

"Mr. Muskie"

by Dennis R. Sands

Recently I had the opportunity to gain some valuable information on Muskie Fishing at Shabbona Lake from the Top Muskie Guide Duane Landmeier. Duane has caught over 150 Muskies 30" long or longer, many from Shabbona Lake. He is also the author of a book titled "Muskie Fishing In Illinois." The book features over 30 lakes in Illinois that have been stocked with Muskies. Duane guides out of Shabbona's Lakeside Bait Tackle & Boat Rental at Shabbona Lake State Park. He also guides for Muskies at other lakes.

Duane has studied everything he can get his hands on about Muskies at Shabbona Lake. The Illinois Department Of Natural Resources, along with the Illinois Muskie Alliance, published a creel survey which revealed some very intriguing facts & figures, which Duane helped me deciphered.

The best months to catch a Muskie 36" or larger at Shabbona Lake is July through September (Get That Muskie Tackle Out !!!). During this time the Muskie are gorging themselves on the high protein forage base of Shad at Shabbona Lake. The Lake has a moderate number of Muskies, but not a huge population. This, according to Duane, is one of the reasons that Shabbona Lake has such big Muskies. Less competition for food and space.

It is amazing that a 318 acre lake, just 60 miles West of Chicago, could produce 4 State Of Illinois Record Muskie, including the current record of 37 pounds, 13 ounces, caught April 1, 1997. The vision that the State Of Illinois had, along with the vision of Muskies Inc. and the Shabbona Lake Sportsman Club, has certainly become a reality.

According to Duane, in the last survey done (1997), there were 373 Muskies reported to the IDNR-IMA Survey. The largest was a 44" brute. Anglers not specifically fishing for Muskies caught 227, while those fishing for Muskies caught 146. That means us Crappie & Bass fishermen have a chance too !!!

The best lure choices were:

182 caught on Crank baits
65 caught on Spinner baits
40 caught on Jerk Baits
26 caught on Jigs
13 caught on Minnows
47 unknown

The best color of lures were:

83 Black 35 Yellow

65 Silver 27 Chartreuse

44 Green 17 Brown

38 White 16 Blue

36 Red 12 Assorted

Shabbona Lake has a large variety of types of structure that Muskie relate to : Points, Sunken Roadbed, Bridge, Foundations, Trees, Brush piles, Fish Cribs, Creek Bed, Ditches, Weedbeds, Drop-offs & Humps. Muskie that you catch at Shabbona Lake will most likely be over 35" long. There was a 3 year span in which no Muskie were added. But, that has been corrected by stockings the last two years.

Duane has noticed a trend of more anglers trolling for Muskies at all times of the year. Remember to adjust your trolling speed according to the water temperature. For instance in 40-50 degree water go very slow, in 50-60 degree water go a moderate speed and in 60-80 degree water go fast.

When you make that trip out to Shabbona Lake and you are in need of a Muskie fishing guide I can highly recommend Duane Landmeier. Duane can be reached through Shabbona's Lakeside Bait, Tackle & Boat Rental, 815-824-2581 or you can contact him at 815-286-7170. See You Out On The Water !!!