

**WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
CREEL SURVEY REPORT**

MUSKELLUNGE LAKE

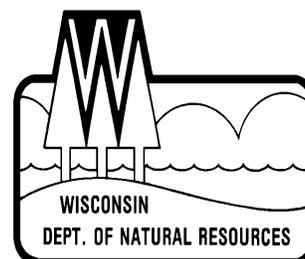
ONEIDA COUNTY

2011-12



Treaty Fisheries Publication

**Compiled by Tim Tobias & Jeff Blonski
Treaty Fisheries Technicians**



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Cover Art: Steve Hilt, Minocqua, WI

Fish Graphics: Virgil Beck, Stevens Point, WI

INTRODUCTION

Fish populations can fluctuate due to natural forces (weather, predation, competition), management actions (stocking, regulations, habitat improvement), inappropriate development (habitat degradation), and harvest impacts. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources fisheries crews regularly conduct fishery surveys on area lakes and reservoirs to gather the information needed to monitor changes, identify concerns, evaluate past management actions, and to prescribe good fishery management strategies. Netting and electrofishing surveys are used to gather data on the status of fish populations and communities (species composition, population size, reproductive success, size/age distribution, and growth rates). But the other key component of the fishery that we often need to measure is the harvest.

On many lakes in the Ceded Territory of northern Wisconsin, harvest of fish is divided between sport anglers and the six Chippewa tribes who harvest fish under rights granted by federal treaties. The tribes harvest fish mostly using a highly efficient method, spearing, during a relatively short time period in the spring. Every fish in the spear harvest is counted – a complete “census” of the harvest.

We also measure the sport harvest to assess its impact on the fishery. But because it would be highly impractical and very costly to conduct a complete census of every angler who fishes on a lake, we conduct creel surveys.

A creel survey is an assessment tool used to sample the fishing activities of anglers on a body of water and make projections of harvest and other fishery parameters. Creel survey clerks work on randomly-selected

days and shifts, forty hours per week during the open season for gamefish from the first Saturday in May through the first Sunday in March, except during the month of November when fishing effort is low and ice conditions are often unsafe. The survey is run during daylight hours, and shift times change from month to month as day length changes.

Creel survey clerks travel their lakes using a boat or snowmobile to count numbers of anglers on a lake at predetermined times, and to interview anglers who have completed their fishing trip to collect data on what species they fished for, catch, harvest, lengths of fish harvested, marks (finclips or tags), and hours of fishing effort. Collecting completed-trip data provides the most accurate assessment of angling activities, and it avoids the need to disturb anglers while they are fishing.

A computer program is used to make projections of total catch and harvest of each species, catch and harvest rates, and total fishing effort, by month and for the year in total. Keep in mind that these are only projections based on the best information available, and not a complete accounting of effort, catch, and harvest. Accurate projections require that we sample a sufficient and representative portion of the angling activity on a lake. The accuracy of creel survey results, therefore, depends on good cooperation and truthful responses by anglers when a creel clerk interviews them.

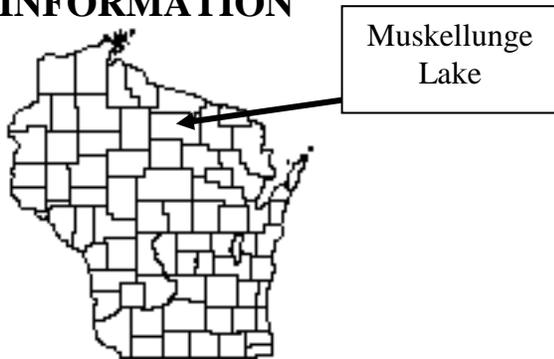
You may have encountered a DNR creel survey clerk on a recent fishing trip. We appreciate your cooperation during an interview. The survey only takes a moment of your time and it gives the Department valuable information needed for management of the fishery.

This report provides projections of:

1. Overall fishing effort (pressure)
2. Fishing effort directed at each species
3. Catch and harvest rates
4. Numbers of fish caught and harvested

Also included are a physical description of Muskellunge Lake; discussion of results of the survey; and detailed summaries, by species of fishing effort, catch and harvest.

GENERAL LAKE INFORMATION



Location

Muskellunge Lake is located in Oneida County in the Town of Lake Tomahawk.

Physical Characteristics

Muskellunge Lake is a 284 acre spring lake with a maximum depth of 24 feet. Littoral substrate consists primarily of sand, muck, rubble and gravel. Muskellunge Lake is a soft water lake with slightly acidic, clear water of moderate transparency.

Seasons Surveyed

The period referred to in this report as the 2011-12 fishing season ran from May 7, 2011 through March 4, 2012. The open water creel survey ran from May 7 through October 31, 2011 and the ice fishing creel survey ran from December 1, 2012 through March 4, 2012.

Weather

Ice-out on Muskellunge Lake was around April 21, 2011. Fishable-ice formed on Muskellunge Lake in mid December.

Sportfishing Regulations

The following seasons, daily bag limits, and length limits were in place on Muskellunge Lake during the 2011-12 fishing season:

Species	Season	Catch	Release
Largemouth Bass & Smallmouth Bass	5/7-6/17	5	14"
Musky	5/28-11/30	1	34"
Northern Pike	5/7-3/4	5	none
Walleye	5/7-3/4	3*	none 1 > 14"
Panfish	year round	25	none
Rock Bass	year round	none	none

* The statewide bag limit was 5 walleye, but due to tribal declarations it was reduced on Muskellunge Lake.

SPECIES CATCH AND HARVEST INFORMATION

Angling effort, catch, and harvest information is summarized for each species in Table 2 and Figures 1-10. Table 2 also includes a comparison of these statistics with the previous creel survey. Information presented about species whose fishing season extends beyond March 4 should be considered minimum estimates. Each species page has up to five graphs depicting the following:

1. **PROJECTED FISHING EFFORT**
Total calculated number of hours during each month that anglers spent fishing for a species.
2. **PROJECTED SPECIFIC CATCH AND HARVEST RATES**
Calculated number of hours it takes an angler to catch or harvest a fish of the indicated species. Only information from anglers who were

specifically targeting that species is reported.

3. **PROJECTED CATCH AND HARVEST**
Calculated number of fish of the indicated species caught or harvested by all anglers, regardless of targeted species.
4. **LENGTH DISTRIBUTION OF HARVESTED FISH**
All fish of a species that were measured by the clerk during the entire creel survey season.
5. **LARGEST AND AVERAGE LENGTH OF HARVESTED FISH**
Monthly largest and average length of harvested fish of a species. Only those fish measured by the creel survey clerk are reported.

CREEL SURVEY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Survey Logistics

The creel survey went well. We encountered no unusual problems conducting the survey or calculating the projections contained in the report. This was the first time the department conducted a creel survey on Muskellunge Lake.

General Angler Information

Anglers spent 7,838 hours or 27.6 hours per acre fishing Muskellunge Lake during the 2011-12 season (Table 1). That was less than the Oneida County average of 37.1 hours per acre. July was the most heavily fished month (5.4 hours per acre). Fishing effort was lightest in February (0.8 hours per acre).

RESULTS BY SPECIES

Walleye (Table 2, Figure 1)

Anglers spent 2,405 hours targeting walleyes. The greatest fishing effort for walleyes was in May (715 hours). August had the least amount of walleye fishing effort (11 hours).

Total catch of walleyes was 110 fish with a harvest of 61 fish. Highest catch (70 fish) and harvest (34 fish) occurred in May. Anglers fished 22.6 hours to catch and 40.2 hours to harvest a walleye during 2011-12.

The mean length of harvested walleyes was 16.8 inches and the largest walleye measured was a 25.2 inch fish.

Northern Pike (Table 2, Figure 2)

Fishing effort directed at northern pike was 1,542 hours during the 2011-12 season. Northern pike fishing effort was greatest in March (368 hours).

Total catch of northern pike was 823 fish with a harvest of 165 fish.

The mean length of harvested northern pike was 21.1 inches and the largest northern pike measured was a 31.2 inch fish.

