

LAWRENCE DISTRICT FISHING NEWSLETTER

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Special Points of Interest:

- More Cubes for Melvern
- Fall netting results for area lakes

Melvern Habitat Work

In the last newsletter, I credited the wrong bass club with constructing and placing cubes into Melvern Reservoir in 2015. The club that did this work was East Kansas Bassmasters. One of their members sent me the photo of structures going in the water. The fish cube project is a partnership between sportsman clubs (namely bass clubs) and KDWPT to get more largemouth bass habitat into State waters. KDWPT provides materials for cubes, then clubs construct and place them in lakes. Locations (GPS coordinates) are supplied by fisheries biologists. Ten fish cubes were placed into Melvern Reservoir last year and 35 more cubes are scheduled for this year. Cubes are constructed of PVC pipe and corrugated plastic hose, so they should last much longer than brush piles.



Bass News

Clinton Reservoir received the last scheduled fingerling largemouth bass stocking in May 2015, as part of a multi-year project. The Early Spawn Largemouth Bass Project involves manipulating photoperiod and water temperature to trick largemouth bass at Meade Fish Hatchery to spawn earlier (> 2 weeks) than bass would normally. Early spawned fish should be larger than naturally produced lake bass, allowing them to be able to feed sooner on gizzard shad (an important prey species). The hope is that these early spawn bass will exhibit higher survival and increase the density of bass populations in Kansas reservoirs. Stocked bass can be identified by DNA analysis, so now they will be monitored for the next several years to determine their contribution to the bass fishery. DNA results for Clinton Reservoir 2015 electrofishing samples indicated about 20% of Age 1 and 2 largemouth bass were stocked.

Early spawn largemouth bass were stocked at Melvern Reservoir, but instead of fingerlings, bass were grown to intermediate size (7-10") and then stocked. Intermediate sized bass should exhibit higher survival than fingerlings, but intermediates take much more time and pond space to produce. Luckily at Melvern there is a 27 acre rearing pond that 6,020 fingerlings were stocked into May 27 and 3507 intermediates averaging 8.1" long were harvested September 26. These bass were stocked at 5 locations at Melvern. DNA results for 2015 electrofishing samples at Melvern revealed that 33% of Age 1 and 2 bass were stocked. Current plans are to continue producing and stocking intermediate largemouth bass for at least a few more years to determine if there are advantages to this stocking strategy.



Largemouth bass harvested from Melvern Rearing Pond.

Lawrence District Reservoir Netting Results

Table 1 shows catch rates (number/net) for selected species observed in fall test netting 2015. Clinton had higher sample catch rates for all species listed, except for white bass. Few blue catfish were caught at Melvern, but fish over 20 lbs were sampled. Whereas most of Clinton’s blue catfish were 2 to about 4.5 lbs, with no big ones sampled. Both reservoirs have good channel catfish populations and anglers should have success this year. Crappie have been drastically down at Melvern in recent years and the 2015 sample indicates that this trend will continue. There may be light at the end of the tunnel, however as high numbers of young crappie were observed. Clinton’s crappie numbers were only average—numbers continued to be lower than normal, but size was very good, with fish up to 14” sampled. Walleye sample numbers were low for both reservoirs, so angling for this species may be poor to fair. Wipers should be good at Clinton, with most fish about 3-5 lbs. White bass fishing should be good at both reservoirs, as many 14”+ fish were seen.



Table 1. Number per net for selected species at Clinton and Melvern reservoirs, 2015.

Lake	Clinton	Melvern
Blue catfish > 20"	1.3	0.6
Channel catfish > 16"	4.3	3.4
Crappie > 10"	2.1	0.6
Walleye > 15"	0.2	0.1
Wiper > 16"	2.9	-
White bass > 12"	5.6	8.1

Lawrence District Small Lake Netting Results

Table 2 shows catch rates (number/net) for selected species sampled at small lakes. Lonestar and Spring Creek lakes had the best catch rates for bluegill. In addition, Douglas SFL and River Pond usually are good bluegill lakes. In fact the River Pond normally has some really large bluegills (i.e. 8-9” individuals). Bluegills of this size were seen in the River Pond during electrofishing, but they did not appear in the netting survey. I am confident that they are still there and I certainly would put the River Pond on my list of lakes to fish if bluegills are your quarry. River Pond, Lonestar, Carbondale City Lake, and Spring Creek all showed decent crappie fisheries. Numbers of redear sunfish sampled were highest at Douglas SFL, but larger ones were found at Lonestar (typically up to 10”+). Saugeye are only stocked in one District lake, Carbondale City Lake, and even though the catch rate was low in nets, anglers catch fair numbers of these toothy critters during April and May throwing crankbaits on the dam. Normally small lakes do not have good populations of white bass, but Lonestar should be a good small lake choice for this species in 2016. Carbondale City Lake was by far the best lake as far as wiper, with most fish measuring 16-18” in length.

Lonestar has an old established wiper population that can fluctuate greatly in density. Although Lonestar appears down this year as far as wiper numbers, keep in mind some large fish can be caught there, such as the 12 pounder in the picture (supplied by Jared Wilson).



Table 2. Number per net of selected species and lakes sampled in 2015 in Lawrence District.

