0.5	10.2	1.6	0
2021	15.5	1	0	17.3	6	1.6
2022	33.5	1	0	13.4	3.9	0
2023	15.5	3.5	0.5	23.6	4.7	2.4
2024	17.5	2	0.5	5.5	3.9	0



Summary

Walleye fishing is open all year round in the Lower Black River and popular among anglers, especially during the spring spawning run and late fall. The walleye population is self-sustaining and has a moderate size structure. The size structure reflects the local harvest orientated angling group that typically harvest the legal walleye they catch. Walleye are also FLOY tagged and if a tagged fish is caught please record the length, approximate catch location and four digit tag number and call the phone number on the tag to report it.

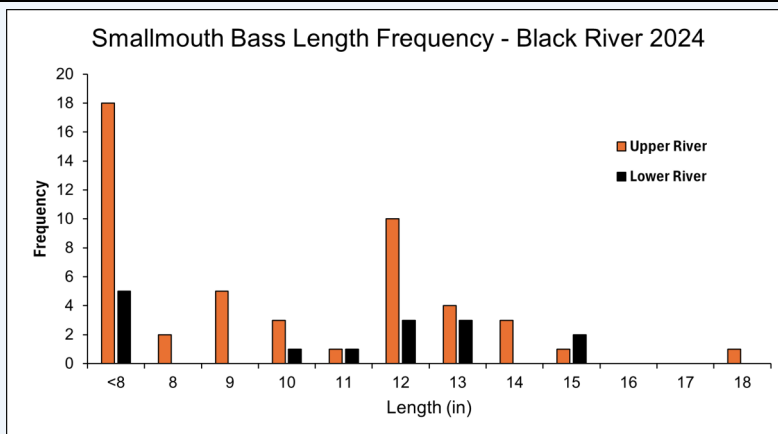


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2024 SMALLMOUTH BASS SIZE AND ABUNDANCE (CPUE) METRICS							
River Section	Station	Total Number Sampled	Average Length (inches)	Length Range (inches)	Catch Rate (fish per mile)	% ≥ 14"	% ≥ 18"
Lower Black River	Perry Creek Landing	2	13.0	12.4-13.5	2	0.0	0.0
	Mason's Landing	13	10.0	4.1-15.5	6.5	15.4	0.0
Upper Black River	Opelt Avenue	9	11.6	5.0-18.3	14.4	22.2	11.1
	Paddy's Rest	34	9.7	4.1-14.5	26.4	8.8	0.0

2015-2024 SMALLMOUTH BASS SIZE AND ABUNDANCE (CPUE) METRICS						
Year	Lower Black River Catch Rates (fish per mile)			Upper Black River Catch Rates (fish per mile)		
	#/mile	#/mile ≥ 14"	#/mile ≥ 18"	#/mile	#/mile ≥ 14"	#/mile ≥ 18"
2015	2	0	0	90.6	4.7	1.6
2016	1	0	0	84.3	3.2	0
2017	1.5	1	0	72.5	20.5	0
2018	13.5	0.5	0	163.9	12.6	1.6
2019	10	2.5	0.5	40.4	1.6	0
2020	5.5	0.5	0	74.1	7.9	1.6
2021	15.5	1	0	84.3	8.7	0
2022	11	3	0	84.3	11	0
2023	5.5	1	0	95.4	11	0.8
2024	7.5	1	0	37.8	3.9	0.8



Summary

The smallmouth bass fishery is self-sustaining with a higher density in the Upper Black River section compared to the Lower Black River. The Upper Black river provides anglers with an action fishery and a solid opportunity for fish over 18 inches. The Lower Black River has a much lower population density but still provides anglers with a fair fishing opportunity.



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2024 CHANNEL CATFISH SIZE AND ABUNDANCE (CPUE) METRICS						
River Section	Station	Total Number Sampled	Average Length (inches)	Length Range (inches)	Catch Rate (fish per mile)	% ≥ 24"
Lower Black River	Perry Creek Landing	5	22.2	19.3-25.8	5	20.0
	Mason's Landing	3	25.0	24.0-27.2	3	100.0
Upper Black River	Opelt Avenue	5	24.9	21.5-27.1	8	80.0
	Paddy's Rest	-	-	-	-	-

2015-2024 CHANNEL CATFISH SIZE AND ABUNDANCE (CPUE) METRICS				
	Lower Black River Catch Rates (fish per mile)		Upper Black River Catch Rates (fish per mile)	
Year	#/mile	#/mile ≥ 24"	#/mile	#/mile ≥ 24"
2015	1	1	2.4	0.8
2016	0	0	0	0
2017	2	0.5	0	0
2018	9	2	7.9	0
2019	3	0.5	0	0
2020	4	0.5	4.7	0.8
2021	1.5	1	0.8	0.8
2022	8	4.0	5.5	0.8
2023	5.5	1.5	8.7	3.9
2024	4	2.0	3.9	3.2

Summary

Channel catfish are found at a moderate density throughout the Black River and have a good size structure with a high percentage of fish sampled being ≥ 24 inches. Anglers targeting channel catfish should be able to find a satisfying number of “eaters”.

