

El Dorado District Fisheries

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KDWPT Fisheries Section

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El Dorado District Update

Cooler weather has finally arrived after a summer of unusually hot and dry weather. Lake levels continue to drop, making some areas difficult to access. Fishing continues to be good as the water temperatures continue to fall down through the 50s. Trout season opened at the El Dorado Trout Stream on October 15, and anglers have been experiencing some great outings already this year.

The Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks underwent an agency name change as of July 1. The name is now Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism or KDWPT.

Is anyone interested in a how-to crappie fishing video containing information on putting crappie in the creel year-round in Kansas? The Fisheries & Wildlife Division Video Committee has been working on such a video, and it is nearly complete! Tips and tactics for catching crappie are included for spring, summer, fall and winter. Stay tuned! More information to follow on what should prove to be a very popular video from KDWPT.

Fall field work is winding down. The fisheries biologists will focus their time on numerous projects including crunching data, writing management reports, compiling information for the 2012 Fishing Forecast, preparing fish stocking requests for 2012, and working on fish habitat projects, just to name a few.

As long as there is open water, Kansas sportsmen will be on the water. Cold water creates dangerous conditions that need to be respected. Please take the time to read [this article](#) as a refresher on the seriousness of cold water.

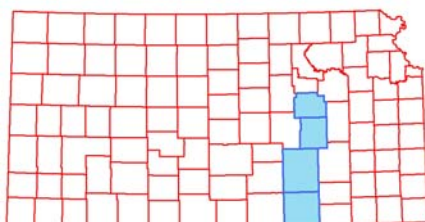
Wiper On!

Few fish are capable of pulling harder than the striped bass hybrid, commonly called 'wiper' in Kansas. The wiper is a cross between the white bass and striped bass. The resulting hybrid grows quickly and can make drags scream with long, repetitive runs once hooked. Wiper are usually found in schools, so once they are located the action can be good for several fish. The trick is usually to find the fish in the larger water bodies in which they inhabit. Wiper are considered a pelagic, or open water, species. They can be quite nomadic and may appear to be aimlessly wandering the wide open spaces. However, once they are found it is usually quite evident why they are there. Factors influencing wiper location can vary from structure preference, wind direction, water temperature, water clarity, forage availability and ease of capture, or a combination of these factors. The simultaneous occurrence of multiple, long lasting, favorable factors may allow a pattern to develop where the fish will remain in a predictable mode

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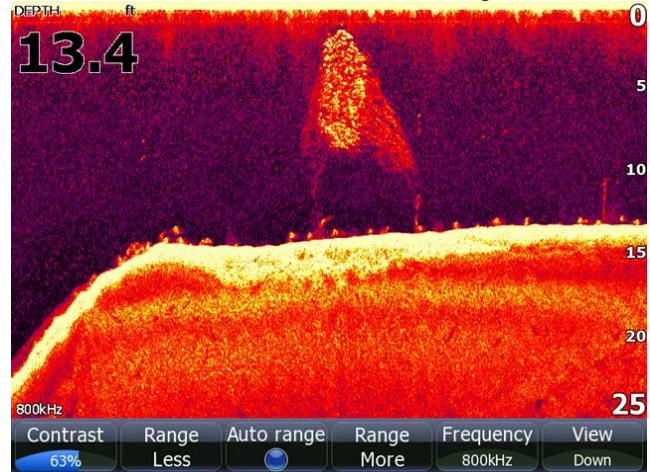
for an extended period. The development of this type of pattern fishing usually requires very stable weather patterns with little change in wind directions, water temperatures, or water clarity. A change or loss of any of the favorable factors holding the wiper to a spot will send them packing to find another more favorable area. In order to be successful, anglers will need to recognize when the pattern has died and when it is time to return to looking for the next hot spot. Long-term patterns do not occur very often, but when they do the rewards can be great as trip after trip can be ones memories are made of.

