2009 WISCONSIN Fishing Report

WISCONSIN DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES

PUB-FH-506-2009

Free

Give yourself a license to relax!

Wisconsin has faced hard economic times in the past, and when that's happened, people have turned to fishing to forget their worries and relax for a few hours. Did you know that during the last three recessions, sales of fishing licenses increased? Once again we find ourselves in difficult economic times, but once again, fishing is still that great escape.

Fishing is a family activity and with children under 16 able to fish free, it provides year-long fun at a low cost. A general resident fishing license only costs $20, which translates to about half a penny a day! And proceeds from licenses go directly back into protecting Wisconsin's fisheries. If you don't have fishing tackle, DNR has equipment for loan at many DNR offices and state parks for your angling pleasure.

So give yourself that license to relax. Fishing can make you forget about your day-to-day stress and worries. That's a big part of fishing — it's the cheapest form of therapy you can get.

Wisconsin also has thousands of fishable lakes and streams, two Great Lakes, and a long stretch of the Mississippi River, which means that good fishing is always less than 30 minutes from wherever you live in this state — so you don't have to spend a lot on gas. Anglers catch 88 million fish and eat 33 million of them a year! That's a lot of good fish dinners and there are plenty more out there to go around this year.

Fishing isn't only good for the soul and stomach, it's also big business. Fishing in Wisconsin generates $2.75 billion in economic activity and provides more than 30,000 jobs!

In this economy, we all need to escape, relax and recharge our batteries, and fishing is a great way to do that. Better yet, take someone along who didn't fish last year. It's a great way to spend time with family and friends, and a terrific way to catch some new memories, too.

– Dennis Schenborn, fisheries section chief, Madison

Contents

Fishing Highlights by Month.....2
Urban Fishing.....3
Catch These Fish.....5
Fisheries Projects.....6-7
Seasons.....6
Fishing Forecasts.....8-15

Follow "fishwisconsin" on Twitter

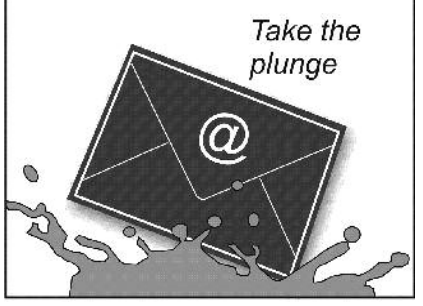
FOLLOW FISH on

Subscribe at **fishingwisconsin.org**

SUBSCRIBE to Fisheries Updates

Stay informed. Go to **fishingwisconsin.org**

Take the plunge



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Find links to fishing licenses, season dates, regulations, where to fish and more at **fishingwisconsin.org**

If you have more fishing questions, call our toll-free 1-888-WDNRINFo (1-888-936-7463) or visit **dnr.wi.gov/contact/** for live chat

Great fishing!
¡Buena pesca!
Zoo Nuv Ntses Heej!
Bilingual services now available

Dear Wisconsin Angler,

Welcome to the 2009 fishing season! In these pages you'll find information on fisheries, equipment, techniques and what's biting when.

As we look forward to another great season, I would like to tell you about important work being done to protect fishing in our great state. Under Governor Jim Doyle's leadership, with grassroots support across Wisconsin, we accomplished a great deal in 2008.

The Natural Resources Board passed a strong rule to cut mercury emissions by 90 percent that should some day reduce mercury levels in fish.

We've stepped up the fight against aquatic invasive species, tripling funding to prevent their spread. Anglers can help by draining live wells and inspecting boats and trailers before moving from one waterway to another.

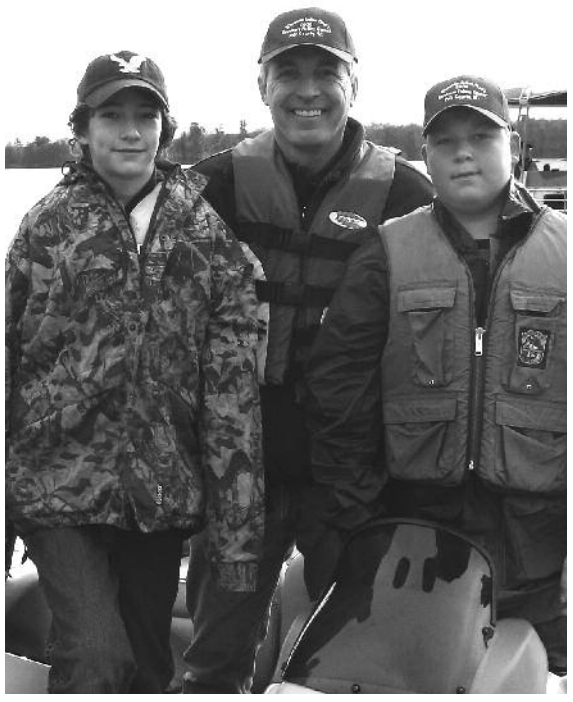
We worked with other Great Lakes states, Canada and Congress to pass the Great Lakes Compact. This historic commitment to sustainably manage the world's greatest freshwater resource laid the groundwork to protect these international treasures.

Wisconsin also renewed the Stewardship Fund, which preserves land for outdoor recreation for all our citizens. Stewardship has protected thousands of miles of lake, river and stream shoreline, improving fish habitat and public access.

Our world-class fishing opportunities make Wisconsin waters a special place, and one of the greatest gifts we can give our children is to connect them to the great outdoors. Take a child fishing — it's a gift that will last a lifetime.

On behalf of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, thank you for the opportunity to serve you. Good fishing in 2009!

Matt Frank, *Secretary*
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources



JIM BISHOP

Along with fishing guide Jim Sigsworth (not shown) and two youth from the Amery area, DNR Secretary Matt Frank prepared for last year's chilly morning fishing opener on Lake Wapogasset in Polk County.

A Year of Fabulous Fishing

JANUARY

Anglers can enjoy a fantastic brown trout fishery in the open waters of Lake Michigan's tributaries and harbors. When the weather gets cold, concentrations of warm water, either in the river mouth or one of several warm water discharges, attract bait fish such as gizzard shad and round gobies — and the hungry browns that feed on them all winter long. Unlike steelhead that prefer to run upstream, browns tend to stay in the river mouth, the harbor, or near shore areas with warmer water.

FEBRUARY

February brings North America's largest winter spear fishery, with an average annual harvest of 1,400 lake sturgeon from the Lake Winnebago system and an annual economic impact of more than $3 million to the region. The sturgeon population, estimated at 12,000 adult females and 25,000 adult males, is the world's largest and reflects DNR's successful century-old sturgeon management program and citizens' commitment to sustaining this prehistoric species.

MARCH

The inland game fish season closes the first Sunday of the month, with anglers often taking advantage of the last few days. In northern Wisconsin, ice fishing for panfish continues, with bluegill and crappie activity often picking up. Ice is often gone or in poor condition in other areas of the state.

As Lake Michigan tributaries open up, fishing for steelhead and brown trout picks up. The early catch-and-release trout season opens the first Saturday in March and anglers can enjoy great weather and action this time of year. Walleye and sauger catches often pick up in those river systems open year-round for game fish. Find which rivers open early online at: dnr.wi.gov/fish/yearnd.htm.

APRIL

The end of the ice season in northern Wisconsin is very near. The majority of fishing action is usually on river systems, especially Great Lakes tributaries where steelhead runs are near peak, and on those rivers that remain open for walleye fishing. Rains often trigger fresh runs of steelhead on Lake Michigan tributaries in April. Walleye angling is often excellent on various rivers with open seasons, including the Menominee, Mississippi, Fox, Wolf, Rock, and Crawfish rivers, and portions of the Wisconsin River. Lake sturgeon are expected to begin their spawning run on the Wolf River and other large rivers in the state by mid- to late April. Some spectacular viewing of these fish can be done this time of year.

MAY

The regular inland season for game fish opens statewide the first Saturday in May. Walleye fishing across the state is usually good as walleye begin to feed heavily after spawning. The start of the regular trout fishing season is a great time to get out on your favorite stream or explore new ones. Most of the stocked trout lakes and spring ponds should provide some excellent fishing for opening weekend anglers.

