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Cedar Bluff District Fisheries

Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism Fisheries Division

2017 Fishing Forecast Edition

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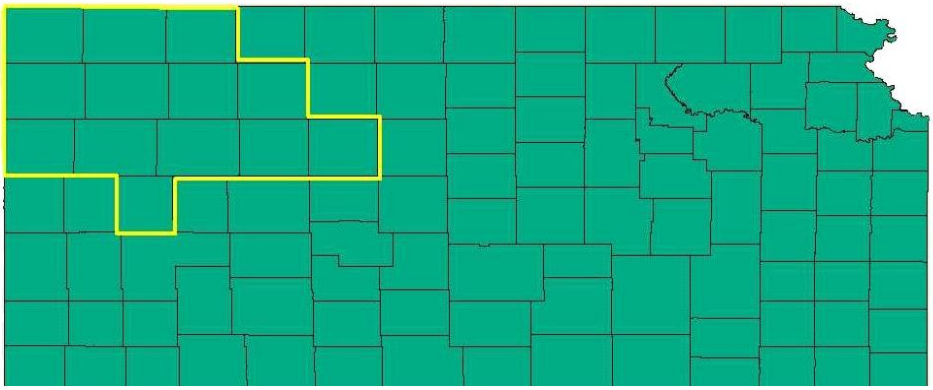


The above figure shows the 13 counties outlined in yellow that comprise the Cedar Bluff District

Cedar Bluff Reservoir

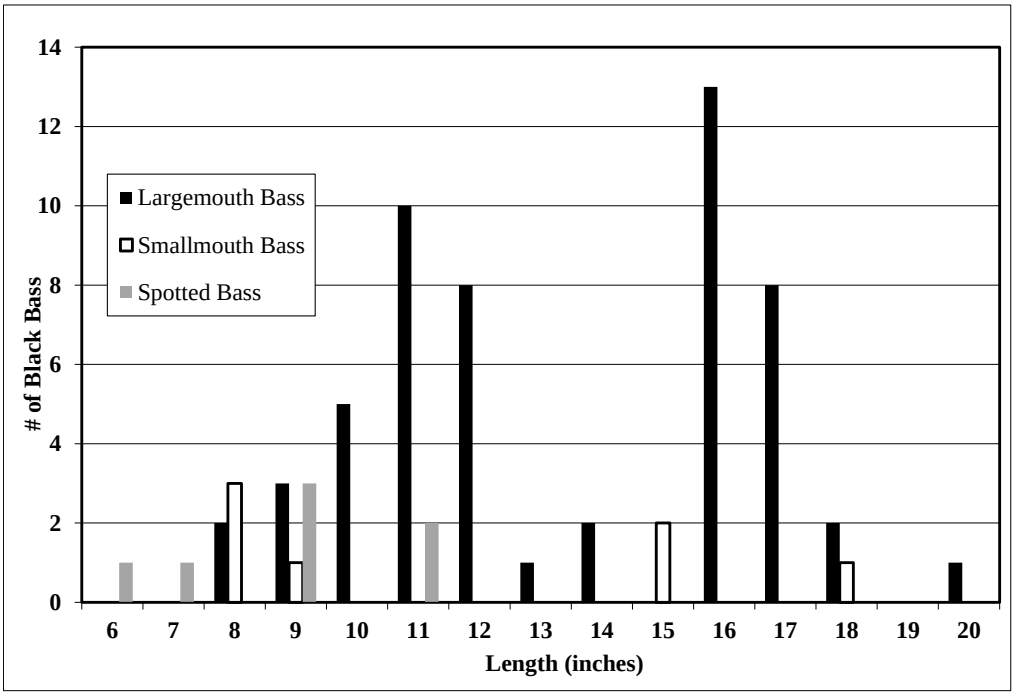
Channel Catfish - Poor

Lack of flow in the river has minimized prime channel catfish spawning and nursery habitat, thus recruitment has been low for a number of years. Low recruitment of young fish to the fishery has resulted in low overall abundance, but the fish that survive grow well. The resulting population is low in number, but fish of all sizes, up to 12 or 15 pounds, are available. Setline anglers fishing trot and limb lines over shallow flats and toward the upper ends of coves in June typically realize the best success.

Cedar Bluff Continued…

Black Bass - Poor

Largemouth, spotted, and smallmouth bass all inhabit Cedar Bluff, and all three populations have been negatively affected by degradation of habitat and declining water levels since the reservoir refilled in the mid- to late-1990s. Abundance of all three species has declined to low levels, but fishable populations still exist. Most largemouth range in length from 12 to 18 inches, and best fishing opportunities exist during the prespawn and spawning timeframes from April through the end of May. All sizes of spotted bass up to, but rarely exceeding 15 inches, are available and are typically caught off rocky shorelines and points. Smallmouth bass abundance has increased to a level similar to the abundance of spotted bass. Recent smallmouth reproduction appears to have improved as a result of stocking adult fish possessing a different genetic background than the original strain stocked shortly after initial impoundment of the reservoir. Smallies are usually caught in areas possessing similar habitat as that preferred by spotted bass, although the smallies seem to occupy a little deeper water.



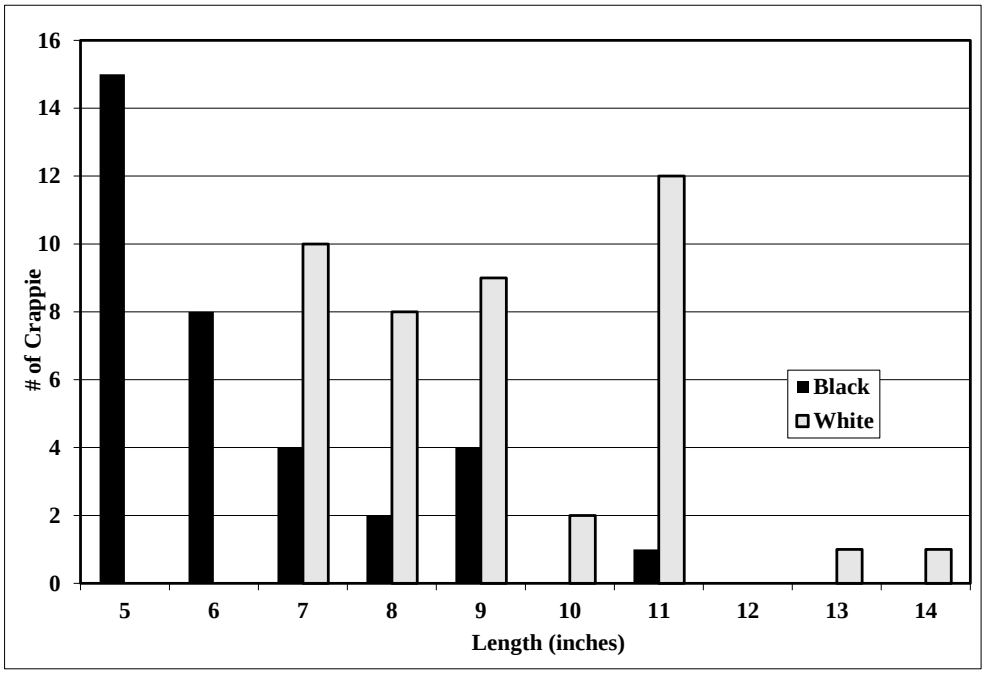
Length-frequency of black bass sampled at Cedar Bluff during 2016

Crappie - Fair

Both black and white crappie inhabit Cedar Bluff, and both populations suffered limited reproduction and recruitment during the recent drought. However, easing of drought conditions beginning in 2014 helped improve crappie recruitment conditions, resulting in a slow rebuilding of both populations. Overall, numbers of both species will be moderate, but anglers can expect a respectable portion of their catch to be harvestable, especially for white crappie, as 42% range in length from 10 to 14 inches. Targeting crappie when they are concentrated, such as on spawning areas during late-April to early-May or on the fish attractors during the fall and winter should yield the best crappie angling opportunities.