Occurring much more often than long-term patterns are short-term patterns and predictable high-percentage areas. These more common, and usually predictable occurrences, include seasonal movements such as spring runs up river during the white bass spawn, positioning near young of the year shad from July through October, and heading to rip-rapped dams or causeways during late fall months. Other features that can set up predictable positioning of active wiper would be steady winds concentrating baitfish along a downwind shoreline or across a shallow point, good ambush areas such as steep bluffs, channel ledges, or humps where shad can easily be cornered by a school of feeding fish, and submerged roads. Having a seasonal "milk run" of these high-percentage areas during your fishing trip will keep you in the wiper zone longer than blindly searching thousands of acres for the roaming wiper.

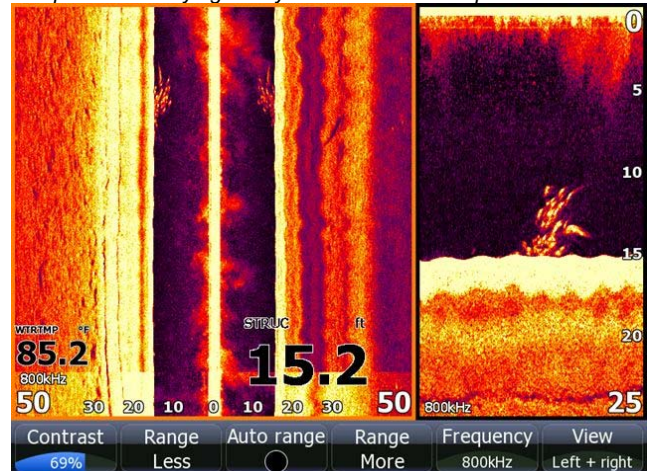
Advances in electronics available to the angler are making locating fish, including wiper, a much easier endeavor. High resolution displays with side imaging sonar abilities allow anglers to look at wide swaths of water to not only find likely fish holding structure but also find the fish themselves and where they are located in the water column. Sonar units with GPS capabilities allow the angler to mark either fish or structure with a waypoint so it can easily be located and revisited. GPS can also prove invaluable in staying in productive water during trolling runs or ruling out unproductive water and eliminating time spent fishing unproductive water a second time.

Using older sonar units, anglers had to use much interpretation to decipher what was being displayed on the screen. Today's advanced units can actually show near-picture quality views of the underwater world.

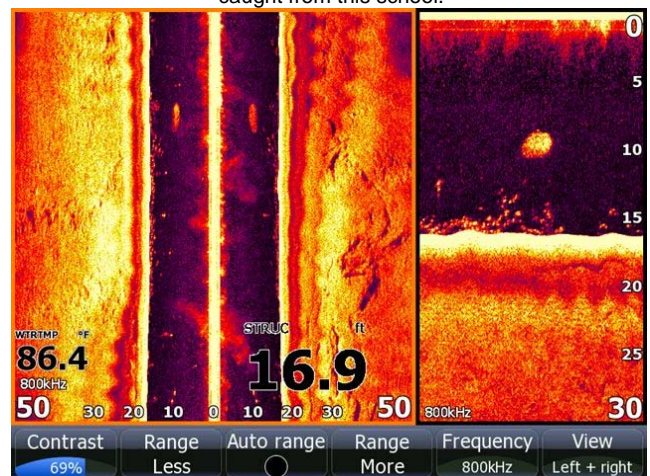
Balls of baitfish look like...well, balls of baitfish! Larger fish can easily be differentiated from smaller individuals. Relation to available cover is easily seen and depth of the target fish is obviously displayed. Below are a few screenshots from a Lowrance HDS unit taken on El Dorado Reservoir during 2011.



A large school of shad can be seen above a large number of predator fish lying nearly on the bottom on top of a channel



A school of wiper hanging close to the bottom. Multiple fish were caught from this school.



*A school of white bass and wiper chasing a small school of gizzard shad. *Note: Left image is side-imaging display in last two pictures.*

Wiper On!—cont.' from page 2

Being able to see the fish and orientation of the school, the angler can make decisions regarding the best possible presentation given the current conditions.

The top picture, Page 2 right hand column, shows nearly all of the predatory fish lying very close to the bottom but not in a tight school. In this instance, medium depth diving crank baits were used to tick the bottom pulling the baits right through the fish. Wiper and walleye were caught out of this grouping of fish.

