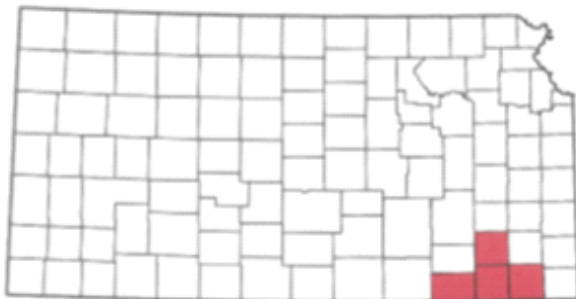


Independence District Fisheries

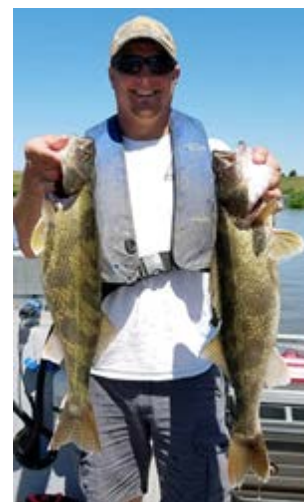
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Area Happenings

Well, I don't know what to say about this year that hasn't already been said, but as strange as it was we were able to complete the majority of job duties in the Independence Fisheries District. As COVID left many of us working from home (including myself for a short period) and not going to class, it left a lot of time for everyone to enjoy the outdoors once again. I noticed, as did many others around the state, that people were out enjoying their local fishing lakes more than ever this spring and summer.



Unfortunately, the coronavirus hit at the time of walleye spawn and we were unable to collect walleye eggs, but don't worry walleye and saugeye will be stocked next spring. We were able to complete our bass electrofishing samples at 1 reservoir, 2 state fishing lakes and 2 CFAP lakes. Our annual blue catfish electrofishing sample was also completed on Elk City Reservoir. We were also able to sample channel catfish in hoop nets at 2 state fishing lakes and 2 CFAP lakes.



Above: Me with a pair of 23 inch saugeye from Sedan-North.

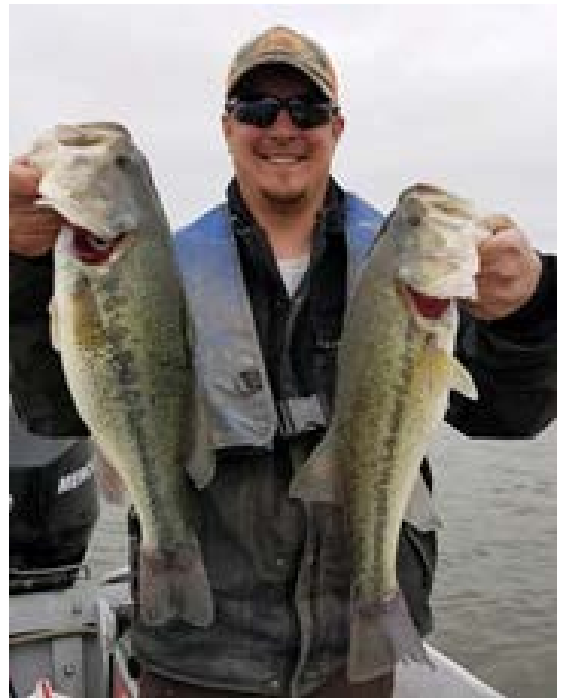
Largemouth Bass Sampling

Even with the challenges that we had to face this spring we were able to get out and do some largemouth bass electrofishing. We were able to get largemouth bass sampled at Big Hill Reservoir, Montgomery State Fishing Lake, Wilson State Fishing Lake and Sedan City Lake North and South.

Electrofishing helped us look at 153 largemouth bass from Big Hill Reservoir, 235 at MGSL, 320 at WLSL, 34 in Sedan- North and 107 in Sedan South. We also sampled 22 smallmouth bass from Big Hill and 60 spotted bass from WLSL. The biggest largemouth bass sampled this spring came from WLSL measuring 21.5 inches long and weight just over 6 pounds.



