

Spring 2010



# New Strawn District Fisheries Newsletter

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**Coffey County Lake**



*Kids love catching catfish*

## District Spring Fishing Update

Every fall, fisheries biologist around the state head out to sample the water bodies in their district. They use trap nets and four different sizes of gill nets to catch a multitude of fish species. Lengths and weights of each fish are recorded before they are released. This data is used to assess the fish population for each place that is sampled. Biologists use this data for such things as evaluating special regulations, determine future stocking needs, and develop forecasts to keep anglers informed of fishing opportunities.

Data is kept on length distribution, body condition and catch rates to monitor changes in fish populations on each body of water sampled.

Last falls sampling indicated that there should be some very good channel catfish to be caught on several small lakes in the New Strawn Management District. Channels up to twenty pounds were sampled in the Melvern River Pond, Osage State Fishing Lake, and Woodson State Fishing Lake. All of the small lakes in the New Strawn District are fed rations of catfish feed to increase growth rates and support increased stocking rates.

Several of the small lakes showed good numbers of wipers in the gill nets. The South Garnett Lake and Woodson State Fishing Lake had good numbers of wipers in the samples. Coffey County Lake probably has the largest numbers of wipers in the District.

Several of the lakes have good numbers of large bluegill. The Melvern river pond is probably the best with bluegills over 9 inches. Yates Center Reservoir and Lebo City Lake are also good bets for large bluegill and redear sunfish.

Melvorn Reservoir will be the best bet for good numbers of quality crappie.

## Melvorn Reservoir Walleye



*Sampled Walleye*

Melvorn Reservoir is one of the top destinations for walleye fishermen in eastern Kansas. Built in the early 1970's Melvorn has always had a good reputation for producing walleye. The 2009 fall sampling showed the highest catch rate of walleye in the past ten years. The largest numbers of fish were in the 15-17 inch range. This should mean continued good fishing for walleye in the future. This gives anglers a lot of opportunity for catch and release fishing as well as harvest. Walleye growth is average at Melvorn and it takes four years to get past the 18 inch length limit.

The walleye fishing begins in late March when they congregate along the dam to begin their spawning ritual. Anglers find the best time to fish them is at night. Walleye will move into shallow water along the rip-rap. The best baits to use are shallow diving shad imitation lures, jig with a night crawler under a bobber work well, also. Walleye will be along the dam for about two weeks. After the spawn, they will move out into the flats. By mid-May, fish can be caught by drifting a jig and night crawler, trolling with deep diving shad or minnow imitations.

Each spring there are 7 million walleye fry stocked in Melvorn Lake. There is a 30 acre rearing pond operated by the Corps of Engineers, Kansas Walleye Association and Kansas Wildlife and Parks to rear larger walleye up to ten inches for the lake.



*Blue Catfish have a thick nape of the neck, a slate blue color and a longer anal fin with 30-35 supporting rays*

## Blue Catfish at Melvorn

Blue cats have been stocked in several other reservoirs in Kansas and the future is bright. Blue catfish have already reached weights of over 50 pounds in other locations. Blue catfish are showing up in fisheries samples at Melvorn Lake. They were stocked about ten years ago and growth has been good. There have already been reports of blue cats over 25 pounds. In the fall of 2009 several over 15 pounds were sampled. Reproduction has been limited, thus far. Therefore, another stocking has been requested for the fall of 2010.

Melvorn has a high density of channel cat, but they do not grow as fast as the blues. Most channels are in the two pound range. Good angling opportunities for channels should continue.

## Feature Lake – Coffey County Lake

### *Hot Water Fishing*

Coffey County Lake is a cooling lake for the only commercially operating nuclear power plant in Kansas. The Plant is operated by the Wolf Creek Nuclear Operating Corporation. The lake is just over 5,000 acres. The fishing access is controlled by the Coffey County Sheriff Office. The lake fishing access is located on Highway 75, three miles north of Burlington Kansas. The lake is open year-round from sunup to sundown. There is only one boat ramp on the lake. Everyone has to check in at gate house as they enter the fishing area.

There are special regulations at the lake to make it safe for the anglers and maintain a quality sport fishery. Foremost the lake is built and managed as cooling water for the power plant. The power plant has rotating screens to filter the water going into the plant. It is possible that high numbers of gizzard shad could get sucked into this screen and shut the plant down. For that reason the population of predator fish is kept at very high levels. Restrictive length and creel limits help maintain a high predator density and low shad numbers. This also makes for great catch and release fishing. The average catch rate for anglers was five fish per hour in 2009. This catch rate is higher than most public fishing lakes.

Safety measures are taken to prevent fatal boating accidents. Life jackets must be worn at all times on the lake and the lake is closed when wind speeds are above twenty miles per hour from the north during the winter months. To check on lake conditions you can call the gate house at 620-364-2475.

The lake has one of the best smallmouth bass fisheries in the Midwest. The lake is also known for excellent numbers of walleye, white bass, crappie, wipers and catfish. Fishing is good around the hot water discharge during the winter months. The lake fishing peaks are about a month ahead of other Kansas lakes. During the heat of the summer the fishing for catfish and white bass continues to be good.

Anglers are also reminded to “Clean, Drain and Dry” your boat, trailer and other fishing equipment at the end of your fishing day. This is always good advice, but even more now that Zebra Mussels have been verified in the Neosho River basin upstream of the lake. There is a probability that this aquatic nuisance species could invade this water as the zebra mussel veligers are released into the Neosho River from Marion Reservoir and eventually from John Redmond Reservoir. Anglers do not want to be involved in spreading this species to other waters they fish via their fishing equipment.



*Good Coffey County  
Smallmouth Bass*



*Wiper*



*Future Trophy Smallmouth Bass ???*