



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Fisheries Information Sheet

LAKE: BIG SAND

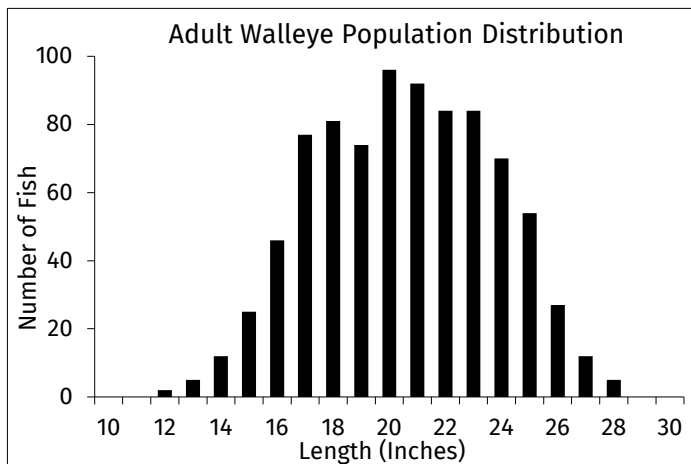
COUNTY: VILAS

YEAR: 2022

Introduction

Big Sand Lake is a drainage lake with predominately sand substrate. The lake has a surface area of 1,418 acres, 8.5 miles of shoreline and a maximum depth of 56 feet. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) surveyed Big Sand Lake, Vilas County, from May 5-15, 2022, to assess the status of walleye and muskellunge. Additionally, on May 24, 2022, a bass and panfish survey was conducted using two electrofishing boats that shocked a total of 7.02 miles of shoreline, which included three stations, totaling 1.65 miles, where all fish species were collected. Only gamefish (i.e. largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, walleye, northern pike, muskellunge) were collected for the remaining 5.37 miles. The walleye and muskellunge populations are maintained by stocking.

WALLEYE

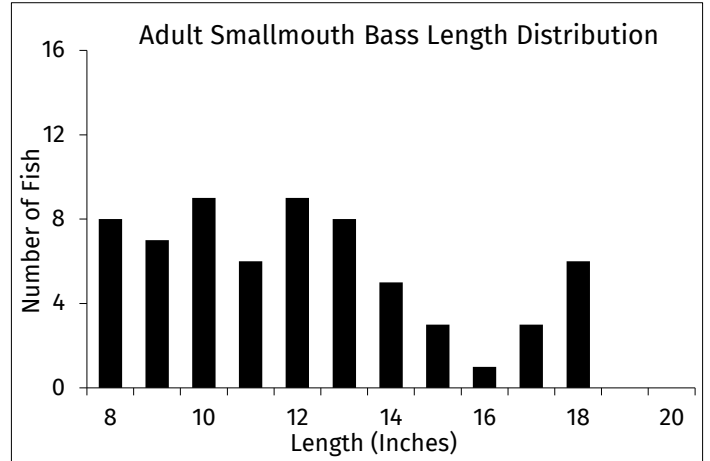


During five days of walleye-targeted fyke netting, 826 adult walleyes were captured and marked with a fin clip. A crew then sampled with an electrofishing boat and caught 61 adult walleyes. During electrofishing, 25% (15 of 61) of walleyes bore the fin clip applied during fyke netting. Based on those results, Big Sand Lake was estimated to contain 1,587 adult walleyes (1.1/acre). An estimated 99% of adult walleyes were 15 inches or longer. The largest walleye caught was a 28.5-inch female. Note: adult walleye are defined as all sexable walleye, regardless of length, and those of unknown sex ≥ 15 inches in length.

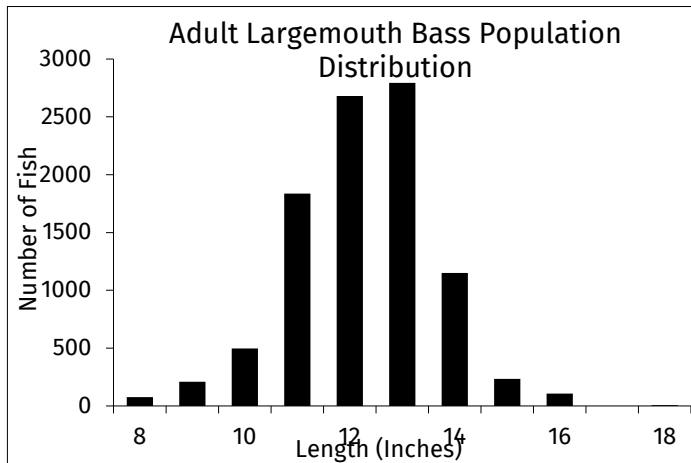
SMALLMOUTH BASS



Survey sampling conducted through May 24 resulted in 65 smallmouth bass being caught. Of the 65 caught, all were considered adults at 8 inches or larger, and 28% were 14 inches or longer, with the largest measuring 18.7 inches. During the May 24 electrofishing survey, adult smallmouth bass were caught at a moderate rate of 5.3 per mile of shoreline.



