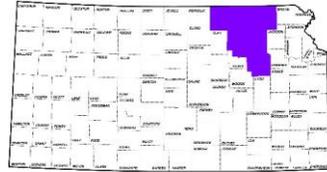


# Manhattan Fisheries Newsletter

Spring 2021



Ely Sprenkle  
District Fisheries Biologist  
ely.sprenkle@ks.gov  
ksoutdoors.com

Tuttle Creek State Park  
5800A River Pond Rd  
Manhattan, KS 66502  
(785) 539-7941

## Fishing Forecast for the Manhattan District

Spring is here and it is time for some fishing. Fisheries biologist of KDWPT annually sample the fish populations of waters open to public access. Results of these sampling efforts and lake rankings for species can be found at <https://ksoutdoors.com/Fishing/Fishing-Forecast>

If you want a little more insight than just the raw data, then please read on for my \$0.02 and a few pictures from expeditions to Manhattan area lakes sampled in fall of 2020. Black bass data is collected in May and that information can be found in my summer newsletter.

### Pottawatomie State Fishing Lake #1

Channel catfish numbers are up for the second year in a row, but the lake usually does not have high harvest rates of catfish despite annual stocking efforts. The crappie population is recovering from a down spell and the 2020 numbers are still below average, but well above the numbers recorded in 2019. The lake supports a nice bluegill population and the fishing can be great when they are up on beds.



The K-State fisheries students helped me with sampling and processing fish at Pott#1 as part of their class.

### Pottawatomie State Fishing Lake #2

This lake is in the Urban Stocking Program that provides larger channel catfish on a monthly basis in spring and summer to maintain harvest opportunities during these good fishing times.

Continued on page 2

The first stocking of 2021 was completed on April 16<sup>th</sup> when 940 catfish were put into the lake. The lake has maintained a modest crappie population over the years with the 2020 sample recording a recent improvement in both abundance and size of crappie.



Aden with a nice size white crappie from Pott#2

### Shawnee State Fishing Lake

This lake is also in the Urban Stocking Program so seeing 12 to 18-inch channel catfish caught is fairly common. The first of five stockings was completed on March 24<sup>th</sup> of 700 pounds of channel catfish. The lake’s crappie and bluegill are finally getting bigger due to efforts to improve the forage base. The 2020 sample recorded the highest percentage of larger panfish in over twenty years. The redear sunfish population has also been doing well with sample numbers being above the long-term average for the last three years. The lake is occasionally stocked with saugeye to maintain a moderate abundance of this popular toothy fish. This month the lake was

stocked with 200,000 saugeye fry to add to the excellent year-class produced from the 2019 stocking.



Redear sunfish and bluegill waiting to be measured at Shawnee State Fishing Lake.

### Washington State Fishing Lake

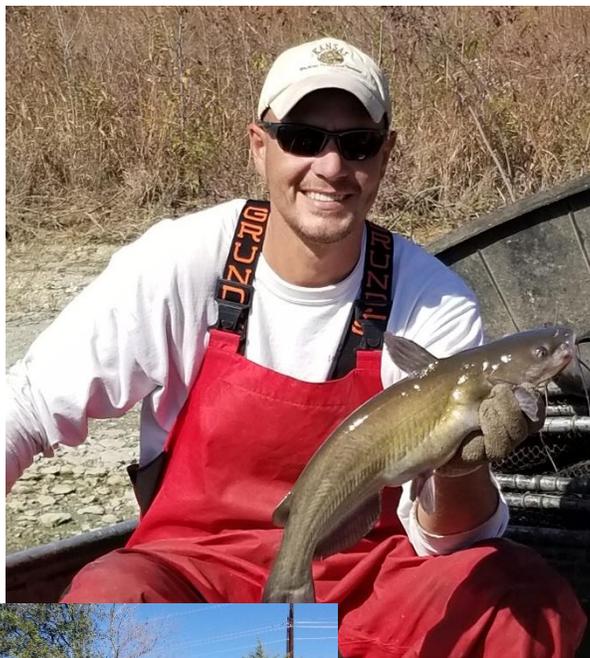
Lots of little crappie in the lake that hopefully grow well into preferred sizes. The lake is home to good opportunities for channel catfish with the 2020 sample having the best combination of numbers and size in a decade. Saugeye numbers continue to be low due to limited stocking survival in recent years.



Megan holding a couple white crappie and a channel catfish at Washington SFL.

### Jeffrey Energy Center Make-Up Lake

There were two strong spawns of crappie a few years back that are expanding the fishery as documented by the 2020 sample where 50% of the crappie were over 10 inches long. The numbers of crappie is still below the highs seen in 2013 - 2015 but opportunities should be much improved in 2021. Walleye abundance is very close to the long-term average, with 86% of the walleye collected last fall were over the 15-inch minimum length limit. White bass numbers are up due to a big spawn last spring, but the size is down with only 9% over 10 inches long. The wiper population is below average due to the lake missing out on a 2020 stocking. Most of the wiper are 16 to 20 inches long. Channel catfish sample numbers are low, therefore the lake received a double stocking last fall.



Make-Up Lake: Ben with a fat little channel catfish, Bryon showing off the typical sized crappie and lots of little white bass.



