

Still fishing is used when muskies are known to be in an area, but haven't touched anything that has been presented to them. Large tackle is a must. You need equipment capable of turning them from cover such as stumps and logs. Use live suckers or chubs and fish four to five feet down from a surface float.



With the increased catch of muskellunge from Ohio waters, interest among fishermen grew and the Division of Wildlife needed to obtain information on the muskellunge harvest. So, in 1961 an organization was formed to officially record the large

muskies caught each year. The name Ohio Huskie Muskie Club seemed a natural. The objectives of the club are to foster and promote sport fishing for muskellunge, to promote release of nontrophy (less than 30-inch) muskies, to promote good sportsmanship and brotherhood among men, women, and children, and to provide the Division of Wildlife with statewide information on muskellunge catch and harvest.

The club has proven to be an excellent vehicle for obtaining information which is valuable in evaluating fish management activities and planning for the future. Many states have copied Ohio's Huskie Muskie Club system to achieve the same results Ohio has enjoyed. Ohio ranks high among the states each year in total catch of muskellunge, and for the past several years has been among the leaders in size taken.

When you catch a muskellunge, you may qualify for membership in this prestigious club. Regular membership is attained by catching a muskellunge measuring at least 42 inches long. Honorable Mention membership is achieved by catching a muskellunge measuring at least 30 inches long (there is no weight requirement). Anglers who catch and release 10 or more muskellunge measuring at least 30 inches will

receive an Honorable Mention Release plaque.

Applicants must register during the year in which the qualifying fish was taken. Regular and Honorable Mention entries must include a scale sample taken in accordance with the procedure described on the application form. It is equally important to submit applications and scale samples for all muskellunge less than 30 inches long that are caught and released. Application forms can be obtained at most marinas and bait dealers at Ohio lakes that have a muskellunge fishery. These forms can also be obtained by writing the ODNR Division of Wildlife at one of the district offices: 1500 Dublin Road, Columbus 43215; 952 Lima Avenue, Findlay 45840; 912 Portage Lakes Drive, Akron 44319; 360 East State Street, Athens 45701; 1076 Old Springfield Pike, Xenia 45385.

Anglers who catch and register a Regular muskellunge, or who qualify for the Honorable Mention Release plaque, receive their certificate/plaque at the March awards banquet. Anglers who catch an Honorable Mention muskellunge receive their certificate by mail the following March or April.

In addition, a muskellunge measuring 36 inches or longer qualifies the angler for a Fish Ohio award.



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Publication 133 (R1000)

Ohio Department of Natural Resources
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

Muskellunge Fishing in Ohio



The ODNR Division of Wildlife's muskellunge program is designed to maintain high-quality muskellunge fisheries at a limited number of lakes throughout Ohio. In selecting lakes for stocking, emphasis is placed upon keeping a relatively even distribution of lakes throughout the state so that all Ohioans can enjoy these fisheries. Water quality, habitat, forage base, and angler access are also important considerations.

The muskellunge has large teeth and a soft dorsal fin situated far back near the forked tail. It differs from the other members of the pike family (Northern pike and pickerels) in having cheeks that are half-scaled; the others have fully scaled cheeks. The upper body of a muskie is greenish, yellowish, or brownish olive;

the sides are light olive-green, yellow, or golden with some dusky spots on the rear third. The belly is white or yellowish.

Female muskellunge grow faster and live longer than males. By age 3, females are larger than males, and they continue to grow faster in later years (see table). The largest muskie caught in Ohio was a 50½ inch, 55 lb. 2 oz. fish taken from Piedmont Lake by Joe Lykins in 1972.

Typical Growth of Ohio Muskellunge

Age	Female		Male	
	Length (inches)	Weight (pounds)	Length (inches)	Weight (pounds)
3	30¼	9½	28½	7¾
4	34½	14	31½	10
5	37½	17½	33¼	11½
6	40¼	22	35¼	14
7	41	23	36¼	15¼
8	43½	29		

Males become sexually mature at three years of age, females at four. Spawning occurs in April and May when water temperatures reach the low 50s. The eggs are small, about 45,000 to 50,000 per quart. A single female may produce as many as 200,000. The eggs are dropped on soft shallow bottoms, where they adhere to vegetation and other debris. With water temperatures in the mid-50s, the eggs hatch in a week to ten days. The fry absorb their yolk sac in about one week and then move about in search of food-microscopic animals (zooplankton) and newly hatched fish. In Ohio, muskellunge do not normally reproduce successfully in impounded waters.

Muskies are ambush feeders, taking anything that moves if it will fit in their mouth. Suckers are usually the most common food in streams; gizzard shad is the predominant forage in lakes.

Scientists reported Ohio's native muskellunge to be abundant as early as 1810 and it was still considered economically important as a commercial fish as late as 1930. After 1930, muskellunge populations declined significantly – especially in the Lake Erie drainage area – as a result of urbanization, blocking of migration routes by dams, and draining of vast marshlands for agriculture. Stream populations were

severely limited by pollution, erosion, and siltation of spawning habitat. The species was hardly known to modern-day fishermen until the Division of Wildlife began its artificial propagation program in 1952.

The Division first attempted to propagate muskies in 1948. Native brood fish were live trapped from Ohio streams and placed in hatchery ponds at Kincaid Fish Farm, in hopes that natural reproduction would occur. Because of poor success with this project, an artificial propagation program was started. Success was achieved in 1953, when 10,000 fry were stocked in Rocky Fork Lake and 2,265 fingerlings were stocked in nine selected lakes and streams, inaugurating a new muskie era for Ohio. Since then the Division of Wildlife has greatly expanded its propagation and stocking program. In 1982 the Division redirected its efforts to the production of 8- to 10-inch fish, because ongoing research was demonstrating that they survived better than 3- to 6-inch fish. As a result, opportunities for catching muskies are better in Ohio today than ever before.

Most Ohio muskies are caught from April through October when the water temperature is 55 to 75 degrees. The best lakes to fish for muskellunge are Leesville, Piedmont, Clear Fork Reservoir, West Branch, Cowan, Salt Fork, Alum Creek, Milton and Pymatuning. Berlin Lake has a low density muskie population which is maintained by natural reproduction. Good muskellunge streams are Paint Creek, Grand River, Sunfish Creek, Little Muskingum River, Rocky Fork Creek, Salt Creek, Wills Creek, and the Mahoning River. Some of these stream fisheries are dependent upon reservoir stocking within the same watershed.



Large tackle is required, but with a little know-how, medium to heavy bass casting equipment will do. Large lures and a wire leader are in order.

Use big crank baits, wobbling lures, spinner baits, spoons, jerk baits, and spinners. Two of the most important factors in bait casting are accuracy and retrieve. When casting to a likely spot such as submerged brush, logs, tree tops, or vegetation, get your bait as close as possible. The retrieve should be irregular, and a fast retrieve is usually more productive than a slow one.



Many strikes will occur close to the boat. If you get a strike while fishing with live bait, such as big minnows, don't set the hook immediately. A muskie will mouth a bait before swallowing it, so give the fish plenty of time before setting the hook... then set it firmly. Muskies require a great deal of wearing down before landing. When you are certain it is played out, place your net in the water and lead the fish into it. Many a trophy has been lost by improper landing technique. On the other hand, if you have decided to release your catch, keep to a minimum the time from hook set to release.

Trolling is usually a good method during the hot months when muskies are suspended in deeper water. The same tackle used for casting can be used for trolling. Check your bait from time to time to see that it is free of weeds.