

Ellsworth District Fisheries



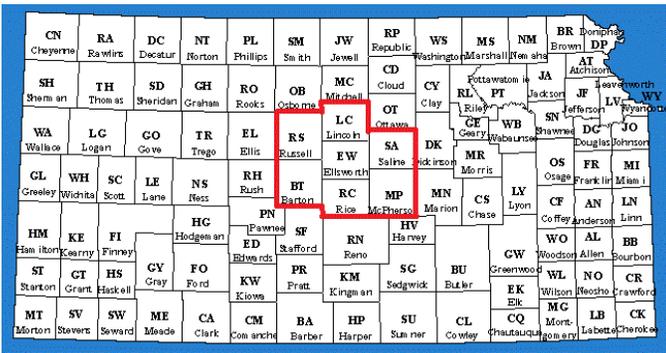
Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism Fisheries Division

Spring 2020

District Information

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Counties and Reservoirs



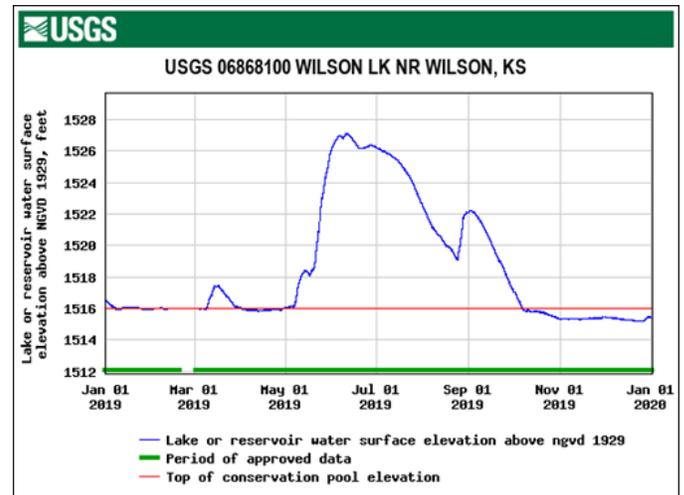
Russell	Wilson Reservoir - 9000 acres
Lincoln	Only leased F.I.S.H. properties
Saline	Saline State Lake (DRY)
	Lakewood Lake - Salina – 6 acres
	Indian Rock Lake - Salina (DRY)
Barton	Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area
	Stone Lake – Great Bend - 40 acres
	Veteran’s Lake – Great Bend - 13 acres
Ellsworth	Kanopolis Reservoir - 3550 acres
	Holyrod City Lake – 13 acres
Rice	Sterling City Lake - 10 acres
McPherson	McPherson State Lake - 47 acres
	Black Kettle State Lake – 8 acres
	Windom City Pond – 1 acre

Note: Keep in mind that there are various Arkansas River access points throughout the region and F.I.S.H. Program properties. The F.I.S.H. Program leases the angling rights from private landowners to allow you to fish their ponds. Get the latest Kansas Fishing Atlas for details.

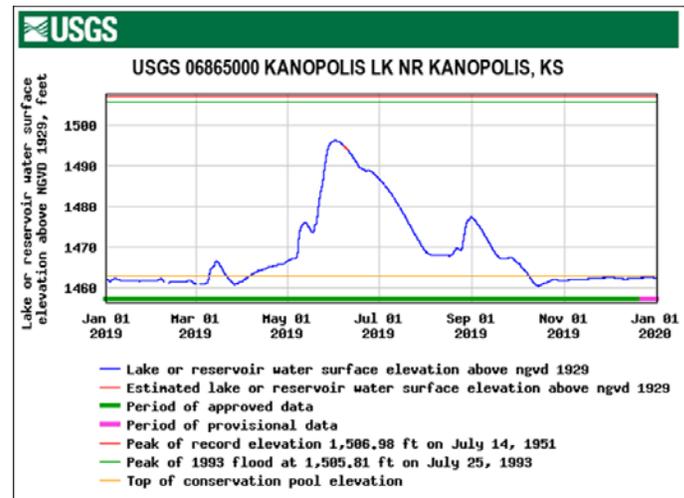


Annual Weather Conditions

Wilson Reservoir) The reservoir rose to over 11 feet above conservation pool last June but has remained near conservation pool since October. The Army Corps of Engineers is keeping the reservoir 0.5 – 1 feet low this spring and summer for a project that will armor several shoreline areas at Lucas and Minooka parks with riprap rock due to erosion that has been occurring there.



