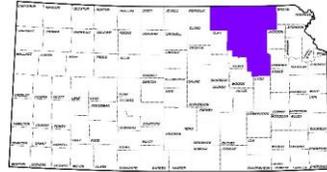


Manhattan Fisheries Newsletter

Spring 2022



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2022 Fishing Forecast for the Manhattan District

Spring is on the horizon and that gets me thinking about fishing. If you also have fish on the brain, then perusing the updated fishing forecast for your favorite fish or lakes can help sidetrack some of that cabin fever. Website is [KSoutdoors.com/Fishing/Fishing-Forecast](https://ksoutdoors.com/Fishing/Fishing-Forecast)

If you are keenly interested in the Manhattan area, then please read on for my analysis of some of the local lakes (plus fish sampling pics). Black bass data is collected in May and that information is usually in my summer newsletter.



Tuttle Creek Reservoir

White Crappie are the most popular sportfish at Tuttle Creek, and they are also the primary focus of sportfish management at the lake. The species has been doing very well in recent

years. It all started with a massively successful spawn in 2017. This large year-class survived the 2019 flood well. Then the following year, these White Crappie had the lake almost to themselves with big losses of White Bass and Saugeye in that flood event. Food has been abundant with 2021 having the largest Gizzard Shad spawn in a decade. These factors culminated into the current population having the highest number of White Crappie over 12 inches in 30 years, as documented by the 2021 fall fish sampling. In addition, the crappie collected had excellent body condition, which is a nice way to say “they fat!” What does all of this mean? That this should be another great year of crappie fishing at Tuttle Creek.



Megan and Ted showing off some of the big crappie we collected with trap nets on a cold November morning.

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Saugeye are another dynamic story. As noted above, the 2019 flood was very hard on Saugeye as most of the fish were flushed out of the lake during high releases. This made for great fishing downstream in the River Pond and at the tubes but didn't leave much opportunity on the other side of the dam. Unfortunately, COVID protocols shut down state egg collection in 2020 and therefore no Saugeye were produced for stocking that year. Thankfully, Tuttle Creek received the full request of 2 million saugeye fry in 2021. These stocked fish did astonishingly well and created the largest year-class ever recorded. Saugeye grow fast in this lake and some should reach the 15-inch minimum length limit by fall. Let's keep our fingers crossed for good water conditions this year and plan on fishing for Saugeye at Tuttle Creek in 2023.



Net full of freshly shocked up Saugeye from our annual fall electrofishing sample conducted at night to evaluate how well the spring stocking performed.

White Bass numbers have been low due to losses downstream and repeatedly poor spawning success the last eight years, mostly due to untimely water level fluctuations. The future is looking a little brighter as the species had a good spawn last year. These young White Bass will offer improved angling opportunities in 2022 as they should grow to 10 inches by mid-summer. Once again, fingers crossed.

The Channel Catfish population has been underperforming for most of the last decade. However, recent data shows the population has fully recovered back to the historical norm of a

good fishery. The 2021 sample collected the most Channel Catfish in nine years. In addition, 11% of the fish were over 28 inches.



Catfish from gill nets. Nathan on the left with a blue. Ben on the right with a channel.

Twenty years after the first Blue Catfish stocking in Tuttle Creek, the species is finally becoming established. The population is still expanding but it is believed it can now support more angler harvest. Therefore, the fishing regulations have changed starting this year. The new harvest regulations on Blue Catfish are a 10 fish daily creel limit which may include only one fish 30 inches or longer. It is hoped this will prevent an overharvest of the large, reproductive adults while allowing anglers to take some of the mid-sized fish. The current population has good numbers of Blue Catfish from 24 to 28 inches, but there are limited numbers of bigger fish. There is an ongoing Blue Catfish tagging study at the lake, please report catching a tagged fish to (620) 342-0658. For more information on the Blue Catfish population, regulation change, and tagging study please see my 2021 summer newsletter that can be downloaded [HERE](#).



