

# Tuttle Creek Fisheries Newsletter Spring 2012

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## DISTRICT UPDATE

Walleye regulations at the Jeffrey Energy Center lakes have changed for 2012 to a 15 inch minimum length limit and a daily creel of 2.

## Tuttle Creek Reservoir Fishing Forecast

Over the years, Tuttle Creek Reservoir has had some large fluctuations in the fish populations. This is primarily due to elevated water levels and untimely high release rates from the reservoir. In particular, large spring releases can facilitate excessive fish migrations out of the reservoir. This is what happened in 2007 and 2008, resulting in a sharp decrease in abundance for many popular sportfish species.

Tuttle Creek has continued to have high water events since 2008. However, the excess water was evacuated in late summer, which reduced the number of fish being washed out of the reservoir. In addition, the high water conditions during the summer allowed for good spawning and growth of many species. These conditions have allowed for a good upswing in sportfish numbers. I expect 2012 to be a very productive fishing year at Tuttle Creek Reservoir.

The biggest news is the crappie population. Netting efforts in the fall of 2011 produced an average of 20 adult white crappie per net. That is the highest sample number of crappie at Tuttle Creek since 1994. In addition to great numbers of crappie in the reservoir, the population also has a great size structure. In the recent sample, 49 percent of the adult white crappie sampled were 8 inches up to 10 inches, 18 percent were 10 inches up to 12 inches, and fish over 12 inches made up 3 percent of the population. In addition to this promising white crappie data, the 2011 black crappie sample was the largest in recent history. I expect the great crappie numbers will lead to excellent harvest in 2012. Hopefully, these fish will continue to grow well and offer some great angling opportunities for years to come.

Saugeye are a hybrid between the closely related walleye and sauger, which is produced in KDWPT's hatchery system. The appeal of stocking this species is that it draws the best characteristics of



A typical trap net crappie sample from Tuttle Creek Reservoir in 2011

## Tuttle Creek Reservoir Fishing Forecast



A good looking saugeye

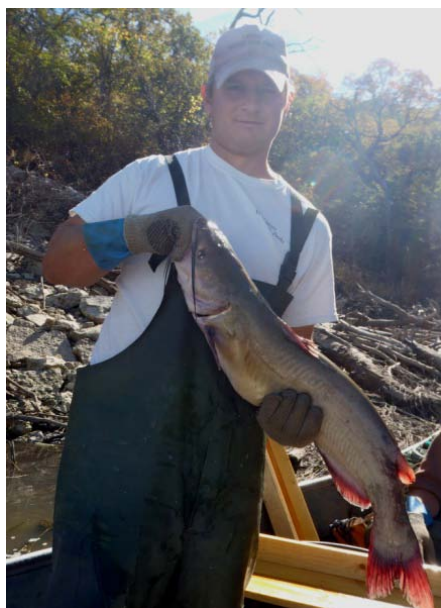
each of its parents. Saugeye and sauger survive well in turbid/muddy environments, but saugeye easily out grow sauger to a size similar to walleye. In addition, saugeye grow rather quickly and usually reach the 15-inch minimum length in a little over two years at Tuttle Creek. And of course, all three species are some of the best eating fish around.

The saugeye population tends to suffer very high migration rates out of the reservoir when there is a large spring discharge. However, saugeye are stocked every year, so with good conditions, they can quickly recover into a productive fishery. The 2011 fall sampling indicates that is what we have now at Tuttle Creek. Good survival and growth from the 2009 and 2010 stockings has led to a sharp increase in the numbers of saugeye in the reservoir. Sample numbers improved from 1 saugeye per net in 2010 to 5 saugeye per net in 2011. In addition, 52 percent of the collected saugeye were over the 15 inch minimum length limit. There are larger saugeye around too, with 25 percent of the sample over 18 inches. In years past, there have not been a lot of anglers that actively pursue saugeye in Tuttle Creek. Hopefully, the good numbers of saugeye this year will draw more anglers out to catch this tasty sportfish. Most people fish for them like they do for walleye, but saugeye tend to be more aggressive and hang out in shallower water than their cousins.



