



Wisconsin Department Of Natural Resources

Fisheries Information Sheet

Catfish Lake, Vilas County, 2025

Waterbody Information

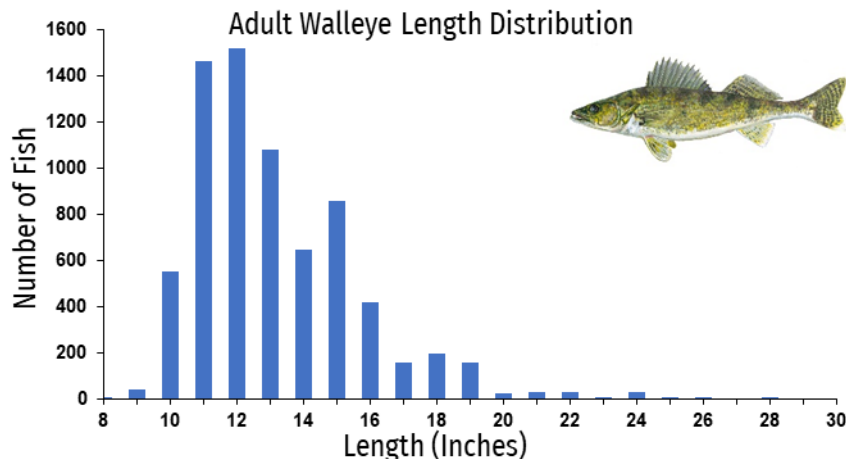
Catfish Lake is a 1,012-acre drainage lake with 11.2 miles of shoreline and a maximum depth of 30 feet. Catfish Lake is classified as a complex-cool-dark system. Bottom substrates are predominantly sand and rock with some areas of muck. Catfish Lake is part of the 3,565-acre Eagle River Chain (Eagle Chain) of 10 lakes. The Eagle Chain's walleye population is sustained through natural reproduction, while the muskellunge population is produced from a combination of stocking and natural reproduction.

Survey Information

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) conducted netting and electrofishing surveys of Catfish Lake targeting adult walleye (April 22 – 26) and adult muskellunge (April 28 – May 1). Other species reported here weren't specifically targeted during the surveys, but the catch provides some insight into their abundance and length distribution.

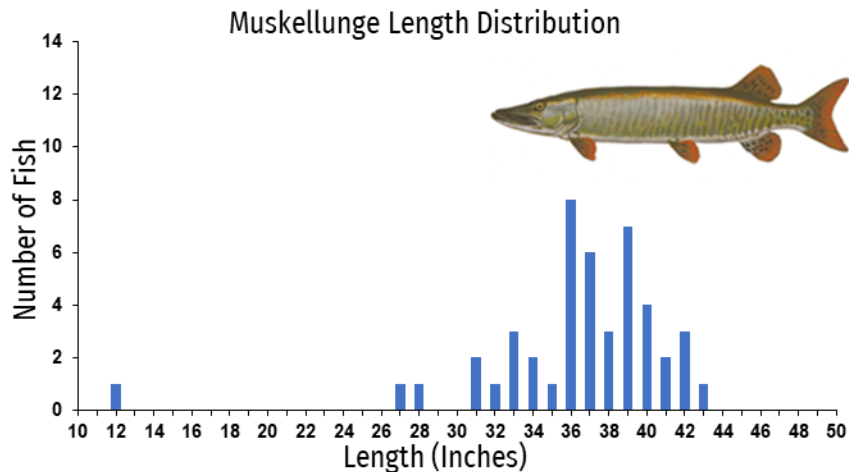
Walleye

Targeted survey efforts captured 1,797 adult walleye (sexually mature or ≥ 15 inches). Mark-recapture procedures estimated 7,236 (7.2/acre) adult walleye in Catfish Lake. An estimated 27% of adult walleye were ≥ 15 inches, and the largest captured was a 28.1-inch female. The accompanying bar chart shows the estimated adult walleye length distribution with fish ranging from 9 to 28 inches and a peak occurring at 12 inches.