LARGEMOUTH BASS

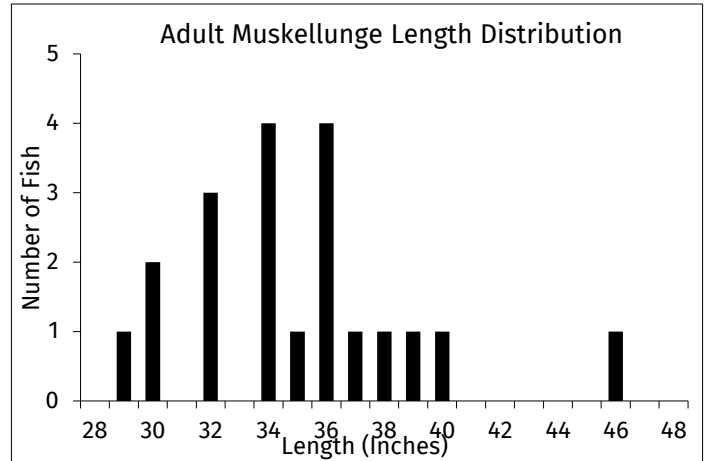


Netting and electrofishing surveys resulted in 718 largemouth bass caught. Of the 718 caught, 717 were considered adults at 8 inches or larger. The adult largemouth bass population in Big Sand Lake was estimated to be 9,592 or 6.8 per acre. An estimated 13% of largemouth bass were 14 inches or longer, with the largest being 18.9 inches. During the May 24 electrofishing survey, adult largemouth bass were caught at a high rate of 32.6 per mile of shoreline.

MUSKELLUNGE



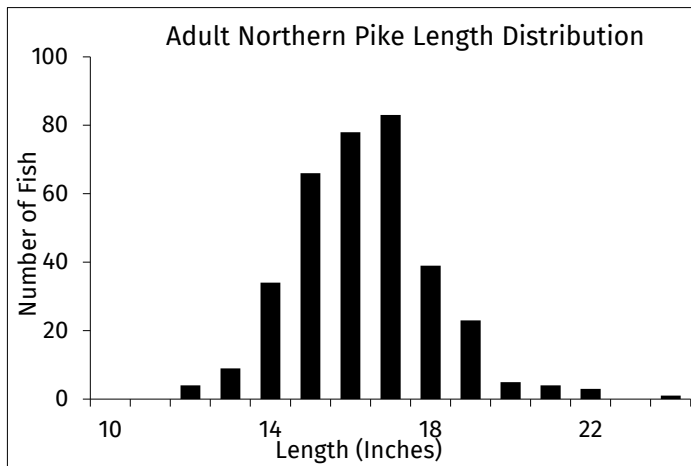
During fyke netting and electrofishing sampling, 20 adult muskellunge were caught, as well as 2 juveniles. Of the adult muskellunge, 10% (2 of 20) were 40 inches or larger, with the largest being a 46.0-inch female. Note: adult muskellunge are defined as all sexable muskellunge and those of unknown sex ≥ 30 inches in length.



NORTHERN PIKE



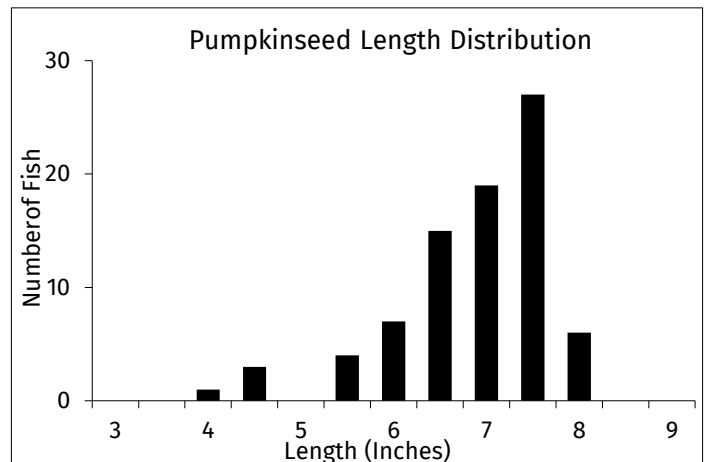
Sampling Big Sand Lake through May 24 resulted in the catch of 499 adult northern pike. The largest northern pike measured 24.0 inches. Note: adult northern pike are defined as all sexable northern pike and those of unknown sex ≥ 12 inches in length.

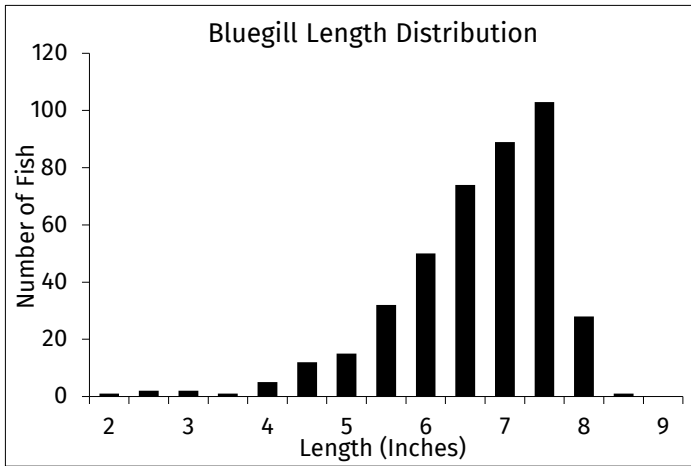


PUMPKINSEED



A total of 454 pumpkinseeds were caught during the course of surveying. Pumpkinseed were captured at a low rate (13.9/mile) during the May 24 electrofishing survey. The average length of pumpkinseeds measured was 7.8 inches, with the largest being 8.3 inches and 63% were 7 inches or larger.





