# Tuttle Creek Fisheries Newsletter Spring 2015

Ely Sprenkle, District Fisheries Biologist

Tuttle Creek State Park, 5800A River Pond Road, Manhattan, KS 66502
www.ksoutdoors.com ely.sprenkle@ksoutdoors.com (785) 539-7941

**Inside This Issue**



White Crappie from Tuttle Creek

Saugeye from Tuttle Creek

## Tuttle Creek Reservoir Fishing Forecast

I wish I had some great things to say about fishing prospects at Tuttle Creek Reservoir for 2015. Unfortunately, there are not too many positives from the 2014 sampling data.

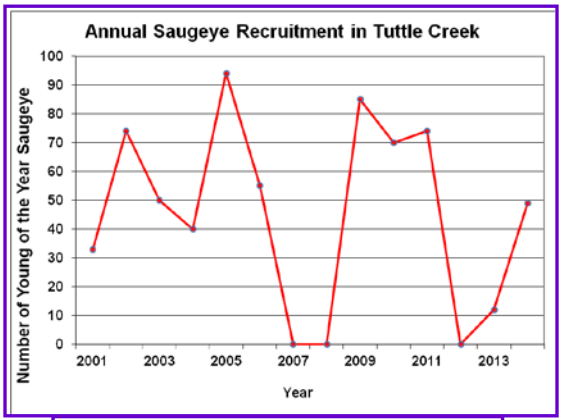
Every year I evaluate the fish populations at area lakes by catching fish with gill nets, trap nets, seines and an electrofishing boat. The data I collect allows me to make some determinations about the fish populations in each lake. An indication of how many fish are in a lake is evaluated by number of fish caught per net and is expressed as abundance. Length measurements reveal the size structure of a fish population and weighing each fish helps me to determine body condition of the different fish species.

The annual sampling efforts at Tuttle Creek Reservoir in 2011 and 2012 revealed that fish abundance was well above average for most of the sportfish species inhabiting the lake. Unfortunately, sampling conducted in 2013 documented that fish numbers had fallen quite dramatically. Factors contributing to this include: water level falling to a record 12 feet low in December of 2012, an ill-timed large water release in the spring of 2013 and a poor gizzard shad spawn in 2013. Persistent muddy conditions produced an even worse shad spawn in 2014, which prevented most of the sportfish species from making any great improvements in the last year.

The white crappie population has been fairly consistent over the years and the current population is just a little below the long-term average for species abundance. White crappie had very productive spawns the last two years, resulting in a population with high numbers of fish less than 8 inches. Fish born in 2012 had poor survival, so there are below average numbers of crappie from 8 to 10 inches. The lake still contains decent numbers of fish over 10 inches, so harvest rates in 2015 should still be close to normal.

At times, Tuttle Creek has had very good numbers of saugeye. However, saugeye leave the lake at high rates when there is a large water release

Continued on page 2




Blue Catfish sampled in 2014

## Tuttle Creek Reservoir Fishing Forecast

in the spring. Sample numbers went from 9 per net in 2012, down to 0.25 per net in 2014. This was primarily due to the loss of fish during the large water release in June of 2013. On a positive note, the 2014 electrofishing sample documented that the 2014 stocking was successful in producing an adequate year-class. Overall, the saugeye population will provide limited harvest opportunities in 2015.

The white bass population has really struggled the last two years. Gill nets collected only 9 fish in 2014, compared to the 240 caught in 2012. In general, white bass fishing will be tough at Tuttle Creek Reservoir this year.

Channel catfish numbers continue to be low with no improvements in the last year. The blue catfish population has been expanding into the fishery as a result of new stocking efforts started in 2011. Most of the blue's are less than 20 inches, but I did collect some over 30 inches. The flathead population appears to be fairly constant.

Overall, the fish populations are below average at Tuttle Creek, but there will still be a whole bunch of fish harvested from the lake in 2015, so do not be afraid to give it a try.

# Fish Stocking Records for the Manhattan District

KDWPT has four fish hatcheries that raise the majority of the fish stocked into public waters in Kansas. To the right is a table with the numbers of fish that KDWPT stocked into lakes and ponds in the Manhattan District in 2014.

The numbers in the graph are pretty typical for how many fish get stocked in this area every year. However, some of these numbers are adjusted annually due to what a lake needs. For example: Centralia City Lake typically gets 4,000 channel catfish a year, but the 2014 stocking was reduced due to very high numbers of small fish sampled the previous year.