Crappie, bluegill and perch become more active in shallow, warm bays of lakes. Northern pike are more active after their spring spawning. Bass fishing in the northern zone is catch-and-release through June 19. The northern musky zone does not open until May 23. White bass runs on several rivers provide great fishing opportunity early in the season and can happen any time from late April to early June, depending on water conditions.

JUNE

Bass and panfish opportunities are plentiful across the state, as they move into shallow water to build nests and spawn. Large and smallmouth bass are usually well into their spawning period in northern Wisconsin. Northern pike action picks up with the warming water temperatures. The harvest season for bass in the northern zone opens June 20.

JULY

Bass and panfish opportunities are plentiful in lakes across the state. This is also a good time for smallmouth bass fishing in streams and rivers, trolling in the Great Lakes for trout and salmon, and perch fishing on Green Bay and the Winnebago System. Walleye fishing tends to slow down in the warmer months of July and August after higher catch rates in May and June. Walleye catch rates pick up again in September and October.

AUGUST

Fishing can be very good for bass and panfish in August. Bass fishing is often best at early morning and evening. This is usually a slow time for walleye. Chinook salmon and brown and rainbow trout are available to pier fishers along Lake Michigan cities. Musky fishing is popular in northern lakes. Lake Winnebago may be the best bet for walleye fishing in August. Lake Michigan fisheries for trout and salmon have been tremendous in July and August for the last couple years.

SEPTEMBER

September brings the hook-and-line season for lake sturgeon. All anglers who plan to harvest a sturgeon must buy a harvest tag before they fish. Lake sturgeon are found in the Wisconsin River, Lake Superior, Mississippi River and Lake Michigan drainages. September is also when walleye fishing picks up. Bass fishing is still good before slowing down with the cooling of lakes and streams. Inland trout fishing season ends September 30, so make a last visit or two to your favorite streams.

OCTOBER

October brings cooler weather but great opportunities for walleye and musky fishing across the state. September to October is often when walleye put on much of their growth for the current year. Fall movements of walleye up rivers can provide good fishing opportunities.

NOVEMBER

Musky fishing is often challenging but rewarding in November, whether on inland lakes or the Fox River. Recent years have seen very large musky caught at the tail end of the musky fishing season, which closes the last day of November.

DECEMBER

Ice fishing starts to pick up in mid-December in northern Wisconsin. Early ice can bring good fishing for walleye and panfish, but anglers need to be very careful about ice conditions.

For current fishing regulations visit dnr.wi.gov/fish/regulations/

TERRY MARGENAU

TARA FEBOCK

Get the lead out!

Lead fishing tackle kills aquatic wildlife dependent on Wisconsin's waters.

You can prevent lead poisoning in wildlife:

- Replace lead jigs and sinkers with those made of tin, bismuth, steel, tungsten or ceramic.
- Spread the word – tell others about the hazards of lead to wildlife and people.
- Ask your favorite bait/tackle shop to carry non-lead products.
- Dispose of old lead sinkers and jigs properly at your local hazardous waste collection site.
- Outfit your children's tackle boxes with non-lead tackle.

For more information, **dnr.wi.gov/fish/pages/gettheleadout.html**

NEAL ROSENBURG

Using DNR loaner rods and tackle, kids from Milwaukee enjoy great fishing and great catching.

Basic tackle box

Regulation book

Hooks

Non-lead sinkers

Pliers or hemostat

Fillet knife (if you plan on eating any fish)

Fishing license

Camera

Clipper or small scissors (to cut line)

Bobbers

Stringer/ fish basket

Tape measure

Small flashlight

Visit **takemefishing.org** for more information on fishing tackle.

Borrow a rod, keep the memories!

Check out the DNR Tackle Loaner Program

Visit the DNR website for more information: **dnr.wi.gov/fish/kidsparents/loanercontacts.html**

Or contact Matt Coffaro at (414)263-8614, Matthew.Coffaro@Wisconsin.gov, or Travis Motl at (414) 333-1183, Travis.Motl@Wisconsin.gov

Get Hooked

Easy Access to Fishing Fun!

Surveys show that people are not passing on fishing skills from one generation to the next as they once did and that there are many activities competing for parents' and children's time.

That's why the Department of Natural Resources is promoting its Urban Fishing Program. The goal is to encourage more people, especially youngsters, to participate in the sport.

To meet its goals, the DNR has designated certain ponds as urban waters to make fishing opportunities more readily available. These ponds have special regulations and are stocked seasonally with trout or panfish. The special regulations and an abundance of fish build confidence for a novice angler. There are 60 of these ponds throughout the state; most located in more densely populated southeastern Wisconsin.

In addition, the DNR wants people to know that while catch-and-release is a common practice, there is nothing wrong with keeping a few fish for the frying pan. Fresh caught trout or panfish provide a delicious and nutritious meal, which adds to the fishing experience.

Luring new anglers to the sport also takes teamwork. The DNR works with local fishing clubs to organize fishing clinics on many urban ponds and the tireless efforts of these groups make these clinics successful. Club member volunteers teach kids the basics of fishing: casting, knot tying, fish identification, habitat protection, safety and ethics. The clinics are free and fishing equipment is provided. Pre-registration is not necessary.

And don't let a lack of equipment keep you from taking a kid fishing. The DNR has fishing equipment to loan through its Tackle Loaner Program. The program has more than 50 sites throughout the state and equipment is available on a first-come, first-served basis. The most popular times for borrowing the equipment are spring and early summer. Equipment is available for free but we ask that it be returned clean and in good working order for the next group.

TRAVIS MOTL

A young angler participates in the Spring Fishing Clinic at Scout Lake, one of the designated urban waters in Milwaukee County.

Fishing doesn't have to be complicated or costly. To make sure kids have a positive experience while fishing; keep it simple. A basic rod and reel and a can of worms are all you need. While avid anglers may spend big money for the latest in fishing technology, that investment is not necessary to enjoy a day on the water. Remember that if the weather is bad, simply wait for a nicer day. You don't want kids to associate fishing with being cold and wet! Also, make sure you bring snacks, bug repellant, sunscreen, water and a cooler full of ice (if you plan on keeping any fish). And don't forget to bring a camera to capture that smiling child holding up a prize catch.

There's a reason, after all, that most family photo albums contain pictures of somebody holding up a fish.

– Matt Coffaro, fisheries biologist, Milwaukee

For more information on the Urban Fishing Program, contact Matt Coffaro (414) 263-8614 or e-mail Matthew.Coffaro@Wisconsin.gov, or Travis Motl (414) 333-1183, or e-mail Travis.Motl@Wisconsin.gov.

Urban fishing waters

SOUTHEAST REGION

KENOSHA COUNTY: Anderson Park, Bong Children's Pond, Poerio Park

MILWAUKEE COUNTY: Brown Deer Park, Dineen Park, Estabrook Park, Franklin High School, Greenfield Park, Holler Park, Humboldt Park, Jackson Park, Juneau Park, Kosciuszko Park, McCarty Park, McGovern Park, Miller Park, Mitchell Park, Oak Creek Parkway, Saveland Park, Shoetz Park, Scout Lake, Sheridan Park, Washington Park, Wilson Park

OZAUKEE COUNTY: Harrington Beach Quarry, Mequon Rotary Park East and West, Pucketts Pond, Schowalter Park, Willow Brooke Park

RACINE COUNTY: Gorney Park, Johnson Park, Lockwood Park, Pritchard Park, Quarry Lake, Reservoir Park

SHEBOYGAN COUNTY: Sheboygan Quarry, Memorial Park, River Park Lagoon

WALWORTH COUNTY: Ceylon Lagoon, Congdon Park, Millpond Park Pond

WASHINGTON COUNTY: Boot Lake, Hartford Millpond, Homestead Hollow Park, Kewaskum Millpond, Sandy Knoll Park, Wells Lake

WAUKESHA COUNTY: Calhoun Park, Heyer Park North and South, Lepper Dam Millpond, Lions Park-Overland, Menomonee Park, Minooka Park, Muskego Park, Nixon Park, Regal Park, and Woodfield North and South

NORTHERN REGION

LANGLADE COUNTY: Remington Lake

LINCOLN COUNTY: Mirror Lake

NORTHEAST REGION

BROWN COUNTY: Manger Lagoon

"Big"

is all in the eye of the beholder for these state record fish

Anglers **Tom Cichosz** of Madison and **John Cichosz** of Menomonee Falls proved that a little brotherly competition pays off. Both established first-time records for two small, little known species while fishing the Milwaukee River, Milwaukee County, on June 29, 2008. Tom claimed his record when he reeled in a 1.4-ounce, 6.25-inch-long hornyhead chub.

