Carson Cox, Fisheries Biologist
Emporia Research & Survey Office
1830 Merchant St., P.O. Box 1525
Emporia, KS 66801

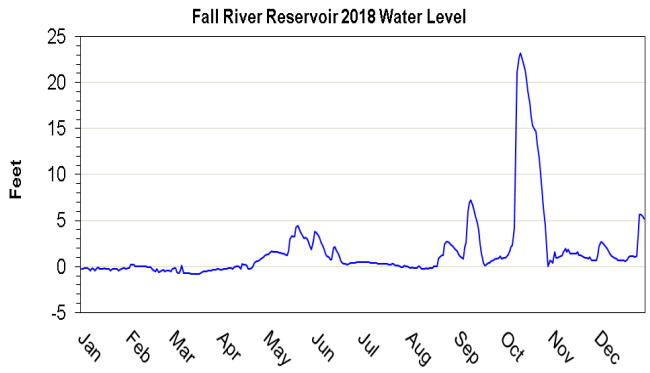
Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism

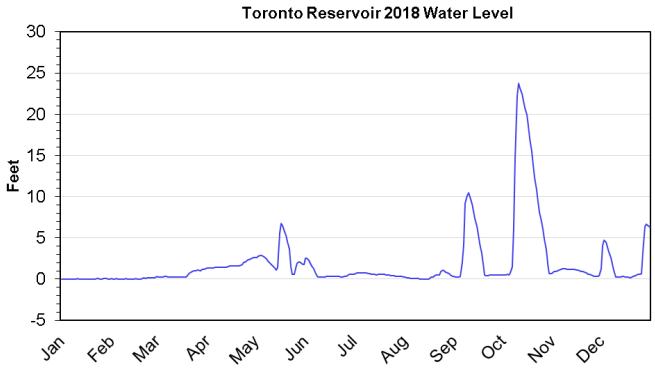
Phone: (620) 342-0658
Fax: (620) 342-6248
www.ksoutdoors.com
carson.cox@ks.gov

Fall River/Toronto Fisheries District Newsletter

Fall River and Toronto Reservoirs Spring 2019 Fishing Forecast

Toronto and Fall River Reservoirs rank as two of the best white crappie, channel catfish, and white bass fisheries in Kansas for 2019. Growth rates were excellent over the past several years due to stunting of abundant young of the year gizzard shad. Despite drought conditions through August, both reservoirs remained full. There was an excellent crappie spawn at Fall River due to prolonged flooding of terrestrial vegetation in May. The crappie spawn at Toronto was not as good because of the shorter duration of the spring flood and untimely rapid water release.





Fall River Reservoir has a good white crappie population. It ranked in the middle of the pack among all Kansas reservoirs. It had the fourth largest crappie sampled in 2018 at 2.09 pounds. There were 2,820 crappie sampled in trap nets. Most were sub-stock size young of the year. If they survive the winter, there will be a dominate year class next fall of 8-inch fish. In the meantime, they provided an excellent forage base. They were the perfect size for cannibalistic crappie, white bass, and channel catfish. They, along with the abundant gizzard shad young, consumed enough zooplankton so as to reduce growth. This was one time where stunted growth was a good thing. Typically, young gizzard shad grow so rapidly that they get too big for crappie and white bass to eat by fall.

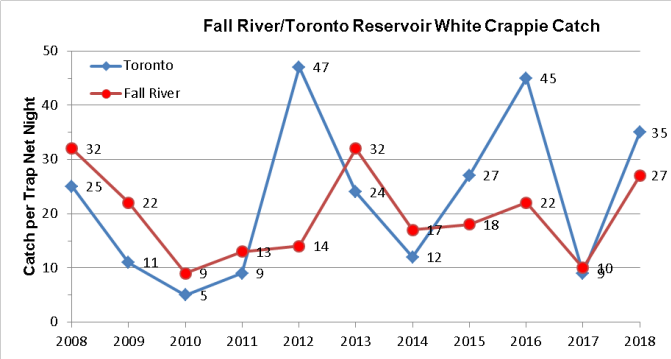
Fall River Reservoir had an ideal density white crappie population. There were 27 adult crappie sampled per trap net, which slightly exceeded the objective density range of 20-25. This was the highest density since 2013. Crappie were not overpopulated and should grow rapidly. Anglers should expect to catch good numbers of 8- to 10-inch fish during the spawn in April. Eight percent of crappie were over 12 inches and should provide for some exciting catches.