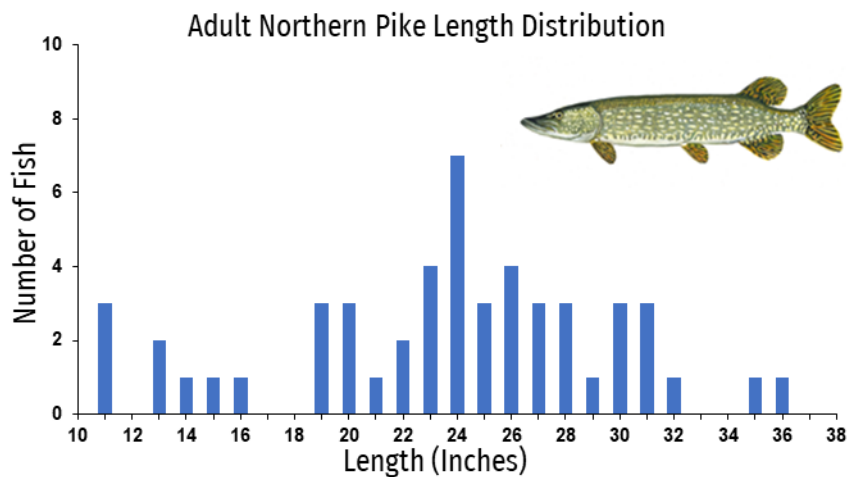
Muskellunge

During the surveys, 45 adult (sexually mature or ≥ 30 inches) and 1 juvenile muskellunge were captured. Adult muskellunge were caught at a rate of 1.3 per net night of targeted effort, placing it slightly below the 90th percentile for its lake class. Of the adults captured, 22% were ≥ 40 inches. The largest was a 43.5-inch female. The accompanying bar chart shows the observed muskellunge length distribution with fish ranging from 12 to 43 inches and a peak occurring at 36 inches.



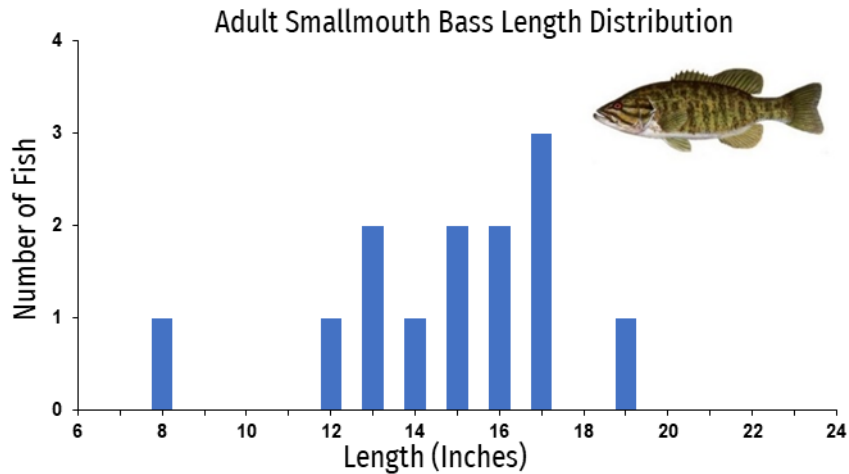
Northern Pike

Survey efforts captured 51 adult (sexually mature or ≥ 12 inches) northern pike at a rate of 1.2 per net night, placing it above the 25th percentile for its lake class. Of the adults captured, 73% were ≥ 21 inches, and the largest was a 36.2-inch female. The accompanying bar chart shows the observed northern pike length distribution with fish ranging from 11 to 36 inches and a peak occurring at 24 inches.



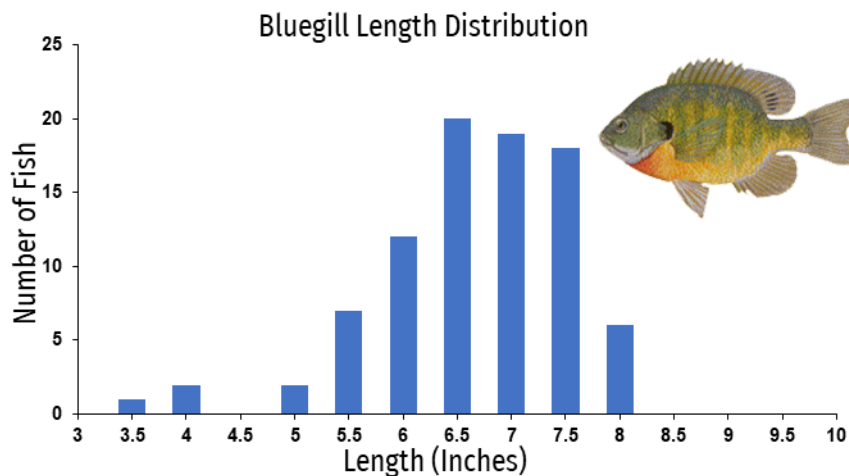
Smallmouth and Largemouth Bass

A total of 13 adult (≥ 8 inches) smallmouth bass were captured, 69% were ≥ 14 inches, and the largest was 19.0 inches. The accompanying bar chart shows the observed adult smallmouth bass length distribution with fish ranging from 8 to 19 inches and a peak occurring at 17 inches. A total of 3 adult (≥ 8 inches) largemouth bass were also captured, all were ≥ 14 inches, and the largest was 20.6 inches.