Kanopolis Reservoir) The heavy precipitation last spring brought the elevation soaring to 33’ above conservation pool; the third highest recorded elevation at Kanopolis behind only 1951 and 1993. Since late October the reservoir has been below conservation pool due to outlet repairs by the Army Corps of Engineers.



Fall Fish Sampling Guide

Wilson Reservoir

Blue Catfish	2018 samples	2019 samples
Total fish	75	128
% of <20" fish	9	9
% of 20" fish	75	75
% of 30" fish	16	10
% of 32-40" fish	0	6

These catches are a combination of Blue Catfish caught from gill nets, electrofishing, and supplemental floatlines. Blue Catfish growth has improved. The proportion of the sample of fish greater than 32" has improved. **NEW FOR 2020: There is a new protective-slot limit for Blue Catfish at Wilson Reservoir. You must release all fish between 32 and 40 inches. You may keep 2 fish outside of this range but only 1 over 40 inches can be kept.**



The author holding a 24" blue catfish from Wilson Reservoir in Sept, 2019. This is an example of legal fish you can take home in 2020.



Travis Riley weighing a +32-inch blue catfish during electrofishing samples in June 2019. This fish would be protected with the new 32-40-inch protected slot limit.

Channel Catfish	2018 sample	2019 sample
Total fish in nets	168	147
% of 11" fish	18	40
% of 16" fish	72	50
% of 24" fish	9	9
% of 28" fish	1	1

Channel catfish numbers have remained high and there's a higher proportion of smaller catfish, indicating good recruitment, and larger catfish, greater than 24" remains the same. Channel Catfish are plentiful at Wilson Reservoir right now!

Largemouth Bass	2018 sample	2019 sample
Total fish electrofished	240	376
% of 8" fish	26	19
% of 12" fish	45	45
% of 15" fish	28	36
% of 20" fish	<1	<1

Bass reproduction exploded when the lake re-filled. Those young fish have grown extremely well and most fish born in 2016 will be over the legal size (15") this spring. Largemouth bass stockings in 2016 seem to have aided in the quick recovery of the population.



Jeff Conley displaying a quality largemouth bass collected with electrofishing in May 2019.

Smallmouth Bass	2018 sample	2019 sample
Total fish electrofished	102	72
% of 7" fish	14	57
% of 11" fish	18	12
% of 14" fish	45	20
% of 17" fish	23	12

The high percentage of 7 – 11" fish in the 2019 sample indicates a strong year class of age-1 fish. There was a great smallmouth bass spawn in 2018. This remains one of the top 3 Smallmouth Bass destinations in Kansas. There is potential for near state-record catches in 2020.



Jeff Conley displaying a near 4 lb. Smallmouth Bass collected by electrofishing in May 2019.

Stripers	2018 sample	2019 sample
Total fish in nets	78	35
% of 12" fish	6	37
% of 20" fish	89	57
% of 30" fish	5	6

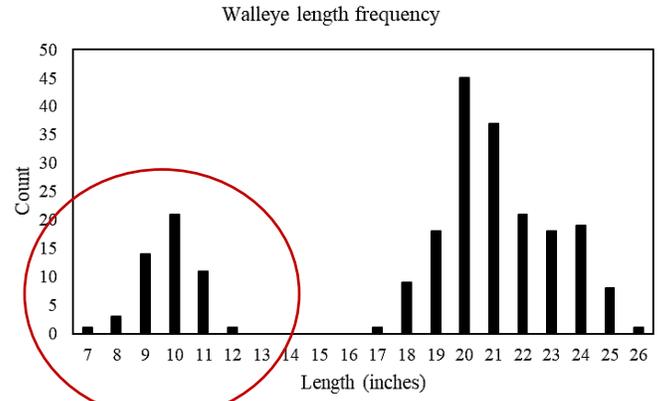
Striper density remains moderate although a decrease in the 2019 sample is notable. Striped bass body condition remains excellent. We will stock more stripers in 2020.