Pair of white bass from Tuttle Creek

The white bass population was hit hard by the 2007 and 2008 flood events. Their numbers are on the way up, but recovery has not been overly swift. The current population has fair numbers of 12 inch fish, but overall numbers of adult white bass are still below desirable levels. On a positive note, lower densities have allowed for good growth, producing some big healthy white bass over 18 inches. The largest white bass sampled last fall was over 4 pounds. The future is looking bright because the netting data indicates a large, successful spawn in 2011. In general, white bass fishing at Tuttle Creek Reservoir should be fair this year, with a decent chance of catching a real trophy. A good place to catch white bass in the spring is in the creeks that flow into the reservoir, many of which are on public property. White bass can travel several miles upstream during their spawning run and you might be able to find them stacked up in a deep hole.



A Tuttle Creek channel cat

Tuttle Creek Reservoir and the connected Big Blue River are known for good channel catfish harvest. Historically, the channel catfish population does not fluctuate much over the years. However, the 2011 sample suggests that abundance has recently improved at the reservoir. There were 3.5 adult channel catfish per net in 2011, compared to 2.7 in 2010. Which does not seem like much of a change, but this is actually a 30 percent increase. In addition, 12 percent of the adults sampled were over 28 inches, which is the largest percentage of big cats in over 20 years. Tuttle Creek also has a blue catfish population, but their numbers continue to struggle. A new blue catfish stocking effort is being undertaken to hopefully bolster the existing population.

Overall, this looks to be a good fishing year for anglers visiting Tuttle Creek Reservoir. Good Luck!

## Crappie Forecast for the Manhattan District

Crappie are one of the most popular sportfish in Kansas, mostly because they are so good to eat! Crappie populations tend to be cyclical, and it is not uncommon for a lake to have great fishing for a couple of years followed by some really tough fishing years. So I am always getting questions like "Where are the good crappie lakes this year?"

Below is a table for waters in the Manhattan District that were sampled in 2011. Very small fish were not included in these tables. Along with the number of fish caught per net, there are also the percentages of the fish that were collected in each length category, rounded to the nearest whole number. Lakes are in no particular order. These numbers will be slightly different from the 2012 Fishing Forecast pamphlet because white crappie and black crappie numbers have been put together for easier use.

White and Black Crappie Data from 2011	Fish/net	Percentage in each length group			
		5 - 8"	8 - 10"	10 - 12"	12 - 15"
Tuttle Creek Reservoir	21	30	49	18	3
Pottawatomie SFL #1	8	48	42	10	
Pottawatomie SFL #2	11	33	55	10	2
Shawnee SFL	61	94	3	2	1
Washington SFL	254	98	1	1	
Jeffrey Make Up Lake	10	14	61	20	5
Pott Co. Cross Creek Lake	17	38	51	9	2
Lake Wabaunsee	97	54	44	1	1
Centralia City Lake	72	79	20	1	



Black crappie on the left  
White crappie on the right

Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism has produced a new video titled *Kansas Crappie Bonanza*. This video demonstrates some of the various techniques for catching crappie throughout the year. It even gives some advice on catching crappie in the heat of summer, a time when many anglers perceive crappie fishing to be unproductive.

## F.I.S.H. - Pond Fishing Opportunities in Kansas

KDWPT has a program called F.I.S.H. that pays private landowners to allow public fishing access on their property. This program has undergone a large expansion over the last year. The Manhattan District is ripe with these properties with 66 ponds, 6 stream sites, and 6 river sites.

The 2012 Kansas Fishing Atlas is the best way to find these F.I.S.H. properties. The booklet will direct you to the general location, then you just need to locate one of the F.I.S.H. signs to let you know where to enter the property. These properties offer a large variety of fishing opportunities; from pond fishing for bass and bluegill, to river fishing for big catfish.

Good luck!

