WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Fishery Survey Summary
Le Tourneau Lake
Price County, Wisconsin, 2024

Introduction

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' Fisheries Management Team from Park Falls completed a late-spring electrofishing survey to assess the abundance and size structure of largemouth bass and bluegill populations in Le Tourneau Lake. We did not repeat the fyke netting surveys that characterized the population status of black crappies in the fall of 2014 and of northern pike, yellow perch and walleye in the early spring of 2015. 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. "Keeper size" is our own description for bluegill ≥ 7" and black crappie ≥ 9", based on observed angler behavior.

HABITAT AND PUBLIC ACCESS CHARACTERISTICS

Le Tourneau Lake is a 124-acre drainage lake located about 10½ miles west of Fifield, Wisconsin. A first-order tributary drains an 800-acre forested watershed, enters Le Tourneau Lake on the southwest shore, discharges from the east shore to nearby Le Claire Lake (27 acres) and then to the North Fork Flambeau River about 1½ miles farther downstream. Le Tourneau Lake has maximum depth 16 feet, average depth 11 feet and 5% of its surface area less than 3 feet deep. Upland hardwoods and conifers cover 80% of the shoreline with leatherleaf bog and hardwood swamp and tag alder swamp comprising the remainder. Lakebed materials near shore were 55% sand, 20% gravel, 10% rock and 15% muck. Aquatic plants grow at moderate density around most of the perimeter. Six fish cribs with traditional log cabin design were installed along the north shore in 1994 and 1995. Water quality information on Le Tourneau Lake is scarce and old. Nonetheless, we can broadly categorize Le Tourneau Lake as "eutrophic" with high nutrient concentrations fueling high biological productivity. Le Tourneau Lake belongs in the class of lakes that have dark-stained water, a cool thermal regime and a simple fish community. Most of the upland sites on the north and south shores have road access and residential improvements. A gravel ramp provides boat access from the Price Lakes Road right-of-way near the outlet. However, roadside parking is inconveniently located about 500 feet from the boat ramp.

SURVEY EFFORT

With water temperature at 68-69° F, our electrofishing survey on May 23, 2024 coincided with the spawning activities of largemouth bass and bluegill. We collected gamefish along Le Tourneau Lake's entire shoreline, sampling 2.21 miles in 1.05 hours and subsampling all fish species for 0.50 miles in 0.27 hours.

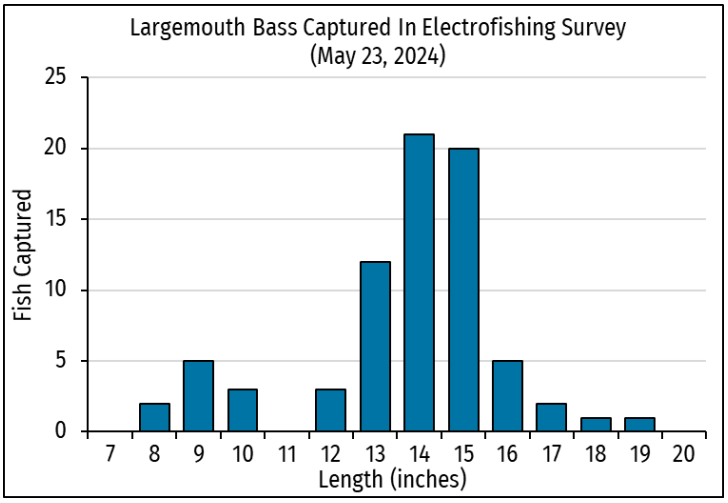
Results and Discussion

FISH COMMUNITY

In the spring of 2024, electrofishing captured seven fish species compared to eight species collected in 2014 and 2015 by netting and electrofishing combined. Largemouth bass and bluegills hold the primary roles in Le Tourneau Lake's predator-prey dynamics. Not surprisingly, walleyes

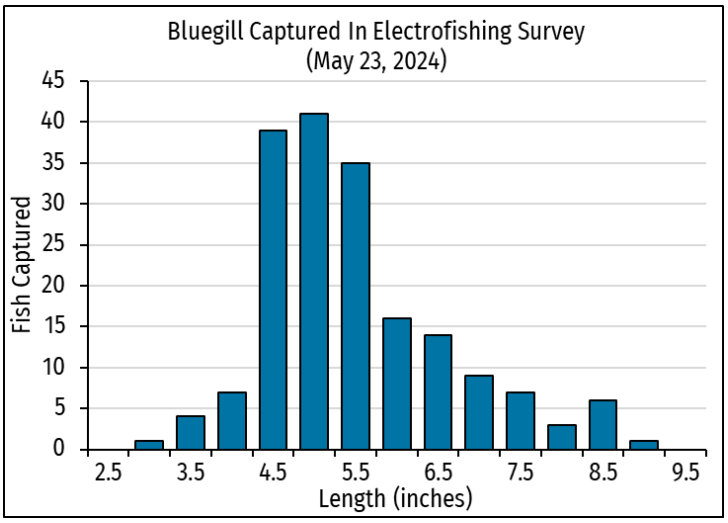
were absent and northern pike were few in our recent sample because these species are typically not vulnerable to capture by electrofishing near shore in late spring. We suspect that Le Tourneau Lake still supports the low-density walleye and northern pike populations that our spring fyke netting survey characterized in 2015.