The middle picture shows a more tightly bunched school of fish but it extends up to five feet of the bottom. Since the fish were a tightly bunched, smaller target that didn't appear to be actively chasing shad, slab spoons and jigs were used to tempt these fish.

The bottom picture displays many, many predator fish relating to the bottom with some trailing up to feed upon a bait ball of gizzard shad. Trolling with crank baits was again used in this situation as these fish were actively moving while chasing the gizzard shad. With the fish spread over a larger area and actively feeding, the crank baits mimicked the fleeing shad perfectly and numerous fish including wiper, white bass, and walleye were caught in this area.



A nice wiper caught after finding a concentration of fish with sonar.

Selecting a productive lure can be a piece of cake or an impossible task depending on the mood of the fish. As stated above, the conditions will usually give you several clues to use in selecting a bait that will get bit. When wiper are actively feeding and very aggressive it is hard to pick a bait that they won't hit. When wiper are surface feeding on gizzard shad nearly any bait will get bit when thrown in to boiling water. During these frenzies anglers can choose their favorite tackle and favorite type of lure. Some anglers prefer bait casting

equipment and lipless crank baits. Other anglers prefer spinning gear and throwing jig heads tipped with plastic baits. One thing to consider when the action is fast and furious is the type of lure you are using. It is usually much quicker to unhook a fish caught on a single hook jig than it is to wrestle a thrashing fish with a stickbait with three treble hooks flying around! Being able to quickly unhook the fish allows the angler to get back to the action and get another fish to do battle with. When fishing during the frenzy season, it is a good idea to always have a rod ready to throw to surfacing fish. This rod should be rigged with a lure that can be casted a long distance and of a size that closely matches the size of the shad the wiper are feeding on.



Good baits for surface feeding wiper include (top to bottom) lipless crankbaits, blade baits, and curly-tail grubs on a jig head.

Slab spoons are a great choice when fish are holding off of a drop or relating to other structure and not moving very much. With a spoon, the presentation can be slowed down and the angler can hang a bait in front of the wiper and tempt them in to biting when they are in a less aggressive mood.



Slab spoons come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Match the size of the spoon to the size of the shad available in the lake.

Slab spoons are worked by dropping the bait to a level just below the fish and then the rod tip is snapped quickly upward a couple of feet. After a slight pause at the top of the lift, the spoon is allowed to drop and flutter on a controlled fall. The angler should keep slight tension on the spoon as it falls so strikes can be detected. Strikes most often occur on the drop and also on the pause after the lift. Spoons are heavy and while fished on a tight line the strikes are very easy to feel. Set the hook immediately if you feel a bump, thump, or just feel weight. Tying a small hair jig eighteen inches above the slab spoon will enhance your presentation. This gives the appearance that the spoon is 'chasing' the jig and really grabs the attention of predator fish. It is not uncommon to catch doubles of wiper or white bass on this rig.

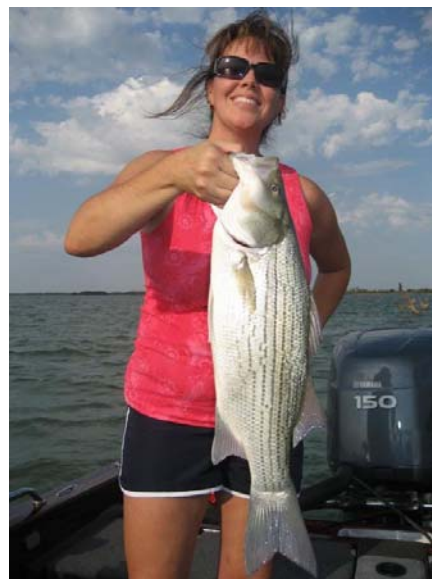
Trolling is a great search tool for locating active wiper and also white bass. After deciding on a high-percentage area considering conditions, set out rods rigged up with crankbaits and work through the area. Keep a close eye on the sonar and GPS while driving the area. Since you will be looking for fish in the area anyway, it increases your chances to have some baits in the water as you scout.



