

Fords Lake

Lackawanna County

2016 Tiger Muskellunge Survey

Area 4 biologists documented an illegal introduction of Gizzard Shad to Fords Lake [during a routine inventory in 2006](#). Gizzard Shad can have negative effects on panfish populations. To control this invasive species, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission began annual fingerling Tiger Muskellunge stockings at Fords Lake in 2007.

We returned to Fords Lake in early spring 2016 to get our first look at how the Tiger Muskellunge stocking program was working. Nine trap nets set during the week of March 21 captured two Tiger Muskellunge ranging from 33 to 34 inches long. Trap net catch rate of Tiger Muskellunge was 0.0095 per hour. This value was slightly below the minimum criteria of 0.01 per hour that the [Plan for Muskellunge Management for Pennsylvania](#) requires for continued stocking. Nevertheless, Tiger Muskellunge stocking will continue at Fords Lake for a couple more years. It's still very early in this program and we expect Fords Lake will exceed minimum criteria in future work. We were also encouraged by the number of anglers we talked to during the survey who had caught a Tiger Muskellunge at Fords Lake in 2015.

Table 1 contains a list of all the fish we captured during this survey. We didn't capture many Largemouth Bass because Bass generally don't go into trap nets and we didn't capture many Bullheads because the water temperature wasn't warm enough for these species to begin shoreline movements that would make them vulnerable to our trapnets. However, we did catch a lot of Crappie. Of those captured, Black Crappie made up 90% of the population and White Crappie made up 10%. Black Crappie averaged 7.7 inches long and White Crappie averaged 8.2 inches long, but some very large individuals of both species were present. The biggest, on the left in the picture below, was 18.5 inches long.

Table 1. Fish captured at Fords Lake during the March 2016 survey.

Species	Number Caught	Length Range (inches)
Tiger Muskellunge	2	33 – 34
Gizzard Shad	12	15 – 17
Black Crappie	842	5 – 18
White Crappie	96	6 – 16
Bluegill	387	3 – 7
Pumpkinseed	34	5 – 6
Yellow Perch	13	7 – 10
Brown Bullhead	72	8 – 14
Yellow Bullhead	84	6 – 10
Golden Shiner	2	9
Largemouth Bass	3	11 – 12

34 inch Tiger Muskellunge captured at Fords Lake



Fisheries Biologist Aaron Frey holding two large Crappie captured at Fords Lake



*Rob Wnuk
Area 4 Fisheries Manager*