

First muskie season now open in Iowa

Iowa fishermen will have something new to look forward to this year -- the muskellunge or "muskie."

The Iowa Conservation commission has approved a muskie fishing season from now until Nov. 30 of this year and from May 15 to Nov. 30 in subsequent years.

This is the first time since fishing regulations were established for the state that there has been a muskie season.

Anglers can take one muskie per day and it must be 30 inches or longer; small muskies are illegal.

Clear Lake, East Okoboji and West Okoboji are the only waters in the state that contain these fish.

Muskies were only introduced to Iowa in 1960. However, due to the characteristic rapid growth of muskies some already are over 17 pounds. Because they have increased in number and have shown rapid growth, the commission decided at its meeting at Des Moines this week to establish the season.

Muskies have variable body markings, which make them hard to distinguish from the northern pike.

The one distinct difference is the presence of scales on the cheek area directly behind the eye. Northerns have a fully scaled cheek while muskies have only the upper one-half of the cheek scaled.