Muskellunge (Table 2, Figure 3)

Muskellunge received the most fishing effort during the 2011-12 season. Anglers spent 3,024 hours targeting muskellunge during the 2011-12 season. Muskellunge fishing effort was greatest in July (777 hours).

Total catch of muskellunge was projected at 61 fish. Highest catch (18 fish) occurred in June. Anglers fished 59.5 hours to catch a muskellunge during 2011-12.

Smallmouth Bass (Table 2, Figure 4)
Fishing effort targeted at smallmouth bass was 169 hours during the 2011-12 season. Smallmouth bass fishing effort was greatest in July (124 hours).

Total catch of smallmouth bass was 136 fish with 4 harvested. Highest catch (63 fish) occurred in July. Anglers fished 3.7 hours to catch a smallmouth bass during 2011-12.

Largemouth Bass (Table 2, Figure 5)
Fishing effort directed at largemouth bass was 586 hours during the 2011-12 season. Largemouth bass fishing effort was greatest in August (297 hours).

Total catch of largemouth bass was 649 fish with no harvest. Highest catch (212 fish) occurred in August. Anglers fished 2.5 hours to catch a largemouth bass during 2011-12

Panfish (Table 2, Figures 6-10)
Yellow perch were the most sought after panfish species during the survey. Fishing effort directed at yellow perch was 2,054 hours.

Total catch of yellow perch was 2,750 fish with 1,299 harvested. The mean length of yellow perch harvested was 7.7 inches.

Bluegills were the second most sought after panfish species during the survey. Fishing effort directed at bluegills was 1,832 hours.

Total catch of bluegills was 5,119 fish with 1,693 harvested. The mean length of bluegills harvested was 6.5 inches.

Black crappies were the third most sought after panfish species during the survey. Fishing effort directed at black crappies was 1,106 hours.

Anglers caught 716 black crappies and harvested 504 fish. The mean length of black crappies harvested was 9.7 inches.

Pumpkinseeds and rock bass were also caught during the 2011-12 season.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Completion of this survey was possible because of the efforts of the technical staff of the fisheries management and Treaty Fisheries Unit. Treaty staff responsible for ensuring completion of this survey included Jeff Blonski, Joelle Underwood, Marty Kiepkke, Jason Halverson, and Tim Tobias. Dean Johnson and Mike Rynski were the creel clerks on Muskellunge Lake during the survey period.

We also thank all the anglers who took the time to offer information about their fishing trip to the survey clerk. Without their cooperation the survey would not have been possible.

The Department thanks the cooperators, Ron and Lavonne Pitek Family, who generously allowed the Department to keep a boat and snowmobile on their property during this survey.

This creel report was reviewed by, John Kubisiak and Dennis Scholl of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Woodruff, Wisconsin.

Additional copies of this report and those covering other local lakes can be obtained from the Woodruff DNR or online at:

<http://dnr.wi.gov/fish/ceded/reports.html>

Table 1. Sportfishing effort summary, Muskellunge Lake, 2011-12 season.

Month	Total Angler Hours	Total Angler Hours/Acre	Oneida County Average Hours/Acre	Statewide Average Hours/Acre
May	1052	3.7	5.3	5.8
June	1031	3.6	7.1	6.1
July	1523	5.4	8.1	6.4
August	1515	5.3	6.2	5.4
September	896	3.2	3.7	3.8
October	587	2.1	1.7	1.6
December	342	1.2	1.3	1.7
January	272	1.0	1.7	1.5
February	240	0.8	1.7	1.3
March	380	1.3	0.3	**
*Summer Total	6603	23.3	32.1	29.1
*Winter Total	1234	4.3	5.0	4.5
Grand Total	7838	27.6	37.1	33.6

*"Summer" is May-October; "Winter" is December-March

**Too few lakes have been surveyed in March to give a meaningful statewide average.

Total Angler Hours is the estimated total number of hours that anglers spent fishing on Muskellunge Lake during each month surveyed.

Total Angler Hours/Acre is the total angler hours divided by the area of the lake in acres. This is useful if you wish to compare effort on Muskellunge Lake to other lakes.

County Average Hours/Acre is the average angler effort in hours per acre for county lakes that have been surveyed since 1990. This value can be useful in comparisons as well.

Statewide Average Hours/Acre is the average angler effort in hours per acre for inland lakes in the state surveyed between 1990 and 1995. This value can be used to compare Muskellunge Lake to other lakes statewide.

Table 2. Creel survey synopses, Muskellunge Lake, 2011-12 fishing seasons.

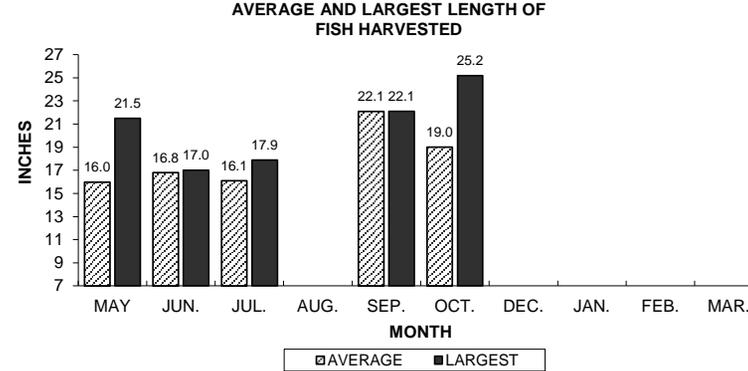
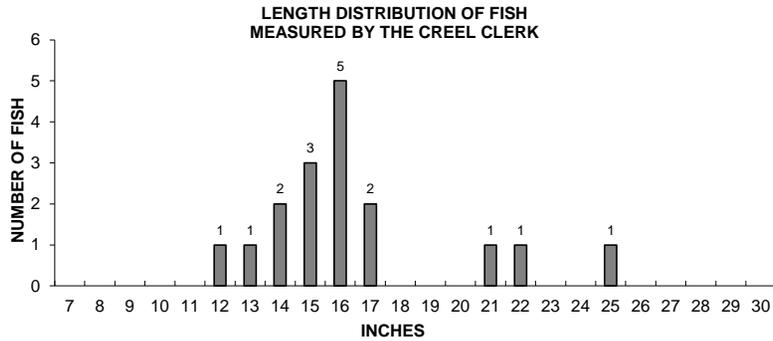
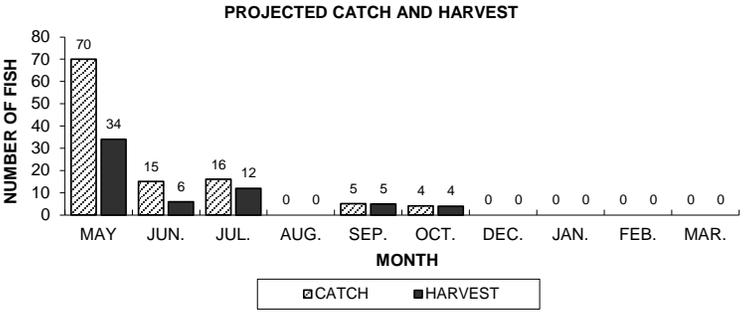
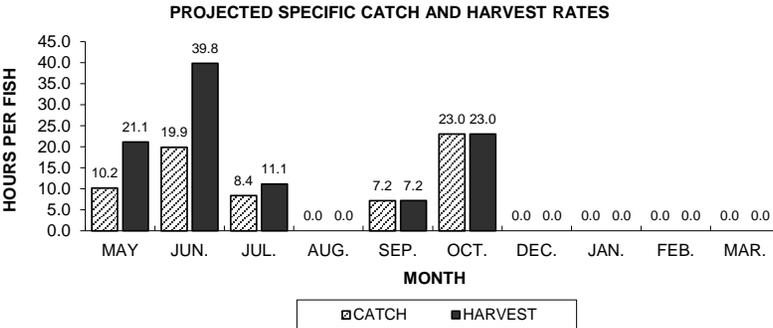
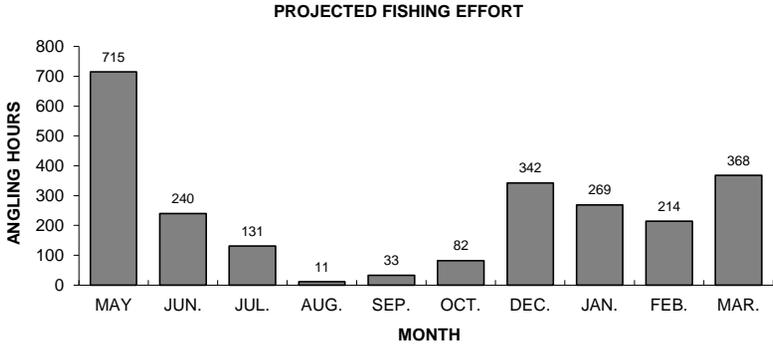
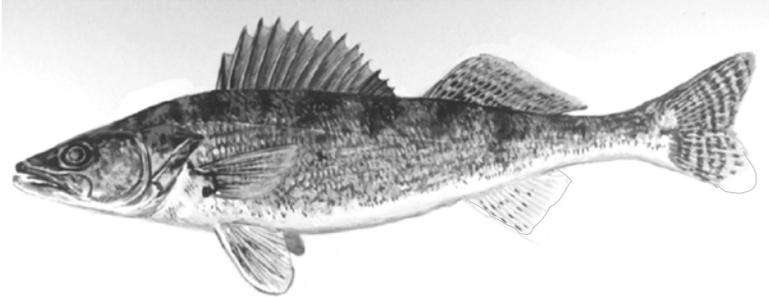
CREEL YEAR: 2011-12

