



# WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

## Fisheries Information Sheet

**LAKE:** Rice Lake

**COUNTY:** Barron

**YEAR:** 2022

### Introduction

Rice Lake is a 939-acre impoundment of the Red Cedar River located in Barron County, Wisconsin. The lake has a maximum depth of 19 feet and a mean depth of 9 feet. Rice Lake has 18.5 miles of shoreline and most of which is located within the city limits of Rice Lake. The immediate shoreline landscape is comprised mostly of urban development and the greater watershed landscape is primarily forested followed by agriculture. Rice Lake is separated into two basins at the Sawyer Street Bridge (County Road C). The larger north basin is elongate, two and a half miles long with a maximum depth of 15 feet and receives inflow from the Red Cedar River and Bear Creek. Water levels are relatively stable and controlled by a dam operated by Barron County located on the western shoreline of the north basin. There are two public boat launches on the north basin located along the western shoreline off Stein Street and Lakeshore Drive and three small canoe launches. The south basin is smaller with a higher degree of irregularity compared to the north basin, has several bays, a maximum depth of 19 feet and one public boat launch located off East Orchard Beach Lane. Rice Lake receives moderate to high recreational boating use and angling pressure and has quality and diverse fisheries. Rice Lake is a fertile, eutrophic system and is classified as a complex-warm-dark lake. Currently, recognized invasive species include Chinese mystery snail, curly-leaf pondweed, hybrid Eurasian watermilfoil and Japanese mystery snail.

Muskellunge have been stocked at varying rates during 1987-2010 and stocking has been maintained at 1.5 fish/acre, every other year since 2011. The muskellunge fishery is stocking dependent and stocking remains necessary to maintain a fishable population. Muskellunge were not targeted during the 2022 late spring electrofishing survey (SE2). Refer to Broadway and Landes (2024) for additional information regarding the status of muskellunge in Rice Lake.

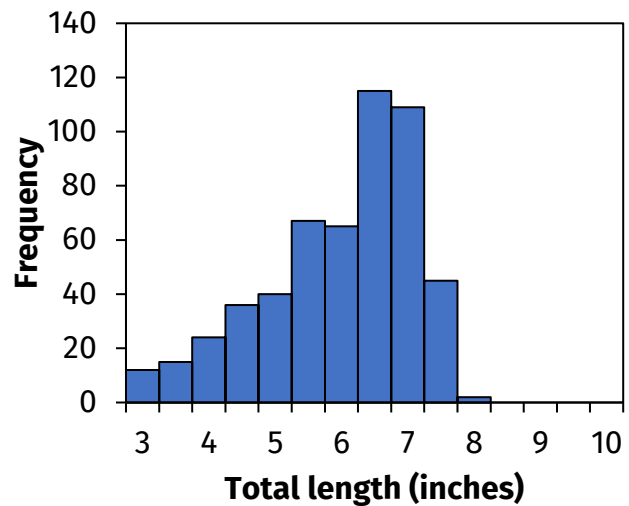
The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) surveyed Rice Lake to assess the status of the fishery during 2022. The SE2 survey was conducted on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022 to assess largemouth bass and panfish populations. The SE2 survey consisted of 0.5-mile index stations where all gamefish and panfish were captured and 1.5-mile gamefish stations where all gamefish were collected. There were four index stations and four gamefish station completed. All fish were measured, but aging structures were collected from five fish per 0.5-inch length group for age and growth analysis. Size structure was assessed by proportional size distribution (PSD). The PSD value for

a species is the number of fish of a specified length and longer divided by the number of fish of stock length or longer, the result multiplied by 100. Catch per unit effort (CPUE; index of relative abundance) was estimated as catch per mile.

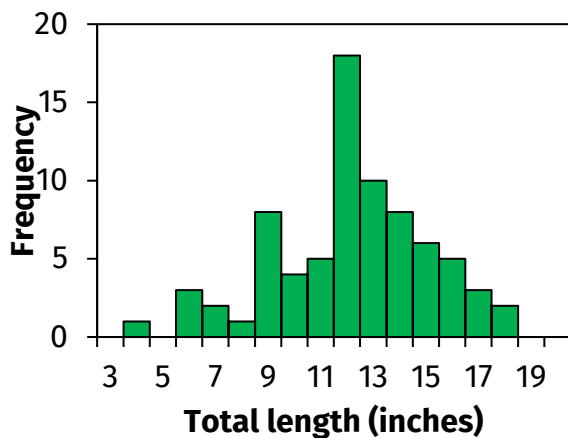
## BLUEGILL



A total of 539 bluegills were collected during the SE2 survey. The CPUE was 270 fish/mile, which resembled the lake class 99<sup>th</sup> percentile and was well above the mean bluegill CPUE for Barron and Polk counties. Bluegill lengths ranged from 3.0 – 8.3 inches with an average length of 5.5 inches. The PSD-6 was 63. Mean length at age was lower than the lake class median length at age and the mean for Barron and Polk counties.



