

Elk City District Fisheries

Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism

Spring 2012

One Says Goodbye, Another Says Hello

Friends, A year ago my supervisor retired, creating a vacancy and an opportunity. So I decided I better take advantage of it even though I would have preferred to stay in my prior position for a few more years. This was my last chance for advancement and being able to stay in the area. I am excited with the challenges that are coming. I will still be in the area, living in Neodesha, but my job duties have changed considerably. The bright side of the coin is in my new position as regional fisheries supervisor, I have a many new waters to investigate in my region, which encompasses the southern half of Kansas.

I have enjoyed working in the Elk City District. Thank you for all your support over the years!

Sincerely,

Sean Lynott

Greetings all! My name is Ben Neely and I am the new fisheries biologist for the Elk City District. Sean did a lot of good things during his 16 years as the Elk City district fisheries biologist. I'm hoping to maintain his successful programs and continually strive to develop new ideas that will make fishing even better in local waters.

I was born and raised in Coffeyville and spent a lot of time in my early years fishing and hunting in Labette and Montgomery counties. As such, I'm vested in making sure that we have the best possible resources to continue those traditions.

I graduated from Kansas State University in 2004 with degrees in Fisheries and Wildlife Biology and Natural Resources/Environmental Sciences. While at KSU, I was introduced to KDWPT as a seasonal worker helping out the fisheries biologist in Manhattan. I took my newfound experience to Nebraska in 2005 where I worked for Nebraska Game and Parks Commission as a fisheries technician on the

(Continued on page 3)

What's in a Name?

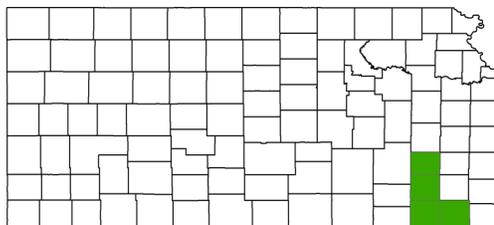
When William Shakespeare penned the famous words, "What's in a name?" in Romeo and Juliet, I doubt he had fish on the brain. However, that line often rings in my head when I discuss fishing with anglers.



Fish come in all shapes, sizes, and colors. Unfortunately, they also come with all sorts of name. Talking with anglers, I come across more names for fish than I ever knew existed. You might be wondering, "Why does it matter what I call a fish?" Well, I'm going to give you a fisheries biologist's slant on it.

Let's start with one of Kansas' most popular fish, bluegill. The two most common names I hear for bluegill are perch and bream. However, I seldom come across an angler that refers to them as bluegill. This wouldn't be too problematic except there are fish (not bluegill) properly named bream and perch. Bream are related to common carp, found in Europe, and can weigh up to 10 pounds. When talking

(Continued on page 4)



Montgomery County State Fishing Lake

Built in 1953, [MONTGOMERY COUNTY STATE FISHING LAKE](#) is a 105-acre impoundment located 4 miles south of Independence. The reservoir is built on Coal Creek, a tributary of the Verdigris River. The property was purchased, developed, and is maintained by fee monies from licensed anglers and the Sport fish Restoration Program. Like other state fishing lakes in Kansas, Montgomery State Lake is managed for fishing and outdoor recreation.

