

Tuttle Creek Fisheries Newsletter Spring 2013

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Tuttle Creek Reservoir Fishing Forecast

Since 2008, Tuttle Creek Reservoir has had good conditions for fish spawning and growth. Water levels have been fairly stable during the spring spawning season and there has not been a lot of fish flushed out of the reservoir during large water releases. These conditions have resulted in above average densities for most of the fish species living in Tuttle Creek Reservoir. Fishing prospects are looking good for 2013.

The best news is the white crappie population. Sampling efforts from last fall produced an average of 54 crappie per net. That is the highest sample number of crappie at Tuttle Creek since 1988. Good spawns the last two years have resulted in there being lots of young crappie less than 10 inches. However, the crappie population has very good numbers of bigger crappie. Anglers did quite well on crappie over 12 inches throughout the winter and fall. Great harvest rates are expected for this spring when crappie come shallow to spawn. Hopefully, the high number of young fish will grow well and extend the great crappie fishing for many years.

Saugeye have been stocked into Tuttle Creek since 1995. They are a hybrid between walleye and sauger that are produced in Kansas's hatcheries. Saugeye stockings from 2009, 2010, and 2011 have had excellent survival and growth. This has led to a rather robust population, with 2012 having the largest saugeye sample in 6 years. Of the saugeye collected last fall, 84 percent of them were over the 15 inch minimum length limit. There are opportunities to catch some larger fish with 28 percent of the saugeye sample being over 20 inches. Unfortunately, not enough saugeye fingerlings were produced last spring and Tuttle Creek did not receive a maintenance stocking in 2012. Overall, the saugeye population is looking good and exceptional fishing is anticipated in the reservoir and in the fishing areas below the dam. A good way of catching saugeye is by casting or trolling brightly colored crankbaits along rocky shorelines or points.



A white crappie from Tuttle Creek



24 inch saugeye



White bass from Tuttle Creek

Tuttle Creek Reservoir Fishing Forecast

The white bass population was at a historic low in 2008. Since that time, white bass densities have been steadily increasing due to good spawning success. The current population will offer good numbers of nice sized white bass to anglers. From white bass collected in the fall of 2012; 54 percent were over 12 inches, 4 percent were over 15 inches, and we even collected a few over 18 inches. In general, white bass fishing at Tuttle Creek Reservoir should be above average this year, with a decent chance of catching a real trophy. During the spring spawning run, good white bass fishing can be found in the creeks that flow into the reservoir, many of which can be accessed on public property.

Tuttle Creek Reservoir and the Big Blue River are popular spots for fishermen looking for catfish. The channel catfish population is about average for density at Tuttle Creek. However, there were surprisingly good numbers of bigger fish. From the most recent sample, 30 percent of the channel catfish were over 24 inches and 11 percent were over 28 inches. In addition, sampling in 2012 indicates the reservoir had one of the largest channel catfish spawns on record. Hopefully, these small fish will grow well and recruit into the fishery.

29 inch
channel
catfish22 pound
blue catfish

Blue catfish have been a part of the fishery at Tuttle Creek since 2002, but densities have been quite low. A new stocking effort was started in 2011 to help establish the species. The 2011 stocking was 13,000 blue catfish from 6 to 10 inches long. These young fish have done remarkably well. Sampling from last year collected the most blue catfish ever at the reservoir. The population was dominated by these young fish less than 18 inches, but we did collect a few older, larger blues. Another 19,000 blue catfish were stocked in 2012. It will take nearly a decade to determine if the population will flourish and naturally reproduce in the reservoir, yet early indications are promising.

I am expecting 2013 to be another good fishing year for Tuttle Creek Reservoir. Good Luck!

Improving the Fishery at Washington SFL

The fishery at Washington State Fishing Lake has been quite poor for several years. The lake has had a persistent muddy water problem. This has prevented site predators (largemouth bass and saugeye) from being able to see and feed. The loss of the lake's predator base has allowed white crappie to over-populate to extremely high densities. This has resulted in a fish population dominated by small, stunted crappie.