Above: Me with the largest bass sampled from Wilson State Fishing Lake.



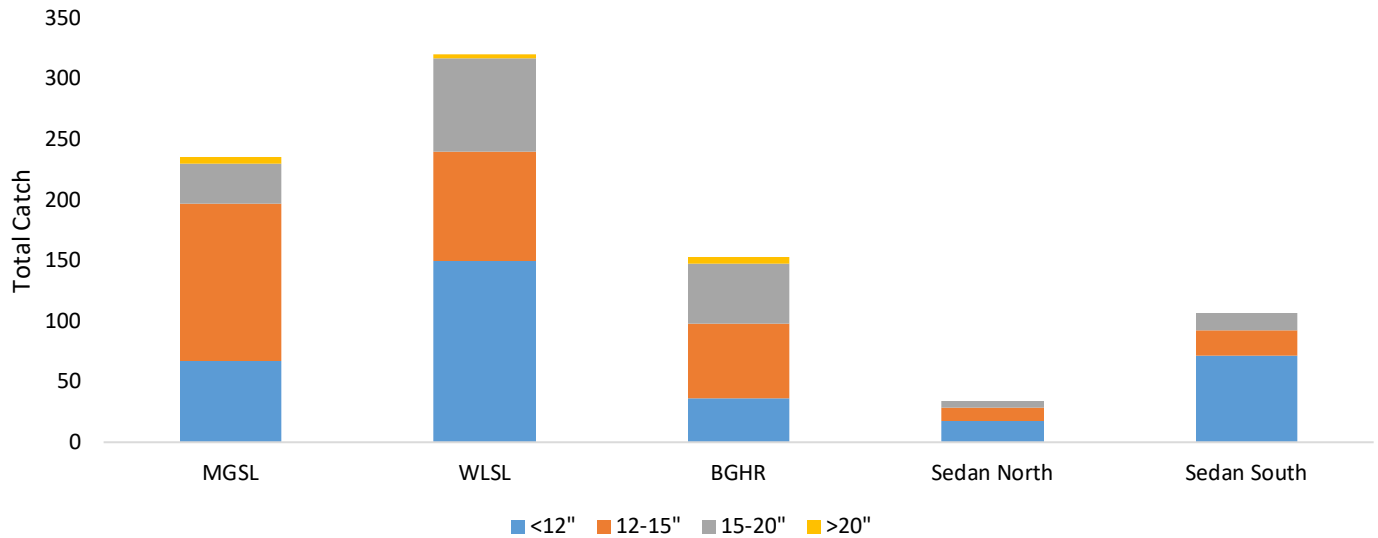
Above: Me with a pair of 21 inch largemouth bass from Big Hill Reservoir.

Below: Danci Johnston with a pair of 20+ inch largemouth bass from Montgomery State Fishing Lake.



Largemouth Bass Sampling Continued...

2020 Largemouth Bass Electrofishing Data



Above: Graph including all largemouth bass sampled via electrofishing including different size classes.



Above: A pair of WLSL largemouth bass.



Above: Danci with a smallmouth bass and largemouth bass from Big Hill.

Donated Fish Habitat for Montgomery State Fishing Lake

Late this spring I was fortunate enough to meet an avid angler who wanted to contribute to the fishery in Montgomery State Fishing Lake. Dave Barton was kind enough to donate 12 artificial fish habitat structures that he had made with some scrap PVC material. He made these fish structures mimicking some of the styles that they sell commercially, which would have retailed at roughly \$1,200. Not only do these structures benefit many fish species and the anglers that fish them, but they are also more snag resistant than natural fish structure. I placed these fish structures in two separate locations (see map below), with one location being a targeted spawning area and the other for deep water winter habitat. If anyone sees Dave around, make sure you thank him for his contributions to the fishery in Montgomery State Fishing Lake.



Above: Picture of the fish habitat that was donated by Dave Barton and placed in Montgomery State Fishing Lake.

Below: Map and GPS coordinates (37.163110°-95.689651°, 37.163111°-95.687635°) of the locations of the new artificial fish habitat in Montgomery State Fishing Lake.