Sometimes the demand for a species exceeds what the hatcheries can produce in a given year. For example: the two Jeffrey Energy Center Lakes normally receive annual walleye stockings, but not enough walleye were produced in 2014 for these two lakes to receive a stocking.

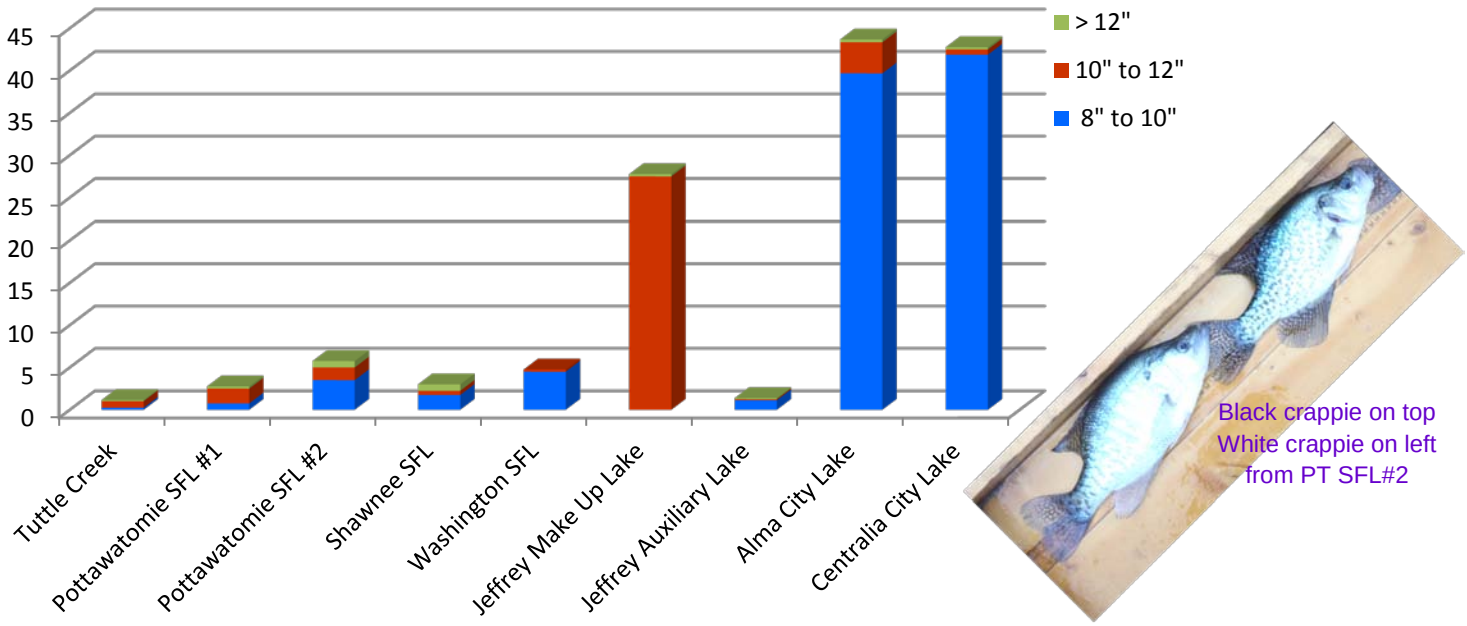
Many fish species do not need regular stockings to maintain their populations, but for some popular sportfish species stocking is an important tool for maintaining good numbers for anglers.

| Fish Stocked in the Manhattan District in 2014 | Channel Catfish | | Blue Catfish | Saugeye | | Wiper | Rainbow Trout |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Size | 8" to 10" | 12" to 18" | 5" to 10" | Fry | Fingerlings | Fingerlings | 2/lb |
| Tuttle Creek Reservoir | | | 24,795 | 1,000,000 | 143,000 | | |
| Willow Lake | 401 | | | | | | 11,000 |
| Pottawatomie SFL #1 | 962 | | | | | | |
| Pottawatomie SFL #2 | | 5,413 | | | | | |
| Shawnee SFL | | 5,552 | | | | | |
| Washington SFL | 2,000 | | | | 3,476 | | |
| Jeffrey Make Up Lake | 1,252 | | | | | 1,396 | |
| Jeffrey Auxiliary Lake | 1,383 | | | | | | |
| Centralia City Lake | 2,003 | | | | 16,000 | 1,779 | |
| Cross Creek Lake | 980 | | | | | | |
| Alma City Lake | 801 | | | | | | |
| Nemaha WA Pond | 503 | | | | | | |
| Jerry Dishman Lake | 301 | | | | | | |
| Wamego City Lake | 250 | | | | | | |
| Waterville - Idlewild Lake | 301 | | | | | | |
| Marysville Country Club Lake | 203 | | | | | | |
| F.I.S.H. ponds in district | 2,300 | | | | | | |
| Total | 13,640 | 10,965 | 24,795 | 1,000,000 | 162,476 | 3,175 | 11,000 |