SPECIES	DIRECTED EFFORT (Hours)	PERCENT OF TOTAL	TOTAL CATCH	SPECIFIC CATCH RATE (Hrs/Fish) *	TOTAL HARVEST	SPECIFIC HARVEST RATE (Hrs/Fish) **	MEAN LENGTH OF HARVESTED FISH
Walleye	2405	18.59%	110	22.6	61	40.2	16.8
Northern Pike	1542	11.92%	823	4.2	165	13.4	21.1
Muskellunge	3024	23.38%	61	59.5	0		
Smallmouth Bass	169	1.31%	136	3.7	4	41.0	17.3
Largemouth Bass	586	4.53%	649	2.5	0		
Yellow Perch	2054	15.88%	2750	0.8	1299	1.6	7.7
Bluegill	1832	14.16%	5119	0.4	1693	1.1	6.5
Pumpkinseed	192	1.48%	130	1.7	15	12.5	6.7
Rock Bass	26	0.20%	235	0.9	51		7.2
Black Crappie	1106	8.55%	716	1.7	504	2.4	9.7

* A blank cell in this column indicates that no fish of a given species were caught by anglers who specifically targeted that species.

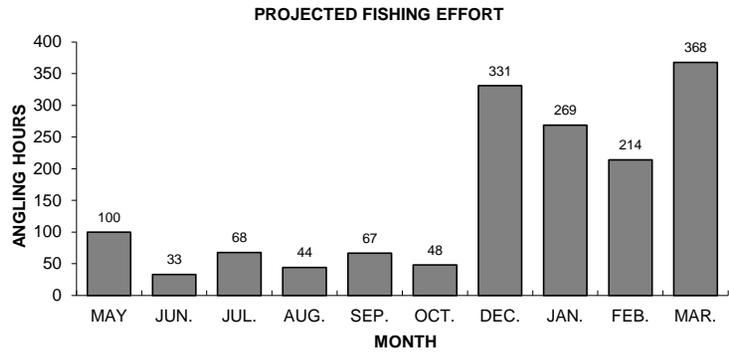
** A blank cell in this column indicates that no fish of a given species were harvested by anglers who specifically targeted that species.

WALLEYE

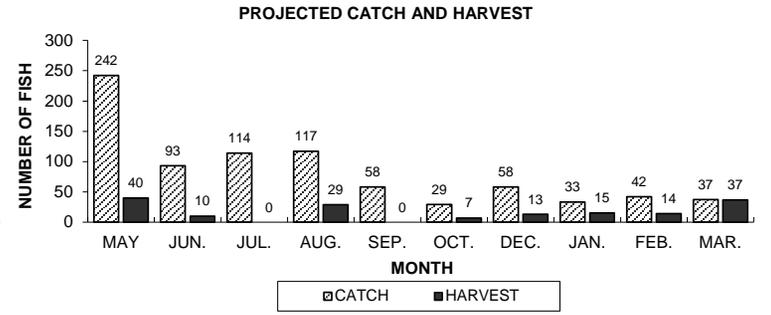
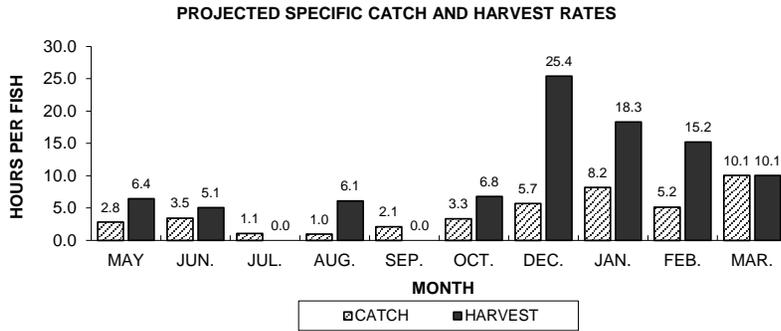
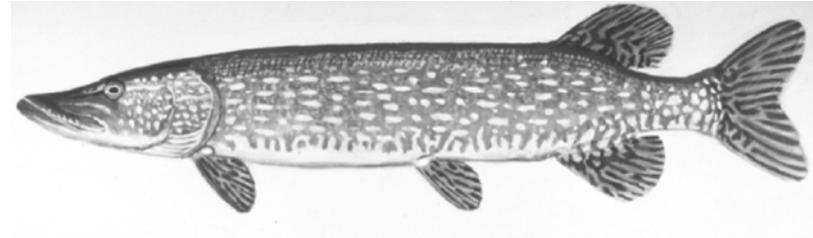


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Figure 1. Walleye sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Muskellunge Lake, during 2011-12.