An example of a nice Cedar Bluff black crappie

Cedar Bluff continued…



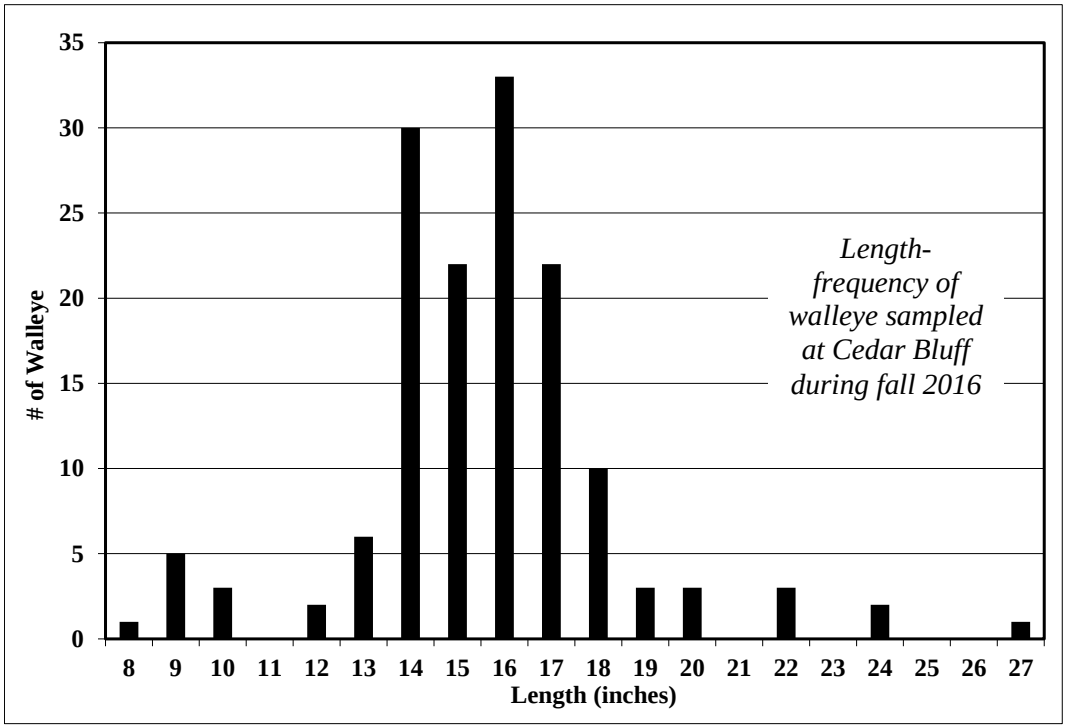
Length-frequency of crappie sampled at Cedar Bluff during fall 2016

Walleye - Good

Natural production, recruitment, and thus establishment of year classes has been relatively consistent at good to exceptional levels resulting in an abundance of walleye. Strong to very strong year classes were produced in 2013 and 2014, respectively. Individuals of these year classes increased the percentage of the population ranging in length from 15 to 18 inches. On the other hand, heavy spring angling pressure and harvest has limited the availability of fish 18 inches and larger since walleye harvest is managed by an 18-inch minimum length limit at this water. Going into 2017, Cedar Bluff ranks No. 1 relative in abundance of fish 15 inches and larger in comparison to other Kansas reservoirs. This fishery will provide excellent catch-and-release opportunities with a fair to good chance of catching harvestable fish as 25% of the population ranged in length primarily from 18 to 25 inches. Fishing jig-and-worm combinations or crankbaits over hard bottomed points, roadbeds, and parking lots in April through early-June tends to be most productive.

An example of a nice Cedar Bluff walleye

Cedar Bluff continued…



A couple of Cedar Bluff white bass

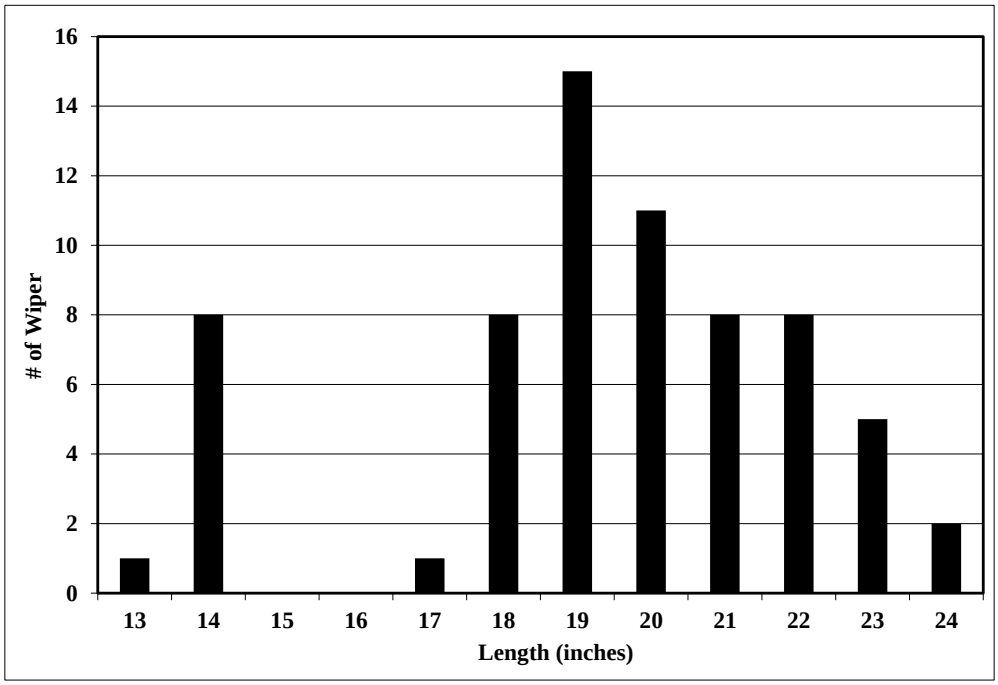
White Bass - Good

White bass abundance is good and fish in the 13- to 16-inch range occupy the largest proportion of the population. Better than average gizzard shad production over the recent past resulted in good growth and condition realized by white bass. Anglers can expect similar angling opportunities to those experienced over the past several years with catches consisting of good numbers of quality fish. Best angling opportunities exist in early April when fish spawn near the dam. Good angling opportunities can be had through much of the rest of the year as whites bust shad on the surface during late June, transition to feeding off deeper points and breaks in the summer, and feed on shad off shallow points and in the shallows of coves in the fall.