John, not to be outdone by his brother, staked his claim to fame when he caught a 1.9-ounce, 6.37-inch-long common shiner.

Daniel Haley of Two Rivers hooked a 5.3-ounce, 8.5-inch-long round goby on May 11, 2008, from Lake Michigan, Manitowoc County, beating the previous record by 2.3 ounces.

Donald Peyer of Whitewater reeled in a 6-pound, 4.8-ounce sauger measuring 23.75 inches from the Mississippi River in Pierce County on March 30, 2008, battering the existing record by almost a half a pound.

To see details on other state record fish, go to fishingwisconsin.org, and look under "Wisconsin fish." If you think you or someone else has caught a fish that may be a state record, here's what you need to do:

- Don't clean or freeze the fish.
- Keep the fish cool, preferably on ice.
- Get the fish weighed as soon as possible on a certified scale (usually found in grocery, hardware stores, etc.) and witnessed by an observer.
- Contact the nearest DNR office to get the fish species positively identified and to find out whether the fish is a state record. If possible, take a photo of you holding your catch and send the photo to the DNR Bureau of Fisheries Management, Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707, in care of Karl Scheidegger, or e-mail to karl.scheidegger@wisconsin.gov.

TOM CICHOSZ

You don't need a 60-incher to hold a state record as John Cichosz proves with his 6.37-inch common shiner.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Brad Bohen (background) and Derek Kuehl (foreground) display their "musky double."

Avid fly fisherman and fishing guide, Brad Bohen of Hayward, had truly a record year in 2008. While fishing the Chippewa River on Oct. 16, he claimed a world fly record for a released fish on a 36-pound tippet, when he landed a 51.25-inch musky. The excitement of the day didn't end there as just moments later, his good fishing buddy Derek Kuehl hooked a mammoth musky of his own, measuring 45 inches, and they executed an almost unheard of "musky double on the fly." To read more about Brad's story, visit dnr.wi.gov/fish/record/.

Science IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Keeping the fight in the state fish

Most of Wisconsin's nearly 800 musky waters support healthy, naturally reproducing native musky populations. But in some waters, musky need help producing the next generation. To ensure adequate quarry for Wisconsin musky anglers, the DNR fish propagation system is using the latest in genetic analysis to produce and stock musky.

Propagation and stocking have been popular and visible tools to help establish and maintain quality musky fisheries. To further improve this important part of the musky management program, the DNR is applying principles of conservation genetics. That means making sure that we maintain the native populations of musky unique to Wisconsin, and avoid potential problems associated with genetic variation loss. Lower survival, growth and reproduction rates are among the potential problems that can occur in artificial propagation programs.

Native musky populations have adapted to local conditions and are the best fit for those waters. Identifying current distribution of genetic markers known as DNA microsatellites helps determine boundaries for groups of lakes that have fish of similar origin, and that should be kept separate from other groups. This is an issue where self-sustaining native populations are stocked in the same basin.

To do this, DNA markers are obtained from fin tissue samples, which are taken from musky netted during spring surveys and then released back to the lake. Most of the sampling is focused on lakes within the upper Chippewa and Wisconsin River basins, which contain most of Wisconsin's native musky populations.

Once genetic distribution is identified, stocking may occur within the native range of musky without introducing fish that might change or replace the native populations if stocked fish reproduce or move to connected waters.

Another important application of conservation genetic principles is to use a sufficient number of brood fish, adult fish netted from wild populations for egg production, so the next generation contains a representative sample of all the genetic diversity in a lake.

Since 2006, for example, the two DNR hatcheries that produce musky have sought to use 70 to 100 brood fish each year. Over a seven-year period roughly corresponding to a musky generation, these targets provide a 95 percent chance of sampling all the genes in a population.

These applications of genetic principles allow us to make fishing better, while protecting our natural heritage.

– Martin Jennings, research scientist, Spooner

GRETCHEN HANSEN

Genetic conservation helps to ensure mighty muskies for anglers who target them.

Fishing by the numbers

1.4 million licensed anglers

21 million annual fishing days

#2 ranked fishing destination

88.2 million fish caught

33 million fish harvested

7 million fingerlings and yearlings stocked per year

$2.75 billion economic activity

30,164 jobs

165 fish species

15,081 lakes

42,000 miles of year-round streams

10,266 miles of trout stream

Catch on to your favorite species with these tips

There's always good fishing in Wisconsin – you just need to know what's biting when and adjust your sights, techniques and bait.

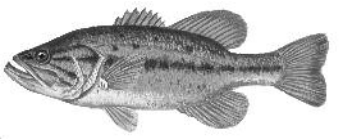
CRAPPIE

Crappie fishing is popular in spring when aggressive males strike at almost anything that comes near their nests. Summer and fall are more difficult, as crappie seek out deep holes or deep submerged brush for shelter. Ice fishing for crappie is also popular on some lakes, as crappie remain active all winter. Anglers are almost certain to have their best success near submerged structures. During spring spawning, fish near vegetation close to shore. In summer, try deep holes or river channels, especially ones with sunken logs or brush piles. Light tackle is preferred for fishing crappie. The more sensitive the rod, the easier it is to detect a crappie's light bite. Small fathead minnows, sometimes called "crappie minnows," are the most popular crappie bait and are often used with a light jig. Crappie also hit on worms, insect larvae and artificial lures such as spinners and spoons. Wet and dry flies are popular when crappies are on their spawning beds. Small teardrop-shaped hooks make good winter bait used alone or in combination with grubs.

BLUEGILL

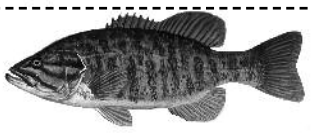
During summer, anglers have the best luck fishing bluegill from a boat in water six to 15 feet deep. Although worms are the most common bait, bluegill are not fussy and will bite at small bait like insects, insect larvae or other invertebrates. Because of their small mouths, anglers should use small hooks. Bluegill suck in prey rather than striking at it, so a bobber helps signal a bite. Fly casters can have fun with poppers, especially in spring and early summer, when nests are concentrated in shallow water. Wintertime jigging in weed beds with grubs or mousies also produces excellent results. Ice anglers find the best fishing among weeds in deeper water, but gills can also be found in shallow waters, sometimes as shallow as two feet, usually near sand/weed borders. Ice anglers use short, light jig poles, lightweight line and small tear-shaped jigs. Small hooks usually are baited with grubs.

LARGEMOUTH BASS



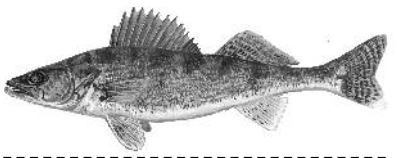
Largemouth bass fishing is best early May to late June, and early September to mid-October, when the water temperature ranges from 55 to 75 degrees. Largemouth bass call "structure" home: in-flowing or out-flowing streams, points, reefs, submerged trees, docks, rafts, tree stumps, vegetation beds, sunken islands, rock and riprap, and drop-offs. When fishing shallow, visible structure, look for spots slightly different from the rest of the cover. In cattails along shore, for example, cast near pockets or points of cattails, or by patches of other vegetation within the cattails. Live bait, surface plugs, underwater plugs, poppers on a fly rod, streamers and almost any other type of bait will attract hungry largemouth bass.

SMALLMOUTH BASS



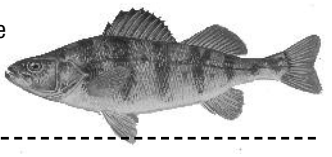
Pound for pound, smallmouth bass are the scrappiest Wisconsin fish. Smallmouth are common in medium to large rocky streams and in large clear water lakes where crayfish are abundant. The best lake fishing is found in June just after the spawning season, and in early fall. Baits like hellgrammites (dragonfly larvae), and crayfish imitations are effective in early morning and late evening. Light tackle is ideal. Fish quietly, casting toward rocks or logs, keeping the rod tip up and the line tight.