White Crappie Stats	Fall River	Toronto
Total Catch	2,820	1,660
Stock Catch (>5 inches)	435	559
Units of Effort (#nets)	16	16
Stock CPUE	27	35
Sub-Stock CPUE	149	17
Percent of catch (5-8 inches)	74	52
Percent of catch (8-10 inches)	17	28
Percent of catch (10-12 inches)	1	11
Percent of catch (12-15 inches)	7	8
Percent of catch (>15 inches)	1	1

Look for early season crappie in the backs of coves where in-flowing water warms up faster than the main body of the reservoir. Schools of spawning crappie congregate in Casner Creek, Otter Creek, and Fall River below the confluence of Otter Creek. If the water's just right, there will also be a run up Badger Creek. It would be worth checking out the rock quarry above Quarry Bay. The rapid water level rise and fall in October may have trapped large numbers of crappie there.

Once the main reservoir warms up in May, you can still catch crappie in the inlet streams. However, large spawning beds exist over gravel shoals in Rock Ridge Cove. The brush piles throughout the cove hold large numbers of fish in spring. Other good areas include Fredonia Bay point, Engineer Bay and point, and the

north east shoreline of the reservoir around Brown's Cove. This shoreline is especially good when a southwesterly wind is blowing on shore. The waves pile up warm water and rich plankton on the rocks.



Toronto Reservoir white crappie population is one of the best in Kansas. It was ranked fourth for fish over 12 inches. It had the fifth highest density of crappie over 10 inches. It had the largest crappie sampled by biologists in 2017. It weighed 2.39 pounds. But, considering that Toronto is the seventh oldest reservoir in Kansas and still consistently produces crappie in the top five, shows the quality of habitat still available and the productivity of the reservoir.

2.39 lbs. white crappie from Toronto Reservoir

There were 1,660 white crappie sampled from Toronto Reservoir, of which 559 were adults. Just like at Fall River, young crappie and gizzard shad were so abundant that they stunted their growth by consuming zooplankton. Young shad and crappie were the perfect size forage. Adult crappie and white bass often go hungry in fall and winter when young gizzard shad grow too big to consume. That was not the case this year. Fish condition exceeded 100 percent. In other words, fish were really fat.

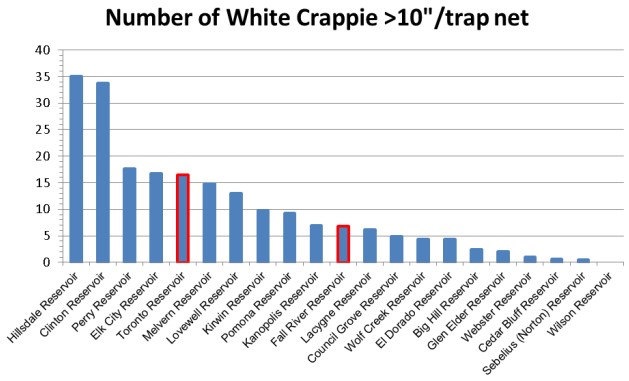
Toronto Reservoir had some really big crappie. Twenty percent of crappie were over 10 inches. Nine percent were over 12 inches. There were 27 adult crappie caught per trap net, which exceeded the objective density range of 20-25. This was the highest density since 2016. However, there was plenty of food for crappie. They were not overpopulated and will grow fast.