Wiper-Good

Overall wiper abundance has been consistent at a moderate level over the past five years, but larger, older fish have been replaced by establishment of individuals from the 2009, 2011, 2013, and 2015 year classes. Reduced number of older fish is due to a corresponding 2006 to 2008 period when fish were not stocked. Anglers can expect to catch good numbers of fish up to 6.5 pounds, but trophy potential will likely be down from that observed in 2013 and prior. Spring angling opportunities consist of fishing shallow, windy points with shad imitations such as bucktail jigs early, but as wipers transition to deeper water later in the spring, drifting live bait over deeper points and drop-offs is effective. Once young shad become available in the summer vertically jigging spoons or fishing live shad over deeper points, drop-offs, and around the fish attractors can be effective. As the water cools in the fall, fishing shallow points and other shallow, hard-bottomed areas with shad imitating lures can be good.

Cedar Bluff continued…

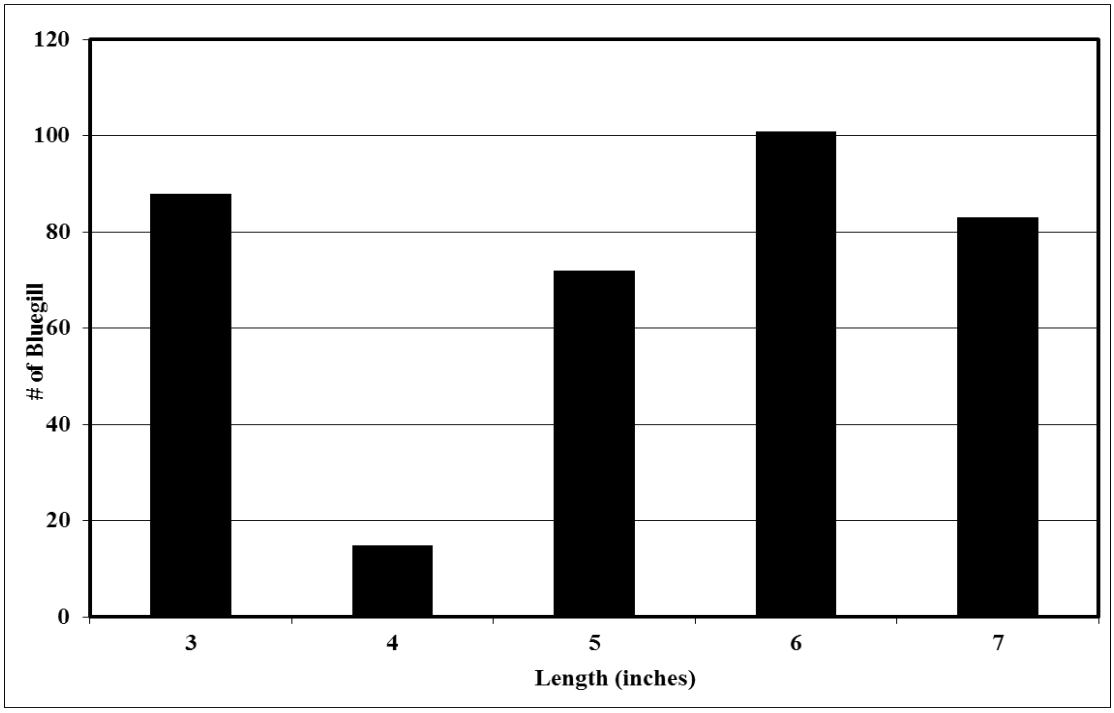


Length-frequency of wipers sampled at Cedar Bluff in fall 2016

Scott State Fishing Lake

Bluegill - Good

Despite high largemouth bass, and saugeye abundance, this population increased in abundance to a moderate to high level. Strong representation of individuals that ranged in length from 7 to 8 inches is evidence that growing conditions have been sufficient to produce bluegills large enough to provide attractive angling opportunities. It was apparent that predatory pressure on this population was key to promoting the quality of this population. Anglers young and old will realize good angling opportunities especially when adult bluegills congregate in the shallows to spawn in May.



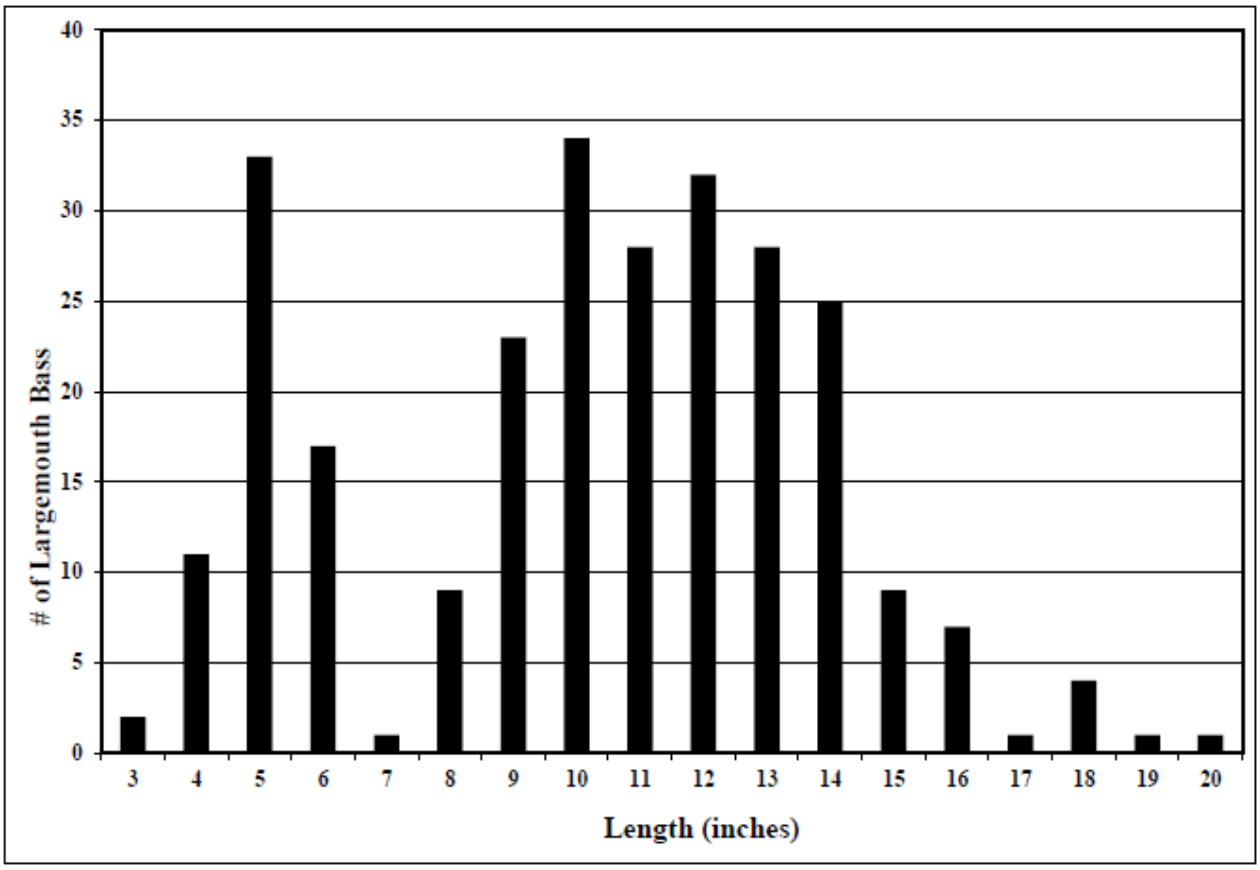
Length-frequency of bluegill sampled at Scott SFL in fall 2016