WALLEYE



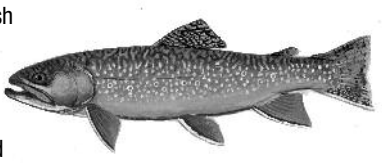
Thousands of walleye are caught during their annual spring spawning runs where the season allows. Walleye primarily feed on minnows, but leeches, small bullheads, night crawlers and small plugs also are favorite baits. In clear waters, walleye stay in deeper areas during the day and move into the shallows at night. In more turbid waters, walleye can be caught throughout the day. Try fly casting with streamer flies or poppers on quiet, calm nights near the edges of rocky bars or weed beds. Ice fish with tip-ups, jigs and medium-sized minnows.

YELLOW PERCH



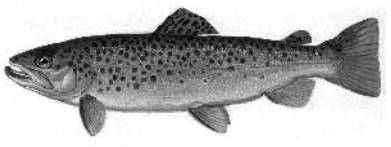
Yellow perch are primarily found near the bottom. They eat almost anything, but prefer minnows, insect larvae, plankton and worms. Tackle may be as simple as a cane pole or as complex as a graphite rod with an ultralight, open-faced spinning reel — as long as it is sensitive. Use a small, fine wire hook with live bait and a small bobber with just enough buoyancy to break water. It will signal even the lightest bites. Because perch prefer cooler water, the best fishing is usually in deep water. Perch move about in schools, often numbering in the hundreds. If one spot is unproductive after a few tries, it is best to move to other spots until a school is located.

BROOK AND BROWN TROUT



Fishing guides say 80 percent of trout are found in 20 percent of the water. Because trout instinctively seek cover from predators, knowing where to look for fish cover can increase angling success. Deep water on the outside of stream bends, pools, undercut banks, areas with surface turbulence, and structure like large rocks and logs are preferred trout habitat. Another way to increase success is to imitate a blue heron, which carefully moves to avoid spooking fish.

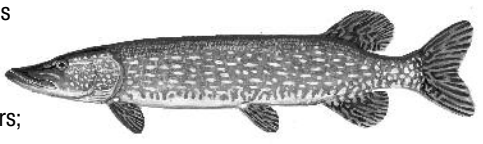
Brook trout are found in the coldest and cleanest streams and spring ponds. These fish feed most actively when water temperature ranges from 57 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Brook trout are voracious predators of aquatic and terrestrial insects and worms, and freshwater shrimp. Brook trout actively feed during low-light conditions of early morning and dusk when aquatic insects emerge. Brook trout tend to be less wary than brown trout, and worms, small spinners and various fly patterns are effective lures.



Brown trout are longer-lived, grow larger and often inhabit waters too warm or enriched for brook trout, actively feeding in water temperatures that range from about 55 to 65 degrees Fahrenheit. Small brown trout have diets similar to brook trout's, but as they grow, the brown trout's diet increasingly is made up of minnows and crayfish. Anglers interested in catching trophy brown trout should try using minnow and crayfish imitations.

Anglers fishing Wisconsin's early artificials-only catch-and-release season should try a different tactic. With colder water temperatures, trout congregate in deep slow moving water typically found in pools. Concentrate on fishing baits slow and deep.

NORTHERN PIKE



During open water season, northern pike anglers should come equipped with a sturdy rod; medium-weight line with a wire leader (to avoid cutting a line on the northern pike's sharp teeth); a full complement of spoon-type lures, streamer flies, and other bait impostors such as large crankbaits. If live bait is preferred, small suckers and chubs up to eight inches long suspended under a sturdy bobber or pulled slowly behind a spinner work well. During ice fishing season, tip-ups rigged so the fish can run with the live bait work well under the ice. Marshy areas and weed beds hold pike when the water is cool — late spring and early summer, late summer and early fall, and in winter soon after the ice forms. If you're hoping to hook a northern when the water is warm, fish the cool depths. As ambush predators, northern pike feed by sight and bite best during daylight hours; keep the bait moving and you're sure to get a strike.

MUSKY

Patience is the most important item in a musky angler's tackle box. Other elements of traditional musky gear include a heavy bait-casting rod; substantial level-wind reel; 20- to 35-pound test line; and a variety of large artificial lures such as plugs, bucktail spinners and spoons. Some anglers prefer to cast or drift with live bait — usually a sucker 10 to 14 inches long on a quick set rig. The musky's natural home is in northern lakes and rivers. It is a solitary fish and often lurks in weed beds or other protective cover. Anglers usually have the best luck fishing during the daytime, although musky are often active after dark and action can be heart stopping. For calm nights, large surface baits are often best while large plugs, spoons, and bucktails are the best artificial baits for daylight hours along with a live sucker 10 to 12 inches long. Musky generally strike bait that has considerable "action," so keep the bait moving. When a musky hits, set the hook immediately and firmly in its hard, bony jaws, keep a tight line and hold on for the ride of your life.

– Compiled by DNR fisheries staff

ENJOY YOUR CATCH

SAFE EATING GUIDELINES FOR MOST OF WISCONSIN'S INLAND WATERS*

Women of childbearing years, nursing mothers and all children under 15 may eat:	Women beyond their childbearing years and men may eat:
One meal per week – Bluegill, crappie, yellow perch, sunfish, bullhead and inland trout;	**Unrestricted** – Bluegill, crappie, yellow perch, sunfish, bullhead and inland trout;
and	**One meal per week** – Walleye, pike, bass, catfish and all other species;
One meal per month – Walleye, pike, bass, catfish and all other species.	and
Do not eat – Musky	**One meal per month** – Musky

***There are 144 waters where exceptions to this advice apply. More stringent consumption advice applies where fish have higher concentrations of mercury, PCBs or other chemicals. See our website for further information: dnr.wi.gov/fish/consumption/**

JOHN NARDI

Enjoy fish low in mercury like these fine black crappie!

Fabulous fisheries projects

The "dead sea" comes alive

NEW RICHMOND — A cooperative lake habitat improvement project is turning a lake once known as the "dead sea" into a local hotspot. The DNR, Star Prairie Fish and Game, Cedar Lake Management and Rehabilitation District and the Willow River Rod and Gun Club started the project in winter 2004.

The overall plan is to install 500 fish cribs into Cedar Lake to improve habitat. The project will take about 10 years to complete with an estimated 50 fish habitat structures installed per year. To date, 178 cribs have been installed.

Structural cover, an important component of fish habitat, has been extremely scarce in Cedar Lake. Cribs provide adult fish with cover, nursery areas, safety from predators, and help increase the food — such as macroinvertebrates — available to fish.

With numerous fish cribs placed in colonies throughout the lake, new habitat is evolving and thriving, evident by hundreds of anglers out fishing for crappie, bluegill and walleye.

Cedar Lake is once again a popular panfish and walleye destination during open water and ice fishing seasons. The local community has already labeled the cooperative project a great success. For more information check out the Star Prairie Fish and Game website, click on activities and maps at: www.fishandgame.starprairie.org/maps.htm

– Marty Engel, fisheries biologist, Baldwin

MARTY ENGEL

Crews construct the 2,000-pound fish cribs at the boat landing on Cedar Lake and tow them out onto the lake using an ice sled and ATV.

New shore fishing access on anglers' radar

WEST SALEM – Habitat improvements in 2008 on the lower La Crosse River provide anglers with new and easy access for shore fishing in Veteran's Memorial Park.

This stretch of river was once essentially devoid of usable fish cover, and its nearly vertical banks made it almost impossible to fish from shore. The DNR and La Crosse County sloped the banks, installed cover for fish, improved a small boat and canoe landing and created spots for anglers to fish.

The benefits are already noticeable in the numbers of anglers catching fish. Even during construction, anglers caught fish in and around the new habitat. The new boat landing allowed kayak groups to easily access the river for day trips and the banks are protected from erosion during high water.