Channel Catfish Sampling

This summer we have been busy sampling channel catfish with hoop nets, which are baited with a compressed soybean and cheese mixture. These nets are set and then left to fish for 48 hours before we check them, this long soak only allows us to sample limited lakes in any given year. Thus far we have been able to sample Montgomery State Fishing Lake, Wilson State Fishing Lake, Parsons City Lake and Bartlett City Lake. We are continuing to sample channel catfish via hoop nets so I will publish the data in its entirety in my next newsletter.

In Montgomery State Fishing Lake we were able to sample 484 channel catfish, and 211 channel catfish at Wilson State Fishing Lake. At Parsons City Lake we were able to sample 321 channel catfish, while we struggled at Bartlett City Lake and only caught 7.



Above: Me and my daughter with a channel catfish she caught from the Elk City State Park Kids Fishing Pond.

If you are looking strictly to catch fish and in higher numbers, I would point you toward Montgomery State Fishing Lake or Parsons City Lake. However, if you are looking for larger fish and fish to take home for the frying pan, I would suggest Wilson State Fishing Lake and Parsons City Lake. Due to low catch rates at Bartlett City Lake, I will be putting in a stocking request for the next couple of years to increase their numbers.



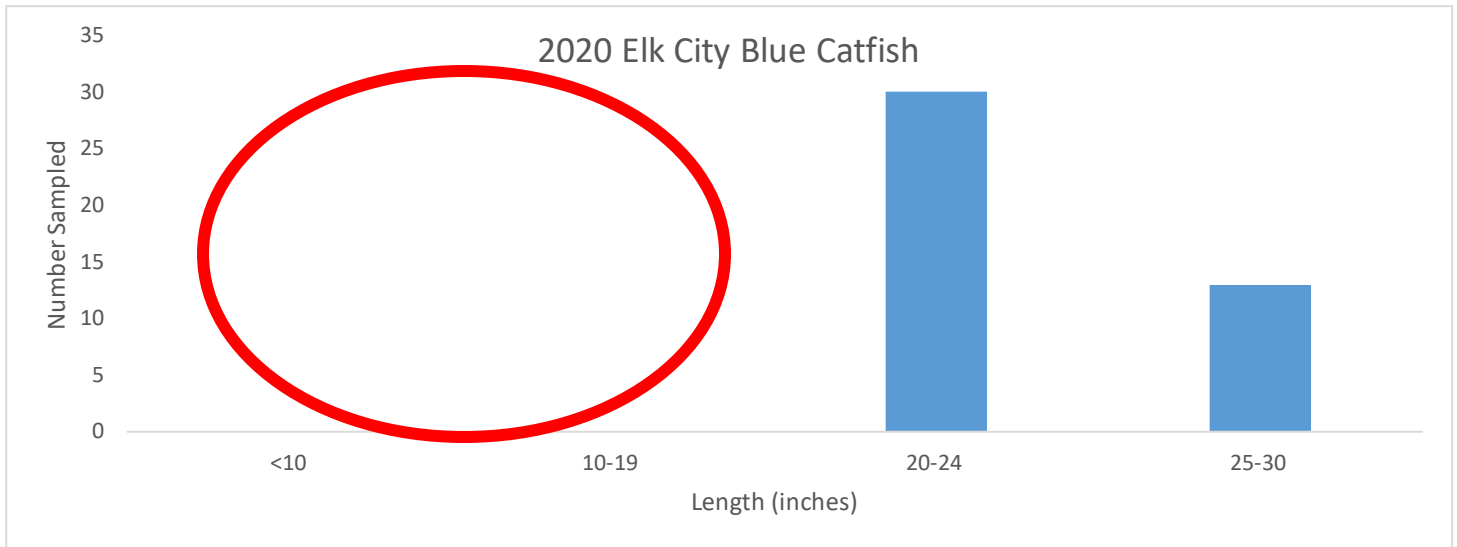
Above: Doug Ramey holding a 13 pound channel catfish from Bartlett City Lake.