NORTHERN PIKE



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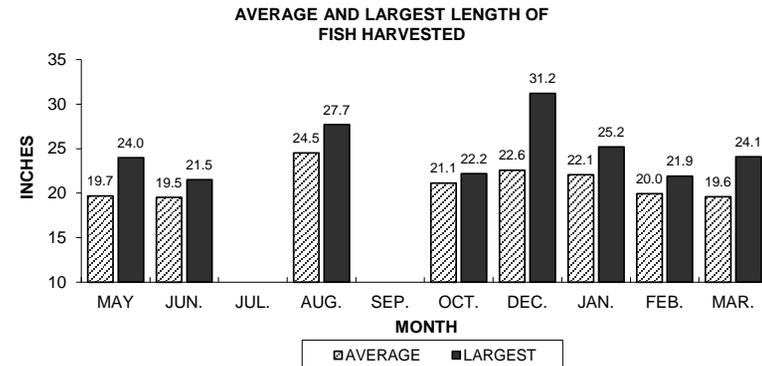
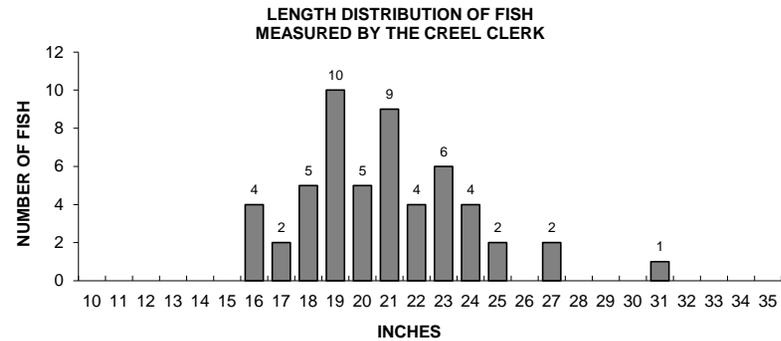
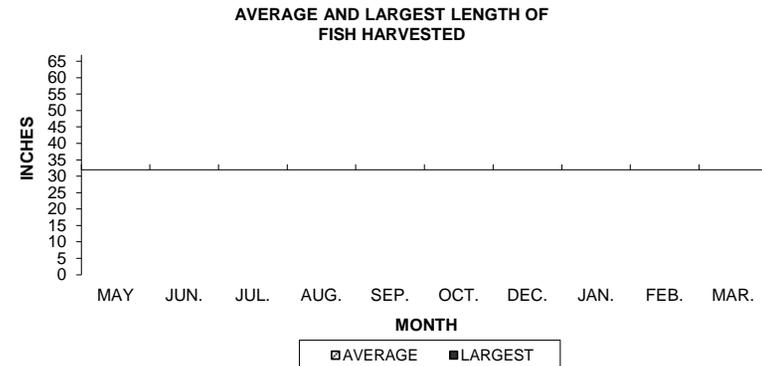
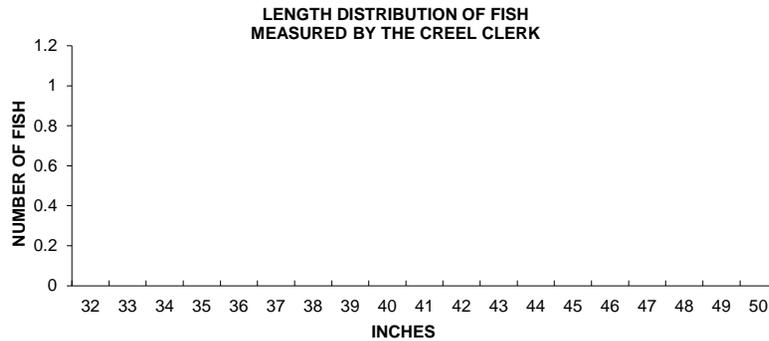
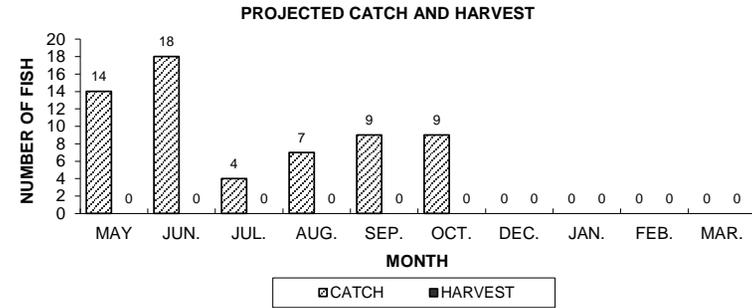
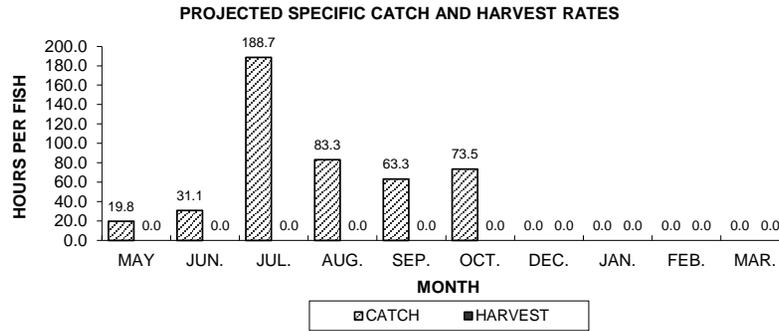
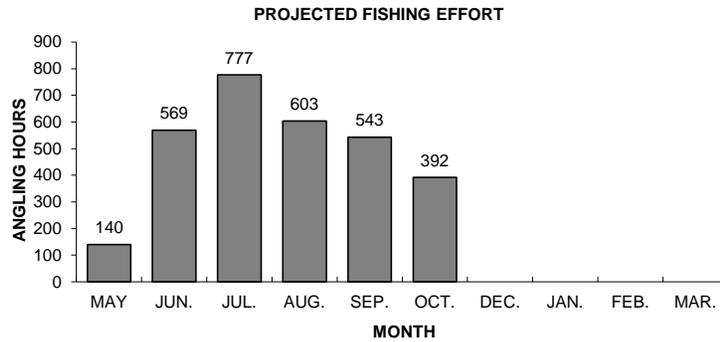


Figure 2. Northern pike sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Muskellunge Lake, during 2011-12.

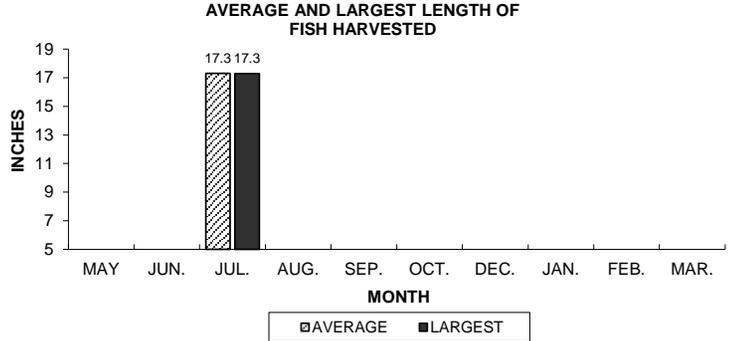
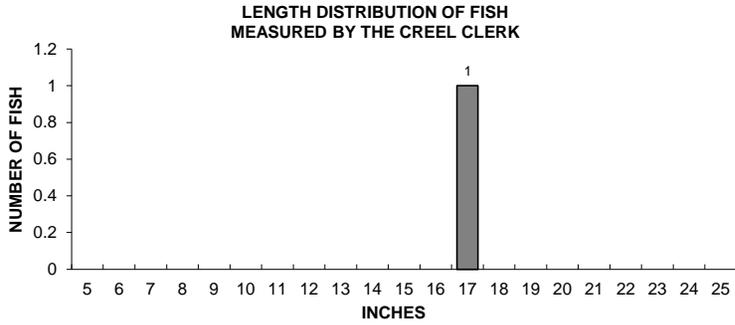
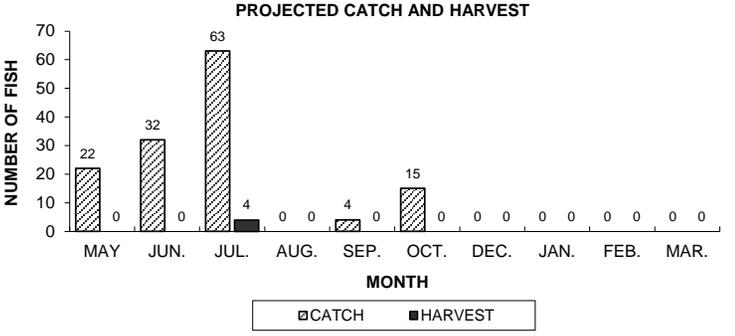
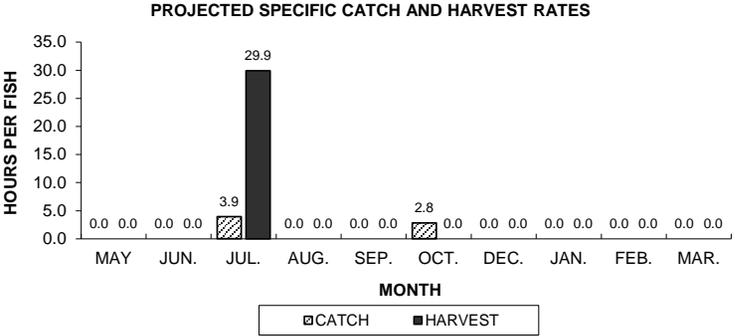
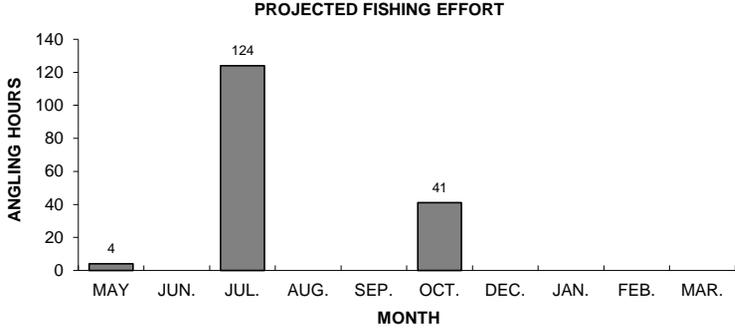
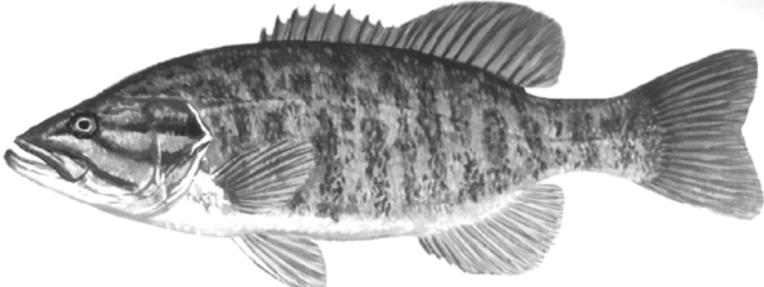
MUSKELLUNGE



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Figure 3. Muskellunge sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Muskellunge Lake, during 2011-12.