– Jordan Weeks, senior inland fisheries biologist, La Crosse

2009 Fishing Seasons

EARLY INLAND TROUT
March 7 (5 a.m.) to April 26

GENERAL INLAND TROUT
May 2 (5 a.m.) to Sept. 30

LARGE AND SMALLMOUTH BASS NORTHERN ZONE CATCH-AND-RELEASE
May 2 to June 19

LARGE AND SMALLMOUTH BASS NORTHERN ZONE – HARVEST
June 20 to March 7, 2010

LARGE AND SMALLMOUTH BASS SOUTHERN ZONE
May 2 to March 7, 2010

MUSKY – NORTHERN ZONE
May 23 to Nov. 30

MUSKY – SOUTHERN ZONE
May 2 to Dec. 31

NORTHERN PIKE
May 2 to March 7, 2010

WALLEYE
May 2 to March 7, 2010

LAKE STURGEON
Sept. 5 to Sept. 30 (hook-and-line)

Lakeshore habitat revived a century later

BARNES – A habitat improvement project on the 191-acre Bony Lake in Bayfield County is restoring lakeshore habitat to benefit fish and other aquatic life and is spurring similar work on nearby lakes.

Logging activities between the 1890s and mid-1920s and northern lakes development beginning in the early 1940s removed many of the downed trees and other lakeshore habitat that fish rely on. Developed portions of 16 northern Wisconsin lakes averaged 57 logs per kilometer of shoreline, compared to 379 along undeveloped portions of the same lakes.

In fall 2008 with funding from a DNR Lake Protection Grant, the leadership of lakeshore property owners, and the assistance of Bayfield Land and Water Conservation, Eau Claire Conservation Club and the DNR added wood to the shorelines of Bony Lake, which at that time had only 80 pieces of wood. By the time spring arrived, that number increased by 400 percent.

Wood in shallow waters has many benefits for lake ecosystems. For fish, it provides spawning and juvenile fish habitat, protection from predators, an ambush spot for predation and macroinvertebrate production.

Perhaps the most important part of the project is that the trees used come from upland woods as part of good forestry management practices.

Three additional lakeshore properties installed wood in winter 2009. In addition, the project's popularity has spread to nearby Willipyro, Middle and Upper Eau Claire lakes.

– Scott Toshner, fisheries biologist, Brule

Tomorrow River, today's trout

WAUSAU – An exciting project to enhance trout habitat and improve anglers' access was completed in summer 2008 on the Richard J. Hemp Fishery Area on the Tomorrow River in Portage County.

A new parking area was developed jointly with DNR fisheries and operations crews to enhance access to the state-owned property. DNR habitat crews added 38 LUNKER structures to the 700-foot stream reach for a total of 304 feet of new overhead cover.

Additionally, on one cold snowy morning, volunteers from the local Bill Cook Chapter of the Izaak Walton League bundled 750 Christmas trees and placed them on the side of the stream channel. These bundles are often more effective than brush bundles at trapping and holding sediment and keeping water clean.

We believe this work will make an already productive trout stream even better.

– Thomas Meronek, fisheries biologist, Wausau

Dam removal puts down a welcome mat for fish

MILWAUKEE – For anglers, the partnership to remove Seminary Dam from the Pigeon River and restore habitat means more great places to fish for trout and salmon.

In 2008, the Department of Natural Resources, working with the dam owner, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, removed the deteriorating Seminary Dam to restore the former one acre impoundment to its natural landscape. The project is expected to improve water quality and enhance spawning and developmental habitat for fish living in Pigeon Creek, the Milwaukee River and Lake Michigan.

The ecological and public benefits will extend beyond Pigeon Creek, which has good environmental quality, and supports 20 native fish species, including the state threatened greater redhorse. Dam removal gives fish access to hundreds of acres of wetlands generally lacking from other Milwaukee River tributaries in this reach.

Anglers were quick to discover Pigeon Creek as a destination for Lake Michigan salmon and trout moving into the Milwaukee River. If trout reproduction continues, Seminary Dam removal will result in the furthest southern point of natural trout reproduction in the Lake Michigan Basin. Biologists are hopeful that northern pike and walleye also will use the new habitat.

– Will Wawrzyn, fisheries biologist, Milwaukee

Reviving a stream, awakening a fishery

BELOIT – A single, newly emerged brook trout fingerling found in 2006 in Raccoon Creek, otherwise known as Paddock Creek, was a sign of life and hope in this Rock County stream.

While once home to brook trout, early agricultural use and a lack of soil conservation brought an end to the native fishery in the late 1800s.

Throughout the past 30 years, though, land use around Raccoon Creek has changed for the better. Herds of cattle no longer roam in the creek and croplands have been enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), which helps reduce soil erosion and improves water quality. Parcels were bought by the Green-Rock Audubon Society, a group of prairie enthusiasts and Beloit College. The "No Trespass" signs came down and the DNR considered stocking.

DNR worked with the local landowners, townships, Audubon and Conservation Congress to devise a plan to restore the prairie vegetation and historic native fish community. In January 2001, "no kill" regulations went into effect and the first "wild strain" brook trout were stocked by late summer. They survived well and the first sign of natural reproduction — a single fingerling — was found in 2006. More natural reproduction followed in 2007.

DNR continues to monitor the population and stock wild trout each year to supplement the emerging fishery. Odds of catching a large trout at this time are slim. But with protection and habitat improvement, this stream has a future.

– Don Bush, fisheries supervisor, Janesville

DON BUSH

Naturally reproduced brook trout fingerlings found in surveys are the first steps to success in Raccoon Creek.

Eagle Lake soon to soar

RACINE – Once plagued by too many small panfish, poor water quality and invasive Eurasian watermilfoil, Eagle Lake in Racine County now has a bright future, thanks to a rehabilitation project designed to improve water quality and fish habitat.

In fall 2008, DNR fisheries staff took the first step in transforming Eagle Lake by eradicating the poor-quality fish community. This was accomplished by applying liquid and powdered rotenone to 14 ponds, Eagle Creek, the lake and adjoining wetlands.

Beginning in 2009, the lake will be

JASON SPAETH

Bundles of Christmas trees (left) were placed on the side of the Tomorrow River to aid in trapping and holding the sediment and keeping the water clean.

Fabulous fisheries projects

Continued from page 6

MATT JENNINGS

Crews build LUNKER structures as part of trout habitat improvement projects on Paradise and Scuppernong springs.

DNR PHOTO

Senior fisheries biologist Kendall Kamke holds the 100,000th walleye tagged on the Winnebago System since tagging began in 1989.

restocked with northern pike, largemouth bass, and forage minnows and in 2010, bluegill and yellow perch. Special fishing regulations designed to protect future fish communities in Eagle Lake are in effect.

Soon, anglers, boaters, and swimmers will benefit from a lake that has bragging size fish, clear water and lush stands of native aquatic plants.

- Doug Welch, fisheries biologist, Sturtevant

Lake Wingra gets a carp clean up

MADISON – Lake Wingra is the lesser known "fifth" lake in the Madison chain. At 345 acres, it is easily overlooked, as it sits nestled deep within the University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum.

Wingra, however, is no stranger to musky anglers. It is recognized as one of Wisconsin's premier action lakes with a robust musky population. Yet it is also a challenged lake. An urban landscape, shallow depths and rich sediments can make Wingra a green soup bowl of algae in mid-summer — a water quality condition exacerbated by carp.

Efforts in late winter 2007-08 removed 6,308 carp weighing more than 48,000 pounds. That translates to 51 percent of the lake's carp mass. The removal was conducted by commercial fishermen using 3,000-foot-long seines (large fishing nets) and all game fish were returned to the lake.

By suppressing carp, Wingra's water clarity improved significantly in summer 2008. A positive response in growth of native aquatic vegetation — the "weeds" anglers target for musky — was also noted.

– Kurt Welke, fisheries biologist, Fitchburg

Habitat improvement for trout

WAUKESHA – Trout habitat improvement projects on Paradise and Scuppernong springs that began in the 1980s and continue today will benefit native brook trout and anglers for future generations.

The Class 1 trout streams have excellent water sources and have documented natural brook trout reproduction but still suffer from negative human impacts including invasive aquatic plants, ditching, damming, development and even mining.

In 2008, DNR fish crews designed and installed a variety of habitat improvement techniques, including installing LUNKER structures, using bio-logs to stabilize banks, and removing buckthorn from the streamside. Crews also removed invasive aquatic plants and isolated a connected warmwater fishery to avoid raising water temperatures on the trout waters.