The Milford Hatchery stocked >60,000 striped bass into Wilson Reservoir in June 2019.

Walleye	2018 sample	2019 sample
Total fish in nets	167	228
% of 10" fish	0	17
% of 15" fish	43	15
% of 20" fish	57	63
% of 25" fish	0	5

Walleye are aging at Wilson Reservoir and most fish are greater than 20 inches! However, our stockings of several different sizes of age-0 walleye did well this fall. We finally have a young group of Walleye recruited to the fishery.



The number of Walleye collected during Oct sampling by inch group. The red circle indicates a strong year class of young, age-0 walleye. Wilson Reservoir ranks 1st in the state for walleye for 2020.



Wes Fleming with a +19-inch walleye caught at Wilson Reservoir in Oct, 2019.

“Wilson Reservoir ranks 1st in the state for Walleye for 2020.”

White Bass	2018 sample	2019 sample
Total fish in nets	64	139
% of 6" fish	6	54
% of 9" fish	3	2
% of 12" fish	75	16
% of 15" fish	14	27
% of 18" fish	0	0

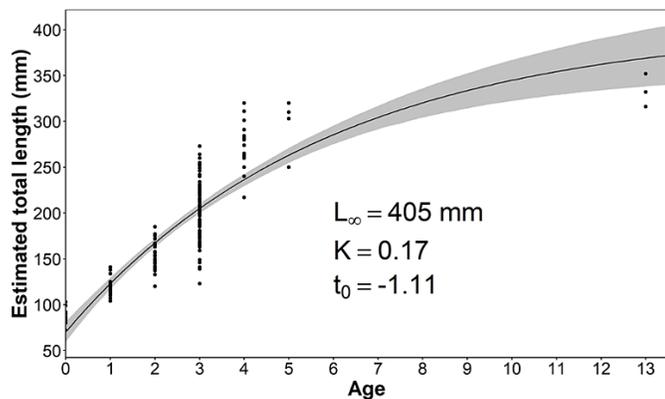
Recruitment improved in 2020, white bass fishing will be good in 2020 at Wilson Reservoir and statewide.

White Perch	2018 sample	2018 sample
Total fish in nets	1,156	718
% of fish <5"	71	14
% of 5" fish	27	72
% of 8" fish	1	10
% of 10" fish	1	3
% of 12" fish	<1%	1%

White perch numbers collected in trap nets and gill nets, combined, dramatically increased in 2017 and abundance remains very high. The abundance of White Perch less than 5" has dropped.

Table 1) We aged White Perch in 2019 to determine their growth rates. White Perch typically grow very slow.

White Perch Growth @ Wilson	
Age	Average Length
1	4.7 inches
2	6.3 inches
3	7.7 inches
4	9.4 inches
5	10 inches
6	11 inches
13 (we collected three 13-year olds)	13.8 inches



White perch growth curve for Wilson Reservoir.

Kanopolis Reservoir

Blue Catfish	2018 sample	2019 sample
Total fish in nets	109	23
% of fish <12"	88	0
% of 12" fish	11	96
% of 20" fish	1	4
% of 30" fish	0	0

Blue catfish have been stocked since 2008 but have not become established. We stocked 30,000 blue catfish in 2017 and 2018. The 2018 sample was impressive, and almost entirely composed of fish that were stocked in 2017. The 2019 sample saw a decrease, likely due to flooding and high flows through the outlet. Regardless, Blue Catfish are growing very fast at Kanopolis and should provide good angling in 2020.