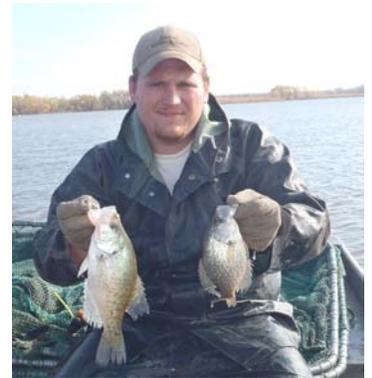
To help rectify this situation, a new pipe was placed in the silt pond upstream of the lake last fall. This will help with the turbidity problem by allowing more of the sediment to settle out in the pond before it enters the lake. Water levels were lowered about two feet to complete the work. The low water levels were maintained through the winter to concentrate the fish so the remaining predators would be better able to consume the small crappie. In addition, the low water will allow terrestrial vegetation to grow along the exposed shoreline for additional habitat for fish when the lake refills. Starting in March, the lake is now being allowed to refill naturally from rain runoff. A saugeye stocking is planned for this spring to help bolster the predator population. Hopefully, Washington State Fishing Lake will see some good improvements to the fishery in the next few years for the benefit of all anglers visiting the lake.

Crappie Forecast for the Manhattan District

Crappie are one of the most popular sportfish in Kansas, mostly because they are so good to eat. Crappie populations tend to be cyclical, and it is not uncommon for a lake to have great fishing for a couple of years followed by some really tough fishing years. So I am always getting questions like "Where are the good crappie lakes this year?"

Below is a table for waters in the Manhattan District that were sampled in fall of 2012. Very small fish were not included in these tables. Along with the number of fish caught per net, there are also the percentages of the fish that were collected in each length category, rounded to the nearest whole number. Lakes are in no particular order. These numbers will be slightly different from the 2012 Fishing Forecast pamphlet because white crappie and black crappie numbers have been put together for easier use.

| White and Black Crappie Data from 2012 | Fish/net | Percentage in each length group | | | |
|--|----------|---------------------------------|---------|----------|----------|
| | | 5 - 8" | 8 - 10" | 10 - 12" | 12 - 15" |
| Tuttle Creek Reservoir | 54 | 87 | 5 | 5 | 3 |
| Pottawatomie SFL #1 | 23 | 73 | 23 | 4 | |
| Pottawatomie SFL #2 | 6 | 36 | 60 | 4 | |
| Shawnee SFL | 32 | 92 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Washington SFL | 221 | 97 | 2 | 1 | |
| Jeffrey Make Up Lake | 11 | 60 | 26 | 14 | |
| Jeffrey Auxiliary Lake | 1 | 67 | 17 | 17 | |
| Alma City Lake | 51 | 41 | 55 | 4 | |
| Centralia City Lake | 84 | 87 | 13 | | |



White crappie on the left
Black crappie on the right

These numbers can be a little confusing, but a crappie fisherman is usually looking for a lake with good numbers of crappie (fish per net) and a good size structure. For an example of a poor crappie population: Washington SFL has the highest crappie per net in the state, yet very few fish over 8 inches. An example of a good crappie fishery would be Alma City Lake, with good densities and a good percentage of the population in the larger length groups. This data can be a helpful guide on where to start fishing for crappie, but netting data does sometimes underestimate the number of big crappie in a lake.

Jeffrey Energy Center Lakes

If you have not tried fishing at the Jeffrey Energy Center Lakes, then this year would be a good time to start. There are two lakes open to public access on the property: Make-Up Lake at 125 acres and Auxiliary Lake at 450 acres.

According to the statewide annual sampling data, Make-Up Lake has the best white bass population of any small impoundment sampled by KDWP. The lake has excellent numbers of white bass from 11 to 14 inches. In addition, there is a nice wiper population this year. There are two big year classes of wiper at the lake; one around 15 inches and the second is over 20 inches.

Auxiliary Lake supports one of the best smallmouth bass fisheries in the state. The population is still fairly new, so there are not a whole lot of big ones around. However, if you like to catch and release, the lake has high numbers of smallmouth from 12 to 16 inches. Auxiliary Lake also has nice wiper numbers.

Both lakes had greatly improved walleye harvest last year. This is largely due to anglers taking advantage of the new walleye regulations: a 15 inch minimum length limit and a daily creel of 2. Reducing the length limit down from 18 inches allowed anglers to keep a higher percentage of the walleye they caught. Overall, both lakes offer some really good fishing opportunities for 2013. Good luck fishing!