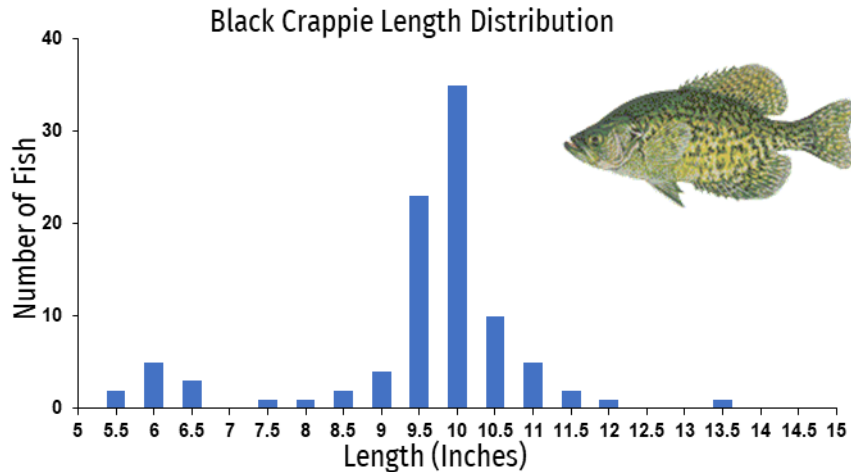
Bluegill

A total of 219 bluegill (including bluegill-pumpkinseed hybrids) were captured during the surveys. Of 87 bluegill measured, the average length was 6.8 inches, 49% were ≥ 7 inches, and the largest was 8.2 inches. The accompanying bar chart shows the observed bluegill length distribution with fish ranging from 3.5 to 8 inches and a peak occurring at 6.5 inches.



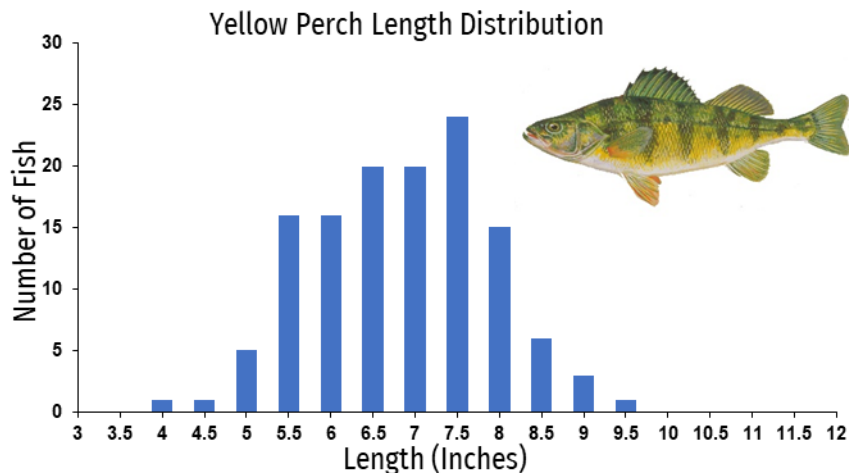
Black Crappie

A total of 233 black crappie were captured at a rate of 5.3 fish per net night, placing it slightly above the 50th percentile for its lake class. Of 95 black crappie measured, the average length was 9.7 inches, 57% were ≥ 10 inches, and the largest was 13.8 inches. The accompanying bar chart shows the observed black crappie length distribution with fish ranging from 5.5 to 13.5 inches and a peak occurring at 10 inches.



Yellow perch

A total of 3,266 yellow perch were captured at a rate of 74.2 fish per net night, placing it slightly below the 90th percentile for its lake class. Of 128 yellow perch measured, the average length was 7.1 inches, 20% were ≥ 8 inches, and the largest was 9.6 inches. The accompanying bar chart shows the observed yellow perch length distribution with fish ranging from 4 to 9.5 inches and a peak occurring at 7.5 inches.



Other Species

Other species not directly targeted and/or captured in low abundance were burbot, golden shiner, pumpkinseed, rock bass, trout perch and white sucker.

Table 1. General fishing regulations for the Eagle Chain of Lakes, Vilas County, WI.

Species	Season Dates	Daily Bag Limit	Size Limit
Largemouth bass (LMB)	1 st Saturday in May – 1 st Sunday in March	5 in total with SMB	14 inches
Smallmouth bass (SMB)	3 rd Saturday in June – 1 st Sunday in March	5 in total with LMB	14 inches
Northern pike	1 st Saturday in May – 1 st Sunday in March	5	None
Muskellunge	Sat of Memorial weekend – Dec 31 (open water only)	1	40 inches
Walleye	1 st Saturday in May – 1 st Sunday in March	3 in total	No minimum; fish from 14 to 18 inches may not be kept; only one over 18 inches.
Bluegill, pumpkin- seed, crappie and yellow perch	Open all year	25 in total	None

Contact Information

For questions regarding fisheries management activities on the Eagle Chain, contact Vilas County Fisheries Biologist Eric Wegleitner. For questions about this report, contact Treaty Fisheries Biologist Lawrence Eslinger.

This report was created by Fisheries Biologist Mark Love.
Fish illustrations by Virgil Beck.

Lawrence Eslinger

Treaty Fisheries Biologist
8770 County J
Woodruff, WI 54568-9635
(715) 356-5211 Ext: 209
Lawrence.Eslinger@wisconsin.gov

Eric Wegleitner

Vilas County Fisheries Biologist
8770 County J
Woodruff, WI 54568-9635
(715) 356-5211 Ext: 246
Eric.Wegleitner@wisconsin.gov