

El Dorado District Fisheries

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White Perch Causing Headaches for Anglers at El Dorado Lake

White Perch were discovered in El Dorado Lake during July 2009 and since that time they have increased in number. This ANS species was found very early at El Dorado and the population density was very low. Each passing year has brought increased numbers of white perch and anglers are now encountering problems as the white perch take baits intended for more desirable species.

Fishing for walleye with the infamous jig and crawler combo during May and June was nearly impossible this year. As quick as you would tip a jig with a crawler and drop it in the water a white perch would strip the worm from the jig hook with a rapid tap, tap, tap. Pulling the jig back to the boat the angler would see that the jig was as clean as when it came out of the package. Over and over the pesky white perch will steal nearly any live bait dropped under the surface. By late June anglers were reporting huge schools of white perch where no other species could be caught. The bulk of the white perch are 6-inches long, too small to interest anglers or produce a decent fillet.

During July and early August the white perch began feeding on gizzard shad. Anglers fishing with shad imitating baits such as crank baits, spoons, or plastics began catching white perch in numbers. A 5-inch white perch will hit a bait as big as itself. Anglers that troll will often find all of

their rods fouled as the white perch will attack anything that resembles a meal. Bait rigs must be checked constantly and artificial baits must be monitored for fouling making for much more work during a fishing trip.



El Dorado White Perch are small and numerous. Anglers consider them a pest while fishing for other species.

White perch are an ANS (aquatic nuisance species) and are on the prohibited species list. The possession of live white perch is prohibited. Anglers catching white perch are asked to kill the fish before releasing them. Dead white perch may be possessed or used as bait in waters from which they were taken.

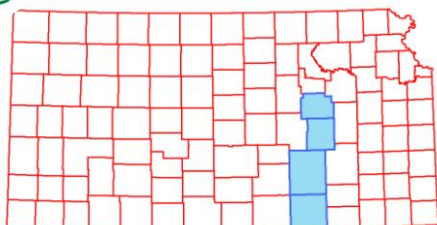
White perch closely resemble other members of the *Morone* species including white bass, striped bass, and hybrid striped bass (wiper). A key

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



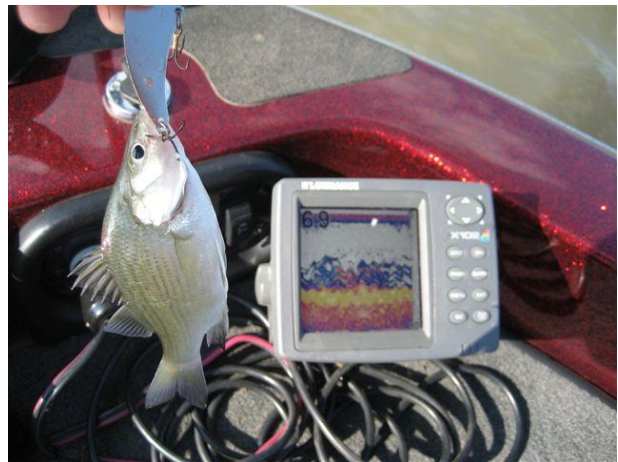
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characteristic in the identification of the white perch is the connection between the spiny and soft dorsal fins. If the spiny dorsal fin is pulled forward towards the head of the fish the soft dorsal fin will also pull forward. White bass and wiper soft dorsal fins do not stand up when the spiny dorsal is pulled forward. Another characteristic to look at is the three spines in the anal fin of the fish. White perch have one short spine and two long spines. White bass and wipers have one short, one medium, and one long spine. A [Temperate Bass ID Poster](#) is available from the KDWPT website to assist anglers in identifying white perch, white bass, striped bass, and wiper.

White perch can grow to sizes that interest anglers but that has not yet happened at El Dorado. White perch populations can be very cyclic over time with many small fish present some years and fewer, larger fish available other years. Spawning success and predation are just a couple of the factors that shape population density and individual size. Currently, predation upon the white perch population by larger sportfish predators is one of the few management tools to assist in the control of white perch. A study is currently underway through a cooperative effort between KDWPT and Fort Hays State University which is examining predator prey relationships within the lake. Age and growth of both the white perch population and the sportfish predator populations is also being studied to give insights on how healthy each population is.



The white perch (top) and white bass (bottom) look similar at first glance. Anglers can quickly differentiate between the two with just a little practice.



Fishing concentrations of white perch can hold the interest of novice anglers making for a memorable outing.

Anglers looking to target white perch at El Dorado will do best with a boat outfitted with a decent sonar unit. White perch are often found in large schools located in or around submerged structure such as old roads, humps, rock piles, and channel edges. Vertically fishing in to the schools of perch usually results in fast action as the fish will hit most any bait dropped in front of them. If you are feeling a lot of strikes but not hooking up, downsize your bait or downsize the hook on your live bait rig. White perch readily take small spoons, blade baits, small plastic grubs, crappie jigs, and crank baits. Live bait such as night crawlers and leeches fished on small hooks is also a productive method for putting white perch in the boat. Once fish are found the fishing can be extremely fast as fish bite one after the other. While many of the fish are quite small, it is a great way to introduce a youngster to boat fishing as there is little time for the beginning angler to become bored.