BLUEGILL

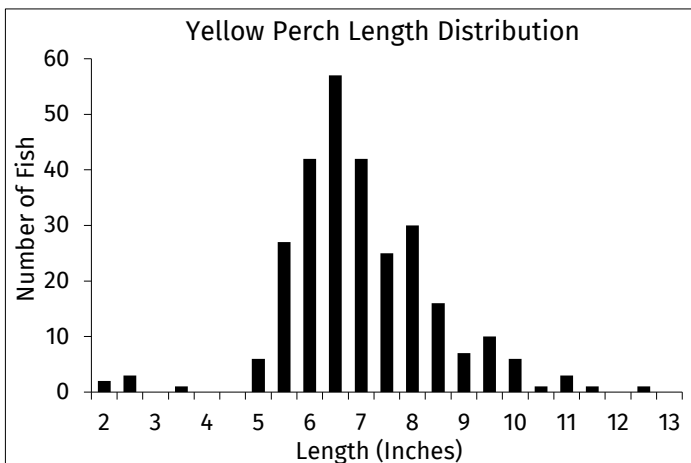
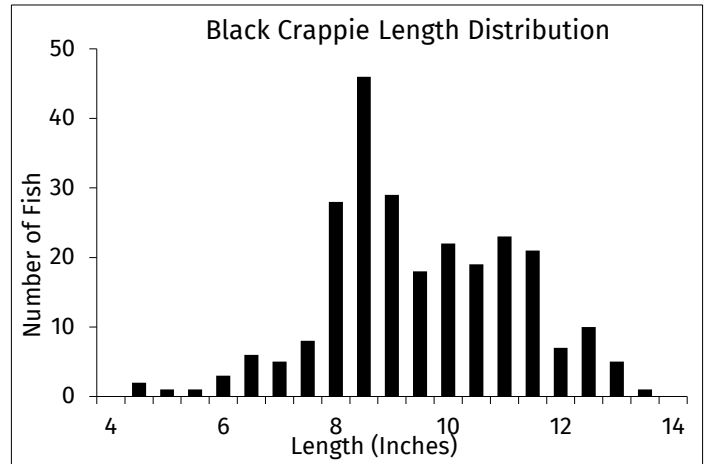


A total of 1,652 bluegills were caught during the course of surveying. Bluegills were captured at a moderate rate (157/mile) during the May 24 electrofishing survey. The average length of bluegills measured was 6.8 inches, with the largest being 8.8 inches and 53% were 7 inches or larger.

BLACK CRAPPIE



A total of 443 black crappies were caught during the course of surveying. Black crappies were captured at a low rate (6.5 per net lift) during muskellunge targeted fyke netting. The average length of black crappies measured was 9.7 inches, with the largest being 13.5 inches and 42% were 10 inches or larger.



YELLOW PERCH



A total of 2,840 yellow perch were caught during the course of surveying. Yellow perch were captured at a moderate rate (37.3 per net lift) during the walleye and muskellunge targeted fyke netting. The average length of yellow perch measured was 7.1 inches, with the largest being 12.6 inches.

OTHER SPECIES

In addition to the gamefish mentioned above, fyke netting and electrofishing sampling efforts in Big Sand Lake resulted in the catch of six species of fish including: white sucker, rock bass, golden shiner, mimic shiner, bluntnose minnow and black bullhead.

Table 1. General fishing regulations for Big Sand Lake, in Vilas County Wisconsin, 2022-23.

| SPECIES | SEASON DATES | DAILY BAG LIMIT | SIZE LIMIT |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|--|---|
| Panfish | All Year | 25, except 5 or fewer can be bluegill or pumpkinseed >7" | None |
| Walleye | May 7 – March 5 | 3 | 15" min length, 20-24" no harvest slot, 1 fish over 24" allowed |
| Largemouth bass (harvest season) | May 7 – March 5 | 5 in total with SMB | 14 inches |
| Smallmouth bass (harvest season) | June 18 – March 5 | 5 in total with LMB | 14 inches |
| Muskellunge | May 28 – December 31 | 1 | 50 inches |
| Northern Pike | May 7 – March 5 | 5 | None |

Selected fishing regulations for Big Sand Lake are summarized above (Table 1). While the regulatory information provided was current at the time the surveys were conducted, it is not comprehensive and should not be used as a substitute for the current fishing regulation pamphlet. You may obtain a copy of current fishing regulations when you purchase your fishing license or download a copy from the [DNR Fishing Regulations page](#).

For answers to questions about fisheries management activities on Big Sand Lake, contact:

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