Depth, water clarity, and size of forage fish are a few factors to be considered when selecting the proper crankbait. These are a few of crankbaits that were good producers for wiper during different seasons at El Dorado Reservoir during 2011.

Having baits that run at varying depths will help you cover more water and find the active fish more quickly. Taking note of the depth of fish returns on the sonar will allow you to adjust the depth of your baits to get them in the zone. Need more depth? Let out more line. Is your lure running under most of the fish? Reel in some line to make the bait run shallower. Line counter reels make it easy to put the bait back in to the same depth where active fish are found. If fish are scattered, then trolling may be the best method to catch fish. If you see that the wiper are concentrated in a small area and you catch fish only while pulling through them, you can stop and work the area

thoroughly with slab spoons or jigs. If the fish can't be enticed to bite while fishing vertically, go back to trolling through them. Sometimes the speed of the lure and the illusion of escaping prey trigger the fish in to biting. Experiment often with colors, lure size, depth, and speed. At times a slight change in a presentation can result in either increased or decreased success. Being able to duplicate a successful trolling pass is key.



A hard fighting wiper caught while trolling crankbaits on El Dorado.

Hot wiper bites can turn stone cold in a matter of minutes. Sometimes it is because they have moved off, and other times they are just done feeding. Nothing beats time on the water for putting together a successful milk run route. Being flexible and not falling in to a rut will keep anglers productive. What was the hot spot today may be dead tomorrow. Having other high-percentages areas identified and knowing how to search new water in an efficient manner is important to staying on top of these striped freight trains.

Restrictive length and creel limits exist for wiper in El Dorado. The 2/day creel limit and 21-inch minimum length limit provides very good angling opportunity at the lake. There are currently good numbers of 21-inch and larger wiper in the lake, creating good chances of hanging in to larger fish. Wiper in the 15- to 17-inch range were caught in high numbers during October by anglers fishing from both shore and boat. Anglers should be able to properly identify wiper. See this [Fish ID Poster](#) for information on how to identify wiper.

Wiper can provide fast action with high numbers of fish that fight like none other. El Dorado has a great population and the Council Grove wiper population has improved each year since the original stocking in 2008. Do a little homework on the lake, spool up with new line, get your friends and family and hit the water! You'll likely make memories that will last a lifetime!



Happy El Dorado angler with a 2011 double on wiper.



Cooling water temperatures can create some fast action. Here's a white bass double, the hard way, at El Dorado during October.



Kids LOVE catching wiper! The fish are big, pull like a truck, and are the things memories are made of. Plan a trip, take a kid, and FISH KANSAS!

Last Cast!

Thanks for taking the time to read this issue. I hope you found something of interest. If you have missed any of the fisheries newsletters from across the state they can be found [HERE](#).

Again, keep an eye on the [KDWP website](#) for information on the soon to be released video titled *Kansas Crappie Bonanza!* Veteran anglers and anglers just getting in to crappie fishing will find this video very useful. Tried and true Kansas techniques are discussed to make you a better crappie angler.

The KDWP trout program is currently underway. If you are looking to get your fishing fix once Ol' Man Winter moves in, check in to the [trout areas](#). The link contains all the info you need including a short video with some good trout tips. The El Dorado trout area has been received two stockings so far this year with eight more to go.

Even as the water temperatures drop, fishing opportunities will continue for wiper, white bass, and walleye and will actually improve for crappie. Cold water requires a much slower approach but can produce some great catches. A boat with good electronics is necessary to find fish and a vertical, slow presentation is needed. Dress warm and take your time, those big fish of summer will still be there waiting for you!

As always, if you know someone who might like to subscribe to the newsletter, they can do so [HERE](#). If you would like to unsubscribe, please send your info to [Contact Us](#) with "unsubscribe El Dorado District Fisheries newsletter" and we'll get you taken off of the list. If you have any questions or comments or story ideas feel free to [send them in!](#) Be sure to reference the El Dorado District Fisheries newsletter in your comments.

Fish On!

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Get your friends, get your family
... and FISH KANSAS!



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