The project areas will provide better angler access, increase brook trout natural reproduction and enhance the water's carrying capacity.

- Benjamin Heussner, fisheries biologist, Waukesha

Spawning brook trout a sign of success on this trout stream

PESHTIGO – Habitat improvements on the Little South Branch Pike River are breathing fresh air into this brook trout stream recently degraded by beaver activity.

Stream banks had sloughed in the stream corridor, sending large amounts of sand and silt into the pools and covering valuable woody debris and gravel substrate. Beaver dams impounded water, causing the water's temperature to rise.

Using trout stamp dollars, the DNR began this project in 2003 and by 2008, fisheries staff had removed 415 yards of beaver dams on the river and restored the adjacent uplands near the stream. Additionally, the DNR restored about 70 yards of stream channel by placing it back into its original channel and installing 16 crossover logs to provide shaded rest areas for trout.

During fall 2008, brook trout were spawning in this reach of stream where previously, six inches of sand and silt prevented such activity. Increased numbers of naturally producing trout will lead to more fish for Wisconsin anglers fishing the Pike River watershed.

– Mike Donofrio, fisheries supervisor, Peshtigo

Winnebago walleye thrive throughout the system

OSHKOSH – Walleye fishing on the Winnebago System is as good as it has ever been — these are the "good ol' days" for walleye. Our proactive walleye management program initiated in 1990 is paying big dividends in a robust, stable walleye population and in thousands of anglers catching their limits every year. Walleye are the mainstay of our recreational fishery on the Winnebago Pool lakes, and the Wolf and Upper Fox rivers. That fishery has an estimated annual value to the local economy of $300 million annually.

The program's success has been built upon sound assessments, habitat management and development, and proactive public involvement. We annually assess: the status of the spawning stock (we captured and tagged nearly 14,000 walleye in spring 2008); adult densities and exploitation through tournament tag returns; and year class strength through standardized fall trawling and shoreline shocking surveys. Our habitat management and development program is implemented in conjunction with local clubs and hundreds of volunteers. Together we have restored thousands of acres of walleye spawning habitat on the Wolf and Upper Fox rivers.

The Winnebago System is a regional destination for excellent walleye fishing. Given the stability and robustness of the walleye population we've been able to build during the past 20 years, the system should remain a walleye hot spot for years to come.

– Ron Bruch, fisheries supervisor, Oshkosh

AL KAAS

Construction continues at Wild Rose

With the first $15.9 million phase of Wild Rose Hatchery completed and coldwater fish production well underway, work is in full swing on the second phase that includes the construction of new coolwater incubation and rearing facilities for raising pike, sturgeon, walleye and musky. Phase II is expected to be completed by the end of 2009, allowing the new hatchery to start raising coolwater fish for stocking in 2010. A third phase will restore the wetland, springs and stream disturbed when the hatchery was originally built in the early 1900s and altered through the 1960s.

BRYANT ESCH

Potential future fish biologists

Fisheries biologist Al Niebur was joined by these two boys and their father (not shown) while doing hoop net surveys on the Wolf River. "One of the boys is totally fascinated with catfish," says Niebur. "I never saw a kid just dive in and grab a fish like he did. He was coated with catfish slime from head to toe, and his mom said he smelled like fish for days!"

2009 Regional Forecasts

Northern Wisconsin

***Special notice to anglers traveling to the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest –** Motorized access has changed. Maps can be found at www.fs.fed.us/r9/cnnf/MVUM/index.html or visit a U.S. Forest Service office in Park Falls, Eagle River, Glidden, Lakewood, Medford or Washburn.

ASHLAND COUNTY

Day Lake Flowage – Surveys show that this is the "go-to" lake for anglers who want to catch a musky. Recently, the adult musky population was estimated at 1.6 fish per surface acre or 1,020 fish in this 625-acre lake. More normal, healthy musky densities are 0.4 to 0.6 adults per acre. Although musky are numerous, the average size is small for the species with most fish less than 30 inches. There is a minimum size limit of 28 inches so anglers should have lots of action with good opportunity to take a fish home.

Other fishable species in Day Lake include largemouth bass — 41 percent are greater than 12 inches — but are found in moderate abundance. The lake has a variety of panfish species but few at harvestable size. A national forest campground and boat launch facilities are available on Day Lake providing good shoreline fishing opportunities for anglers of all ages.

– Jeff Roth, fisheries biologist, Mercer

BARRON COUNTY

Bass Lake-Chetek – Walleye, largemouth bass and northern pike are present. Bluegill are abundant and below average in size with none larger than seven inches collected. Largemouth bass also are common, but with only a few larger than 16 inches.

Bear Lake – Largemouth bass are fat and in great condition, with 18-inch and larger bass present. Northern pike are common with many mid-20-inch fish present. The adult walleye population is estimated at only 0.5 fish per acre, or 661 walleye. Bluegill run above average with many fish in the 7.5- to 8.5-inch range.

Big Moon Lake – The adult walleye population is estimated at 0.6 fish per acre, or 107 fish. About a dozen musky have been collected, with the largest fish 45 inches and just shy of 30 pounds. Largemouth bass are abundant. Bluegill are the most abundant panfish with most fish maxing out between 6.5 and 7.5 inches.

Rice Lake – The largest musky measured in a two-year musky survey was collected in 2008. The fish was just shy of 49 inches and weighed 44 pounds. Preliminary results indicate a high-quality musky fishery with lower numbers of fish. Northern pike, largemouth and smallmouth bass and walleye were captured. The bass fishery is of quality-size with numerous fish 18 inches and larger present. Bluegill were the most common panfish collected but generally ran small, in the 6.3- to 7.3-inch range.

Staples Lake – The adult walleye population is estimated at 0.6 fish per acre or 172 fish. Largemouth bass are abundant with many fish larger than 18 inches and in excellent condition. Northern pike have been captured, but were lower in overall abundance. Bluegill are the most common panfish collected, with most fish 7.5 to 8.5 inches.

– Heath Benike, senior fisheries biologist, Barron

BAYFIELD COUNTY

Siskiwit Lake – A comprehensive fishery survey began in spring of 2008 and showed that the walleye population has average size quality but lower abundance. Adult walleye abundance was just below average at 2.6 walleye per acre. Length of walleye was average for this lake type at 14.8 inches, with a maximum of 18.7 inches.

Middle Eau Claire Lake – A musky population survey in spring 2008 showed that this lake has lower numbers of musky but good size structure. The average size of musky surveyed was 36.4 inches with a maximum of 51 inches. Twenty-six percent of musky surveyed were greater than 40 inches in length. Middle Eau Claire Lake doesn't have the action potential of other musky lakes in northern Wisconsin, but it does afford an angler a chance to catch a trophy.

– Scott Toshner, fisheries biologist, Brule

BURNETT COUNTY

Yellow Lake – This lake consistently produces quality game fish. The 2008 adult walleye population estimate was 4.6 per acre compared to 5.1 per acre in 1992 and 4.7 per acre in 1986. Those are pretty decent numbers, but it's the size of the walleye that makes Yellow Lake special. Male walleye average 17 inches and 47 percent of the female walleye are greater than 20 inches. Creel surveys show May and October are the best months to try for walleye but July is the top month for musky action.

– Larry Damman, fisheries biologist, Spooner

DOUGLAS COUNTY

Bond Lake – A spring 2008 survey showed that the walleye population has low abundance but good size structure. Of the 152 walleye surveyed, the average length was 19.8 inches and the size ranged from 17 to 26 inches, indicating quality size structure. Largemouth bass were the second most abundant game fish captured with an average length of 14.6 inches and a maximum length of 19 inches. Although pike are low in numbers, the size structure is good for this area. The longest northern pike caught in the survey was 39 inches.

– Scott Toshner, fisheries biologist, Brule

FLORENCE COUNTY

Edith Lake – Public access was acquired on this 44-acre lake, which will be managed for trout fishing opportunities in the future through stocking. There is currently a primitive, carry-in access and the goal is to keep it that way but improve an area to accommodate better parking.