Scott State Fishing Lake continued…

Largemouth Bass - Good

A generally stable, healthy population inhabits this water as individuals are found in good abundance, exhibit good body condition that is indicative of good growing conditions, and reproductive success is sufficient to maintain stable abundance. Good recruitment conditions result in a large portion of the population comprised by smaller fish as 85% of the population sampled last spring ranged in length from 8 to 15 inches. However, this population offers anglers opportunities to catch respectable, trophy-sized fish as fish up to 20 inches are present. Lake Scott possesses excellent habitat to harbor bass, including beds of aquatic vegetation, overhanging shoreline brush, and cedar tree fish attractors. Anglers casting spinner baits, soft-plastic worms and creature baits, and swimbaits around the above mentioned bass haunts will enjoy primarily good catch-and-release bass fishing with the occasional lunker fish to keep it interesting.

An example of a nice Scott SFL largemouth bass

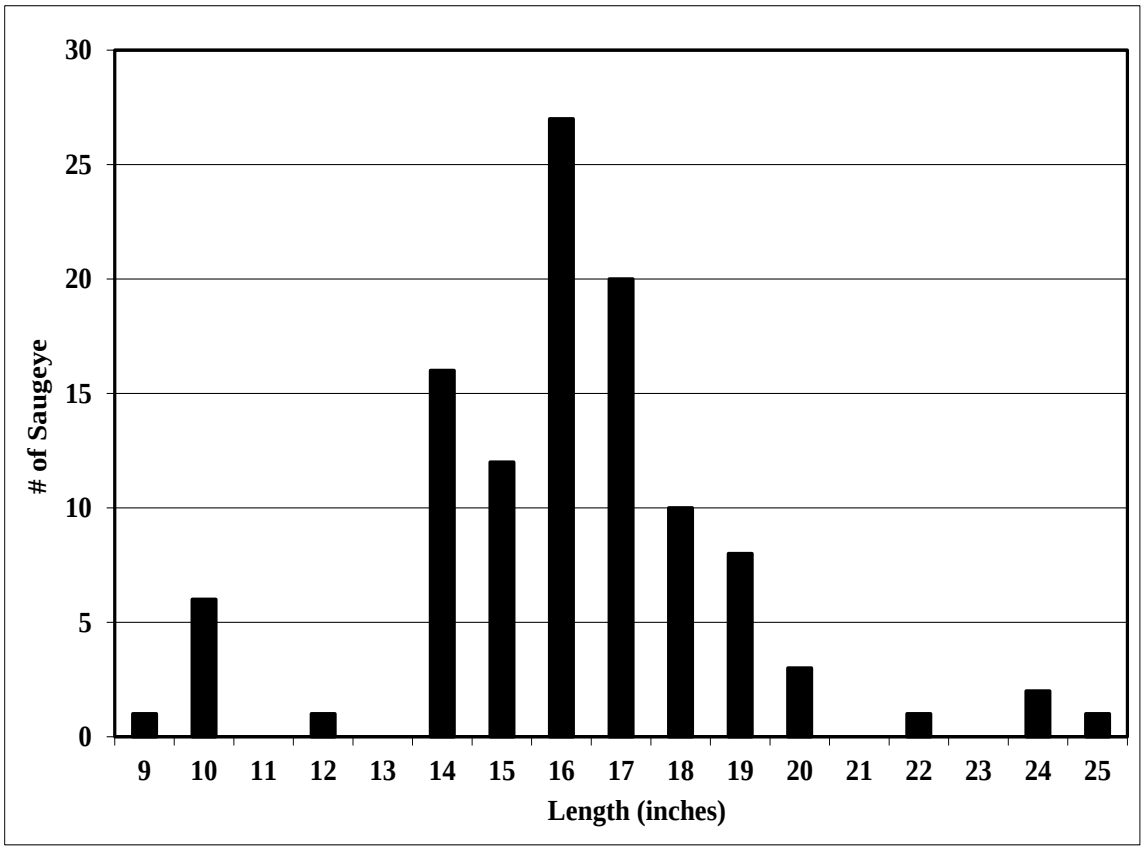


Length-frequency of largemouth bass sampled at Scott Lake in fall 2016

Scott State Fishing Lake continued…

Saugeye - Excellent

Since the initial introduction of this hybrid species, this population has expanded each year both in terms of abundance and size range availability. Abundance has increased to a high level such that this fishery is one of the preeminent small-lake saugeye fisheries in Kansas, and this highly abundant predator has improved the size quality of the white crappie population through predation on small crappie. Not only has this population realized success in terms of strong year class establishment, but growing conditions have promoted the development of a respectable number of larger individuals as 23% of fish sampled ranged from 18 to 25 inches. Anglers can expect excellent catch-and-release saugeye fishing opportunities since harvest is regulated by an 18-inch minimum length limit, but also expect a 1 in 4 chance of catching a keeper. The hottest bite will be catching fish feeding aggressively shortly after spawning, from mid-April to June, but plenty of fish will be caught in the fall and winter even through the ice. Effective tactics include fishing points, gravelly shelves, and edges of weed beds presenting fish imitating lures ranging from jigs tipped with minnows to swimbaits.



