

Why Stock Hybrid Striped Bass

I n s p i r e d B y N a t u r e

Recently, hybrid striped bass have been recognized as a valuable management tool in pond and lake management. A cross between a striped bass (*Morone saxatilis*) and a white bass (*Morone chrysops*). Their popularity arises from the ease of managing their populations, forage size selectivity, rapid growth, and their high quality as a food source.

One important aspect of hybrid striped bass is the fact that they are hybrids. As a result, they are *essentially* sterile in ponds. This provides more control over the predator populations in their water resource. Rather than having a reproducing population of predators and having the potential for a stunted population, you will never have more hybrid striped bass than you stocked. Another advantage of their sterility is that if for any reason the hybrids are no longer desired, simply stop stocking and the populations will decline in a relatively short period. Also, hybrid vigor produces rapid growth as a result of decreased energy inputs towards reproduction.

Hybrid striped bass also enhance the quality of your water resource as a result of their foraging selectivity. Because of their small mouth size relative to their large body size, hybrid striped bass play an important role in pond management. Research (Neal et al. 1999) demonstrated that hybrids 4.75 – 13.5" stocked in small water impoundments rarely consumed prey over 1.4". In fact, over 97.3% of the items found in the hybrids' stomachs were less than .6". Also, this research indicated that of the stomach contents evaluated, larval sunfish comprised 56.4% and insects comprised 48.1% of their diet.

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Exactly what relevance does this have to your pond or lake? Because the hybrid striped bass are consuming only the smallest of prey fish available, you can expect to see a decrease in the number of small forage fish. During their first year of growth a typical population of hybrid striped bass will consume approximately 250 pounds of small prey in a one acre pond, especially insects, sunfish, and minnows such as carp. This can help to reduce the number of rough fish as well as increasing the size structure of sunfish populations.

These feeding characteristics promote what we call "biomanipulation," changing one aspect of a food web to induce a change in another. In some cases, reducing the number of small, zooplankton consuming fish, we can also promote a clearer water situation in your lake. Also, because hybrid striped bass are consuming smaller organisms (fish and insects), the transfer of nutrients is more efficient than if the hybrid striped bass were consuming larger organisms located higher in the food web.

It is not uncommon for a 6" HSB stocked in May to reach 13" and 1 1/3 pounds by October of the same year. Although maximum sizes vary according to water resource, hybrid striped bass have the potential of reaching 8-12 pounds. Refer to Chart 1 for size/weight relationships. Ultimately, hybrid striped bass will enhance the quality of your water resource and will provide many opportunities for great angling.

Please contact Inspired By Nature, Inc. for any questions on fish stocking or about the status of your pond or lake.

Reference Cited

Neal, J.W., R.L. Noble, and J.A. Rice. 1999. North American Journal of Fisheries Management 19:1044-1053.

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