Below: My nephew Brayden holding a channel catfish he caught from Montgomery State Fishing Lake.



Elk City Blue Catfish Sampling

In July we conducted our annual Blue Catfish sampling outing. Although the catfish were hard to find that day, we did sample 46 blue catfish. Of these 46 blue catfish sampled all were above 20 inches in length with the largest measuring right at 30 inches and weighing almost 10 pounds. We are continuing sampling sporadically on Elk City Reservoir the rest of this summer to get more data collected, while trying to target the small size classes of fish that are lacking in our sample. These small blue catfish would be naturally produced fish from the 3 year classes of stocked blue catfish, and are vitally important in determining the sustainability of blue catfish in Elk City Reservoir. **Please remember that Elk City Reservoir is managed with a 35 inch minimum length limit on blue catfish**, so please do your part and release fish under this size restriction to further the chances of successful reproduction.



Above: Graph of the number and size of blue catfish sampled on Elk City Reservoir in 2020, highlighting the void of smaller size class fish.



Above: A 30 inch blue catfish sampled from Elk City Reservoir.



Above: Danci with a pair of 29 inch blue catfish from Elk City Reservoir.

Coronavirus... An Excuse to Go Fishing?

It seemed as if spring and summer all melded together this year, with virus restrictions and places being closed down, everything seemed to be on pause. One thing that didn't change and remained open were our public lakes, and it seemed like the public noticed this fact as well. From March thru June it seemed as if there were people fishing every water body at all times of the day, some Mondays looked like the 4th of July weekend!

I was glad to see that so many people were taking advantage of our fisheries resources and coming back to the outdoors. For many it seemed that it was there only escape from their houses or their chance to take their mind off of everything that was going on. I'm sure there were plenty of students who played hooky from their computer classes or adults from their mundane home computer work (don't worry your school or job doesn't know). It also showed at the local stores and bait shops where finding tackle was sometimes impossible. So whether you were an avid angler before 2020 or this coronavirus convinced you to try for the first time, I hope that you found the experience both rewarding and relaxing during this interesting time.



Above: A "Pandemic Stringer" of white bass from the Elk River.



Above: COVID didn't stop the "Local Legend" from finding some Elk City Reservoir crappie.

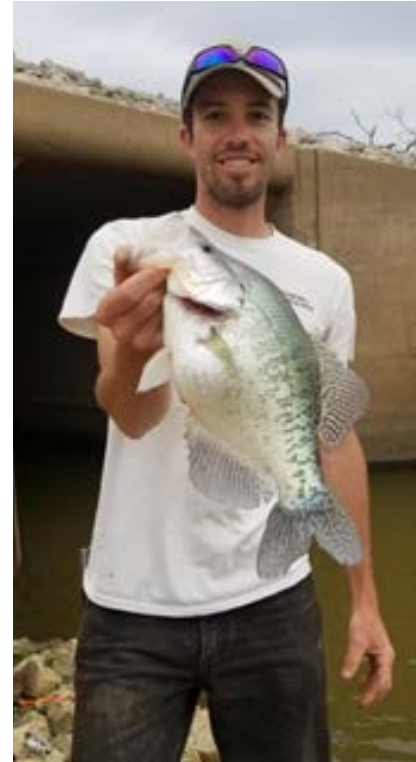
Below: My wife and daughter with a nice stringer of Montgomery State Fishing Lake bluegill.





Above: My nephew Keatyn with some nice farm pond bluegill.

Below: My wife and daughter with a nice farm pond black crappie.



Above: Ryan Lies with a 16 inch white crappie from Elk City Reservoir.

Final Thoughts

I hope this newsletter finds everyone still in good spirits and hopefully inspires some of you to get back out there and catch fish and relax. If you need an excuse to get out there and try, remember your kids or someone else's could always use a little biology lesson (at least that's how I would justify it).

I look forward to seeing you out there enjoying a resource that many people have found again. As always feel free to get ahold of me at the information above, or check out our website at <https://ksoutdoors.com/> for more information about fishing in Kansas.

Happy Fishing!