LARGEMOUTH BASS



We caught 75 largemouth bass that ranged from 8.7 to 19.6 inches and averaged 14.2 inches long. Electrofishing catch rates of 34 bass ≥ 8 inches per mile or 71 per hour indicate the moderate population abundance needed to keep them growing fast to approach memorable size of 20 inches. Our electrofishing catch rates ranked between the 75th and 90th percentiles in the simple-dark-cool lake class. Among bass 8 inches and longer, 87% were quality-size fish at least 12 inches long, two-thirds were legal-size bass ≥ 14 inches and 39% were preferred-size fish 15 inches or longer. Comparing the same measures in 2015 and 2024, largemouth bass abundance was similar, and their size distribution improved, since our last survey when electrofishing captured 67 bass per hour and proportions of quality-, legal- and preferred-size fish were 66%, 31% and 12%, respectively. With predatory help from northern pike and walleye, largemouth in moderate abundance bass seem to eat enough young bluegills to foster good bluegill fishing for the sizes that anglers like to catch and eat.

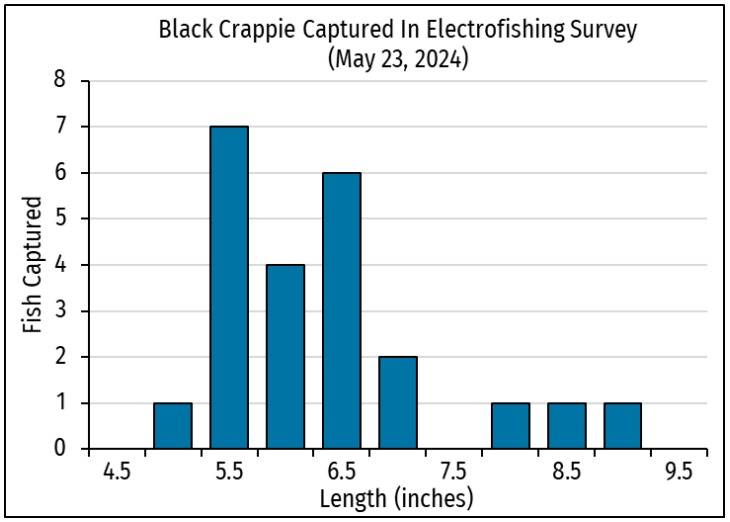
BLUEGILL



In late spring 2024 we dip-netted 183 bluegills at electrofishing capture rates of 366 fish ≥ 3 inches per mile and 686 per hour—catch rates that ranked near the 90th and 95th percentiles values among lakes in the simple-dark-cool category. Despite their high population abundance, bluegill size structure was somewhat better than average. They ranged 3.0–9.4 inches and averaged 5.7 inches long. About 31% of bluegills ≥ 3 inches in our sample were quality-size fish at least 6 inches long, 14% grew to keeper size ≥ 7 inches and 5.5% attained preferred size of 8 inches or longer. Bluegill abundance and size were lower in our last survey when electrofishing in the late spring of 2015 captured 204 bluegills per mile or 408 per hour, 25% were ≥ 6 inches, 9% were ≥ 7 inches and 2% were ≥ 8 inches. The size structure of Le Tourneau Lake's bluegill may be even better than our recent electrofishing sample indicated. The dip-netters said that they saw more large bluegills along the remaining shoreline than in the half mile where they collected panfish.

BLACK CRAPPIE

Though we typically describe the status of black crappie populations from fyke netting surveys in spring or fall, our late spring electrofishing sample included 23 crappies that ranged from 5.1 to 9.0 inches and averaged 6.5 inches long. Based on its reputation, Le Tourneau Lake's crappie population is often at moderately high abundance to offer fast fishing action for 8- and 9-inch fish, but we seldom captured crappies longer than 10 inches in our previous assessments. Based on age estimates from ear bones extracted and interpreted in 2015, we expect that abundant and slow-growing crappies in Le Tourneau Lake will die from natural causes before they can reach the sizes that anglers prefer to keep and eat.



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