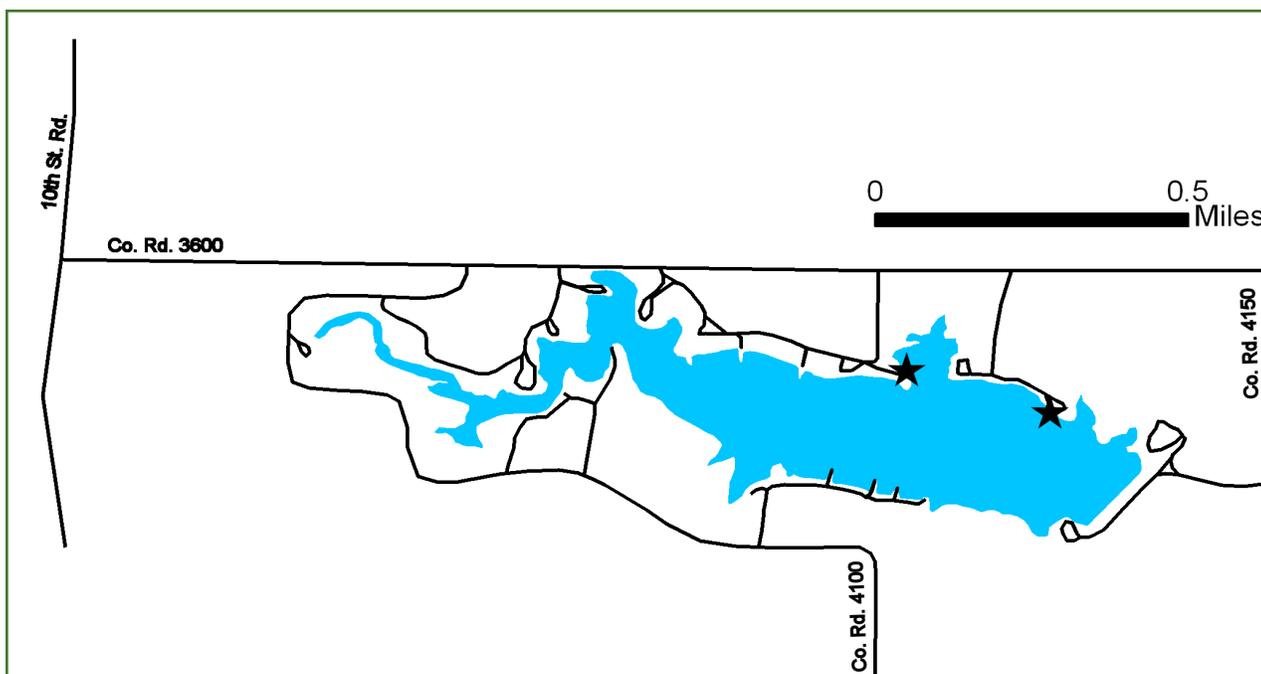
The fish community in Montgomery State Lake is much like most of the smaller waters in the area. Popular sportfishes in the reservoir include channel catfish (42 percent of angler effort in 2007), largemouth bass (17 percent) and bluegill/redear sunfish (15 percent). The black and white crappie populations also support a popular fishery during spring and fall.

One issue that Montgomery State Fishing Lake has had trouble with is unwanted fish species. In fact, the lake was renovated in 1984 to eradicate these species and improve habitat for sportfishes. Currently there are reproducing populations of three unwanted species in the reservoir: common carp, gizzard shad, and white bass. None are overly abundant but I will be keeping an eye on them to make sure they don't degrade the reservoir's popular fisheries.

Montgomery State Fishing Lake is an excellent place to take the family for a "hometown vacation." There are plenty of places to go fishing, have a picnic, hike around the lake, or just to sit around and enjoy the outdoors. I encourage you to take advantage of this wonderful resource this spring, you just might see me there.

Things to Remember...

- Statewide fish harvest regulations are in effect at Montgomery State Fishing Lake with three exceptions:
 - 1) Largemouth bass are subject to a 13 to 18 inch slot length limit with a five-fish daily bag limit. This means that all largemouth bass from 13-18 inches must be released immediately and an angler may harvest no more than five large mouth bass daily.
 - 2) Channel catfish are subject to a 15 inch minimum length limit with a five-fish daily bag limit. This means that all channel catfish under 15 inches must be released immediately and an angler may harvest no more than five channel catfish daily.
 - 3) Seining baitfish, trotlines, and set lines are prohibited
- A no trash policy is in effect throughout the area.
- Vehicles are permitted on maintained roads, parking areas, and camp pads only.
- Motored boats may be used for fishing only. Pleasure boating is not allowed.
- Consumption of cereal malt beverages containing no more than 3.2% alcohol is permitted.