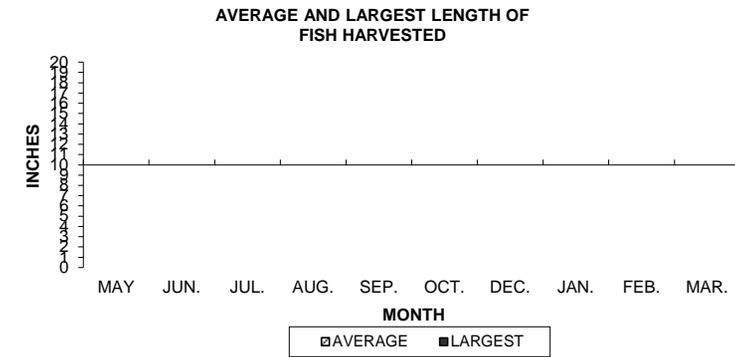
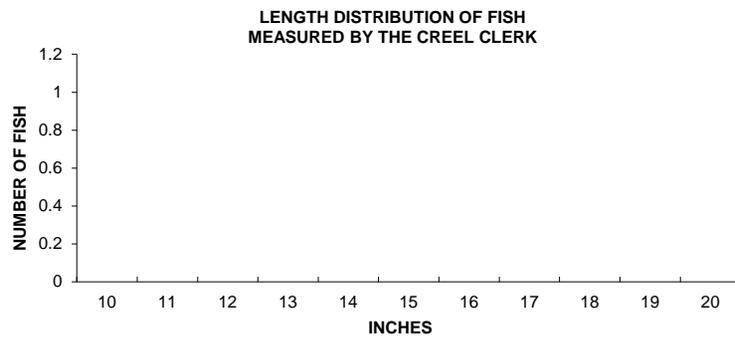
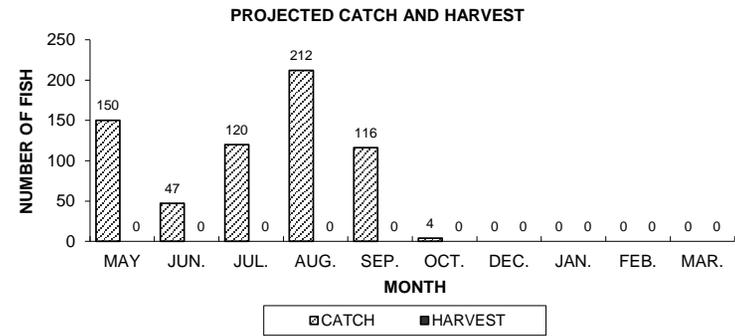
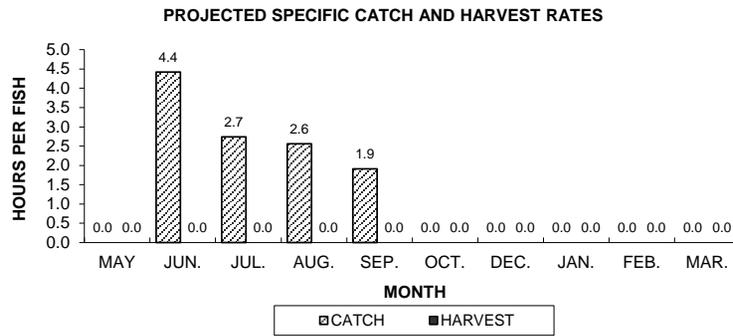
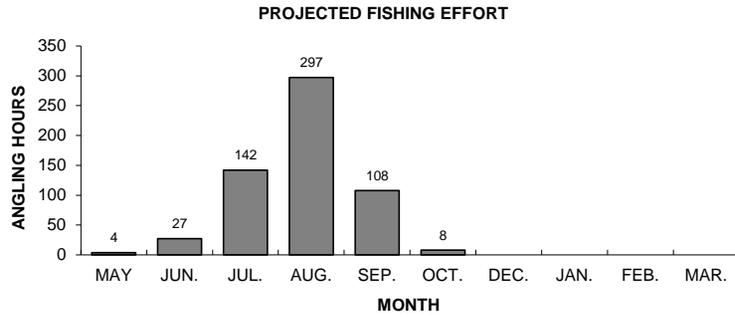
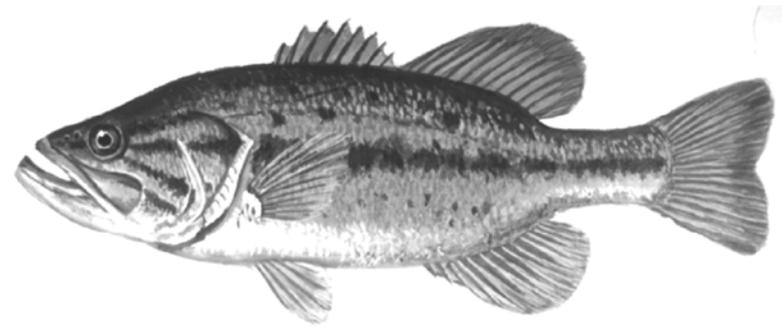
SMALLMOUTH BASS



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Figure 4. Smallmouth bass sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, ___ Lake, during ____.

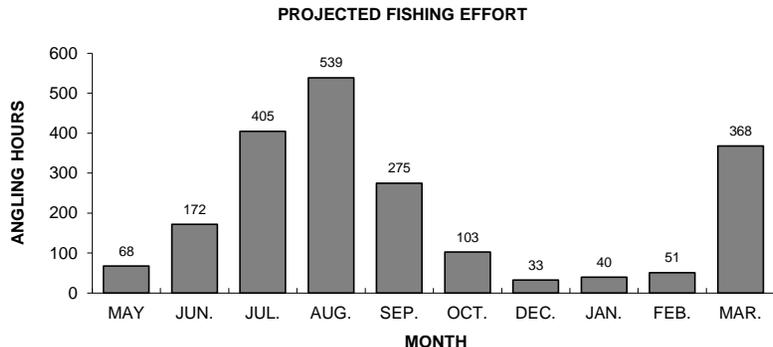
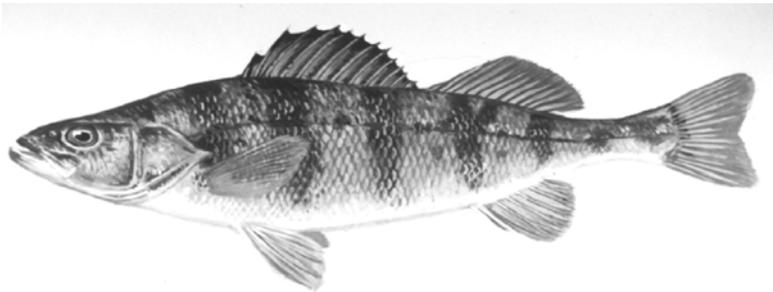
LARGEMOUTH BASS