A 22" Blue Catfish collected at Kanopolis Reservoir in July 2019.

Channel Catfish	2018 sample	2019 sample
Total fish in nets	70	198
% of 11" fish	40	37
% of 16" fish	57	61
% of 24" fish	3	2

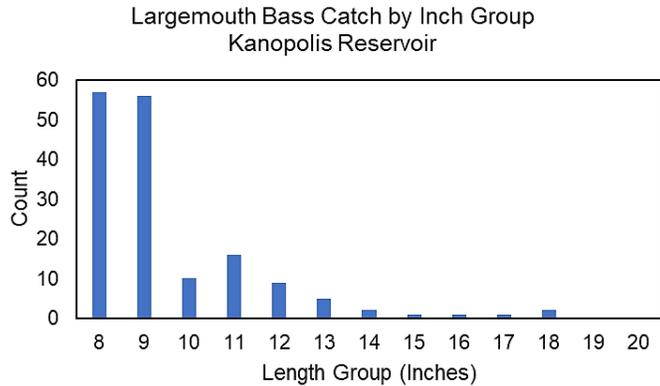
Sample numbers dropped mostly due to poor sampling conditions. The reservoir was 7' high when we sampled it, making catches difficult for most species. Kanopolis Reservoir ranks 3rd in the state for Channel Catfish in 2020.

"Kanopolis Reservoir ranks 3rd in the state for Channel Catfish in 2020."

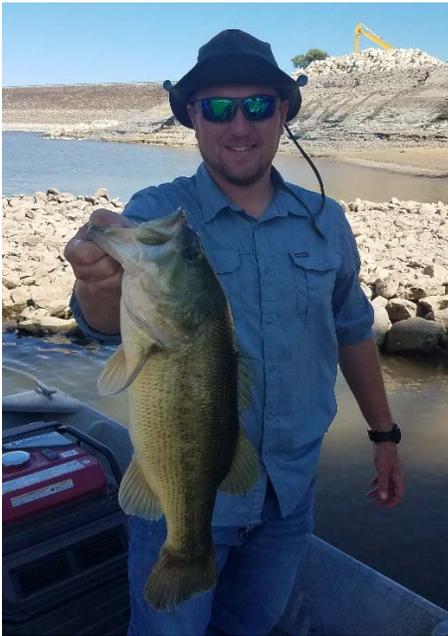


Largemouth Bass	2018 sample	2019 sample
Total fish in nets	50	268
% of 8" fish	22	75
% of 12" fish	52	22
% of 15" fish	26	2
% of 21" fish	0	0

Largemouth Bass have benefitted from stockings in 2016 - 2019. The high water has benefitted recent stockings very well and angling should be good in 2020, although most fish are less than 12 inches.



Largemouth Bass length frequency (inches) at Kanopolis Reservoir from Sept 2019 electrofishing sample.



The author displaying a +4 pound largemouth bass collected near the outlet during electrofishing in Sept 2019.

Crappie	2018 sample	2019 sample
Total fish in nets	78	160
% of 5" fish	15	4
% of 8" fish	66	81
% of 10" fish	14	14
% of 12" fish	5	1

Crappie remain similar at Kanopolis with plenty of fish greater than 9 inches. Black Crappie, surprisingly, made up the largest percentage of our 2019 sample.

White Bass	2018 sample	2019 sample
Total fish in nets	168	1,192
% of 6" fish	28	64
% of 9" fish	45	9
% of 12" fish	22	22
% of 15" fish	5	5

White Bass numbers have exploded, due to higher recruitment in 2018 and 2019. There's a high abundance of fish less than 9 inches. Kanopolis Reservoir ranks 1st in the state for White Bass in 2020!

“Kanopolis Reservoir ranks 1st in the state for White Bass in 2020.”



Ryan Pinkall with a 6-inch White Bass caught in December 2019.