Check out our website kdwpt.state.ks.us

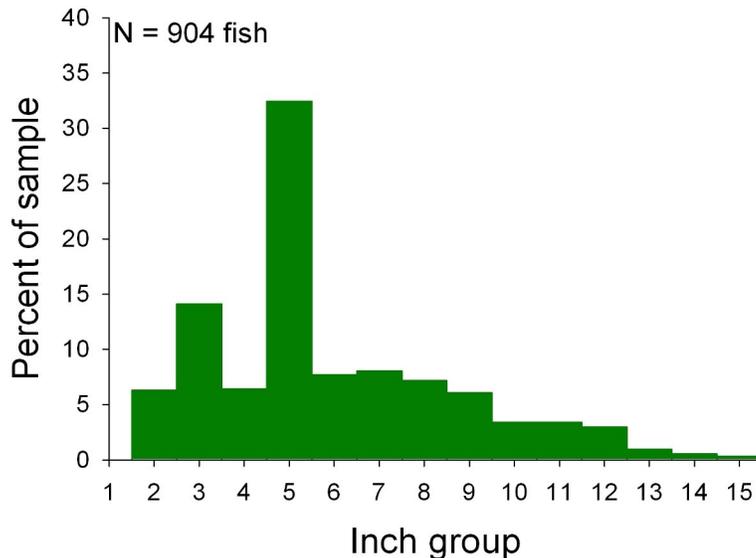
(One Says Goodbye, Another Says Hello—Continued from page 1)

Missouri River. While in Nebraska, I attended the University of Nebraska and graduated in 2008 with a M.S. in Fisheries Science. I accepted a position as a district fisheries biologist in Abilene, Tex. and lived there until September 2011. I began my duties as the Elk City District fisheries biologist with KDWPT in September 2011 and hope to retire with the agency.

Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my family, hunting, and fishing. Deer are my favorite quarry, but I'll also spend a lot of time hunting turkeys and squirrels. My fishing adventures are usually centered on catfish or bluegill, although I'll fish for anything and everything. If you see me around, please say hello. I'd love to meet you.



Crappie Looking Good in Elk City and Big Hill



This past October, we set 16 nets in Elk City Reservoir to sample the white crappie population. What we found bodes well for crappie anglers this spring.

We sampled a staggering 904 white crappie. That means we caught 56 fish/net! Better yet, 12 percent of sampled fish were over 10 inches and 5 percent of sampled fish were over 12 inches. The biggest fish we sampled was nearly 16-inches long and weighed a whopping 2.67 pounds!

The big spike in 5-inch fish reflects a successful spawn in 2011. These fish will be growing rapidly and should be 6-8 inches by April and 8-10" inches by October.

Looking at this graph, there is no question that crappie fishing in Elk City will continue to be among the best opportunities around.

- 50 fish daily creel limit, no length limit

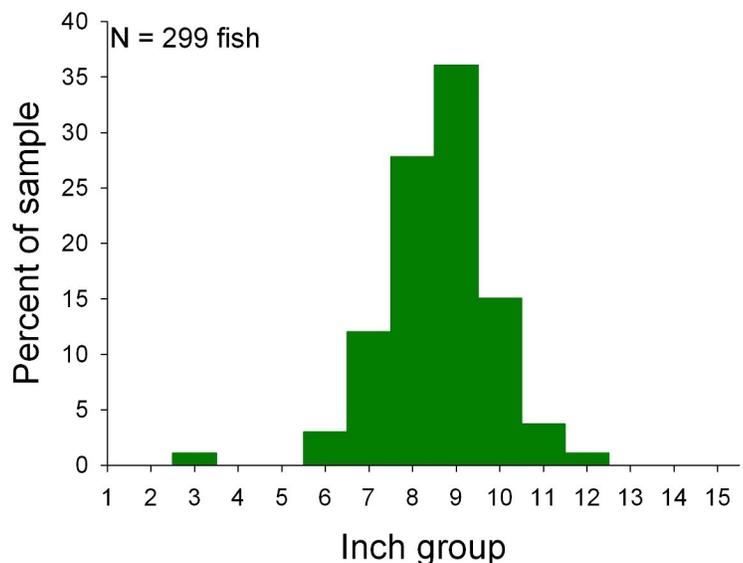
We set 10 nets at Big Hill and caught 299 crappie. The crappie population in Big Hill was about 85 percent white crappie and 15 percent black crappie.