# Crappie Forecast for the Manhattan District

Crappie are a popular sportfish, but their populations tend to be cyclical in nature. A lake can go from bad to good or vise versa in a rather short period of time. That is why I always put annual crappie sampling data in my spring newsletter to get anglers ready for the good fishing during the spawning season.

Below is data for waters in the Manhattan District that were sampled in the fall of 2014. The chart is meant for easy comparison of crappie populations in local waters. The bars represent how many crappie I collected per net in each length category. Lakes are in no particular order. These numbers will be slightly different from the 2015 Fishing Forecast pamphlet because white crappie and black crappie have been put together for easier use.






Black crappie on top
White crappie on left
from PT SFL#2

Looking at this data can be a helpful guide on where to start fishing, but it can also be a little misleading at times. For one thing, it is a little more complicated than just comparing sample numbers from a big 12,000 acre reservoir to a small 24 acre state fishing lake to determine where the better place to fish is. Second, netting data can underestimate the number of big crappie in a lake; I don't sample very many crappie over 12 inches in the trap nets at Tuttle Creek, yet every year local anglers seem to do pretty good catching them.

Jeffrey Make Up Lake is the place to go this year, as it ranks 2nd in the state for crappie over 10 inches. The population is dominated by fish from the exception 2011 spawn that occurred at Make Up Lake and almost every fish there is nearly the same size from 10½ to 11½ inches. The great fishing at this lake won't last for too many years into the future, as crappie are a short lived species and a successful spawn has not been documented at Make Up Lake since the big one in 2011. This is a great example of the boom or bust nature of crappie populations. It is also a good reason to go catch them soon while there are great numbers in the lake.

Centralia City Lake has a lot of crappie, but the size structure has not changed much in the last four years. The crappie population is suffering from an overcrowding situation where fish are struggling to get enough food to grow over 10 inches. This is a common concern with white crappie and why black crappie are the preferred species in smaller lakes. Hopefully, the recently improved numbers of saugeye at the lake can begin to "thin the herd" and allow more crappie to get bigger.

Alma City Lake also has high numbers of small fish, but this is a new situation here. This corresponds to the recent appearance of white crappie into the fishery. Hopefully, this will not develop into a chronic problem at the lake, but the current population does have good numbers of black crappie over 10 inches.

Continued on page 4

## Crappie Forecast for the Manhattan District

The other lakes in the graph had low to moderate sample numbers in 2014. This does not mean that crappie cannot be caught at these lakes; I always see anglers catching crappie at Pottawatomie State Fishing Lake #2 during the spring spawn, even though sample numbers are usually low at this lake.

For more information, the state wide fishing forecast for crappie and many other species can be found HERE or paper copies are available at most KDWPT offices. I hope this information helps you find some good crappie fishing this spring and good luck!

Alma City Lake sample

17" black crappie from Shawnee SFL

# Some pictures from fall sampling in 2014

Centralia City Lake

Centralia City Lake has an excellent channel catfish population with 2014 having the highest sample number on record. It also has pretty good saugeye numbers with 85% of the fish collected last fall over 18 inches and 40% over 22 inches.

Jeffrey Make Up Lake

Along with an excellent white crappie population, Make Up Lake also has good numbers of wiper over 20 inches. Jeffrey Auxiliary Lake has great numbers of big white bass. Both lakes have good smallmouth bass fishing and moderate walleye populations.

# Wildlife Section Update by Zackary Cordes

Turkey season is right around the corner. Youth season begins April 1st, archery season April 6th, and the regular season opens on the 15th. The Walk In Hunting Access (WIHA) program has many properties in the Manhattan area that are only a short drive away. Riley and Pottawatomie County have a total of 17 properties available for access this spring. If you are willing to drive a little further, Nemaha County has over 50 properties and Marshall County has even more. Keep an eye out for the 2015 Spring Turkey Hunting Atlas. This atlas will show all available WIHA properties as well as Wildlife Areas open to public hunting. The atlas can be found online or at many local stores and state parks. Have fun and good luck!