– Mike Vogelsang, fisheries supervisor, Woodruff

FOREST COUNTY

Stevens Lake - Stevens Lake is more known for its bass and northern pike fishing, but walleye appear to be doing very well for this shallow lake. Spring surveys show that the number of adult walleye in the lake was estimated at 3.7 per acre, with 98 percent of those fish captured larger than 15 inches. The largest walleye caught was 26.7 inches. Forty-four northern pike were captured with an average size of 26 inches; the largest was 37.7 inches. Largemouth bass numbers were low, reflecting the difficulty of capturing these fish with the cold water temperatures during this time of year, but all of the six fish captured were larger than 14 inches.

Surveys show that the walleye spring hatch on Butternut, Franklin, Lucerne and Lily lakes was very good and above the average index level for naturally reproducing lakes.

– Mike Vogelsang, fisheries supervisor, Woodruff

CHRIS ZUNKER

Bayfield fish biologist Mike Seider holds a beauty of a lake trout caught during surveys on Lake Superior. Most years, the best catch rates for lake trout are during June-July when the trout have moved into the deeper water areas of the lake.

IRON COUNTY

Pine Lake – Located in east central Iron County, this 312-acre lake is considered a "walleye factory" that produces more walleye than a healthy, balanced lake is capable of supporting. Spring surveys in 2008 estimated the adult walleye population at 8.8 fish per acre. This is an extremely abundant population comprised of mostly slow-growing male fish. By comparison, this year's average adult walleye density in northern Wisconsin is 3.9 fish per acre. Fall 2008 surveys showed that another banner year class was produced this year, which will further increase abundance down the road.

Because of the overabundance of walleye, forage fish densities are very low and the majority of walleye are less than 14 inches, so anglers should have fast action with lots of hungry fish at legal size available. Historically, fishing pressure is extremely light even though there is a newly renovated public boat landing available. Anglers are encouraged to harvest walleye.

Plunkett Lake – Plunkett (Sugar) Lake is a small, two-story (cold and warmwater fish) lake located in the Northern Highlands State Forest just off of Highway 51. Anglers will find success fishing for a variety of species in a very picturesque environment. A carry-in boat access and a few shoreline fishing opportunities are available. Annual plants of catchable-size rainbow and brown trout are made each spring before opening day. Last year, adult lake trout up to 30 inches were stocked to add to the fishing excitement and as a management strategy to utilize the abundance of forage fish in the lake. Along with an occasional eight- to 10-pound walleye and a variety of panfish, this is an outstanding fishery that anglers of all ages will enjoy.

– Jeff Roth, fisheries biologist, Mercer

LANGLADE COUNTY

McGee Lake – The McGee Lake brook trout restoration project is on schedule. A fall 2008 survey showed a healthy and growing brook trout population. Some up to 18.5 inches were actively spawning during the surveys. Successful reproduction and survival will quickly build this fishery from the 11 per acre we found in 2008 to one that approaches 50 per acre, which can sustain harvest. The lake will reopen to fishing, likely in 2010, once it has a harvestable surplus of fish and it is safe to do so without harming the repopulation process.

Spring Brook – This Class 1 brook trout stream is well on its way to recovery after a significant fish kill in summer 2005. Surviving trout are spawning and surveys in 2008 revealed the best catch rates since before the fish kill. The population estimate for number of trout per mile is still only about 10 percent of their pre-kill levels, but the number of four-inch and larger brook trout is 460 per mile. If you add in trout less than four inches, the number rises to 1,260 per mile. As long as these fish continue to survive and spawn, the stream should be back to pre-kill fish populations in another two years.

– Dave Seibel, fisheries biologist, Antigo

LINCOLN COUNTY

Prairie River – There is a very good trout population in the Prairie River. In 2008, trout numbers in a long-term survey station, which includes a portion of the stream where the regulations changed, increased by 19 percent from 2007. The 19 percent rise in trout numbers represents an estimated increase of 760, four-inch and larger, trout per mile of stream. The four-inch and larger brook and brown trout populations are estimated to be 4,800 per mile. While trout numbers increased, the proportion of bigger trout declined. Compared to 2007, the number of brook trout six inches and larger increased, and those eight inches and larger stayed the same.

Spirit River Flowage and Rice Reservoir (Lake Nokomis) – These reservoirs and the stream segments below them are very good fisheries for walleye, musky, northern pike, bass and panfish. Year-in and year-out, these are some of the best fisheries in the county.

– Dave Seibel, fisheries biologist, Antigo

ONEIDA COUNTY

Willow and Rainbow flowages – Concentrated fish from low water levels produce good angler catches in late summer and through the ice, but the fish will be more scattered once the basins refill. A spring survey on the Willow Flowage found quality-size walleye centered on 16 inches, but few fish larger than 20 inches. Most northern pike were 13 to 25 inches, but a few larger fish were found including a 39.7-inch female. Smallmouth bass showed peaks in abundance at 13 and 17 inches. Nine muskellunge were captured with the largest fish 52.8 inches. Musky numbers should increase

In reel terms

Year class – Fish hatched in a particular year.

Young-of-the-year (YOY) – Generally, fish that hatch in the spring and summer and survive through fall, when DNR typically does "young-of-the-year" surveys to assess their survival.

Recruitment – Fish surviving to reach catchable age and enter the adult population.

Size structure – Generally, the proportion of fish occurring at different sizes. When biologists say they are taking a management action to try to improve size structure, they're often talking about trying to increase the number of bigger fish.

Find fish and habitat survey reports for many lakes and rivers featured in this forecast at dnr.wi.gov/fish/reports.

Top 10 Family Waters Northern Wisconsin

- Pickerel and Crane lakes (connected) Forest/Langlade counties
- Pine Lake, Forest County
- Carol and Madeline lakes (connected), Oneida County
- Chetek Chain of Lakes, Barron County
- Balsam Lake, Polk County
- Clam Lake, Burnett County
- St. Croix Flowage, Douglas County
- Solberg Lake, Price County
- Nelson Lake, Sawyer County
- Miller Dam Flowage, Taylor County

with a low level of stocking started in 2004. Yellow perch, yellow bullhead and white suckers are large and abundant, while bluegill and black crappie are relatively low in numbers but show trophy-size potential. Fall surveys found lots of forage and excellent numbers of young-of-year walleye and northern pike on both flowages. All species of fish are in excellent condition because of the abundant food resources.

Pickerel Lake – A comprehensive survey of this 736-acre lake found abundant northern pike. Most were 15 to 19 inches, but a few larger fish up to 38.5 inches also were found. Largemouth bass 12 to 14 inches in length were fairly abundant, with a few fish exceeding 19 inches. The walleye population was very low, at only 0.4 per acre. One adult walleye per acre is about the minimum to provide a "fishable" population. Twenty-seven muskellunge were handled during the survey, with sizes from 31 to 50.5 inches. There were abundant small panfish, but anglers willing to sort will find reasonable numbers of seven-plus inch bluegill and pumpkinseed, nine- to 10-inch crappie and 10- to 12-inch yellow bullhead.

Sevenmile Lake – A spring survey on Sevenmile Lake found a low-density walleye population of 1.3 adult fish per acre. Walleye size was excellent, with peak abundance at 17 and 24 inches in length. The musky population was of average density, with about one 30-plus inch fish every 3.3 acres and the largest fish captured was 46.1 inches.

Other lakes – A musky population estimate found moderate numbers on the Moen Chain (one 30-plus inch fish every 3.8 acres). Spring bass surveys found abundant largemouth bass on Little Bearskin, Burrows and Maple lakes. Bluegill size was poor on all three lakes.

Trout streams – Trout populations in northern Wisconsin are still suffering from drought. Better trout numbers are found in streams with good base flow and deep-water refuges. Look for stocked brown trout in Dorothy Lake; rainbows are planned for stocking in Perch, Hawk and Little Bass lakes. Brook trout will go into Mercer Springs and Brown, Gudegast, Scott, Starks and Thunder creeks.

– John Kubisiak, senior fisheries biologist, Rhinelander

PRICE COUNTY

Phillips Lake Chain – In October 2007 a first attempt was launched to characterize the crappie population of the Phillips Chain by fall fyke netting. Capture rates of five-inch and larger fish averaged only four per net-night in the chain, suggesting crappie abundance is well below the desired range of 10 to 20 crappies per net-night. Size structure of the population also fell short of the target. Of all black crappie five inches and longer captured by fyke netting in late spring or mid fall, 30 to 40 percent should be 10 inches or longer, but only 15 percent were at least 10 inches long. In spring 2008 the electrofishing capture rate of 115 bluegill (three-plus inches) per hour slightly exceeded the range (50 to 100 per hour) tentatively set as the target level of abundance.

