

Perry District Fisheries Newsletter

Fall 2017

Trash and Vandalism

Special points of interest:

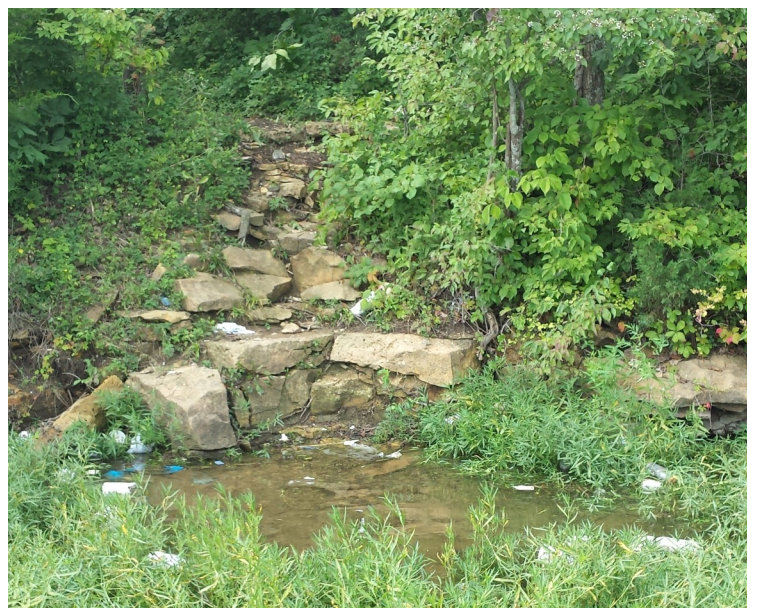
- Trash and Vandalism
- Length Limits explained
- Species Spotlight: Blue Catfish
- F.I.S.H. Program



Leavenworth State Fishing Lake is again the topic of the cover page but this time were not talking about a unique red algae but rather another problem that is taking away from the beauty of this state fishing lake: trash. The shorelines of this popular fishing and boating location are riddled with trash. These are just two pictures of many that I have taken throughout the summer of trash piles accumulating near popular fishing spots. A lot of the trash seems to be correlated with where people sit to fish the automated feeders. We all need to do a better job of policing the area and educate our fellow anglers. We do not want to change operations due to the bad habits of a few. The State of Kansas puts a lot of time and effort into its fish feeding program to attract both fish and anglers alike. Scenes like this are not appealing to fellow anglers.

Another similar problem has occurred at Nebo State Fishing Lake, located just outside of Holton. People have been leaving behind their trash at this little fishing hole but not nearly in the same manner. In this location there was also disappointing vandalism to the feeders. These are services provided to the angler at no additional fees outside of the cost of a fishing

license. KDWPT is a fee funded agency that does not receive general tax dollars. Therefore, the anglers own and operate these public fishing sites. Let us work together to insure that we can operate as efficiently as possible now and in the future. As landowners, we all need to work together to protect our investment. We want to avoid unnecessary expenses or management changes.



“Why don’t we have a slot limit for Walleye?”



A popular question asked to all of the fisheries biologists in the state of Kansas is something along the lines of “Why don’t we use a slot limit on Walleye?” and there is usually a story about fishing in Minnesota or Canada that accompanies this question. It’s a long answer but there is one and it all depends on what the management objectives and the scenarios surrounding it are.

To start, Minnesota is the land of 10,000 lakes, and that is a big difference. They have lakes where Kansas has impoundments; natural vs. man-made. The difference between these is HUGE to Walleye and Sauger. The natural lakes of the northland tend to have the more optimum habitat of rock and sand compared to our silt in reservoirs and impoundments. This difference in habitat is crucial to the spawning of Walleye (they’re kind of picky) and that is the main reason why we have an aggressive stocking program and Minnesota doesn’t; because they don’t need it. Their walleye have minor issues of naturally reproducing. There may only be a few reservoirs in Kansas that they do not. So we need to stock every year to ensure that there are fish to catch.

After a general fish biology lesson, it’s time to move on

to our fish management course. There are three main categories of length limits:

- Minimum length limits protect a fish until it reaches a certain length, usually to optimize investment and attain mature spawning age.
- Maximum length limits are pretty rare to see but they protect larger fish so they can keep producing smaller fish.
- Slot based limits come in two forms protected slot and harvest slot. A protected slot allows the harvest of fish below the slot and usually only a few above (ex. For a 14-20 in. slot, an angler could harvest fish below 14 and above 20). The harvest slot limit is the inverse of the protected and an angler could harvest fish between the 14 and 20 in. range but not outside.

As mentioned, each limit depends on the management objectives and the scenarios or circumstances that each waterbody presents.

Ideally, a minimum length limit would help a biologist to create an ideal population by reducing harvest, increasing catch rates and improving size struc-

ture, but all of that depends on the anglers obeying the regulations. Here in Kansas, the minimum length limit attempts to do all of these things by postponing harvest until the fish reaches 15, 18 or 21 inches long depending on the water body. Of course, it is all reliant upon consistent species recruitment or stocking success.