Abundance of "keeper-sized" crappie was excellent in 2011. About 64 percent of sampled fish were 8-9 inches long and nearly 20 percent were 10 inches or longer!

The size distribution is reflective of successful reproduction in 2009 and/or 2010. However, a lack of smaller fish in the sample is a bit disconcerting. We will be monitoring the crappie population in coming years to ensure that fishing remains the best it can be.

As water warms, look for crappie to move shallow on gravelly, sandy banks. There should be some good crappie fishing at Big Hill this spring.

- 50 fish daily creel limit, no length limit



Summertime Pond Management

Amid the many phone calls we receive asking questions about where to fish and how certain lakes are doing, are calls from concerned landowners about how to best manage their ponds. The two most common questions are 1) seeking advice for stocking fish in a private pond or 2) how to control problematic vegetation.

Stocking a pond can be very confusing if you don't know where to look or who to ask for help. A good formula for producing a balanced fish population is to stock 100 large-mouth bass fingerlings/acre, 500 bluegill fingerlings/acre, 100 channel catfish/acre, and three pounds of fathead minnows/acre. However, stocking strategies can be altered to fit certain management objectives.

Many landowners wish to stock species other than large-mouth bass, bluegill, and channel catfish. However, stockings of other species are often unsuccessful and can negatively affect other fish populations. For example, many landowners try to establish crappie populations in small ponds. Because of the high reproductive rate of crappie, they will often overpopulate a pond with many small, starving individuals. Additionally, crappie compete directly with largemouth bass for forage and might negatively affect the bass population.

A comprehensive **GUIDE** to private pond management, including stocking strategies, used by many KDWPT fisheries biologists can be found online at: www.tinyurl.com/KSpndmgmt

Vegetation control can also be confusing but is much easier if the vegetation is properly identified. Although vegetation identification can be a daunting task, there are numerous websites that make the job much easier. One excellent site for this is the **TEXAS A&M AQUAPLANT** site: <http://aquaplant.tamu.edu>

Once the vegetation is identified, a removal strategy can be selected. Mechanical controls are often used for a quick fix and consist of physically removing vegetation. Grass carp can be used to control certain types of plants, but results can be unpredictable. Sometimes grass carp will eat everything, sometimes it will seem like they eat nothing, and sometimes they do exactly what the landowner intended. Chemical controls are commonly used to control vegetation, but different types of plants require different types of chemicals. The Texas A&M Aquaplant site listed above has species-specific management options for most of the plants that cause problems in private ponds.

What's presented here is just a quick summary of private pond management to point landowners in the right direction. As with most biological issues, there are likely many solutions. Please don't hesitate to call me with any questions and I'll do my best to get help you get your pond where you want it to be.

(What's in a Name?—Continued from page 1)

to anglers, I'm fairly certain that when they refer to bream, they are not referring to a European carp. However, I can't be quite as certain when I hear an angler mutter "perch". Yellow perch are related to walleye and are found in several Kansas reservoirs, including those in Yates Center.

Of course, all of this could be remedied by simply referring to bluegill as bluegill. As far as differentiating between different species of sunfish, well, I'll save that article for another day.

Whether you call them bluegill, perch, or bream, they are an awesome fish. They are fun to fish for, easy to catch, and make excellent table fare. To bring back Shakespeare, "A *bluegill* by any other name would *taste* as sweet".

Check our homepage for Kansas Crappie Bonanza on February 17!

Spring is a busy time for fisheries biologists. Data gathered from electrofishing is used to compose fishing forecasts and fine tune management plans for lakes across Kansas. If you see us out and about electrofishing this spring, feel free to say hello or ask any questions you may have.

If you know someone who would 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 to Independence District Fisheries newsletter" and we'll get you taken off of the list. If you have any questions or comments feel free to send them in.

Ben Neely
District Fisheries Biologist
Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism
5089 CR 2925
Independence, KS 67301
ben.neely@ksoutdoors.com
620-331-6820

All articles are copyright of Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism and cannot be copied or distributed without permission from KDWPT