

# MILFORD DISTRICT FISHERIES NEWSLETTER

KDWPT

Fisheries Division

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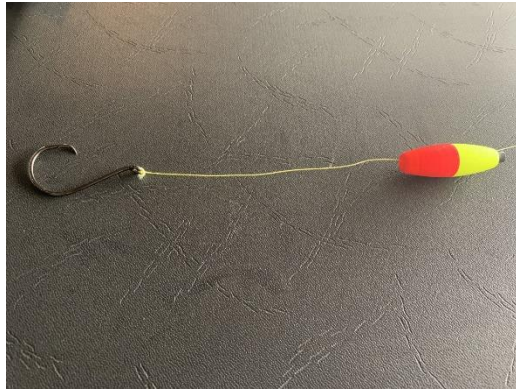
## Popular Blue Catfish Angling Techniques/Rigs

Blue Catfish angling has become very popular in Kansas over the last 10-15 years. Milford Reservoir was stocked with Blue Catfish in the early 1990s and natural reproduction was documented in 2001. The success of Milford's population led to stockings of Blue Catfish at several other Kansas reservoirs across the state. Blue Catfish are now actively managed in 16 impoundments.

Choosing the right equipment is crucial when targeting Blue Catfish. These fish can exceed 100 pounds so using the right equipment can improve your success at landing these fish. When angling for mid-sized to large Blue Catfish, a fishing rod with a lot of backbone is crucial. Medium-heavy to heavy action fishing rods from 7 feet all the way up to 11 feet have been used by dedicated Blue Catfish anglers. Monofilament and braided line are both used by catfish anglers. Typically, 30-pound test line at a minimum is enough for

targeting large Blue Catfish. Circle hooks are a very popular hook style for catfish angling. Sizes 7/0 or 8/0 are popular; however, some anglers will use 10/0 circle hooks for big fish.

Below is a picture of the lower part of a Santee rig which is one of the most popular catfish rigs used. This rig can be easily modified. Typically, this weight uses a weight, barrel swivel, leader (various lengths used), peg float, and circle hook. This rig is intended to lift the bait slightly off the bottom. Cut bait is one of the most effective baits to use with the Santee rig. In Kansas, anglers commonly use cast nets to gather Gizzard Shad for bait. Gizzard Shad are naturally oily which is a great attractant for catfish of all sizes. Other cut bait that has been used include Bluegill, Common Carp, Freshwater Drum, etc.



### Milford Reservoir Results

After a year-long absence due to record flooding in 2019, Milford Reservoir was sampled in 2020. Black Crappie catch rates were the highest in 2020 over the past five years at 3.5 fish/net. Most of the Black Crappies collected were from 5.5-8" with one fish measuring 13". White Crappie catch rates in 2020 were the lowest since 2016 at 11.6 fish/net. White Crappie lengths ranged from 3.5-14.5" with 68 individuals being above 9". Blue Catfish catch rates in 2020 were the second highest recorded since 2016 with 11.7 fish/net. Blue Catfish lengths ranged anywhere from 7-43". Only 15 fish collected were in the 25-40" protected slot. However, one fish over the slot was collected. 111 individuals were collected via jug lines in 2020. Blue Catfish lengths ranged from 9-42". 51 individuals collected were in the 25-40" protected slot with three fish caught over the 40". 84 individuals were collected via boat electrofishing in 2020. Blue Catfish lengths ranged from 4-34" with only two fish being caught in the 25-40" protected slot. Channel Catfish catch rates in 2020 were

1.7 fish/net. Channel Catfish lengths ranged from 6-21" with most of the individuals caught between 8 and 16". Walleye catch rates in 2020 mirrored those of 2017 with 4.4 fish/net. Walleye lengths range from 10.5-25" with six individuals reaching harvestable size (21"). This is the fourth year following a regulation change from an 18" MLL/5 per day to 21" MLL/2 per day. Since the regulation change, twenty-one 21+" fish have been collected in fall sampling activities. Prior to 2017, only three 21+" fish were collected since 2014. In 2020, White Bass catch rates were the highest since 2016 at 6.4 fish/net. White Bass lengths ranged from 5-15" with 10 fish over 12.5" being collected. Wiper catch rates in 2020 were 8.8 fish/net. Wiper lengths ranged from 5.5-24". Wiper density has remained consistent since 2018 after the daily creel limit was increased in 2018.