The slot limits in Minnesota help control the Walleye from becoming stunted due to over population. Due to the natural reproduction, they have an abundance of Walleye. If they implemented a minimum length limit like in Kansas, they would reach the carrying capacity scenario. As I mentioned in my catch and release article in the last newsletter, due to all of their fish being protected until spawning age. Instead they allow the harvest of some of those smaller fish to thin the shorter fish, reduce competition and allow more fish to reach the larger sizes.

Fisheries management isn’t quite as easy as just switching a length limit, but it also isn’t quite as hard as we make it seem sometimes. If you have any other fisheries management related questions do not hesitate to contact me. I will gladly try to explain all of the reasoning behind our actions.

Species Spotlight:

Blue Catfish *Ictalurus furcatus*



The true river monster, the Blue Catfish! These fish appear very similar to the Channel Catfish and are sometimes very difficult to distinguish by the untrained eye. The easiest way to tell the difference in the past was to ask where you caught it. Blue Catfish are only native to our rivers in Kansas and only recent decades did we begin to stock them in our reservoirs. So if you claimed to catch one before we stocked them, chances are it was a Channel Catfish. The color is another trick to distinguish the two with a blue cat appearing a silvery-blue and a channel appearing kind of a yellow grey to dark grey. Both of the fish can appear the dark grey color so that method isn't that reliable. In our future regulations, the two will be differentiated by the number of fin rays on the fish's anal fin (get those fingers and toes ready to count!). The Blue Catfish will have 30 or more rays in its anal fin and a Channel Catfish will have less. If you don't want to count that

high or don't have a buddy to count his toes too then I'll share a trick I learned while working on the Mississippi River. This works very well for fish from 2 inches up to the monsters. Holding the fish with the head in one hand and the tail in the other, look at the shape of the head. A Blue Catfish's head has a steeper slope up towards the dorsal fin than the Channel Catfish's, which will appear

flat when compared to a Blue. And finally, a Blue Catfish is going to reach much larger sizes than a channel would so if you catch a monster, chances are it is a blue. Remember, if there is any doubt, count the fin rays because that is the way they are differentiated in the regulations and that is how the wardens will enforce the limits.

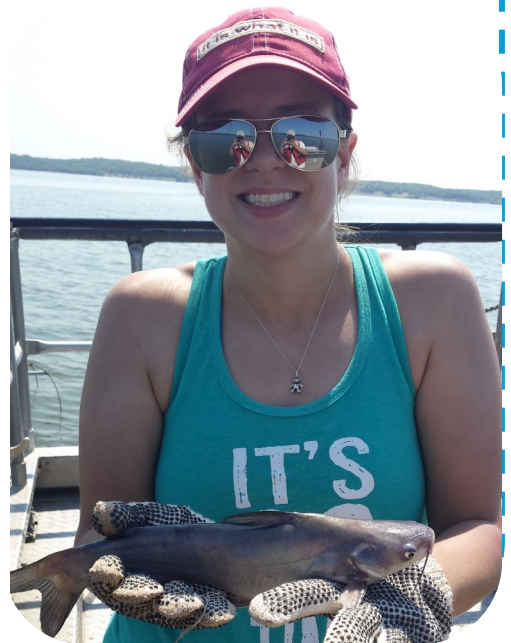
So, back to the large size, **how big can they get?** The Kansas state record is just shy of 57 inches long, weighed 102.8 pounds, and was caught in the Missouri River in 2012. This is pretty close to the maximum size of 65 inches long and 125 pounds.

The next question might be, **where can I catch one of these monsters?** As noted earlier, they are native only to our rivers and that is where the state record resides so it would be a good place to start. Look for moving water in deep channels with sandy or course bottoms. In the reservoirs that we have stocked them in, fisheries biologist

have had good luck sampling these fish near where old river channels come close to the bank.

Now that you're there, **how do you catch a Blue Catfish?** Their feeding style is a mix between flatheads and channels, being deemed opportunistic omnivores. They feed on fishes, zooplankton, crayfish, insects, and mollusks, including the zebra mussel. I have seen with my own eyes and in other studies in which a fish the size of the one to the left has a 18" Silver Carp in its throat or a stomach just jammed full of zebra mussel shells. Anglers have best luck using shad in our reservoirs but the river rats that chase the monsters prefer other fresh herring.

Once you catch one, make sure you obey the regulations in place. Most reservoirs have a 35" minimum in place to protect fish allowing them an opportunity to reproduce and to further establish a population of these true monsters. So get out there and try your luck at landing a big blue!





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F.I.S.H. program provides untapped potential



Beginning in 1998, the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism has been leasing private waters from landowners to provide the public an opportunity to fish. The F.I.S.H. program, which stands for Fishing Impoundments and Stream Habitat, pays landowners by the acre for ponds or by the mile for streams. Most of these properties are open from March 1st through

October 31st and have special regulations listed in the yearly fishing regulations summary. The locations of these F.I.S.H. waters can be found online or in the Kansas Fishing Atlas which is produced and distributed free of charge at your local KDWPT office or at your nearest hunting/fishing license vendor.

These water bodies provide an excellent opportunity for anglers who want to get away from crowded reservoirs, want to take kids fishing, or just want to recreate the simpler times of farm-pond fishing as a kid.

The fishing on these ponds should be heating up with the cooler weather moving in. Grab your tackle box, head to the country side and find yourself a secret spot!