

Ghost Lake Fisheries Information

Fall, 2022

Provided by:

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Habitat: Most of Ghost is surrounded by undeveloped USDA Forest Service owned lands. This gives the lake a wilderness feel to it, and most of the nearshore and riparian habitat is intact and high quality. Littoral large wood is fairly abundant. USFS did perform some “tree drops” in 2007 to add habitat complexity to some sparse areas. I plan on refreshing these areas with new wood in the coming years. Other than that, there really isn’t much more habitat work we could do on Ghost that would have an effect on the fishery. Its good just the way it is.

Musky: Ghost has been and still is a musky factory. Habitat is ideal to support natural musky reproduction, and I am consistently seeing different individual year classes of naturally reproduced musky coming up in my fall surveys. However when you have musky populations at the high densities seen in Ghost, often times size is lacking. People often call these “numbers lakes” which I’m sure you are familiar with. This happens on other high density musky lakes in the National Forest as well, including Day, Mineral, Moquah, and Potter to name a few. Our data from Ghost and other area lakes with high musky densities has shown that this can partly be attributed to a lack of optimally sized preferred forage. Ghost does not have the forage base to support many large fish. For example, during a recent spring netting assessment on Day Lake in 2021 (which has many similarities to Ghost) 110 unique musky were sampled in 3 days, and only 1 was over 40”. Anglers should expect to have continued high success rates for musky on Ghost, but may want to consider lower density musky lakes for a shot at larger fish.

Walleye: Fall walleye relative abundance recently has stabilized right around 45/hr, and we are seeing a few naturally produced fish on occasion. It is doubtful that these small naturally produced year classes are adding meaningful numbers to the adult population, but it is an encouraging sign that we will keep our eye on. Fall relative abundance in the 40’s/hr is good for a fishery sustained mostly by stocking, and like Max mentioned decent survival of stocked fish when compared to other lakes. A 2015 Treaty Assessment Team survey found the adult walleye population to be 2.1 walleye per acre, and I would agree that the population is still around that mark which is good for a stocked lake. Ghost also has a survey history of producing some large walleye on occasion. The difficult thing about walleye fishing on Ghost is that the lake lacks much of what people consider classic walleye spots like rocky humps, drop offs, or long points. Indeed many of the larger walleye surveyed on Ghost are found in untraditional walleye spots such as lily pads and other dense weeds. It would be challenging to present a lure past these fish. Ghost’s large expanses of featureless shallow flats makes pinpointing numbers of walleye difficult.

Panfish: Ghost has never been known as a lake to keep a stringer of nice panfish. Bluegill size structure is especially disappointing, with the majority of fish under 7”. Sporadic years of good crappie fishing on Ghost have been known over the years, including some particularly large fish. During the 2005 netting survey USFS sampled a 16.4” crappie and a few others over 15”. However as a population, “eater” sized crappie are few and far between most years. One interesting thing about Ghost Lake crappie is that it is the only lake on the National Forest with a measurable white crappie population. White crappie are typically found much further south in the state including large rivers so if you catch a white crappie consider it a treat! Like walleye, crappie fishing can be challenging on Ghost because the lake lacks a defined habitat to concentrate fish. Most crappie are found scattered in the weeds or roam the deeper mud flats looking for invertebrates.

Bass: Ghost has a low density largemouth bass population with a fair size structure. Most of the bass we sample come from the weedy north bay or along downed shoreline wood like the tree drops. If you concentrate on these spots, you can probably catch a few nice ones but action won’t be fast.

Overall: If the fisheries goal on Ghost is to provide an action musky lake with a good shot at a legal walleye or two, then no management changes are needed for the future. Ghost is a lake where one can expect to land a musky any given day which is pretty cool. In my own view I think musky are too abundant on Ghost and are negatively impacting their own size structure. There is a noticeable gap in optimal forage size on Ghost that appears in many National Forest musky lakes with high abundances. However most anglers I talk to are satisfied with what the fishery offers.