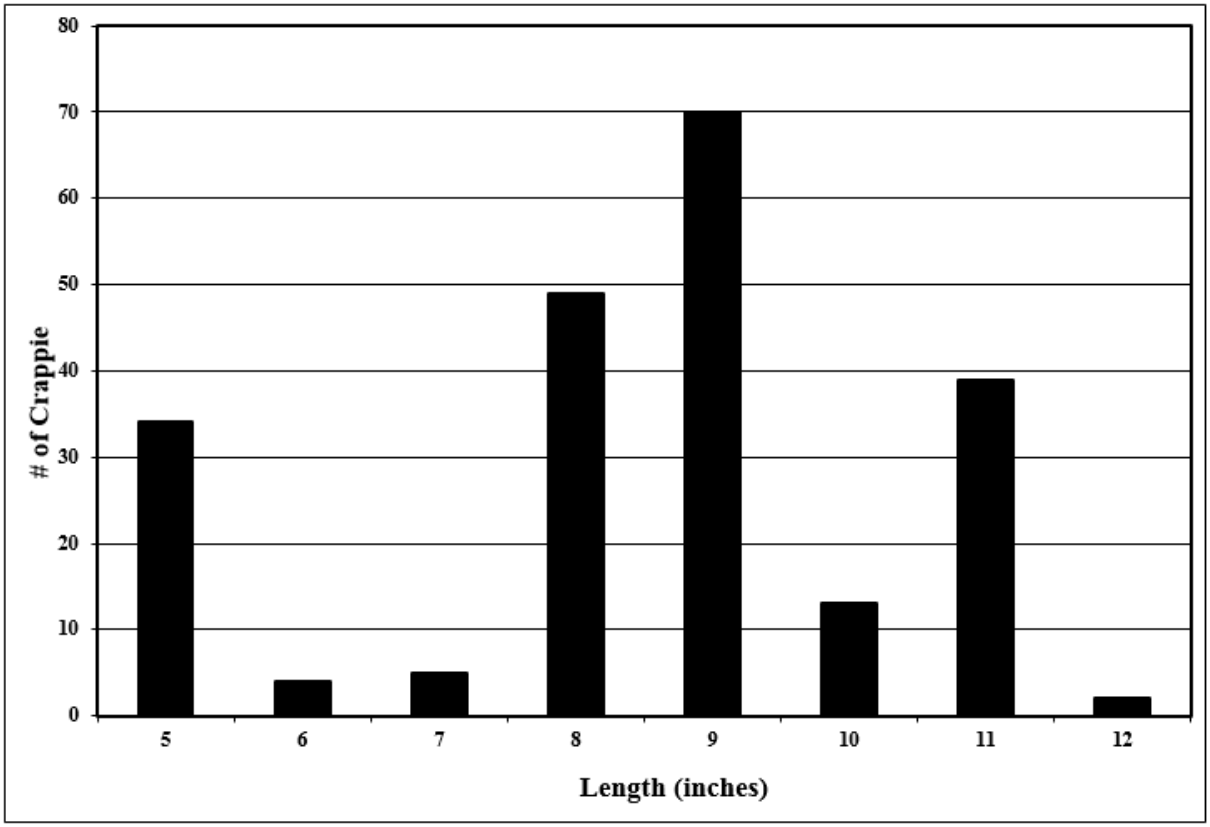
Length-frequency of saugeye sampled at Scott SFL in fall 2016

An example of a nice SCSL saugeye

Scott State Fishing Lake continued…

White Crappie - Good

Abundance has been reduced from the extreme high abundance historically typical of this population to a more moderate level by a combination of angler harvest of adult crappie and sportfish predation on Age-0 and Age-1 crappie. Ongoing age-and-growth studies conducted on this population revealed a dramatic increase in the growth rate of recent crappie year classes such that 26% of fish sampled last fall fell within the 10- to 13-inch range, which was the highest documented relative abundance of larger crappie at Scott SFL since 2006. It is hoped that by maintaining high predator densities, primarily through continued saugeye stocking, that the accelerated crappie growth will continue into the future. Anglers should expect to catch fewer but better quality fish this year, and will enjoy the greatest success when fish concentrate in the shallows to spawn in the spring and in the fall and winter as crappie congregate around the fish attractors.

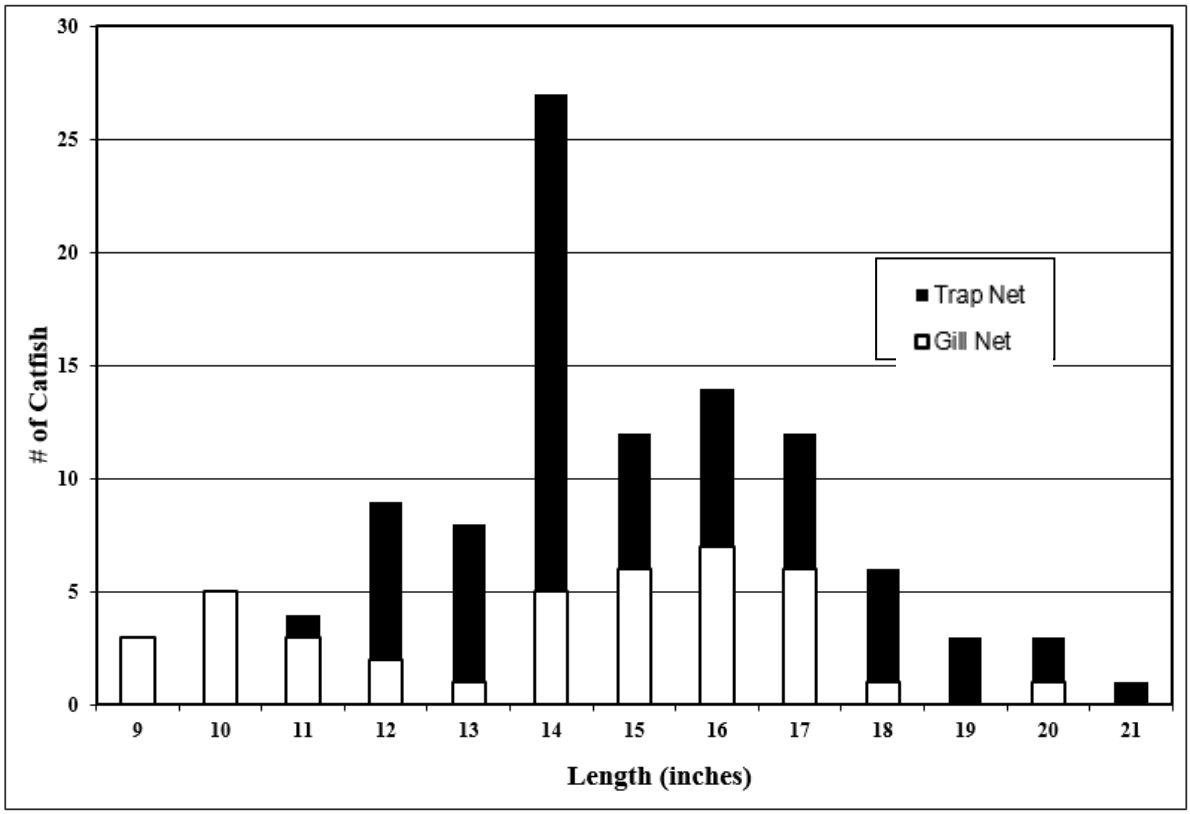


Length-frequency of white crappie sampled at Scott SFL in fall 2016

Scott State Fishing Lake continued…

Channel Catfish - Good

This population receives a great deal of fishing pressure and anglers commonly report catches of good numbers of nice fish. To maintain a fishable population, 4,025 catfish that usually average 8 inches in length are stocked each fall. Despite high angler exploitation, survival and growth of individuals is sufficient that a respectable number of fish reach relatively large sizes as individuals ranging from 12 to 22 inches were sampled last fall. Anglers fishing various baits such as cut sunfish, minnows, and prepared catfish bait off the bottom should realize good catfish opportunities.

