

# Culture *and* Stocking of Pennsylvania's Hybrid Striped Bass

by Rob Brown,  
Fish Production Manager

What eats like a White Bass, grows like a Striped Bass and fights with the vigor of a Muskellunge? If you're a Pennsylvania angler, you know the answer—the hybrid Striped Bass.

Known for its strength and fighting ability, it's of little surprise that hybrid Striped Bass are gaining popularity with Pennsylvania anglers. These fish are big, hit voraciously and are outstanding gamefish, but few know that one Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC) hatchery is gearing up to improve this popular fishery.

Staff at PFBC Union City State Fish Hatchery, Erie County, have been rearing and stocking hybrid Striped Bass since the spring of 2015. The Union City State Fish Hatchery is one of four warmwater/coolwater facilities within PFBC that hatch and rear warmwater/coolwater species including Largemouth Bass, Muskellunge, Northern Pike, Walleyes, catfish and tiger muskellunge. Collectively, the warmwater/coolwater hatcheries raise over 16 different species of fish and provide 20 to 30 million fish for annual stocking in Pennsylvania's waters. In addition, PFBC acquires and stocks an average of 200,000 hybrid Striped Bass and 200,000 Striped Bass fingerlings from other state agencies such as those in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia.

## What is a hybrid Striped Bass?

The hybrid Striped Bass is a hatchery-created cross between a White Bass and a Striped Bass. It is stocked in both slow-moving rivers and large reservoirs, where there is an abundance of open-water forage fish such as Alewives, Gizzard Shad and Spotfin Shiners. The lateral stripes on a hybrid Striped Bass are usually irregular or broken behind the pectoral fins and above the lateral line, while a Striped Bass has unbroken stripes. Hybrid Striped Bass exhibit fast growth and tolerate warmer habitats than Striped Bass. The hybrid Striped Bass is functionally sterile, meaning reproduction is uncommon. This allows biologists the ability to manage hybrid Striped Bass populations based on available forage without overpopulating a waterway.



photos-PFBC archives

For species overview, identification, habitat and life history, visit [www.fishandboat.com/Fish/PennsylvaniaFishes/Pages/StripedBass.aspx](http://www.fishandboat.com/Fish/PennsylvaniaFishes/Pages/StripedBass.aspx).

## How are hybrid Striped Bass cultured?

Fish culturists at the Union City State Fish Hatchery receive 2- to 3-day-old sac fry in May each year. Young hybrid Striped Bass are reared 4 to 6 weeks in outside earthen ponds. Hybrid Striped Bass fry survival is dependent on both the quantity and quality of zooplankton (food). To ensure there is the proper size and amount of zooplankton in the pond for the young fry to eat, fish culturists are diligent in the timing of the shipment of fry with the filling of the ponds. Fish culturists



Hatchery raised hybrid Striped Bass ready for stocking.

prepare ponds to ensure sufficient amounts and types of phytoplankton are present in the pond for the zooplankton to consume. The young fry are satisfied with zooplankton for only 1 or 2 weeks. Then, the fry are converted to a formulated diet of dry feed to prevent the fry from eating each other. The dry feed is broadcast along the edges of the pond for the remaining weeks of culture. The fry grow quickly reaching 2 inches in length within 5 to 6 weeks. At this size, the fry are referred to as fingerlings and are ready to be harvested from the ponds. Once the fingerlings are harvested from the production ponds, fingerlings are inventoried and stocked into waters across Pennsylvania. Once stocked, hybrid Striped Bass grow rapidly and reach legal size (20 inches) in approximately 4 years in Pennsylvania.

## How many hybrid Striped Bass are stocked?

One of the keys to maintaining a great hybrid Striped Bass fishery is consistency with stockings. The PFBC has increased the number of hybrid Striped Bass fingerling stockings each year since 2013. A total of 246,974 fingerlings were stocked in 2016. This was the highest amount ever stocked and more than double the average amount stocked in the last 10 years. Fortunately for anglers, these hybrid Striped Bass fingerlings are well distributed across Pennsylvania each year.

To find information on best fishing waters for hybrid Striped Bass, visit [www.PaBestFishing.com](http://www.PaBestFishing.com).

## What's the fishing report?

Anglers can expect good hybrid Striped Bass fishing in the eastern part of Pennsylvania in Blue Marsh Lake, Berks County, Pinchot Lake, York County, and Hammond Lake, Tioga County. On the western side of Pennsylvania, hybrid Striped Bass are targeted in Lake Arthur, Butler County, Shenango River Lake, Mercer County, and the Three Rivers pool, of the Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio rivers, surrounding



Hybrid Striped Bass sac fry are placed into production ponds for grow out.

downtown Pittsburgh. The fishing gets good in May each year and continues through June and July. Early spring and fall are a great time to target large schools of baitfish seeking warmer waters when looking for hybrid Striped Bass. Look for thermal differences between the main water body and the shallows. During these times, Alewives and Gizzard Shad seek warmer water, and a difference of a few degrees can be enough to concentrate the fishing activity. Overcast days, dusk and dawn, and night are popular fishing times for hybrid Striped Bass anglers. Long baitcasting or spinning rods (6 to 8 feet) with 10-pound, abrasion-resistant monofilament line is preferred for inland lakes. A little heavier line is used in the rivers.

Boating anglers prefer casting imitation minnow baits or spoons around the main lake's points and flats. Some prefer to drift live bait. Shore anglers use live shad fished below a balloon or float along the spillways and below dams in tailwaters. Others wade and cast to the lake points and creek mouths. Whether you're a new or seasoned angler, give it a try. Remember to hold on to your rod. ☐

