

# Focus on Fishing

Guidelines for success

## Muskellunge



### General facts

The largest member of the pike family, muskellunge are one of the sport-fish most highly-prized by anglers. Reaching over 4 feet in length, Jersey muskies grow to trophy proportions that rival fish from many of the best waters in the country. This elusive fish is seldom abundant, with one adult fish per acre considered a good fishery. Known as the fish of 10,000 casts, muskellunge in New Jersey do not stick by that standard and are routinely caught with less effort. Muskies are generally a shallow-water fish, preferring areas of weeds, logs and other cover in both lake and river environments.

### Seasonality

Fishing is relatively consistent from late spring to mid-fall, with September and October considered two of the best months. Most muskie fishing takes place during daylight hours, with the afternoon considered the most productive time of day. Muskies will move deeper as waters become increasingly warm in the summer months.

### Prime Fishing Time

Season	Time of Day
Spring	Daytime
Summer	Early morning, evening and night
Fall	Daytime
Winter	Daytime

### Bait

Attach a #2/0 single hook or 1/0 treble hook to a 12-inch wire leader. Thread the hook through the lips or behind the dorsal fin of a 6- to 10-inch sucker, trout (purchased), or shiner and suspend the bait by attaching a float 2 to 3 feet above the leader. Exercise caution when using live bait to prevent killing muskies that may swallow the hook. If the hook has been swallowed, do not try to remove it but carefully cut the leader at the point closest to the mouth. When planning to catch and release these trophy specimens, use artificial lures.

### Artificial Lures

Cast large, 5- to 9-inch, sucker or perch colored crankbaits (*examples*: Believer or Swim Whiz), bucktail spinners (*example*: Mepps Musky Killer), or chartreuse spinnerbaits (1/2 to 1 oz.) around available structure and edges of weed beds. Retrieve quickly. Trolling these lures is often effective once the waters have warmed and the fish have moved deeper. The rule of thumb is smaller lures in the spring and larger lures during the fall. If muskies frequently follow the lure to the boat without striking, swirl the lure through the water in a figure eight pattern at the end of the retrieve.

### Gear:

*Fishing Rod* — 6.5 to 7.5 ft.

*Line* — 20 lb. test or greater monofilament with a 12 in. wire leader or 50 lb. test braided line with wire leader

### Key Fishing Areas:

Echo Lake Reservoir, Greenwood Lake, Lake Hopatcong, Manasquan Reservoir, Monksville Reservoir, Mercer Lake, Mountain Lake, and Delaware River. Developing fishery at Cooper River Lake.

### Size:

Adults typically range 10-30 lbs. (average 15 lbs.)

### Skillful Angler Award (min. size):

*Adult*: 20 lbs.

*Junior*: 15 lbs.

*Catch & Release*: 40 in.

### State Record:

42 lbs., 13 oz., Monksville Reservoir (1997)



After ice-out, target shallow waters and tributaries flowing into the lake for some early season, pre-spawn muskies using bucktails and top-waters.