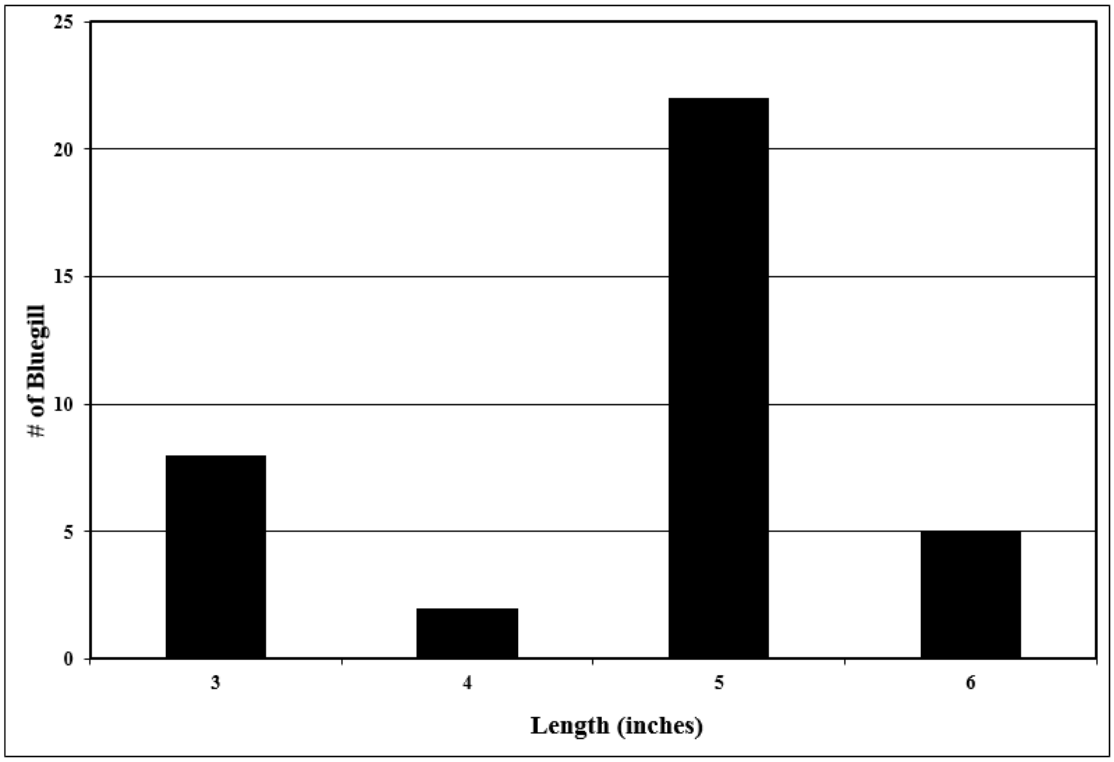


Length-frequency of channel catfish sampled at Scott SFL in fall 2016

Sheridan State Fishing Lake

Bluegill - Poor

Abundance of this population has been on a declining trend over the recent past such that low abundance was documented by sampling efforts this past fall. Furthermore, availability of larger individuals attractive to anglers was nearly non-existent as no fish larger than 6 inches were sampled. Several lines of evidence indicated that the highly abundant common carp population may be limiting the bluegill population through physical disturbance of bluegill nests and depredation on eggs and fry. It is hoped that this population will be improved by reducing common carp abundance through selective removal. Bluegill angling opportunities at Sheridan will be limited this year.



Length-frequency of bluegill sampled at Sheridan SFL in fall 2016

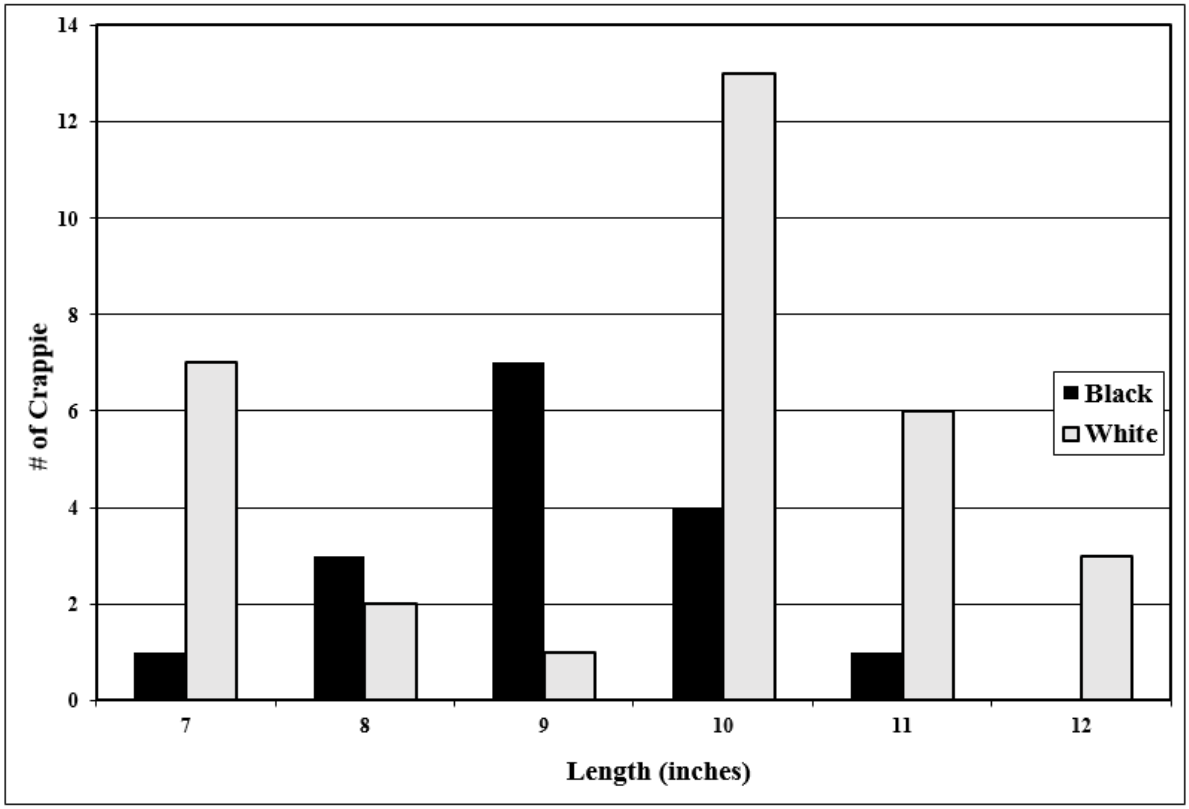
Channel Catfish - Fair

This population receives a great deal of fishing pressure thus angler harvest influences abundance and size availability of fish. To maintain a fishable population, 1,005 catfish that average 8 inches in length are stocked each fall. The prognosis for this population was reduced as few fish were sampled and the availability of larger fish was limited to individuals up to 17 inches. This population won't likely garner much dedicated angling pressure this upcoming year, but a few fish will be caught by casual anglers that decide to throw a line out in the evening while camping.