Species	Carbondale	Douglas SFL	Lonestar	Osage SFL	River Pond	Spring Creek
Bluegill > 6”	3.3	3.7	11.8	2	3	8.5
Crappie > 8”	7.5	3.7	10.3	3.6	10.5	7
C Cat > 16”	5.3	5.7	1.3	3.5	4.5	2
Redear > 7”	NA	11.3	3.5	1.3	NA	1
Saugeye > 14	0.5	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
W Bass > 12”	1	NA	6	2	0.3	NA
Wiper > 16”	5.3	NA	2	1	1	NA

Walleye and Sauger Egg Collection Starts in March

Fisheries personnel will be gearing up for walleye and sauger egg taking activities this spring. Sauger collection typically begins mid-March and walleye gets going a little later in the month. This effort is necessary to maintain fishable populations of walleye, saugeye (walleye-sauger cross), and sauger in many Kansas waters. Nets are set and run daily to remove live percids (i.e. walleye or sauger). Ripe females are stripped of eggs, which are then fertilized with milt from males. Fertilized eggs are then mixed with a clay solution to remove the adhesiveness from eggs so that they do not stick together. After a period of time to water harden, eggs are transported to one of the Agency's Fish Hatcheries. There eggs hatch in 7-10 days depending on water temperature. Within 4 days of hatching, fry are on their way to one of the State's



waters to hopefully one day provide anglers with thrills or tasty fillets. In my District the following lakes are scheduled to be stocked with percids in 2016: Clinton (3.5 million walleye fry, 700,000 sauger fry), Melvern (7 million walleye fry, 2,000 walleye intermediates, 700,000 sauger fry), Lake Shawnee (10,400 walleye fingerlings), and Carbondale City Lake (6,625 saugeye fingerlings). Without this dedicated effort, percid populations would be very minimal in Kansas.

2015 Clinton Creel Survey Results

White crappie ranked first in number harvested, whereas channel catfish was number one in terms of weight harvested. White bass was another important species in terms of harvest, ranking 3rd in number and 4th in weight. Walleye harvest was high in 2015; as over 8,000 were computed to be taken by anglers (normally a decent walleye harvest at Clinton is about 3,000 fish). In addition, walleye ranked 3rd in weight harvested. Catch and released fish are an important component of the recreational fishery equation. White crappie was the most important released species as far as number; followed by white bass, channel catfish, bluegill, and freshwater drum. Largemouth bass and smallmouth bass were released 96 and 94% of the time, respectively. Blue catfish started showing up in more abundance in both harvest and released

Table 3. Computed harvest and released data for Clinton Reservoir, March-October 2015.

Species	Harvest Number	Released Number	Harvest Pounds	Released Pounds
White Crappie	87356	68135	67263	22484
Channel Catfish	25491	10417	73924	8646
White Bass	18653	17230	21263	15334
Walleye	8094	3653	22903	3909
Black Crappie	4284	1930	2956	926
Wiper	1872	3436	9093	14775
Sauger	1609	1078	3055	1109
Bluegill	503	5287	70	740
Blue Catfish	457	471	1573	611
Green Sunfish	380	1849	57	259
Flathead Catfish	281	0	2355	0
FW Drum	202	5064	491	8554
Common Carp	179	974	1258	3668
Largemouth Bass	141	3640	309	4004
Smallmouth Bass	71	1080	200	1109
Gizzard Shad	19	96	4	16

data. Assuming the blue catfish population continues to develop, its contribution to the fishery should increase.

Blue Catfish Regulation Changes at Clinton and Melvern reservoirs

A 35" minimum length limit and reduced daily creel limit of 5 for blue catfish went into effect at Clinton and Melvern reservoirs January 1 of this year. Blue catfish take as long as 7 years to become sexually mature in Midwestern lakes. Clinton Reservoir was stocked with blue catfish from 2006 to 2013 (with the exception of 2010). Currently there is a population of mainly small blue catfish. The concern was that anglers might harvest a large number of these immature blue catfish, thus not allowing the population the chance to develop to its full potential. The 35" minimum length limit should provide some protection for young broodfish, allowing them a few chances to spawn before they are legal to harvest.



Melvorn Reservoir has a more mature population of blue catfish, but density appears low based on sampling. The only time juvenile blue catfish are observed in samples are usually within 3 years of a stocking, so it appears that natural production and recruitment is low. If a significant reason for low production/recruitment is low number of broodfish, then the 35" minimum length limit should serve to improve this parameter. Increased broodfish should result in higher numbers of blue catfish.

Don't Forget about Trout!

There are 3 trout fishing locations in my District; Lake Shawnee, Auburndale Park Stream (Topeka), and Lake Henry at Clinton State Park. Trout season is open from November 1 through April 15. A trout permit costs \$ 14.50 and is good for the calendar year. The daily limit is 5 per day. Anglers 15 and younger may fish for trout without a permit, if they adhere to a 2 trout per day limit. Many anglers enjoy trout fishing, as trout are active during winter and can often be readily caught. Common baits used for stocked trout include: small spinners, small spoons, powerbait, worms, corn, jigs, and flies. The opportunity to catch large fish is present as Lake Shawnee usually receives some lunkers, in fact the State record was broken 2-3 times there over a 2 year period recently.



This lucky angler caught 2 big trout like this one at Lake Henry this winter. There are 2 more months of the season left this spring, so give it a try!