

Kansas City District Fisheries Newsletter

Summer/Fall 2021

Biologist's Notes

Fall is here and yet another busy summer has passed us by. Good angling opportunities remained numerous here in the Kansas City District and numerous projects on area waterbodies were conducted to enhance and preserve those opportunities. Along with the typical spring and summer management activities (e.g., largemouth bass population monitoring and the Urban Channel Catfish Stocking Program) some new and exciting projects were initiated as well. The 2021 Kansas City District Largemouth Bass Sampling Summary is on page 2 of this issue and a total of 15,315 lbs. of channel catfish were stocked among 21 waterbodies throughout the Kansas City area this summer through the Urban Channel Catfish Stocking Program. Page 3 will highlight a new project I am quite excited about and involves a partnership between KDWP, Leavenworth BASS Club, and 3 area high schools to restore water willow habitat in Hildale Reservoir. Page 4 will cover a statewide project looking into the population dynamics of flathead catfish in some of our smaller impoundments.

Fall always offers some of the best angling opportunities of the year. Predator fish are in full feeding mode to pack on weight for the winter. Changing weather patterns usually have fish on the move as well. A great time to get out, enjoy the weather, and catch lots of fish!



Middle Creek SFL Flathead

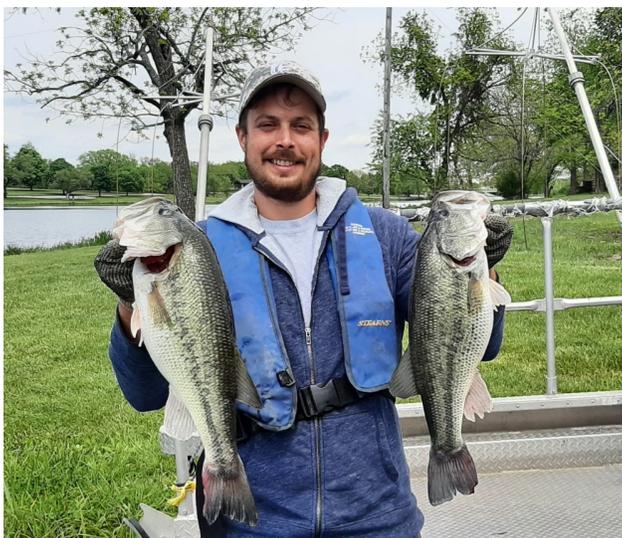
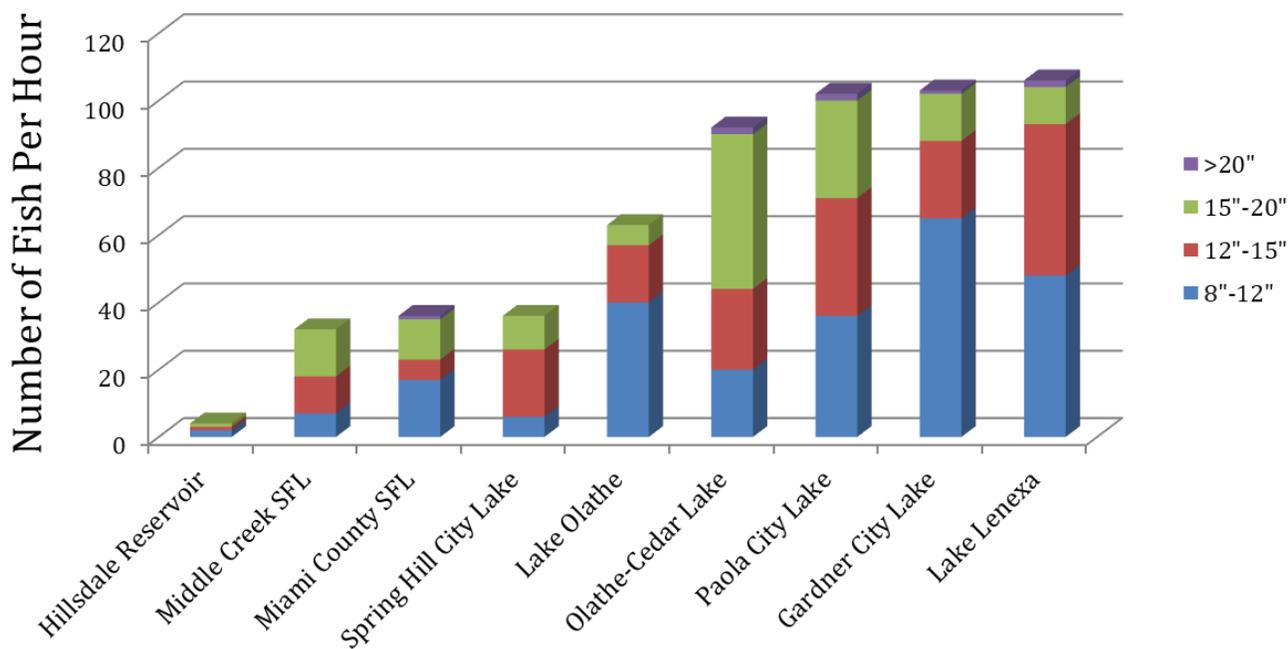