Saugeye	2018 sample	2019 sample
Total fish in nets	132	106
% of 9" fish	1	59
% of 14" fish	24	3.5
% of 18" fish	69	34
% of 22" fish	6	3.5

A new 18-inch minimum length limit began in 2017. Saugeye numbers and size structure improved immediately in 2017 and again in 2018. Adult Saugeye catch has decreased likely due to high water levels and high flows through the outlet. However, the sample of stocked, young fish was as high as it's ever been. These fish will grow fast and provide excellent Saugeye fishing in 2021 and beyond.

McPherson State Lake

Bluegill	2018 sample	2019 sample
Total fish in nets	215	186
% of 3" fish	52	68
% of 6" fish	48	32
% of 8" fish	0	0

Six-inch fish are common. Seven-inch bluegill occur here but aren't common.

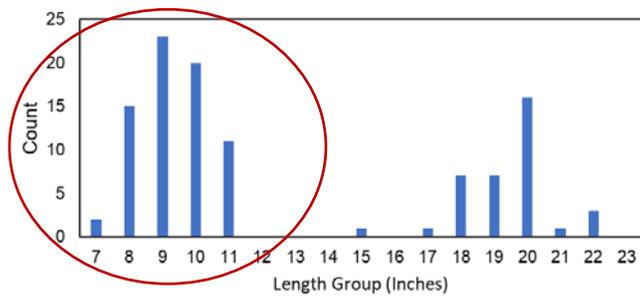
Channel Catfish	2018 sample	2019 sample
Total fish in nets	46	48
% of 11" fish	32.5	64
% of 16" fish	62.5	32
% of 24" fish	5	4
% of 28" fish	0	0

Channel Catfish remains stable. Catfishing should be good at McPherson in 2020.

Largemouth Bass	2018 sample	2019 sample
Total fish electrofished	159	182
% of 8" fish	31	35
% of 12" fish	26	37
% of 15" fish	42	27
% of 20" fish	1	1

Great bass fishing at McPherson. This is a very stable population.

Saugeye Catch by Inch Group
Kanopolis Reservoir



Saugeye length frequency at Kanopolis Reservoir as indexed by the 2019 gill net sample. The red circle indicates an excellent year class of Saugeye produced from the May 2019 stocking.



Joe Lambert displaying a Saugeye collected at Kanopolis in the Sept 2019 electrofishing sample.



Jason Black holding a +4 lb. largemouth bass collected by electrofishing in May 2019.

White Crappie	2018 sample	2019 sample
Total fish in nets	414	382
% of 5" fish	29	31
% of 8" fish	65	55
% of 10" fish	6	14
% of 12" fish	0	0

The number of 10" crappie and above has reached record levels. Crappie fishing should be really good in 2020. Catch and eat all the small crappie you can manage!!!



Jason Black holding a +12-inch white crappie at McPherson State Fishing Lake.

Saugeye	2018 sample	2019 sample
Total fish in nets	28	24
% of 9" fish	36	0
% of 14" fish	29	62
% of 18" fish	14	25
% of 22" fish	21	13

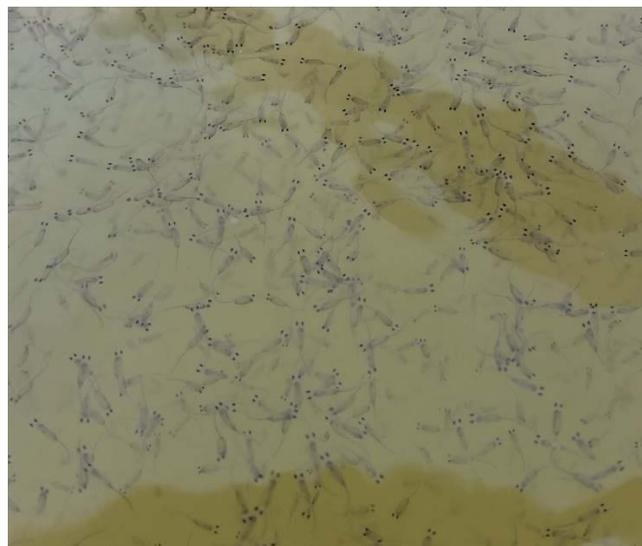
The Saugeye minimum length limit is now 21" and only 2 can be kept per day. We successfully stocked Saugeye in 2018 and it showed in the fall sample as 36% of the catch were Saugeye less than 14". These fish were all greater than 14 inches in the 2019 sample.



Jason Black with a Saugeye collected at McPherson State Lake.

Stocking Advanced Walleye Intermediates

Few walleye populations in Kansas are able to naturally recruit on a regular basis in order to maintain their populations. Cedar Bluff, Kirwin, and Wilson reservoirs are examples of walleye populations that typically do well without stockings. However, most reservoirs require at least some stockings in order to maintain their populations. Even Wilson has been struggling to naturally recruit for the last several years.



An example of walleye fry getting ready for a stocking.

Throughout the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism's fish culture history we have stocked fry-sized and fingerling-sized individuals. Fry are stocked 2-3 weeks after hatching and are typically smaller than an eraser on a pencil. Fingerlings are stocked 6-8 weeks



An example of walleye fingerlings.

after hatching are typically 1.5 to 2 inches long. These small fish, when stocked at high rates, do fairly well, but don't always produce a strong year class of walleye every time they're stocked. Furthermore, stockings at

reservoirs with white perch might do even worse due to the high densities of these hungry nuisance fish.

Therefore, our hatchery system has intensively developed the new Intermediate Walleye Program that grows walleye from 7.5 – 9 inches by October, or 5-6 months after hatching. The hope is that these fish, although more expensive to raise, are able to survive the unforgiving reservoir conditions and gauntlet of predators that await. If so, this will provide fisheries managers with another tool in the toolbelt for maintaining walleye populations in our reservoirs. Our hatcheries are currently able to produce approximately 20,000 – 30,000 of these intermediates annually.



We stocked 9,000 walleye intermediates, shown here, into Wilson Reservoir in early Oct 2019.

We stocked fry, fingerling, and intermediate walleye into Wilson Reservoir in 2019. We had one of the best gill net samples of juvenile walleye that we've ever had at Wilson Reservoir. Some of this could be from natural recruitment but is likely due to one or more of these stockings.

Wilson Reservoir walleye stockings - 2019	
FRY	4.5 million
FINGERLINGS	53,232
INTERMEDIATES	9,000

Ellsworth District Top 15 Fishing Prospects for 2020

1. White Bass – Kanopolis Reservoir
2. Largemouth Bass – Wilson Reservoir
3. Crappie – Kanopolis Reservoir
4. Walleye – Wilson Reservoir
5. Channel Catfish – Kanopolis Reservoir
6. Bluegill – McPherson State Lake
7. Smallmouth Bass – Wilson Reservoir
8. Blue Catfish – Wilson Reservoir
9. Largemouth Bass – Holyrood City Lake
10. Saugeye – Kanopolis Reservoir
11. Channel Catfish – Saline State Lake
12. Largemouth Bass – McPherson State Lake
13. Crappie – McPherson State Lake
14. Bluegill – Holyrood City Lake
15. Bluegill – Sterling City Lake