539 fish per mile $\geq$ 3 inches	
Quality Size $\geq$ 6 inches	168 per mile
Preferred Size $\geq$ 8 inches	1 per mile



## LARGEMOUTH BASS



A total of 78 largemouth bass were collected during the SE2 survey. The CPUE was 10 fish/mile, which resembled the lake class 25<sup>th</sup> percentile. Lengths ranged from 4.0 – 18.0 inches with an average length of 13.0 inches. The PSD-12 was 74 and PSD-15 was 23. Mean length at age was similar to the lake class median

length at age which indicated growth was average.

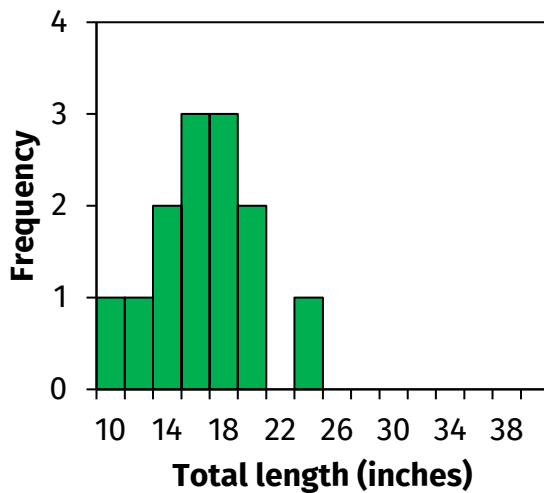
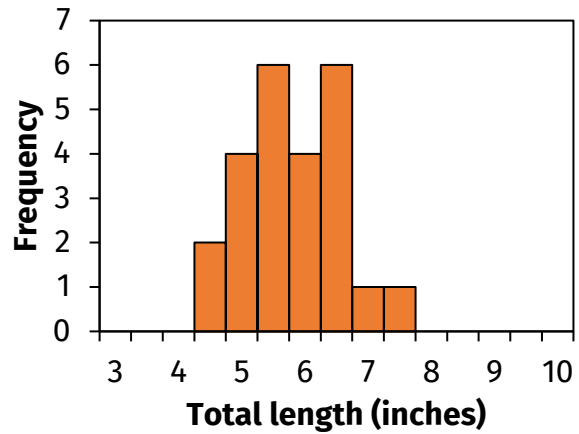
72 fish per mile $\geq$ 7 inches	
Quality Size $\geq$ 12 inches	7 per mile
Preferred Size $\geq$ 15 inches	2 per mile

## PUMPKINSEED



A total of 24 pumpkinseeds were collected during the SE2 survey. The CPUE was 12 fish/mile and CPUE-6 was 6 fish/mile. Lengths ranged from 4.8 – 7.5 inches with an average length of 6.1 inches.

38 fish per mile $\geq$ 3 inches	
Quality Size $\geq$ 6 inches	6 per mile
Preferred Size $\geq$ 8 inches	0 per mile



## NORTHERN PIKE

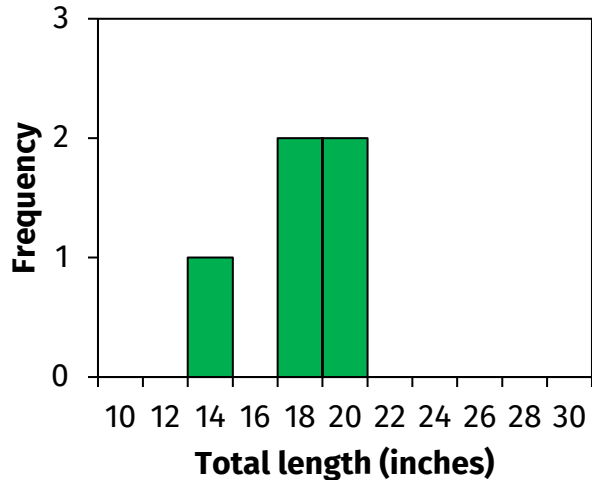


A total of 13 northern pike were collected during the SE2 survey. Lengths ranged from 10.0 – 25.5 inches with an average length of 17.3 inches.