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2021 Kansas City District Largemouth Bass Sampling Summary

Fisheries biologists use a variety of gear to sample fish depending on species, season, and environmental conditions. Every spring, district fisheries biologists around the state use electrofishing boats to assess black bass populations. Black bass sampling is conducted during the spring when the bass are in shallow waters and can be caught more efficiently. This sampling allows biologists to assess relative abundance, length structure, and condition of black bass populations. Below is the largemouth bass sampling summary for the Kansas City District in 2021. This information is a good guide to current largemouth bass populations at some area waterbodies. Lake Lenexa and Gardner City Lake continued to have high catch rates and a lot of 12 to 15 inch fish. Paola City Lake’s largemouth bass population has been improving with a high catch rate and very good size structure to the population. If you are seeking lunkers, Olathe-Cedar Lake or Miami SFL would be your best bets with impressive numbers of fish exceeding 15 inches.



Impressive Catch at Cedar Lake-Olathe



Miami Co. SFL Lunker

A Unique Partnership Leads to Water Willow Habitat Restoration

Water willow (*Justicia americana*) is a shallow water plant that provides critical habitat to largemouth bass and other sport and prey species. Historically, Hillsdale Reservoir had several arms, coves, and shallow water areas covered with vibrant stands of water willow, but the sustained flooding that occurred in 2019 wiped out all areas of shoreline habitat that the plant provided. Efforts are underway to restore this needed habitat. The Leavenworth Bass Club, with support from KDWP, applied for and was awarded \$6,000 in grant money from Aquatic Ecosystems Restoration Foundation, Aquatic Plant Management Society, and B.A.S.S. Nation to fund this restoration project.

This has led to an even more exciting collaboration. The funds from this grant are being used for assisting 3 Johnson County area high schools (Gardner-Edgerton, Mill Valley, and Shawnee Mission Northwest) establish water willow propagation projects. The high schools have different set ups, but include an aquaponics, greenhouse, and wetland capabilities. If successful, the projects will provide clean (free of aquatic nuisance species) and sustainable sources of water willow, which can be harvested and transplanted into Kansas waterbodies. I am excited for the future prospects of this unique collaboration and the habitat benefits it will bring to area waters.



Students Harvesting Water Willow Plants for Propagation Project



Aquaponic Lab at Mill Valley High School

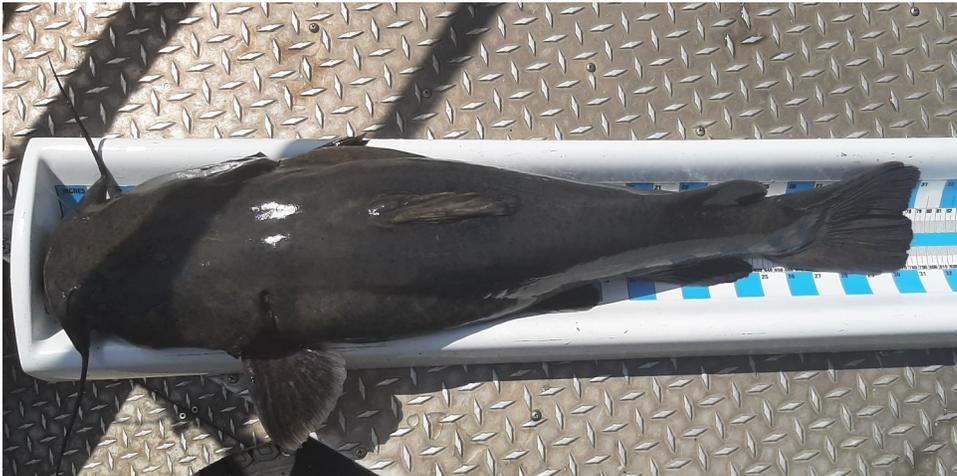


Plant Cuttings Growing in Gardner-Edgerton High School Lab

Flathead Catfish in Small Kansas Impoundments

Over the past summer KDWP conducted a project investigating flathead catfish populations in some of our smaller impoundments statewide. Populations in eight waterbodies were sampled throughout the summer with low-frequency electrofishing. Locally, Leavenworth SFL and Middle Creek SFL were part of this study. Typically, flathead catfish are difficult to sample with our current suite of standardized sampling gear and seasons (e.g., spring bass electrofishing and fall netting), and summer low-frequency electrofishing is more suited to sampling these populations. Objectives of this project are to obtain relative and absolute abundance estimates from each waterbody along with age and growth information from the populations.

Sampling from this project is completed and data analysis is underway. The density estimate for flathead catfish in Leavenworth SFL was 1.3 fish/acre and for Middle Creek was 0.3 fish/acre, which were moderate to low compared to other study waterbodies. Length distribution was good and balanced for both populations. Age and growth information should be available this winter. Information from this project will guide future flathead management and sampling techniques in our state fishing lakes and smaller impoundments.



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