

# Muskie Fishing On The Chain O'Lakes

## Big Muskies in the Flatland

Terry Bitz of Outdoor Convergence

I met up with my friend Captain Doug Kloet on a recent Saturday morning to check out the muskie fishing on the Fox Chain O'Lakes in Illinois. Doug has been muskie fishing on the Chain since the mid 1990's and has seen these toothy predators become well established in the system.

We launched the boat shortly after 6 a.m. on the north side of Lake Marie. Doug proceeded to pilot the boat up the channel which connects Marie to the lakes of Channel and Catherine to the north. Typical of this summer's weather, we were wearing warm clothes to ward off the cold morning air.

After leaving the channel and the associated no-wake zone, Doug hit the throttle and quickly took us to the north side of Channel Lake. Once we arrived at the planned destination, Doug and I began fishing the shallows. Doug was casting a bucktail called a Double Cowgirl while I was throwing a top water lure called a Depthraider.

According to Doug, the muskies are currently holding in relatively shallow water because that is where the food is at.

"The muskies here follow the whitebass, sheepshead and carp;" said Doug. "If they move out of the weeds, so do most of the muskies. However, it seems like the muskies on the Chain will be in the same locations much of the year."



Captain Doug Kloet holding a large muskie caught on the Chain O'Lakes in Illinois

Fifteen minutes into the excursion, I noticed a dorsal and tail fin following my bait during the retrieve. Though I knew it was a small fish, the "Da Dum Da Dum" music from Jaws played in my head. Seconds later the bait was knocked out of the water as the small muskie took a swipe at it and missed.

Eventually, I traded the top water lure for a jerkbait called a Suick. This famous lure has been used by muskie anglers for five decades with great success and stood in stark contrast with the Double Cowgirl used by Doug. The Cowgirl is a recent creation that has taken the muskie world by storm in just the few years it has been on the market.

We eventually finished working the north end of the lake and moved to fish a shallow flat. It was there in six feet of water that we finally hit the jackpot.

I was in the middle a retrieve when I heard a commotion behind me. Looking back, I saw Doug setting the hook on what appeared to be a big fish that had engulfed the Cowgirl.

Doug began to crank in the fish and we got a good look at her before she began her second run. She was a large muskie; one of the biggest I had seen while fishing and she was not happy to be hooked.



After a couple more runs and jumps, the big female finally tired of the fight and allowed Doug to bring her boat side. As I stood with net in hand with the hoop near the water, Doug started leading the fish towards me.

**Doug Kloet releasing the large muskie back into the waters on Channel Lake**

However, the muskie made one last jump and inadvertently landed headfirst in the net with half of its body hanging over the side of the hoop. Fearing I would be forever banished from Doug's boat if I lost his fish, I quickly twisted the handle while simultaneously raising the hoop from the water to dump her fully into the net. It required some effort due to the weight of the fish, but she safely slid in the rest of the way. I breathed a sigh of relief.

After a quick celebration, Doug unhooked the muskie and held it for the requisite photos. He then gladly released the fish and we traded high fives as it swam away. The healthy fish stretched the tape to 47 ½ inches and provides a glimpse into the big fish potential just south of the state line.

“Several fish in the fifty inch class have been caught on the Chain this year;” said Doug. “These waters are in the same class as the muskie lakes in Waukesha County and the 48 inch size limit on the Chain allows these fish to grow big, something Wisconsin should keep in mind;” he added.

Muskies have been stocked in the Chain O’Lakes since in 1982. In less than thirty years the fishery is now so successful; it seems the fish are practically jumping into landing nets.

For information about Doug Kloet’s guiding service or Musky Magic Tackle, contact Captain Doug at 262-605-8247 or at his website at [www.dougekloet.com](http://www.dougekloet.com).