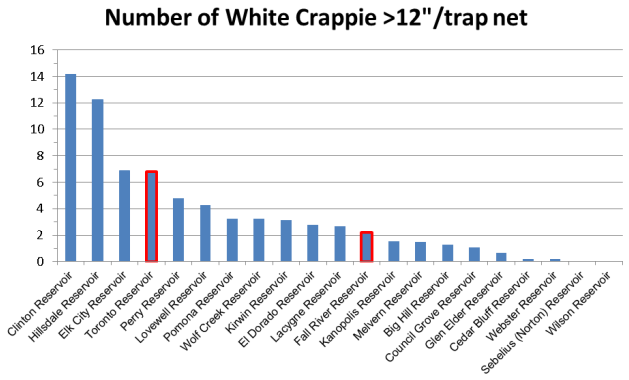
Young channel catfish, gizzard shad, and white crappie from Toronto Reservoir.

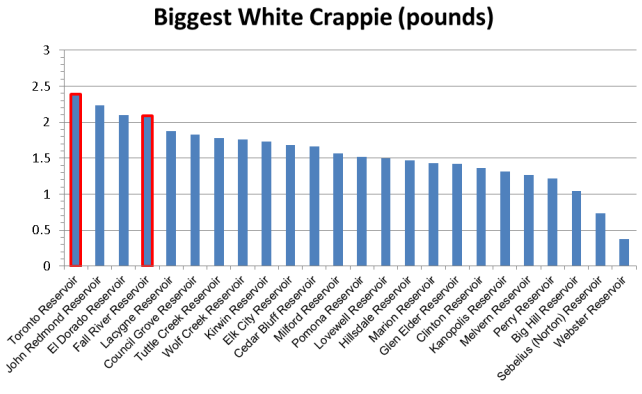
There are so many good places to catch crappie at Toronto Reservoir, it's sometimes hard to predict where they might me schooled. The north side of Duck Island holds fish at times; especially when water is flowing into the reservoir. I had trap nets set there this fall when a cold front went through. The next morning, I had to break ice to get the nets. There were still crappie in the nets, though. Both Mann's and Toronto Point coves hold a lot of crappie in the spring. When crappie are schooled on deep brush piles, don't forget that I built 24 new ones last winter. All the brush pile locations can be found on the KDWPT web page for Toronto Reservoir fishing report.

Fall trap net under ice on North side of Duck Island.

For early spring crappie, look in the deep holes in Walnut Creek. There is one on the sandstone cliffs above the county bridge on Road 33, and one by the sandstone cliffs by the old Baker Bridge site. This is one of those patterns where either the crappie are schooled there in good numbers or they're not. So don't waste too much time looking here.



