

Cheney District Fisheries

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District News: Cheney, Hutchinson and Wichita Fishing

Hello everyone, I hope you all had a safe and fun summer fishing season! If you're like me, you are probably looking forward to cooler temperatures, college football and hunting seasons ahead. Don't forget that fall offers some of the best fishing opportunities of the year. Fish feeding activity increases when temperatures begin to drop from their summer peak. The best part is that you may have the lake to yourself! Good luck out there!

Inside This Issue

District News

Fishing Q&A

Hook, Line & Sinker

Cheney Reservoir

New Brushpiles Paying Off

The Cedar trees that were placed in February 2018 are holding some big fish. KDWPT fisheries division staff sampled both sites with electrofishing for catfish in August. Numerous Blue Catfish up to 19 pounds and Flathead Catfish up to 40 pounds were sampled in each location. If you want to go after these fish, you may need to adjust your tactics somewhat. The blues are likely suspended in the upper half of the trees, and the flatheads are probably hanging out on the bottom under the trunks during the day. To target the blues, I would suggest drifting cut shad just over the tops of the trees, perhaps using a float to control the depth. For flatheads, try jigging live bait around the base of the trees; good boat control and heavy tackle for pulling large fish out of the trees are key for this tactic.



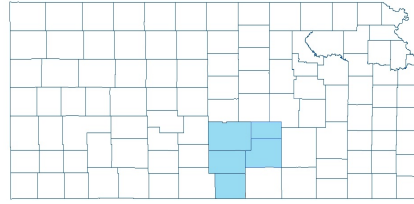
At Right: KDWPT fisheries biologists Craig Johnson and Lowell Aberson with a 32-inch Blue Catfish electrofished from a brushpile site.

Kansas Gas Service Donates Artificial Fish Habitat

In August, Kansas Gas Service donated 50 artificial fish attractors for placement in Cheney Reservoir. The attractors are constructed of expired and scrap pieces of plastic natural gas pipe. These structures were placed near popular spring crappie fishing locations in the East Shore Marina and Red Bluffs. Because of their construction, they will be nearly snagless, and they should provide increased opportunity for shore anglers to catch crappie in the springtime.



At Right: Gas pipe fish attractors being deployed at Cheney Reservoir.



Wichita Area

Habitat Project at Island Pond

In July and August, district staff enlisted the help of Cheney Wildlife Area staff and Great Plains Nature Center staff to transplant 140 cattail and three-square bulrush plants into exclosures along the north shore of Island Pond at Chisholm Creek Park in Wichita. The goal of the planting effort is two-fold. Shoreline erosion is occurring along the north side of the pond, likely as a result of wind and wave action during high water events. Establishing a zone of emergent vegetation along the shore should mitigate

the shoreline erosion by acting as a barrier to wave action. Additionally, increasing the amount of aquatic vegetation in the pond will improve habitat for fish and wildlife species such as Largemouth Bass, Bluegill, and a wide variety of wetland bird species. Chickenwire exclosures were constructed around the transplant locations to protect the plantings from rooting activity of Common Carp, and the grazing activity of muskrats. With any luck, the transplants will thrive in their new location and eventually expand beyond the perimeter of the exclosures. Island Pond is an important location for kids' fishing clinics in Kansas and is one of the few locations in Kansas with catch-and-release only regulations in effect.



At Right: Three-square bulrush being transplanted into a carp exclosures at Island Pond.

Elsewhere in the District

Channel Catfish Stocking

Fall is catfish stocking time in Kansas! Channel Catfish are an important component of the fisheries in many state and community lakes across Kansas. However, Largemouth Bass are efficient predators of juvenile Channel Catfish in small lakes, which results in very little natural production of catfish in those water bodies. In order

to maintain catfish populations in small lakes, KDWPT hatcheries produce 8- to 10-inch catfish that are large enough to avoid being eaten by Largemouth Bass. In some years, hatchery production is limited and a scoring system must be used to prioritize which waterbodies will receive fish that year. Fortunately, 2018 was a good year of Channel Catfish production in the KDWPT hatchery system, and all stocking requests for the Cheney District waters will be fulfilled this year.

Fishing Q&A

Q: How do you tell the difference between Channel and Blue Catfish?

A: Being able to positively identify Blue Catfish and Channel Catfish is important because length and bag limits usually differ between the species. For example, at Cheney Reservoir there is no length limit for Channel Catfish and anglers may keep up to 10 per day. Conversely, Blue Catfish have a minimum length limit of 35 inches and a daily creel limit of 5 fish per day. Unfortunately, many anglers struggle with identifying the two species. There have even been a few cases of anglers unknowingly showing off stringers containing undersized Blue Catfish on social media. Fortunately, if you follow these three tips, you can be confident that you're making the right call on the water.

1. Ignore the color of the fish. I cannot overstate the importance of this. Blue and Channel Catfish can have very similar colorations. Individuals of both species can vary from nearly white, to grey, tan, blue, and nearly black. Additionally, coloration of individual fish varies widely, even within the same lake. For this reason, you should never use color to identify fish species.

2. Look at the shape of the anal fin. This is the fastest way to identify your fish. Blue Catfish anal fins are an angular shape, with the rear margin being nearly straight. The anal fin of Channel Catfish has a rounded margin.

A Blue Catfish (left) and Channel Catfish (right) of similar sizes from Cheney Reservoir. Notice the difference in shape of the anal fins.



3. Count the anal fin rays. If you are still unsure about what species of fish you have caught, count the number of anal fin rays. If the number is 24-29, the fish is a Channel Catfish. If it's 30 or more, you've caught yourself a Blue!

Hook, Line and Sinker

Cheney District Fisheries

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There's no place like home, so *Fish Kansas!* - Andrew