

# LAWRENCE DISTRICT FISHING NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2013

KDWPT, Richard Sanders, Fisheries Biologist

## Special Points of Interest:

- *Over 200,000 fingerling largemouth bass stocked at Clinton Reservoir*
- *GPS locations of new brush piles at Clinton Reservoir*
- *Water willow planted at Melvern Reservoir*

## BIOLOGIST NOTES

What a difference a year makes! Fisheries biologists across the state dealt with some very cold weather during walleye egg collection efforts. One windy day spray would blow inside the boat, freeze, then the wind would blow it off—it was as though it was snowing inside the boat! The good news was that plenty of walleye eggs were collected and hatching success at hatcheries was very good (around 70%). So lakes needing walleye received them. Next biologists got busy getting fish feeders ready on area lakes. After that was accomplished, black bass sampling commenced. Again cooler temperatures caused delays in sampling, effectively pushing Spring back about 2-3 weeks later than normal. It all seemed to work out, as fish adjusted, most just spawned a little later than usual. In this newsletter, I will give a synopsis of electrofishing efforts thus far this year and include any other news that I have for selected lakes.

## CLINTON RESERVOIR

A 5 year Early Spawn Largemouth Bass Stocking Project was initiated this year to try to improve fishing for this species at Clinton.. Adult bass will be tricked into spawning early each year by manipulating light duration and water temperature in the hatchery. Resultant fingerlings will be about 2 weeks ahead of naturally produced bass in the reservoir giving them a competitive advantage because they will be able to feed on larger prey. Largemouth bass habitat was evaluated and over 200,000 fingerling bass were stocked into the best available habitat. Success or failure of the project will be determined by angler surveys, electrofishing, and bass tournament data. Electrofishing samples the last 2 years have shown an increase in largemouth bass catch rate indicating improvement in the population. The catch rate for 2013 was the highest in over 5 years. Smallmouth bass continue to improve, after they were restocked into Clinton from 2008 through 2011. Smallmouth bass catch rate doubled from 2012 to 2013, and catch rate for juvenile

smallmouth bass was 5 times higher in 2013 than 2012. So the near future looks very bright for smallmouth at Clinton.



Clinton smallmouth bass captured during spring electrofishing



Early spawn largemouth bass fingerlings stocked into Clinton Reservoir





Nice largemouth bass captured at Melvern Reservoir during spring electrofishing

## 2013 LAWRENCE DISTRICT ELECTROFISHING RESULTS

### MELVERN RESERVOIR

All 3 black bass species (i.e. largemouth, smallmouth, and spotted) reside at Melvern. Collectively they provide a good black bass fishery. Smallmouth bass are most abundant and samples collected this spring were very good. Smallmouth catch rate was higher in 2013 than any other year over the past 5 years. In addition, juvenile numbers were high also, indicating many more fish in the pipeline! Quality was good too, with 39% of smallmouth exceeding 14". Largemouth bass was the second most abundant black bass species at Melvern in 2013 samples. Catch rate was low, few young bass were observed. Almost 60% of largemouth sampled exceeded 15", but there just is not enough of them. In an effort to improve largemouth bass numbers, bass are being produced in the Melvern Rearing Pond. Fingerlings, measuring about 1" were stocked in May. After 1 month these fish grew to about 4" long! Hopefully there will be enough food in the pond to carry them through September, then they will be harvested and transferred to the reservoir. Spotted bass sample numbers were slightly less than

those observed for largemouth bass. Few juvenile spotted bass were observed, and most fish were in the 11-14" length range.

### DOUGLAS STATE LAKE

Largemouth bass catch rate was lower in 2013 than past years, likely due to cooler water temperature at the time of sampling. Even so, catch rate was good. Higher numbers of bigger fish were caught this year, but small bass still predominate this lake. Douglas is a great place to introduce young anglers to bass angling due to high bass density.