In addition to El Dorado reservoir and the river below, white perch are found in Cheney and Wilson reservoirs and confluent stream drainages. White perch are also found in Hoover Pond in Kingman, Lake Afton, Sedgwick County Park Lakes, and Browning Oxbow Lake. All lake users should take precautions to prevent the spread of white perch and all other ANS species from infested waters. For more information visit this [LINK](#) at the KDWPT website.

El Dorado Blue Catfish Continue To Improve

Blue catfish were first stocked in to El Dorado reservoir during 2004 and the population has increased in density every year since. One method used to track the blue catfish is low pulse electrofishing conducted during mid-July each summer. The first summer sample occurred in 2007 and yielded a single fish. Low pulse electrofishing samples have been conducted each year and results show a population well on its way to providing some great angler opportunities with good trophy potential. The total number of blue catfish sampled during the 2008 through 2012 surveys are as follows: 2008=16, 2009=53, 2010=162, 2011=239, 2012=262. The 2013 summer sample showed a large jump in total catch of blue catfish. The ten historically sampled locations produced a total catch of 685 blue catfish. The summer low pulse electrofishing sample will be continued in future years to gather additional trend data on this population.



A 30-inch blue catfish sampled during July 2013

Blue catfish are known to be a slow growing fish. Sexually maturity is not reached until the fish reach age 7. A 35-inch minimum length limit was imposed to protect the blues while the population became established. Modifications to this length limit are being explored as the goals of the larger length limit have been met. Natural production was documented within the lake during 2009. The 2009 year class was likely the result of adult fish stocked during 2005. Blue catfish were not available from the KDWP hatchery system during 2005. Adult blue catfish were captured at

Kaw reservoir in Oklahoma. Before being released in to El Dorado the fish were tagged. These fish ranged in length from ten to twenty inches with a total of 597 fish stocked. Tagged fish from this 2005 stocking continue to be caught within the lake. The most recent tag return was during June 2013 when a tagged fish was captured during electrofishing sampling. It is very good to see that these fish that were tagged eight years ago remain within the reservoir even with the high flow through events that occurred from 2007 through 2010.

Angler catch of blue cats has improved each year. As expected, many of the blue catfish remain below the 35-inch minimum length limit but increasing numbers of fish above 30-inches are being seen. Anglers have recently reported catches of blues over the 35-inch limit.

The blue cats are being caught several ways. Anglers targeting blues will often throw cast nets to collect fresh shad. The shad are used for cut bait and fished in areas that blues inhabit which can range from shallow weedy flats during high water to deep main lake river channels. Incidental catch of blues is high as anglers seeking crappie, walleye, white bass, or wiper often tangle with blue catfish. Blue catfish can be quite aggressive and they will hit artificial lures including jigs, bucktails, spoons, crank baits, and spinners. Recently, anglers fishing the stilling basin during flood releases did well on blues. There is no minimum length limit on blue catfish in the stilling basin and anglers can harvest up to ten a day (creel limit is 5/day within the reservoir).

Keep an eye on this exciting species at El Dorado in upcoming years. Fishing for blues will only improve as the abundant smaller fish grow in to larger sizes. The chance at trophy sized fish improves with each passing year. Be sure to bring a quality rod, reliable line, and a reel with a smooth drag as even a mid-sized blue catfish can put up a very impressive fight!

Click [HERE](#) for a guide to identifying Kansas catfish



Dead fish line the banks in an isolated backwater area at El Dorado reservoir. Low water conditions during the 2013 drought were responsible for the kill.



Vegetation that grew during the low water period was flooded as El Dorado reservoir returned to conservation creating quality habitat.



August 2013, water is released from El Dorado reservoir for the first time since May 2012.

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Last Cast!

Thanks for reading the Fall 2013 edition of the El Dorado District Fisheries newsletter.

After an extended period of drought, all public fishing waters within the El Dorado District have filled back to near normal pool and in many cases ABOVE normal pool. Both El Dorado and Council Grove reservoirs have seen releases occurring over the last few weeks which have produced some stilling basin fishing opportunities that haven't been seen in a very long while.

Fishing has been good at both reservoirs this summer. Council Grove has been producing some great saugeye catches with limits of larger fish being taken on a regular basis. Action on crappie, white bass, and channel catfish has made for some great trips on Council Grove. El Dorado has had another good summer for walleye fishing with fish over 24-inches being caught regularly. El Dorado white bass and wiper action improves by the day and will continue to improve through the end of October and possibly later depending on the weather. All three state fishing lakes have given up good numbers of channel catfish and the fish feeders will continue to operate through the end of September.

Fall is a great time to fish in Kansas! Set aside time to take advantage of the productive fishing this year. Take a trip, catch a fish, and make a memory.

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!

Fish On!

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