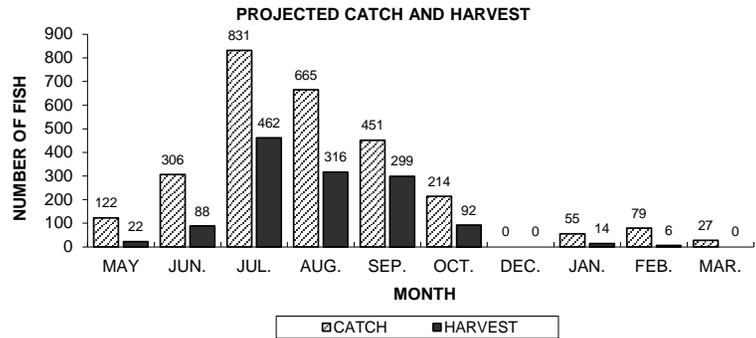
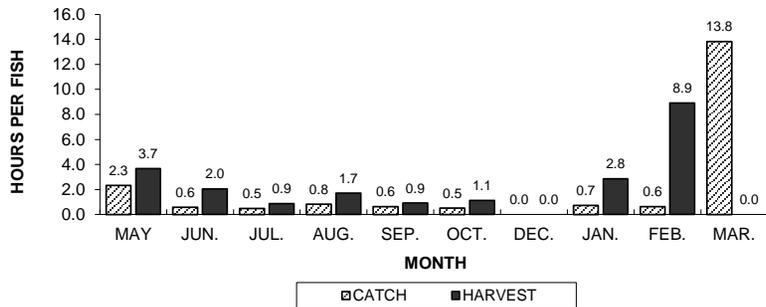
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Figure 5. Largemouth bass sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Muskellunge Lake, during 2011-12.

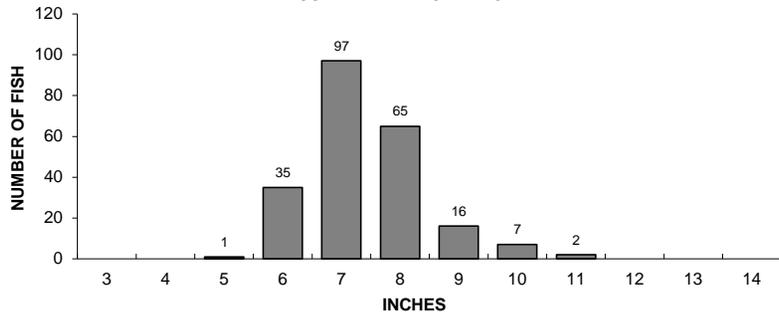
YELLOW PERCH



PROJECTED SPECIFIC CATCH AND HARVEST RATES



LENGTH DISTRIBUTION OF FISH MEASURED BY THE CREEL CLERK



AVERAGE AND LARGEST LENGTH OF FISH HARVESTED

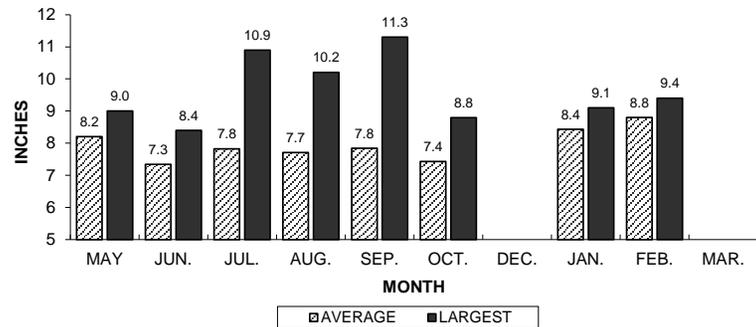


Figure 6. Yellow perch sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Muskellunge Lake, during 2011-12.

BLUEGILL

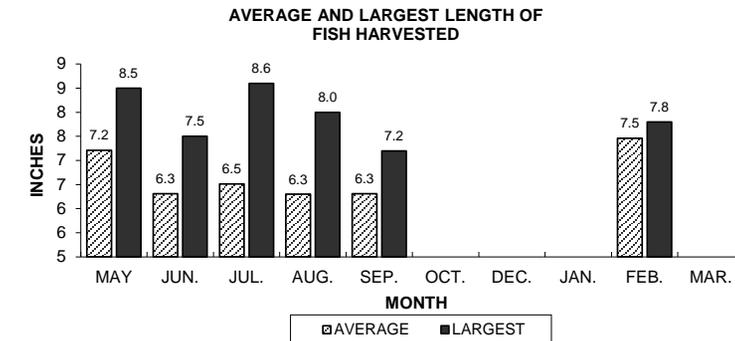
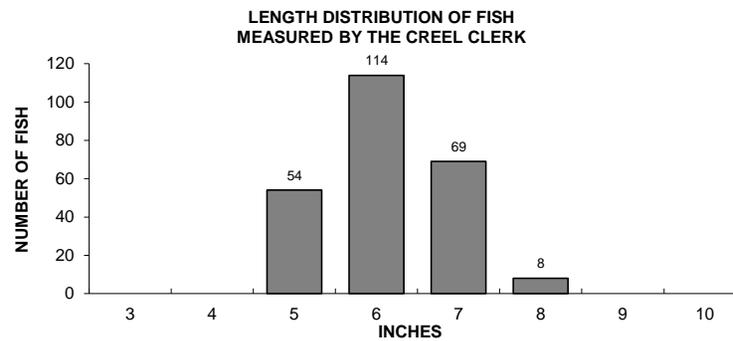
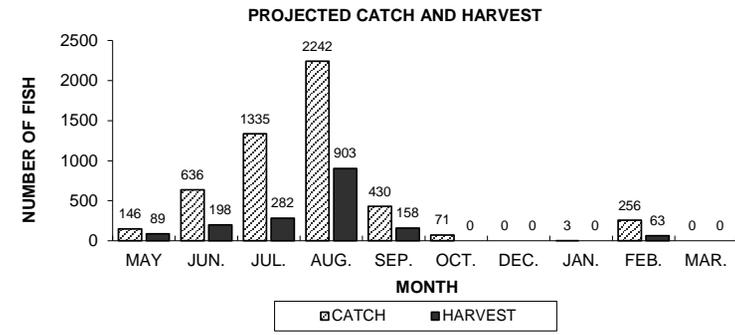
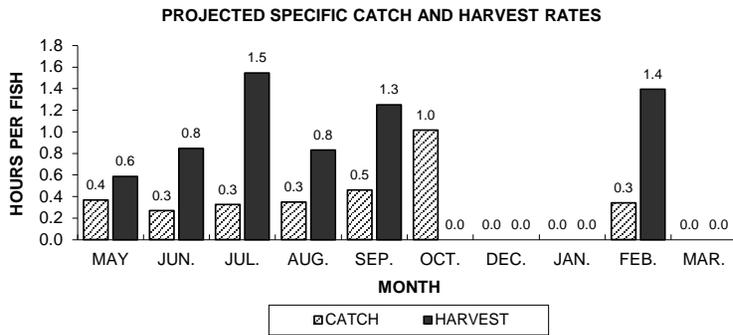
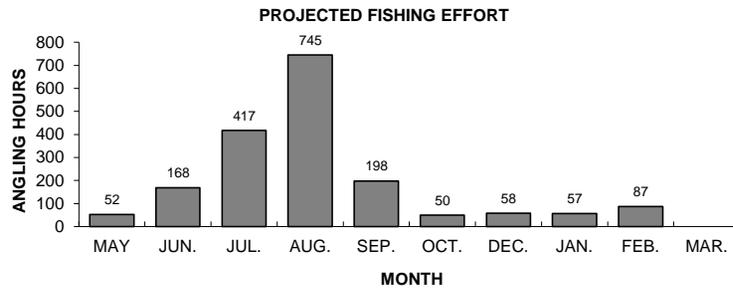
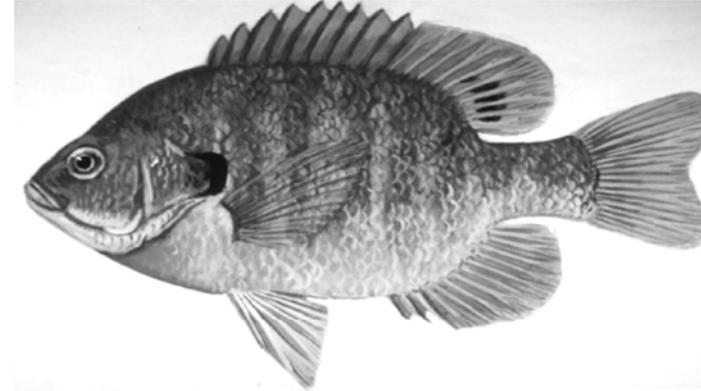


Figure 7. Bluegill sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Muskellunge Lake, during 2011-12.