## WALLEYE



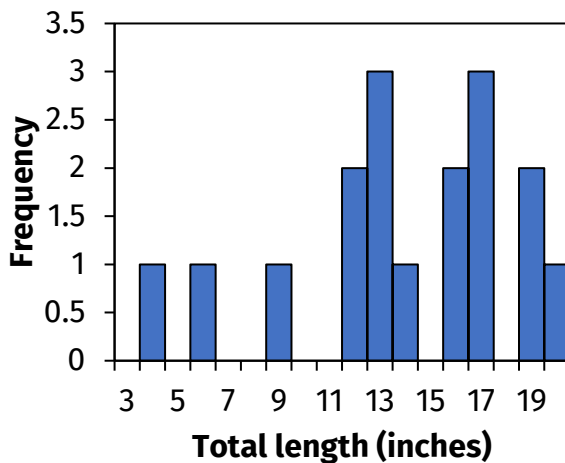
A total of 5 walleye were collected during the SE2 survey. Lengths ranged from 14.0 – 22.5 inches.



## SMALLMOUTH BASS



A total of 17 smallmouth bass were collected during the SE2 survey. The CPUE was 2.1 fish/mile, which resembled the lake class 75<sup>th</sup> percentile. Lengths ranged from 6.2 – 20.0 inches with an average length of 15.2 inches. Mean length at age was greater than the lake class median length at age which indicated growth was above average.



## OTHER SPECIES

A total of two black crappie were collected and lengths ranged from 7.3 – 7.9 inches. A total of 32 greater redhorse, seven river redhorse and 62 white suckers were collected. Other species encountered at low abundances included golden shiner, yellow perch, muskellunge, rock bass and yellow bullhead.

## Summary

Rice Lake supports a complex fishery with multiple bass and panfish species, walleye migrants from upstream lakes, a stocked muskellunge fishery and a host of riverine species. A high-density bluegill population was present with low - average size structure and relatively slow growth rates. Additionally, few large individuals (greater

than 8 inches) were present. The bluegill fishery supports a popular year-round fishery that yields excellent harvest opportunities for anglers. A low-density largemouth bass population with good size structure and average growth was present. Additionally, a quality smallmouth bass population was present with moderate density, high size structure and above average growth rates which provides anglers opportunities for trophy-sized fish. Rice Lake receives high angling effort throughout the year and hosts several bass tournaments throughout the open water season.

Walleye, northern pike and muskellunge were observed at relatively low abundances during the survey. However, SE2 surveys are generally not effective at indexing abundances of these species. Walleye are present in Rice Lake at low abundances but are not stocked and represent upstream migrants from either Bear Lake, Long Lake or Red Cedar Lake. Northern pike are likely more abundant than indexed during this survey. A low-moderate density muskellunge population with excellent size structure was present in Rice Lake and further information can be found in the 2022-2023 muskellunge survey report for Rice Lake (Broadway and Landes 2024).

Rice Lake supports quality sportfish populations providing harvest and trophy fishing opportunities. Recreational fishing effort is likely high due to the diversity of fishing opportunities and its proximity to the City of Rice Lake. The current harvest regulations for panfish, largemouth bass and smallmouth bass should continue to promote quality recreational fisheries.

*General fishing regulations for Rice Lake, Barron County, Wisconsin.*

<b>SPECIES</b>	<b>SEASON DATES</b>	<b>DAILY BAG LIMIT</b>	<b>SIZE LIMIT</b>
Panfish	Open all year	25	No minimum length
Largemouth bass	May – March	5	14” minimum length
Northern pike	May – March	5	No minimum length
Muskellunge	May – December	1	50” minimum length
Walleye	May - March	3	15” minimum length, 20-24” protected slot

## **References**

Broadway, K., and C. Landes. 2024. Muskellunge Survey Report for Rice Lake, Barron County, Wisconsin 2022-2023 (WBIC: 2103900). Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Internal Fisheries Management Report. Barron Field Office.

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

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