Crappie - Good

Both black and white crappie inhabit this water with whites being numerically dominant. However, both species display good growth characteristics, resulting in a quality small-lake crappie population. Relatively consistent annual production of highly abundant, slow-growing Age-0 gizzard shad coupled with predatory regulation of crappie abundance by largemouth bass and saugeye promote rapid crappie growth at this water. Anglers should expect excellent opportunities to harvest some nice crappie as 31% of black crappie sampled last fall ranged from 10 to 11 inches and 69% of white crappie in last fall's sample ranged from 10 to 13 inches. Doodle-socking jigs around shoreline-oriented fish attractors for spawning crappie in mid-to late April or fishing minnows around the deeper, mainlake fish attractors during the fall have been good patterns to produce a nice mess of fish.

Sheridan State Fishing Lake continued…



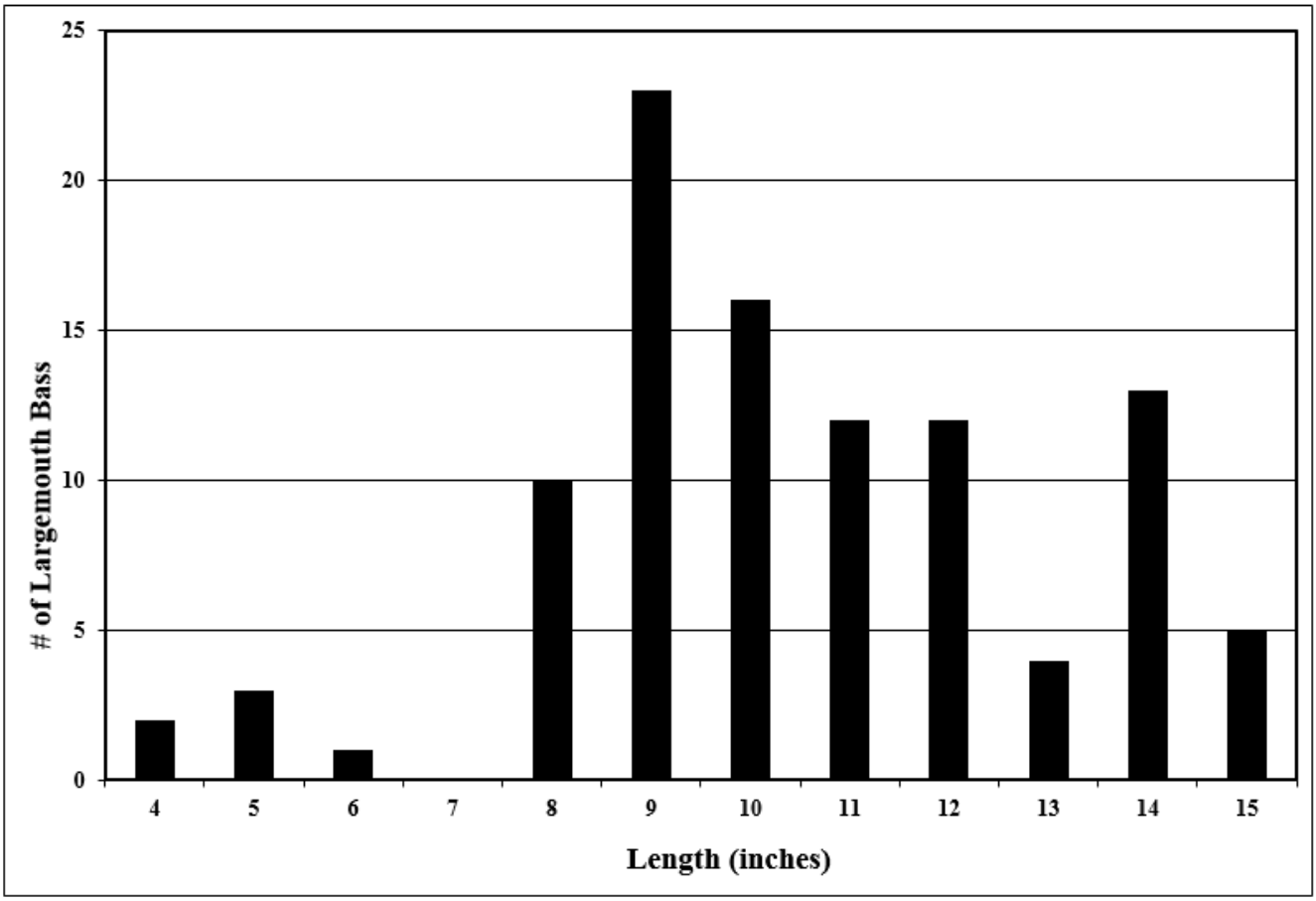
Length-frequency of black and white crappie sampled at Sheridan SFL in fall 2016

An example of some nice Sheridan SFL crappie

Largemouth Bass - Fair

Abundance has been moderate over the longer term, but has followed a declining trend the past three years. Existing individuals exhibit slow growth, especially at older ages, resulting in few individuals surpassing 15 inches in length. Similar to bluegill, it may be that over abundance of common carp may be limiting this population. It is hoped that reducing common carp abundance will increase production and recruitment of bass to the fishery by limiting disturbance of spawning bass and their offspring by carp, and bass growth will improve with increasing bluegill abundance. This population will provide some catch-and-release fishing opportunities to anglers fishing small spinnerbaits, plastic worms, and swimbaits around the shoreline brushpiles, but the potential to catch many fish over 15 inches will be very limited during 2017.