PUMPKINSEED

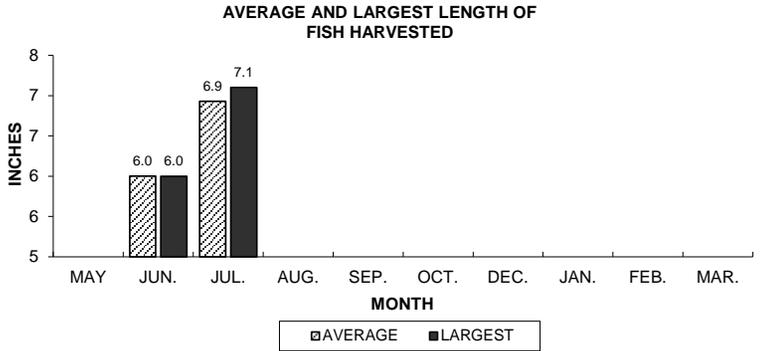
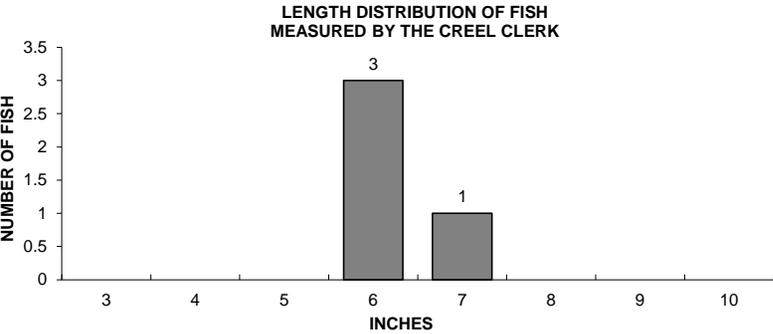
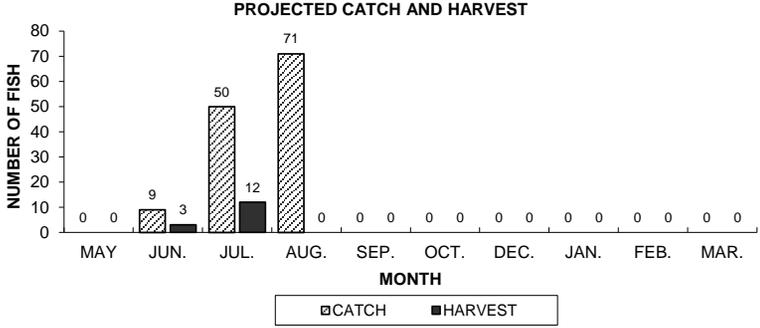
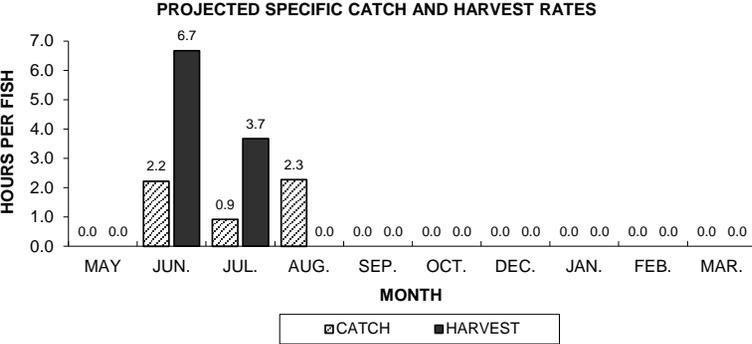
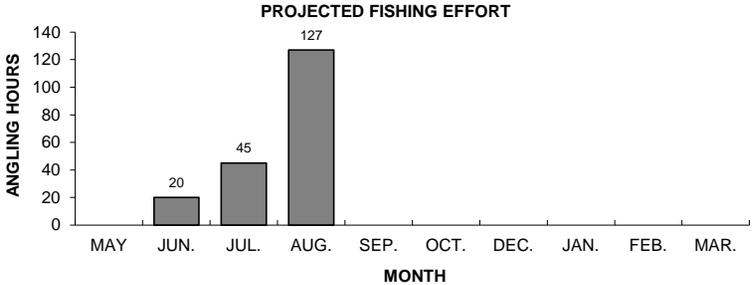
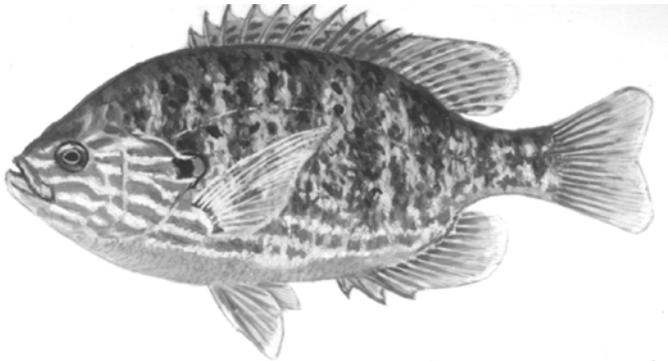
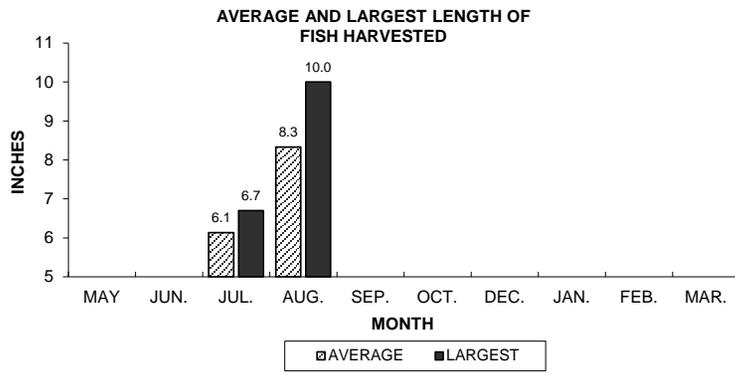
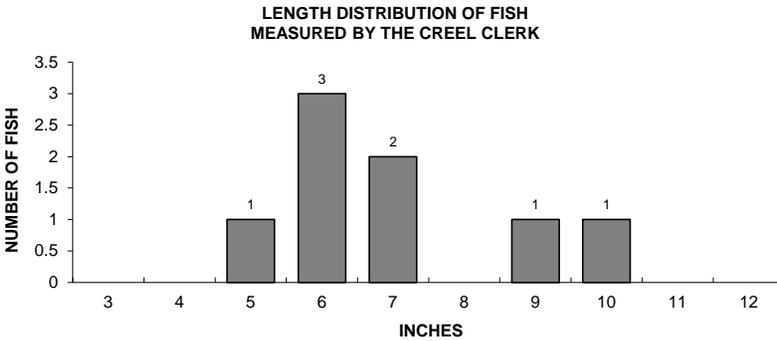
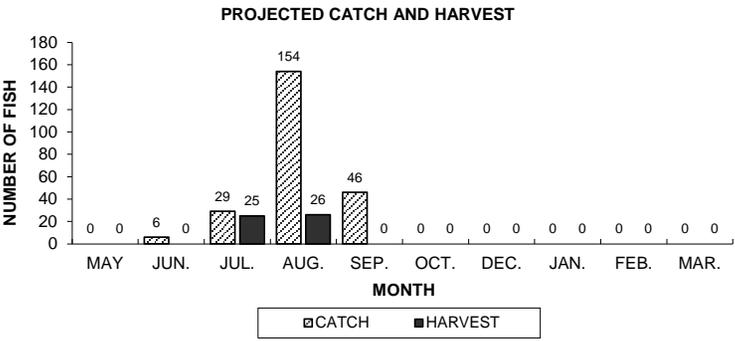
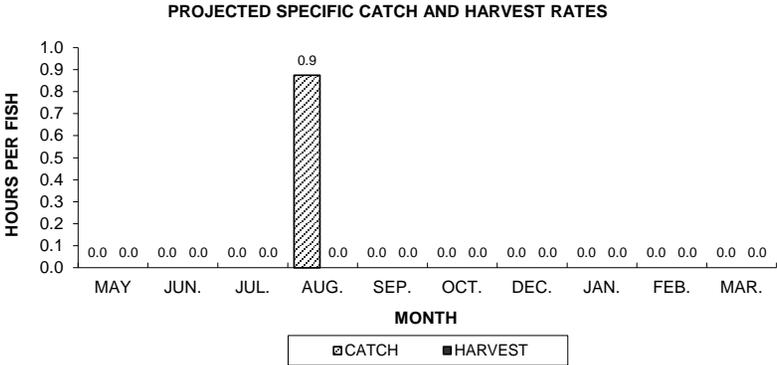
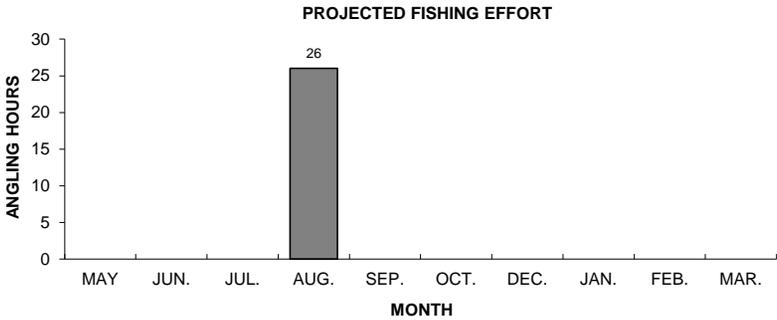
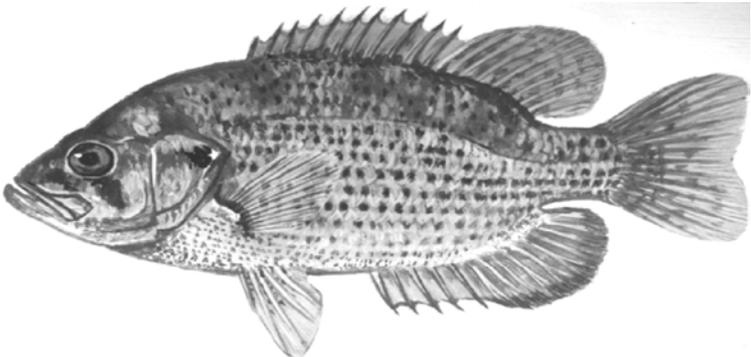