### OSAGE STATE LAKE

High numbers of largemouth bass were captured at Osage, similar to past years. Not many large bass were sampled, in fact only 22% of bass exceeded 12" in length.

### CARBONDALE CITY LAKE

Largemouth bass catch was higher this year than the past 5 years, but it was still low. Good size characteristics were noted, as 26% exceeded 15" in length.

### LONESTAR LAKE

Over 180 bass per hour were sampled at Lonestar this year, which was

similar to rates observed in 2011 and 2012. High numbers of young bass were observed again, a common occurrence at Lonestar. Bass density is too high to have many large fish. A 13-18" slot limit was placed on the lake to allow some harvest of small fish, in an effort to improve quality. Some bass were present in length ranges up to 20-25", so there are a few big bass.

### LAKE SHAWNEE

Largemouth bass virus was detected at this lake in 2012, and likely explains a large decrease in bass density from 2009 through the present. A slight increase in catch rate was observed in 2013 samples, but this rate was still about half that recorded in 2009. Sixty-eight percent of bass sampled in 2013 were 8-12" long.

### SPRING CREEK LAKE

Also known as Baldwin City Lake, this water only covers about 7 acres, but it has some decent largemouth bass. Catch rate was 95 bass per hour. Size characteristics were OK, as 29% ranged from 12-15", and 16% were longer than 15" in length..

## MORE HABITAT WORK AT CLINTON RESERVOIR

Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism and Corps of Engineers combined resources to place cedar tree fish attractors into Clinton Reservoir during March of this year. A total of 20 pontoon loads were deployed. Most structures were placed in 25-35 feet of water, and should provide some good wintertime crappie habitat. GPS coordinates in datum NAD 83 in decimal degrees are as follows:

1. N38.91331 W095.36826 inside old Marina Cove Bloomington Point 9.5 feet
2. N38.91461 W095.36439 Wakarusa River channel N of Island breakwater 30 feet
3. N38.91774 W095.36337 Wakarusa River channel N of island breakwater 33 feet
4. N38.91639 W095.36828 Wakarusa River channel N of island breakwater 32 feet
5. N38.91999 W095.37294 Wakarusa River N of Bloomington Area 30 feet
6. N38.91716 W095.37327 Wakarusa River N of Bloomington Area 25-30 feet



CORPS of Engineers transports cedar tree brush pile to create deep water fish habitat at Clinton Reservoir

## WATERWILLOW PLANTED AT MELVERN RESERVOIR

In an effort to improve nursery habitat for largemouth bass, water willow (an aquatic plant) was planted during late June and early July at selected areas around the lake. Water willow is a plant that is rooted to the bottom and extends above the water surface. It normally does not grow deeper than about 3-4 feet. Water willow can provide shoreline stabilization, and living areas for a variety of aquatic organisms. It has been successfully established at El Dorado and Hillsdale reservoirs. It was planted at Melvern some time ago, but never really took off. Earlier planting during the growing season may allow water willow the opportunity to have a better chance of establishing. Weedbeds are important habitat especially for juvenile largemouth bass and bluegill (one of their primary food sources). Establishment of water willow beds should improve both food resources, as well as largemouth bass numbers.



Planting water willow at Melvern Reservoir



Planted rows of water willow along shore at Melvern Reservoir

## CLINTON RESERVOIR, THE NATURE OF IT ALL

A local Lawrence TV station Channel 6 owned by Knology and now WOW is airing a 30 minute show approximately each month about natural resources and its management at Clinton Reservoir. Shows thus far have covered eagle nesting/banding, camping facilities, hiking/riding trails, walleye egg collecting/stocking, black bass electrofishing, fish feeder program, early spawn largemouth bass project, and crappie fishing. If you do not have channel 6, you can view some videos on facebook Clinton Reservoir: The Nature Of It All. Check it out to see the capture of this 33 inch blue catfish!



33 inch long blue catfish sampled at Clinton Reservoir this summer

**GOOD LUCK AND GOOD FISHING IN 2013!!**