A nice Blue Catfish tagged by Vanessa

Pottawatomie State Fishing Lake #1

Channel Catfish numbers are above the long-term average for third year in a row, but the lake usually does not have high harvest rates despite annual stocking efforts. The Black Crappie fishery is at a five-year high and should offer some modest harvest opportunities this year. The lake maintains a nice Bluegill population and can be a great summer spot for this panfish.



Pottawatomie State Fishing Lake #2

This lake is in the Urban Stocking Program which means it gets stocked with larger Channel Catfish regularly in spring and summer to support a higher harvest rate than can be achieved through natural in lake production. The lake received 3,150 Channel Catfish through this program in 2021 that averaged just over a pound a piece. The experimental slot harvest regulation on sunfish at the lake has not yet improved the Bluegill population, but we are starting to see larger Redear Sunfish. The lake has maintained a modest crappie population over the years with the 2021 sample numbers being typical for both Black Crappie and White Crappie. A low-level Saugeye population is maintained with occasional stockings and the current population has pretty good numbers of



20"-24" fish. The lake had 14 tagged fish for the Great Kansas Fishing Derby, three of which were caught: a Warmouth, a Black Crappie, and a Largemouth Bass.

This lake was also in the Urban Stocking Program which means it gets stocked with larger Channel Catfish regularly in spring and summer to support a higher harvest rate than can be achieved through natural in lake production. The lake received 3,526 larger Channel Catfish through the Urban Stocking Program. The lake's crappie have been growing a little bigger in recent years due to improvements in the forage base. The Redear Sunfish population has also been doing well with sample numbers being above the long-term average for the last four years. The lake is occasionally stocked with Saugeye to maintain a few for angling and there currently is decent numbers of 15-inch Saugeye in the lake. This lake has a great Largemouth Bass population.



A Derby tagged Saugeye from Pott#2

Shawnee State Fishing Lake

This lake has maintained a modest crappie population over the years with the 2021 sample numbers being typical for both Black Crappie and White Crappie. A low-level Saugeye population is maintained with occasional stockings and the current population has pretty good numbers of



A super fat Redear Sunfish that was tagged for the fishing derby held last spring.

Washington State Fishing Lake

The crappie fishery is currently dominated by small fish and there were none over 10 inches in the last sample. Saugeye numbers continue to be low due to poor survival from the last few stockings. The lake is home to a good Channel Cat fishery with 24% of the last sample over 24 inches long.



Largemouth Bass from Washington SFL. Doesn't even look real to me with how fat and short it is. The lake holds some nice bass.

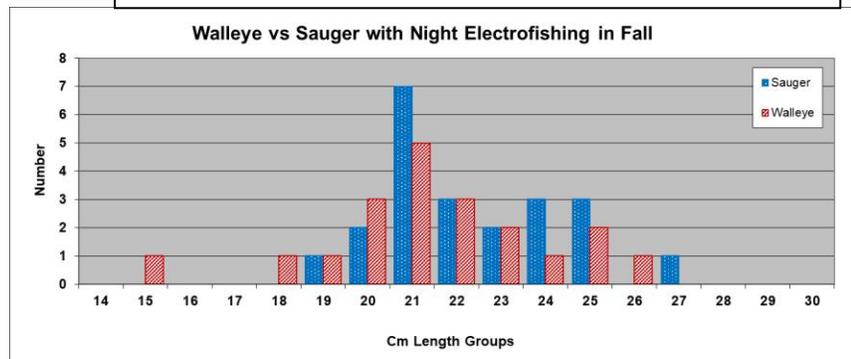
Jeffrey Energy Center Make-Up Lake

The White Bass are doing great, with lots of 11"-12" fish in the fall sample. Wiper are also doing well with good numbers of 18" to 20" fish. On the flip side, Crappie are not doing so well, with the lowest abundance seen in a decade. Walleye are holding steady with abundance near the long-term average and 80% of the walleye collected last fall were over the 15-inch minimum length limit. The lake received its first Saugey stocking last spring and these fish have done well so far. I am guessing most of these

young Saugey will start reaching the 15" minimum length limit by this time next year.