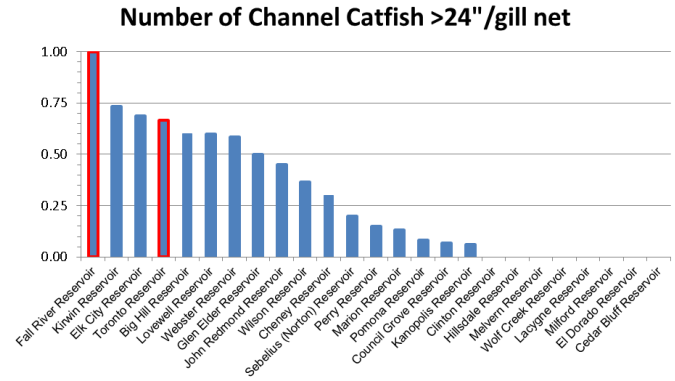


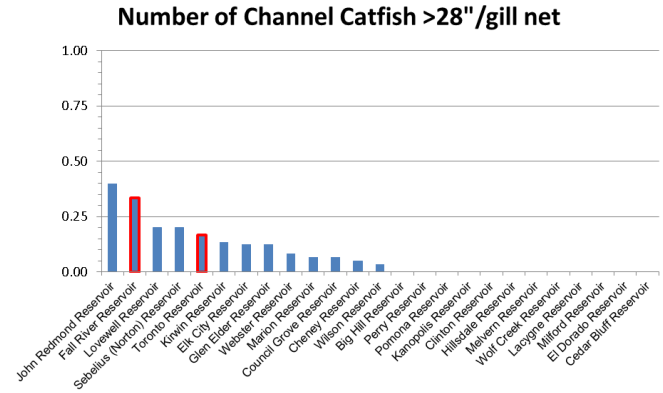


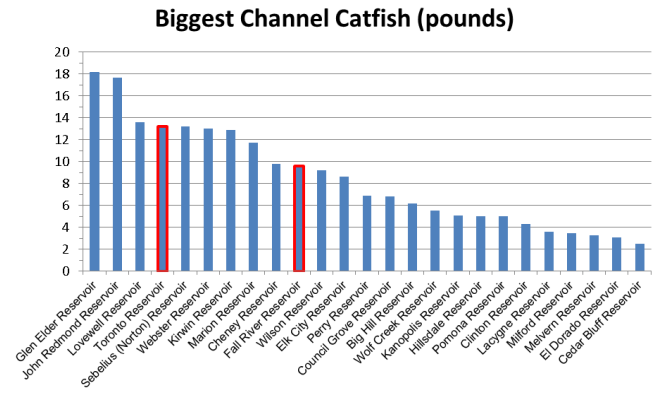
Fall River and Toronto Reservoirs have some of the finest channel catfish populations in the state. I've seen film crews with fancy boats from Missouri at Fall River shooting video footage catching channel catfish. I've also seen channel catfish guides taking clients out at the reservoirs. It's no wonder why these reservoirs attract this attention. Fall River Reservoir had the highest density of channel catfish over 24 inches among Kansas reservoirs. Toronto was ranked fourth for fish over 24 inches. Fall River was ranked second for channel catfish over 28 inches, and Toronto was ranked fifth.

Both reservoirs have high densities of really big cats. One of my favorite patterns is to fish the mouth of the river when flood water first starts coming into the lake. Catfish congregate into a feeding frenzy in the current. Another consistent pattern is to fish the windy shoreline. Like crappie and white bass, channel catfish feed on young gizzard shad and crappie as they congregate along the rocks on the windy shoreline when the wind blows out of the southwest.

33 lbs. flathead catfish from Fall River Reservoir.







Carson Cox, Fisheries Biologist
Emporia Research & Survey Office
1830 Merchant St., P.O. Box 1525
Emporia, KS 66801

Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism

Phone: (620) 342-0658
Fax: (620) 342-6248
www.ksoutdoors.com
carson.cox@ks.gov

Fall River/Toronto Fisheries District Newsletter

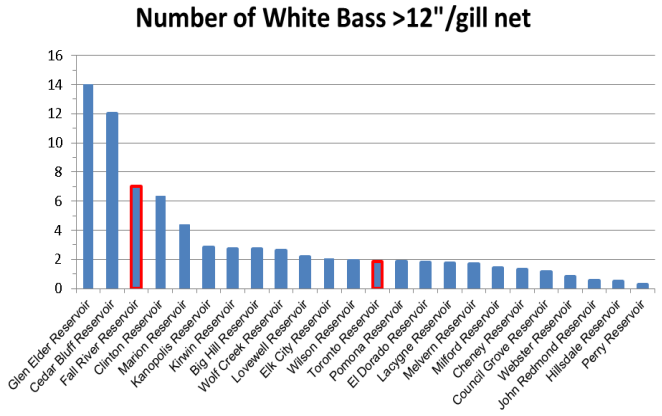
17-inch white bass from Fall River

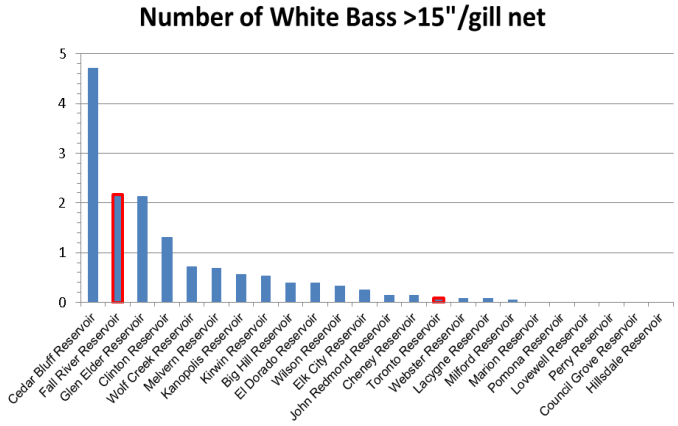
Fall River Reservoir had an excellent white bass population. It had the second highest catch of fish over 15 inches and the third highest catch over 12 inches in the state. A 2.56-pound white bass was sampled in gill nets, which was the third largest among reservoirs. Toronto Reservoir also had a 2.5-pounder caught, but the density of fish at Toronto was just average this year.

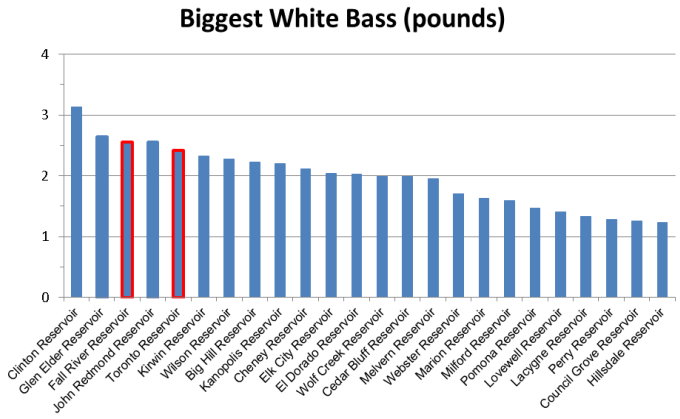
With the number of young gizzard shad and white crappie in the nets this October, I would expect some white bass to grow to three pounds by the spawn in April. There are three areas where white bass traditionally spawn when the river rises. The first is the riffles below the confluence of Otter Creek. The second is the riffles in Otter Creek upstream from the narrows. And the last is the riffles at Twin Falls just below the narrows.

Occasionally, when the river floods really high, they bypass these areas and run all the way up to Moss Ford to spawn. I had a friend that caught and released 345 there one day. He said his arms were burning from reeling! He took me back there the next day; we only caught a few young males. We searched the traditional areas downstream, too, but never got into them like he did the day before. The lesson learned was to watch for the first rise in the river or Otter Creek after March 15.

I never get skunked as long as the river's flowing. There's always some white bass to catch and early spawn crappie are present, too. I even catch channel catfish slurping up eggs along with some really big smallmouth buffalo. I like to use 6- or 8-pound test line and often times the buffalo break me off. It's a rare trip where I don't catch a largemouth or spotted bass and a flathead in the riffles. Since the county closed the Honey Creek Bridge below Climax, anglers don't seem to visit the white bass spawning grounds as much anymore. It's not like the old days when you'd pull up and there'd be 10 or 12 trucks there. This is something to think about if you are willing to drive some back country roads.







If you know someone who might like to subscribe to the newsletter, they can do so at this address: http://ksoutdoors.com/KDWPT-Info/News. If you would like to unsubscribe, please send your info to Contact Us with "unsubscribe Fall River/Toronto District Fisheries Newsletter" and we will get you taken off the list. If you have any questions, comments, or story ideas, feel free to send them.

Carson Cox, District Fisheries Biologist
Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism