



2022 SPRING FISHERIES SURVEY SUMMARY

SMITH LAKE, SAWYER COUNTY

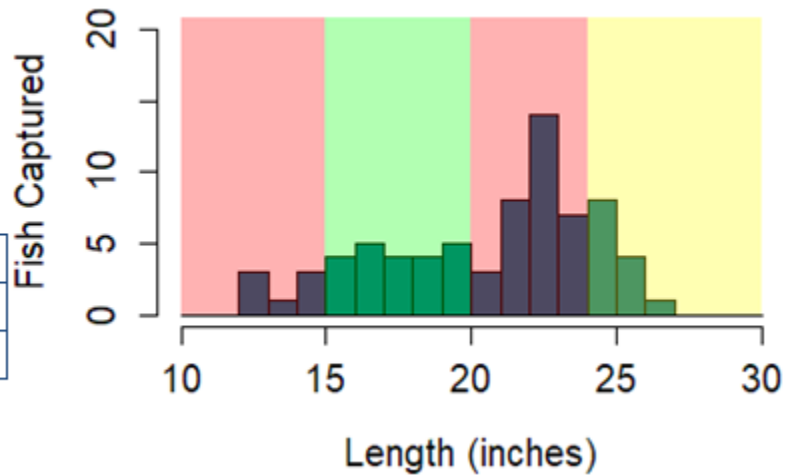
Report by Max Wolter

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Hayward Fisheries Management Team conducted a fyke netting survey on Smith Lake from May 2-4, 2022. The primary species targeted were Northern Pike and Walleye, but useful data were also gathered on Black Crappie. Up to eight nets were set overnight for two nights, which resulted in 13 total net-nights of effort (some nets were compromised by wind). An electrofishing survey was conducted on May 31, 2022 to target Largemouth Bass and Bluegill and included 4.25 miles of shoreline. Quality, preferred and memorable sizes referenced in this summary are based on standard proportions of world record lengths developed for each species by the American Fisheries Society.

WALLEYE



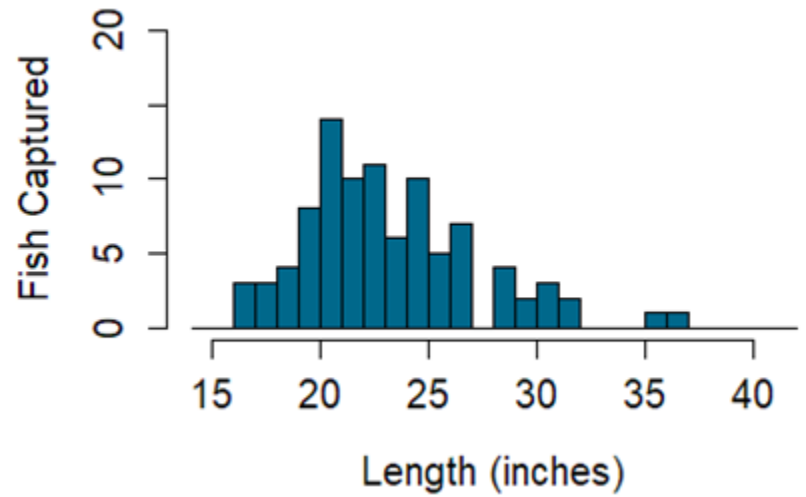
Captured 6 per net-night ≥ 10 inches	
Quality Size $\geq 15''$	91%
Preferred Size $\geq 20''$	61%



NORTHERN PIKE



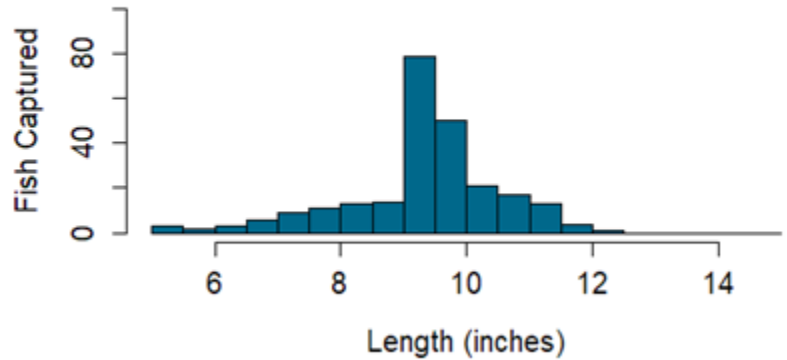
Captured 7 per net-night ≥ 14 inches	
Quality Size $\geq 21''$	66%
Preferred Size $\geq 28''$	14%



BLACK CRAPPIE



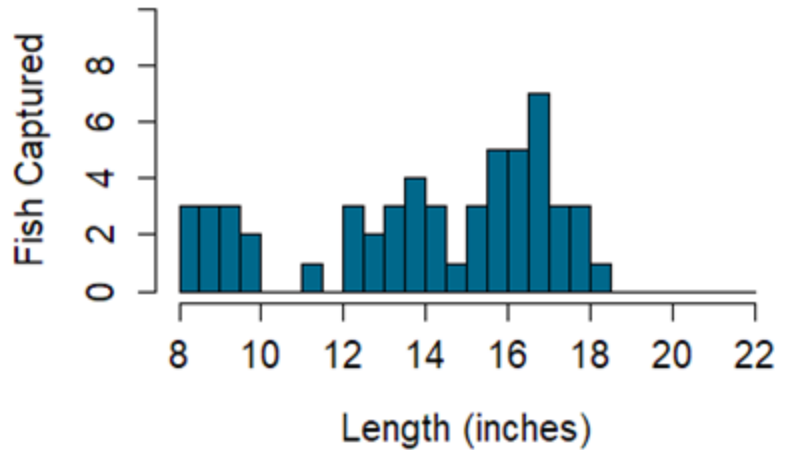
Captured 1.9 per net-night ≥ 5 inches	
Quality Size $\geq 8''$	92%
Preferred Size $\geq 10''$	16%



LARGEMOUTH BASS



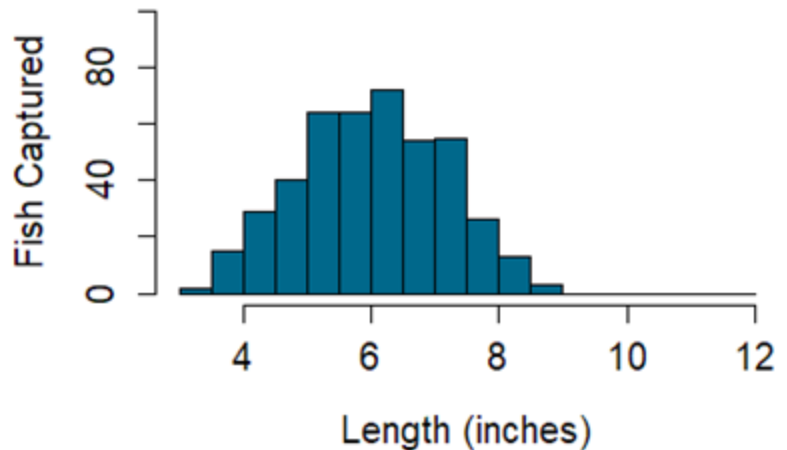
Captured 13 per mile ≥ 8 inches	
Quality Size $\geq 12''$	78%
Preferred Size $\geq 15''$	49%



BLUEGILL



Captured 441 per mile \geq 3 inches	
Quality Size \geq 6"	51%
Preferred Size \geq 8"	4%



SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The netting survey was well-timed for Walleye and Northern Pike, capturing the start of spawning activity for each species. Nets were set shortly after ice out and covered a variety of habitat types. Water temperature was below the ideal range for capturing Black Crappie, but results are still included in this report. The electrofishing survey was very well-timed for Largemouth Bass and Bluegill. Smith Lake is a “Complex-Cool-Dark” lake based on the DNR Fisheries lake class system. “Complex” refers to the number of gamefish present in the fish community. “Cool” and “Dark” reference the temperature and water clarity of the lake relative to others. This report will compare catch rates from Smith Lake in 2022 to other lakes of this same type and past surveys.

WALLEYE

The catch of Walleye in this survey (six per net night) was above the median for lakes in the same class. This catch rate was also much higher than the previous survey of Smith Lake (2015), in which only 0.5 Walleye per net night were caught. The population has primarily relied on stocking for some time, which appears to be moderately successful. The size of the Walleye was impressive, with most over 15 inches and a large percentage over 20 inches as well. DNR Walleye stocking has occurred at an “every other year” frequency in odd-numbered years. The Walleye regulation on Smith Lake is a 15-inch minimum length limit, a 20-24-inch protected slot with only one fish over 24 inches, and a three fish daily bag limit.

NORTHERN PIKE

Northern Pike catch rate (seven per net night) was greater than the 90th percentile compared to lakes in the same class as Smith Lake and nearly identical to the Smith Lake survey in 2015. The size of pike should create a lot of appeal for anglers, with an average length of over 23 inches and 14% over 28 inches. There is no minimum length limit for Northern Pike, and anglers may harvest up to five per day. The harvest of smaller pike is encouraged.



DNR fisheries technician, Evan Sniadajewski, with a nice Northern Pike from Smith Lake in Sawyer County. Photo courtesy of Max Wolter

BLACK CRAPPIE

The Black Crappie catch rate was low (25th percentile for lake class), but that was not unexpected given the timing of the survey. The size of crappies were modest, with most crappies over 8 inches but only a small percentage over 10 inches. The daily bag limit for panfish (for all species combined) in Smith Lake is 10.

LARGEMOUTH BASS

The catch rate for Largemouth Bass in Smith Lake was close to average compared to lakes of the same class and up slightly from 2015. However, the size of Largemouth Bass in Smith Lake has improved considerably since the last survey. The percentage of bass over 15 inches increased from 11% in 2015 to 49% in 2022. There is no minimum length limit for bass and a 5-daily bag limit. Anglers interested in harvesting bass are encouraged to focus harvest on individuals less than 14 inches long.

BLUEGILL

The Bluegill catch rate was high (95th percentile) compared to other lakes in this class. Despite being relatively abundant, the size of Bluegill was still fair. About half of the Bluegill captured were over 6 inches long, with a small percentage over 8 inches long. The daily bag limit for panfish for (all species combined) in Smith Lake is 10.

Other species present include: White Sucker, Pumpkinseed Sunfish, Rock Bass, Yellow Perch and various minnow species.

Survey Crew: Max Wolter, Scott Braden, and Evan Sniadajewski, with volunteers Tim Gardner and Pat Eaton

Reviewed and approved by Aaron Cole