Parting Shot

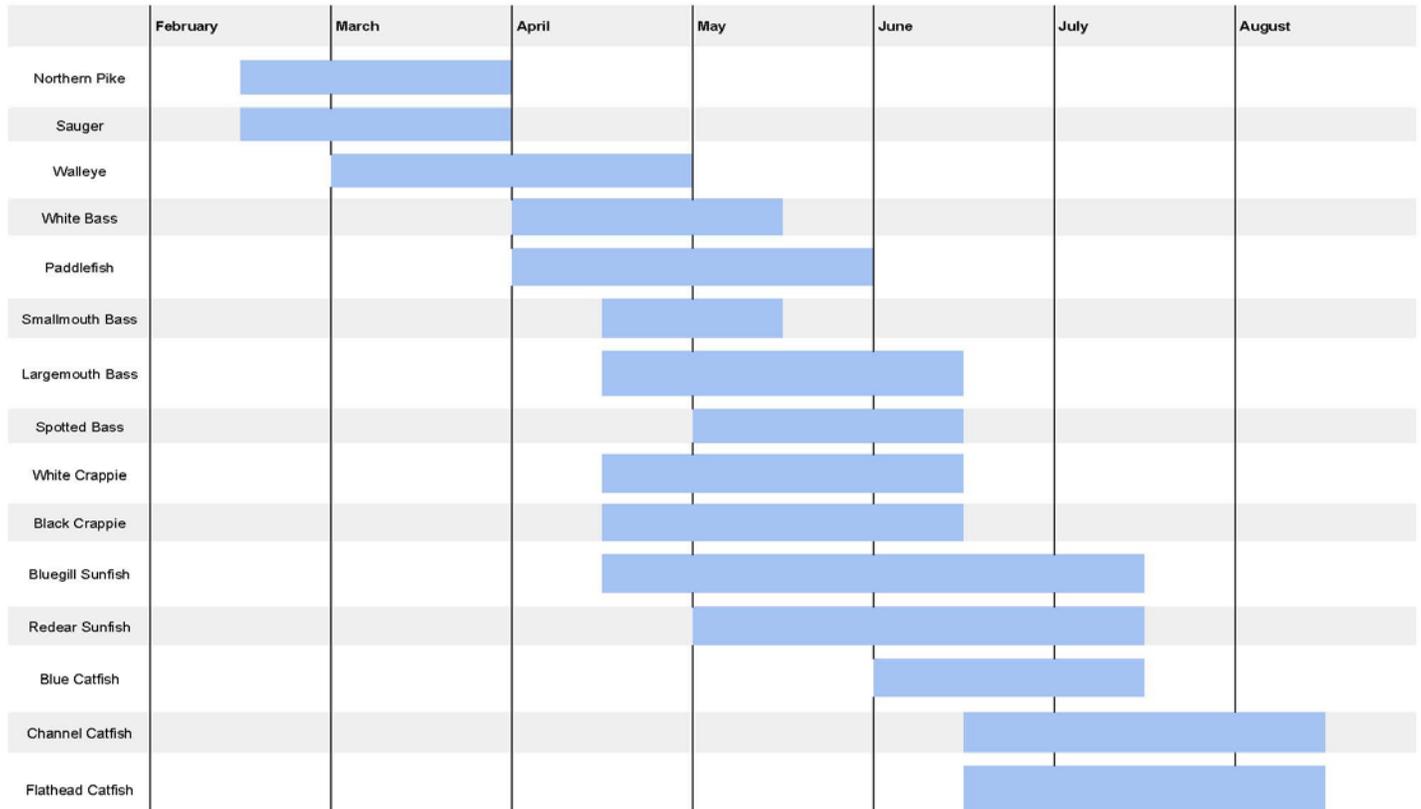


Rose impatiently waiting for a Blue Catfish bite on a calm summer evening in Hell Creek, Wilson Reservoir in 2019.

Spawning Schedules

Fish species spawn at varying times of the year. This is based on a species' physiology, water temperature, and the changing day length. Water levels and other abiotic conditions can also play a role. Cold water species (Northern Pike, Walleye, etc.) typically spawn first, followed by black basses and crappies, and finally catfishes. This rough display (below) illustrates typical spawning times for popular Kansas sport fish. Remember, large females are typically more difficult to catch during the spawn for most fish species. Their energy and focus is on reproducing and not eating your bait. It's likely a better plan of action to target these fish as the spawn draws to a close and they begin feeding again.

Typical Fish Spawning Months in Kansas*



**Please note that fish spawning is dependent on water temperatures, day length and other factors, which can vary annually and by location. This information is meant to be a general guideline for anglers curious about the approximate spawning seasons, and not an exact representation of specific start and ending dates for fish spawning time in Kansas.*

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Go Fish Kansas!



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