Sheridan State Fishing Lake continued…



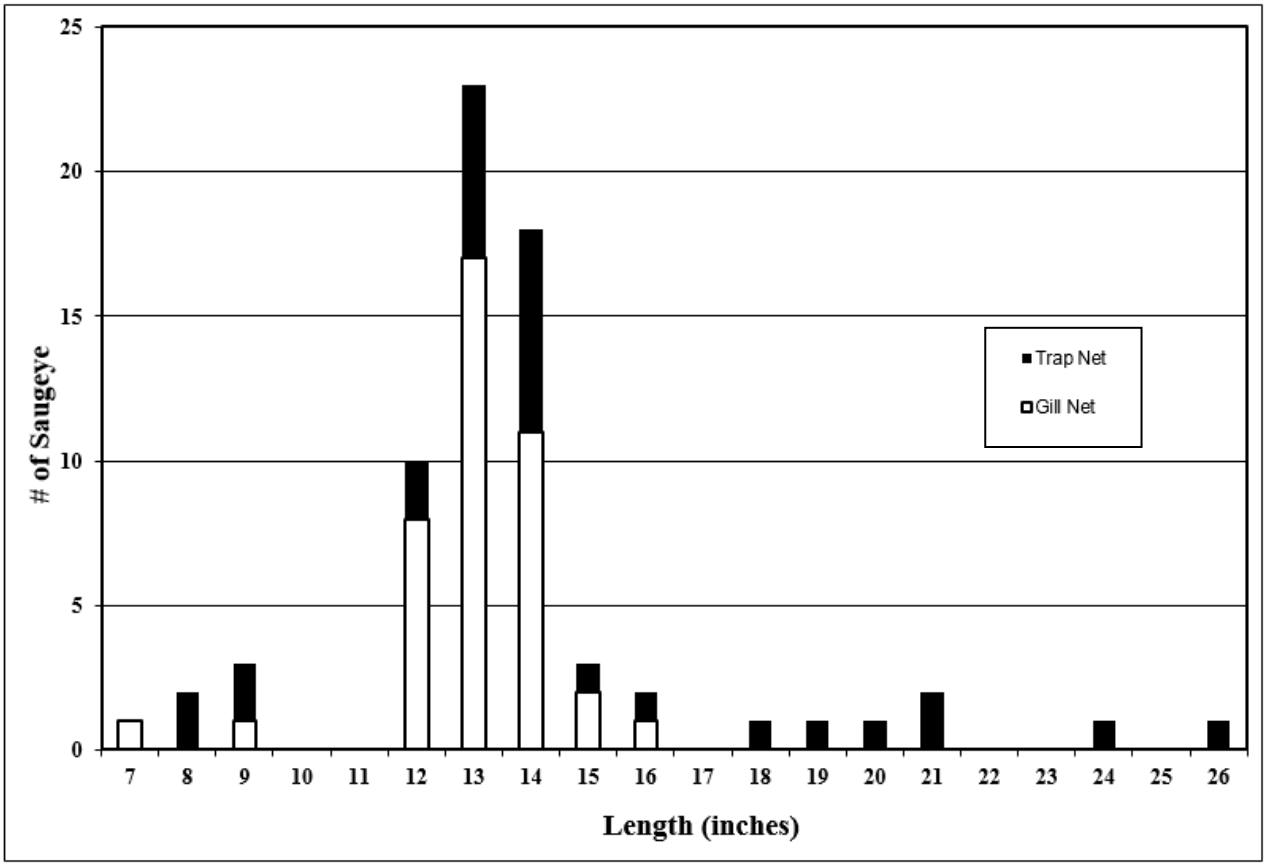
Length-frequency of largemouth bass sampled at Sheridan SFL in fall 2016

An example of a nice Sheridan SFL largemouth bass

Sheridan State Fishing Lake continued…

Saugeye - Good

Individuals of this population are abundant due in large part to the establishment of a strong year class in 2014. Given the dominance of this year class, fish ranging from 12 to 15 inches comprise the majority of the population. Despite the abundance of small fish, fish up to 27 inches are present but in low abundance. Anglers will primarily realize catch-and-release angling opportunities under the 15-inch minimum length limit, but will have a limited chance of catching fish up to trophy sizes.



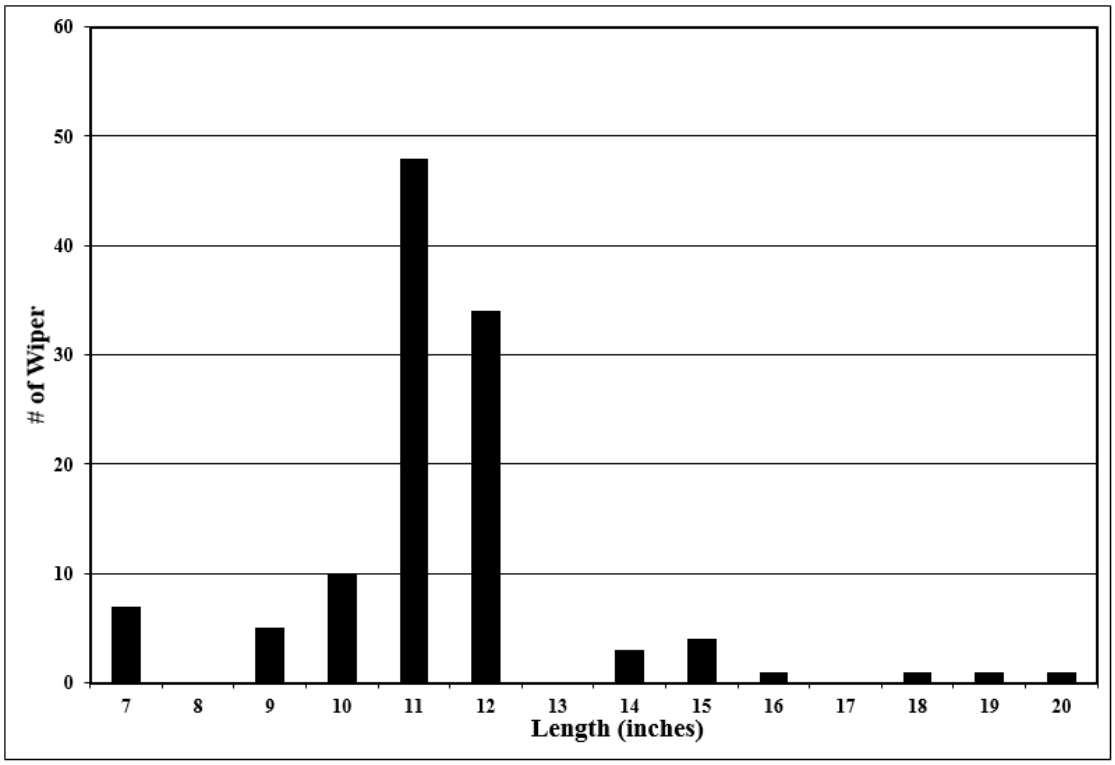
Length-frequency of saugeye sampled at Sheridan SFL in fall 2016

An example of a nice Sheridan SFL saugeye

Sheridan State Fishing Lake continued…

Wiper - Fair

Abundance of this population increased to a high level primarily resulting from the establishment of a strong 2015 year class. Dominance of this year class means most of the fish available to anglers will range from approximately 11 to 13 inches as almost 90% of fish sampled fell within this length range. Survival of older individuals resulted in a limited availability of larger individuals up to 20 inches. The high overall abundance has led to a high degree of competition amongst individuals and thus poor body condition and reduced growth rates. Cessation of stocking over the next several years will be necessary to reduce this population to a lesser, more desirable abundance. High competition for food will mean, hungry fish that should be easy to catch.



Length-frequency of wiper sampled at Sheridan SFL in fall 2016

An example of a Sheridan SFL wiper