Brett Miller, KDWPT District Fisheries Biologist, pictured with a Blue Catfish from Milford Reservoir



Clint Thornton, KDWPT District Wildlife Biologist, pictured with a Wiper from Milford Reservoir



Clint Thornton, KDWPT District Wildlife Biologist, pictured with a pair of nice White Crappie from Milford Reservoir

### Council Grove Reservoir Results

Channel Catfish catch rates have remained consistent the past five years ranging between 1.9 and 3.0 fish/net. Channel Catfish ranged from 8-25" with a mean length of 15". 2019 and 2020 catch rates for Saugeye were the same at 3.5 fish/net. Saugeye ranged from 9.75-23.5" with a mean length of 16.5". No Saugeye from 14.5-18.5" were sampled in 2020. 23 of the 49 individuals collected were harvestable

(15" minimum length limit). Walleye catch rates remain to be relatively low at Council Grove Reservoir. 26 Walleyes have been collected since 2016. Only one 20" Walleye was sampled in 2020. White Bass catch rates in 2020 were the lowest in the past five years at 0.3 fish/net. The four White Bass collected ranged from 9-13". Juvenile White Crappies were 73% of the catch for 2020. While smaller individuals dominated the sample, 33 fish were greater than 10" with the largest measuring just under 14". No wipers were collected in 2020.

### Geary County State Fishing Lake

Bluegill catch rates in 2020 were the second highest in five years with 17.5 fish/net. Bluegill lengths ranged from 2-7"; however, numbers of harvestable Bluegills were low. Channel Catfish catch rates in 2020 were 3.3 fish/net. Channel Catfish were caught at various sizes ranging from 8-22". 87% of the sample were 12" or greater. Saugeye catch rates were identical in 2019 and 2020 with 3.3 fish/net. Saugeye lengths ranged from 12-23" with a mean length of 16". 31% of the collected individuals were of harvestable size. The White Bass catch rate in 2020 was the second lowest since 2016 at 2.3 fish/net. White Bass ranged from 6-16.5"; however, 89% of fish collected were above 10.5". White Crappie catch rates continue to remain low. Only two juvenile individuals were collected in 2020. Similarly, the Black Crappie has only been collected in two of the past five years (2018 and 2019).

### Council Grove City Lake Results

Black Crappie were documented for the third consecutive year. 50% of the individuals were between 8 and 9" with the biggest fish reaching 10". White Crappies ranged from 7-11" with a mean length of 9". Bluegill catch rates the past three years have been lower compared to 2016 and 2017. In 2020, Bluegills ranged from 2-7" with the most abundant length group being just over 4". Channel Catfish catch rates were the third highest in the last five years with a catch rate of 5.4/net. Channel Catfish ranged from 8-29" with an average length of 16". One 35" Flathead Catfish was sampled in 2020 and was the first one sampled since 2017. Walleye abundance remains low at Council Grove City Lake with an average of 3.4 fish/net since 2016. Only two individuals were collected in 2020. Since 2017, White Bass catch rates have remained low with an average catch rate of 2.8 fish/net. Only one White Bass was collected in 2020. In 2020, White Crappie catch rates were the second lowest in the past five years at 10.5 fish/net.



Brett Miller, KDWP District Fisheries Biologist, pictured with a Flathead Catfish from Council Grove City Lake

### "New" Herington City Lake Results

Black Crappie catch rates in 2020 were 6.8 fish/net. Black Crappie lengths ranged from 6-12" with no Black Crappie collected between 8 and 10". White Crappie catch rates in 2020 were the highest over the past five years at 289.5 fish/net. However, 93% of the sample were juvenile individuals. Twenty individuals were above 9" with the largest fish measuring just over 13.5". Bluegill continue to remain in low abundance. Bluegill lengths ranged from 3.5-6" with no Bluegill collected that anglers would deem harvestable. Since 2018, Channel Catfish catch rates have remained under 4 fish/net. Channel Catfish collected in 2020 ranged from 4-16.5". Walleye continue to remain in low abundance. Only one 20" individual was collected in 2020. White Bass continue to remain in high abundance with 23.4 fish/net. White Bass ranged from 6-16.5" with most of the individuals collected between 10-15". Wiper catch rates in 2020 were at 8.2



fish/net. Also, the “New” Herington City Lake had the highest density of Wipers greater than 16” among lakes (excluding reservoirs). Wiper lengths ranged from 12.5-21.5”.



Clint Thornton, KDWPT District Wildlife Biologist, pictured with a pair of nice Wipers from the “New” Herington City Lake

### FISH Changed to WIFA

In 2020, our walk-in fishing program FISH (Fishing Impoundment and Stream Habitats) program was renamed to WIFA (Walk-In Fishing Access). If you fish regularly on these properties, new signage with the new logo will be posted. However, the program remains the same. Pictured below is an example of one of the new signs with the new logo.



### My Final Thoughts

With the 2020 fishing year over, a new year of angling opportunities awaits us during 2021. Anglers who utilize our Kansas waters should experience great fishing opportunities across our state no matter what species you choose to target. I hope this information can provide some helpful information on where to fish in the Milford District. Good luck this spring and take a kid fishing! If you want more information, please feel free to visit our website at <http://ksoutdoors.com>. Have fun and good fishing!