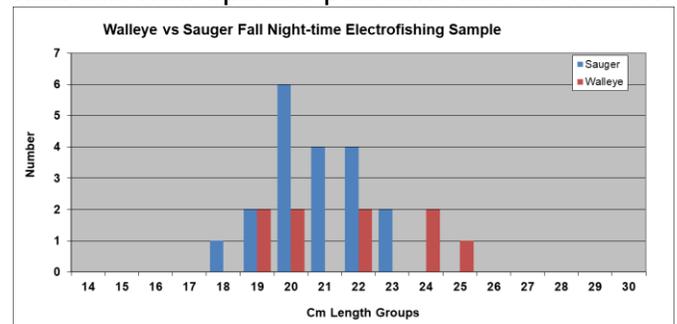


Baby Saugey at the top of the picture above and a young Walleye at the bottom. The graph below shows how the two species performed together their first year at Make-Up Lake – this graph just shows the small fish collected.



Jeffrey Energy Center Auxiliary Lake

The bigger lake at the power plant has maintained a good walleye fishery through time; however, the sampling data indicates the population has been well below normal the last two years. This lake also received an introductory Saugey stocking last spring. It surprised me when these Saugey out competed their cousins, Walleye 2 to 1 from the same stocking. In addition, Saugey created a larger year class than Walleye have been able to in 5 years. It is early, but it will be interesting to see how this new species performs into the future.



Auxiliary Lake has never been a great crappie fishery, but harvest rates have been well above average the last few years. White Bass have fallen from the highs we have gotten used to at this lake. Wiper numbers are maintained at a rather low level at Aux Lake but offer some big fish chances. There has been some work at the lake and now the pumped in water will be surface discharged in the cove North of the boat ramp. I am assuming that this will be a good place to fish when the water is rolling.



Corey and Ted helping me out with crappie sampling. Billy with a decent Walleye below. All at Aux Lake.



Pottawatomie Cross Creek Lake

This lake usually has great Bluegill numbers but the 2021 fall sampling showed below average numbers of bigger ones. There is a decent Black Crappie fishery with 10% of the last sample over 10 inches. For a smaller



Jacob enjoying some sunshine and a big Channel Catfish.

lake, there is a pretty good population of bigger Channel Catfish.

Centralia City Lake

The crappie population has been fluctuating quite a bit the last few years. White Crappie have been the dominate crappie species for most of the last decade. However, Black Crappie had a giant spawn in 2020. Those young Black Crappie have not grown very well and White Crappie have had limited spawning success recently. This has led to below average numbers of crappie over 10 inches. Crappie are dynamic in this system and can quickly produce a fabulous fishery with the right conditions. One of those conditions is a good predator base to feed on small crappie to encourage better growth rates of the remaining crappie. The primary reason to stock Saugeye at the lake is to serve as this predator. Unfortunately, Saugeye numbers are about 70% below the long-term average which is contributing to the high numbers of small crappie. The 2021 Saugeye stocking didn't create as strong a year-class as normal here, so the turnaround may take a bit longer. The lake has been maintaining an excellent Channel Catfish population for a decade. However, they are starting to do too well and growth is slowing from overpopulation. It may help in the short-term if you want to harvest a few of the high numbers of Channel Catfish from 11"- 18". Wiper numbers are maintained at a modest level and the most recent sample was dominated by fish 17" to 21".



Centralia City Lake: Billy and Saugeye from night shocking. I was disappointed by the young Saugeye we saw as they were on the small side.

A big Thank You to all that helped me get my job done. Fish sampling tends to be a team effort and pictured above is employees from Public Lands, Wildlife, Law Enforcement, and Research. Good luck to You in all your 2022 adventures.