### Jeffrey Energy Center Auxiliary Lake

Crappie at the bigger Jeffrey lake have been on a good trend as sample numbers and angler harvest rates have been above the long-term numbers since 2015. The lake has maintained a good walleye fishery over the history of the lake; however, the sampling data indicates the population is at its lowest point in the last twenty years. Hopefully, stocking efforts this spring will help bolster walleye back up. The exceptional white bass fishery couldn't be maintained forever and the population has lost the title of best white bass lake in the state. Wiper numbers were getting quite low, but the 2020 stocking effort was successful in improving this with most of the current population being young fish less than 12 inches long. Channel catfish have been doing steadily well the last five years and it is hoped the lake can support more so stocking rates have been increased.



Bryon and Ben helping me again and holding the fish at Jeffrey Auxiliary Lake.

### Alma City Lake

This beautiful little lake can have wide swings in the fish populations due to the fluctuating nature of the water levels. For 2021, the

crappie fishing should be great as 2020 recorded the most angler appealing white crappie data in the history of the lake; abundance was up and 51% of the fish were over 10 inches. In addition, the 2020 sample collected the most black crappie over 10 inches in the last decade. The two crappie species together should provide robust fishing opportunities this year. The lake maintains a good channel catfish population for a small lake, but the last sample contained fewer large fish.

population since 2012. The 2020 data shows the channel catfish population has had a recent step back as only 26% of the collected fish were over 16 inches. Saugeye sample abundance is up with the second highest number recorded in the last ten years. However, average size of saugeye is down with one of the lowest ratios of the population over the 18-inch minimum length recorded at 31%. The lake maintains a low-level white bass population that has never flourished. The lake is stocked with a few wiper to maintain a modest trophy opportunity.

Alma City Lake crappie. Water levels were low.



Centralia City Lake. Dillon with a white crappie and a black crappie. Net full of saugeye from night shocking. A few black bullheads are still cruising around the lake.



### Centralia City Lake

Over the history of the lake, crappie numbers have been very dynamic due to large spawns and high growth rates. The current white crappie abundance is about half of the ten-year average, but this is up from the lows seen the previous two years. Black crappie numbers have been trending downwards since white crappie became the dominate species in 2011. However, there could be a change brewing as the 2020 sampling recorded the largest black crappie spawn ever at the lake. Overall, the data shows that the lake will continue to provide good crappie opportunities in 2021. The lake has been maintaining an excellent channel catfish

### Tuttle Creek Reservoir

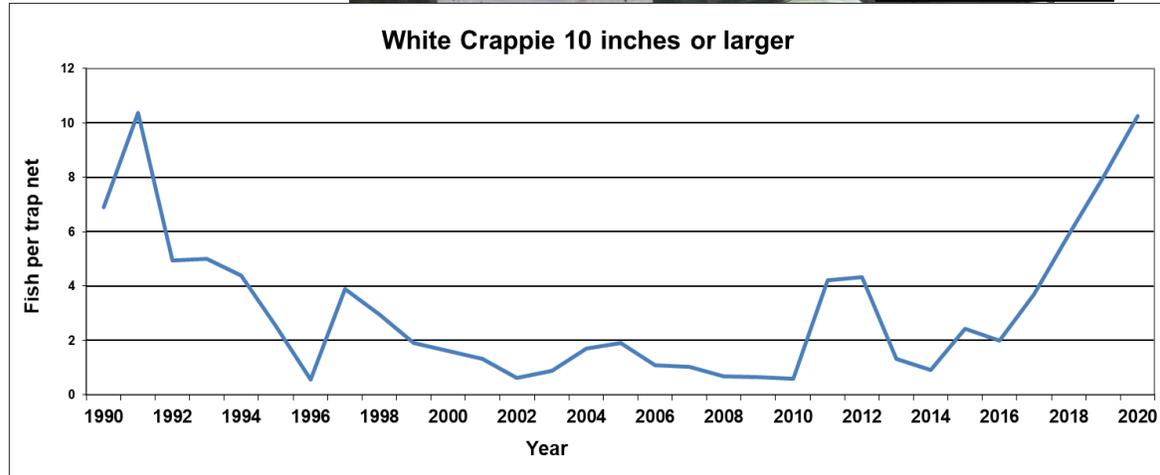
Crappie drives the bus at Tuttle Creek Reservoir as they are easily the most fished for species at the lake. The 2017 fish sampling documented the largest spawn in two decades. This big group of fish have been growing well and have resulted in the 2020 fall sampling having the highest number of crappie over 10 inches since 1991! These fish had higher than normal body condition, which was a bit surprising with the below average gizzard shad spawn last spring. All of this points to another great year of crappie fishing at the lake. Saugeye, on the other hand, are well below normal due to the lake missing out on stocking in 2020 and the losses of saugeye

out of the reservoir during the 2019 flood. The lake has already been stocked with 2 million saugeye fry this spring and is scheduled to receive 50,000 saugeye fingerlings next month so the population will be on the rebound if there is good survival from those stockings. The numbers of white bass collected continue to be well below the historical trend data for the lake. The channel catfish numbers have been below average for a few years, but the 2020 data documented improvements in all metrics: abundance, body condition, and percentage of bigger fish. Blue catfish numbers are slowly but steadily improving. The hope is to change the

regulations to encourage more harvest of blue catfish in Tuttle Creek starting in 2022, but more on that in my summer newsletter.



Kenzie weighing some nice Tuttle crappies.



Thank you to everyone that helped me get my work done and held fish for the camera.

Thanks for reading about my passion for fisheries science and good luck on all your 2021 fishing adventures



Brent on a sandy beach with a beautiful saugeye.



Corey proudly showing off a 59", 25-pound longnose gar from mighty Tuttle