Figure 8. Pumpkinseed sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Muskellunge Lake, during 2011-12.

ROCK BASS



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Figure 9. Rock bass sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Muskellunge Lake, during 2011-12.

BLACK CRAPPIE

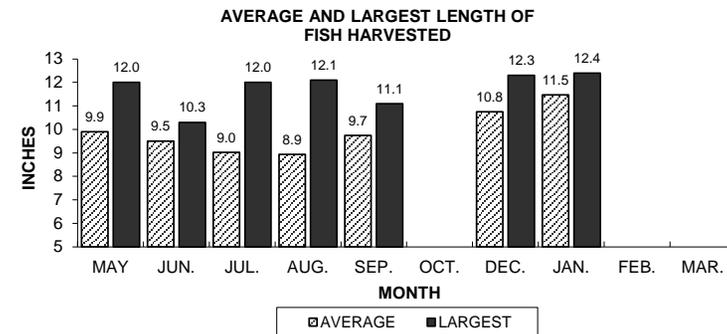
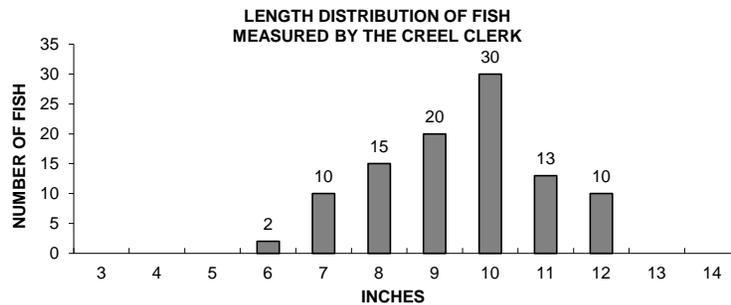
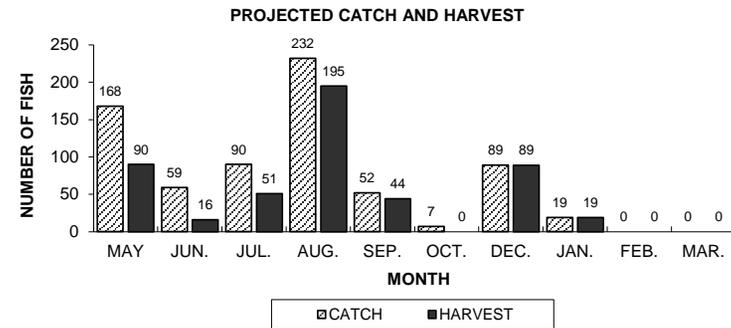
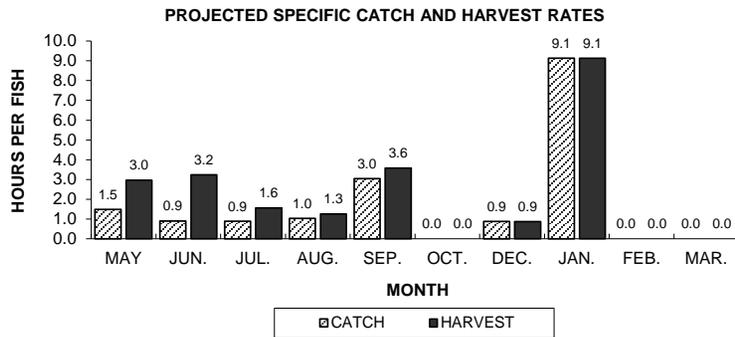
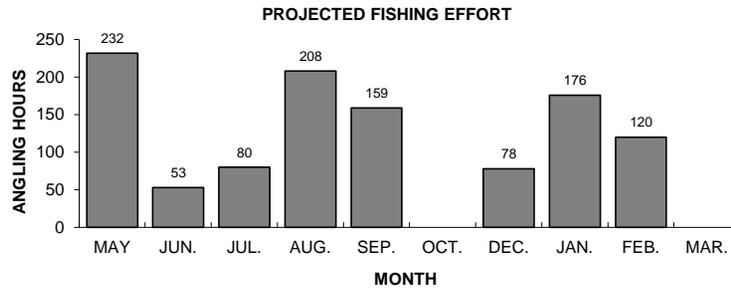
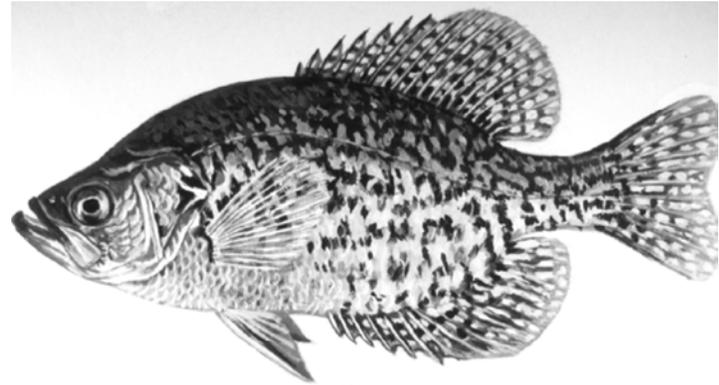


Figure 10. Black crappie sportfishing effort, catch, harvest, and length distribution, Muskellunge Lake, during 2011-12.