Walleye in the Phillips Chain currently meet the objective for population size structure: 20 to 40 percent of walleye 10 inches and longer captured by netting in early spring were at least 15 inches long.

Smallmouth bass abundance in Elk and Long lakes was within or slightly below the desired level, but smallmouth bass in the entire chain fell short of objectives for population size structure.

Musky populations in the chain did possess the desired size structure. Of all muskellunge 20-plus inches captured by fyke netting in early spring, 15 to 30 percent should be 42 inches or longer.

– Jeff Scheirer, fisheries biologist, Park Falls

LEAH KENDZIORSKI

These two young boys were fully expecting it to be the "big one" with net in hands while fishing Perch Lake in Sawyer County.

POLK COUNTY

Balsam Lake – In 2008, the walleye population was estimated at one adult fish per acre, or 1,956 fish, slightly up from the 0.8 found in 2005. Largemouth bass are abundant. Everyone who fishes Balsam Lake is encouraged to keep one small bass less than 14 inches to reduce the number of small bass and improve bass growth. Bluegill size was above average with most fish 7.5 to 8.5 inches.

Long Trade Lake – Largemouth bass were common in 2007, some are larger than 18 inches. Good-sized bluegill were found with many fish 7.5 to 8.5 inches.

Black Brook Flowage – Muskellunge are present in low numbers. The largest fish in 2007 was 47.3 inches and weighed more than 34 pounds. Largemouth and smallmouth bass are present, with fish up to 17 inches. Northern pike are also present in low numbers. Bluegill size averages 6.5 to 7.5 inches.

McKenzie Creek – Habitat improvements should improve angler access and trout habitat from Highway W downstream to Little McKenzie Creek.

– Heath Benike, senior fisheries biologist, Barron

RUSK COUNTY

Deertail Creek – Deertail Creek supports a warmwater fish community that offers opportunities for anglers who like easy wading. Electrofishing at four sites in 2008 yielded 170 northern pike ranging up to 25 inches long and 125 smallmouth bass up to nearly 17 inches long. Juvenile and adult smallmouth bass were plump and often shaped like footballs.

Perch Lake – Anglers looking for a secluded fishing experience with ample opportunity to catch medium-size bluegill and largemouth bass should consider a trip to the 23-acre Perch Lake in the Blue Hills region of northwest Rusk County. Survey results from 2008 reveal that 44 percent of all bluegills three inches and longer were six to eight inches long, and half of the 42 largemouth bass were between eight and 20 inches long. Our electrofishing capture rates suggest a moderate to high density of largemouth bass (99 per mile) and bluegill (203 per mile). The fishery in Perch Lake also includes medium-size black crappie (seven to nine inches) and yellow perch (six to 7.5 inches) in low to moderate abundance. Public camping facilities are available nearby.

– Jeff Scheirer, fisheries biologist, Park Falls

SAWYER COUNTY

Here are some kid-friendly waters that are easily accessible:

Lake Hayward – This lake offers good panfishing with shorefishing access at the public beach park behind the Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame. Look here on the Saturday of Free Fishing Weekend for a family fishing event. Try fishing off the snowmobile track on the south side of the State Highway 27 Bridge (drop-down fishing — no casting necessary). A display pond at the Fishing Hall of Fame is also open to kids fishing, with bluegill from Lake Hayward.

Shues Pond – Try the community fishing pond in downtown Hayward that the state stocks with panfish. During Musky Fest, watch for family fishing education events where you'll find lure making, casting and fishing games.

Managed trout lakes – Easy shore fishing is available at Camp Smith Lake, off Telemark Road and Pig Pond, and off Larsen Road in Seeley. Mostly rainbow trout are found here, but brook and browns are also available.

Dam tailwater areas – Below Hayward Dam on Namekagon you'll find suckers, redhorse, walleye, trout and smallmouth bass. Below Nelson Dam on the Totogatic Flowage, you'll likely catch bluegill, perch and northerns. Access is a bit more rigorous, so watch your footing.

Namekagon River – For veteran trout anglers on the Namekagon, the 2009 forecast is a mixed bag. Summer 2008 surveys show the numbers of mid-sized fish are down considerably, but there has never been a better population of brown trout larger than 15 inches. The best news is a strong 2008 year class, the first in three to four years. If these fish survive (likely), expect really good fishing in 2011-12.

– Frank Pratt, fisheries biologist, Hayward

TAYLOR COUNTY

Rib Lake – Usually trade-offs are necessary between fish size and numbers, but survey results in 2008 revealed that walleye anglers in Rib Lake can have their cake and eat it too. Walleye met or exceeded the benchmarks set for size and density. Among the walleye 10 inches and longer now in Rib Lake, 66 percent were at least 15 inches long and 9.3 percent were at least 20 inches long. A catch rate of 90 adults per net-night suggests that walleye abundance is at or above the desired moderate density of five to 10 adults per acre.

Panfish, especially bluegill, also are important in this fishery. But recent samples suggest that bluegill, black crappie, and yellow perch populations offer the desired size structure but not the desired numbers. Bluegill were scarce in all samples, and pumpkinseed outnumbered bluegill 15 to one. The proportion of black crappie and yellow perch 10 inches and longer (13 percent and 19 percent respectively) was sufficient to meet anglers' expectations, but netting and electrofishing capture rates in summer 2006 and spring 2008 were lower than the rates selected to represent the moderate densities that anglers would like in Rib Lake. Walleye are effectively controlling the reproductive survival and growth of panfish in Rib Lake in a predator-prey balance that favors larger panfish size over higher panfish numbers. While it may be difficult to reach targets for panfish size and numbers when walleye are plentiful, anglers seem content.

– Jeff Scheirer, fisheries biologist, Park Falls

WASHBURN COUNTY

Long Lake – After years of poor recruitment, walleye are coming back strong. The 2005 year class is the largest since 1992 and these fish will range from 15 to 18 inches for the opener. Electrofishing survey catch rates for bass have declined 58 percent but these fish still provide plenty of angler action. A large year class of black crappie was evident in the 2007 survey; fish sizes should run about 10 inches this year.

Minong Flowage – At seven adults per acre in the 2005 estimate, this is one of the best walleye waters in the northwest. Sixty-eight percent (4.8 per acre) are greater than the 15-inch size limit. Natural walleye reproduction is no problem here. Anglers often get concerned about catching too many sub-legal, juvenile fish. If you start catching little ones, try a different spot.

– Larry Damman, fisheries biologist, Spooner

VILAS COUNTY

Trout lakes of the Northern Highland State Forest – Vilas County may not have many miles of trout streams but it has a group of lakes in the Northern Highland State Forest that provides unique fishing opportunities for trout anglers. The department is stocking nine small lakes in the state forest with brown and/or brook trout on an annual basis. These lakes range in size from 10 to 55 acres and all but one is completely surrounded by public land. Most of these lakes do not have developed landings and access is by walk-in only. Fishing pressure during most of the year is very low and this is an opportunity to get off the beaten path in the Northwoods.

Low water and boat landings – The result of below normal precipitation for several years is that water levels on many spring-fed lakes are at historical lows. Boaters should check with local resorts, bait shops, marinas, and the DNR to see if they may encounter problems launching their boats this summer. Once on the lake they should also be aware that the rock bars or reefs out in the lake they motored over in the high water years may now be waiting just under the surface for their propeller.

– Mike Vogelsang, fisheries supervisor, Woodruff

Northeastern Wisconsin

NORTHERN GREEN BAY

Outlying waters of Green Bay – In Green Bay, annual fishery surveys suggest a moderate year class of yellow perch in 2008. Preliminary results from the summer creel survey demonstrated that more than half of perch harvested by anglers were from the 2005 year class. Most of these fish were seven to eight inches with occasional older and larger fish also kept. Anglers reported catching numerous small perch five to six inches. The 2007 open water sport harvest of yellow perch was down 30 percent from the previous year, but still ranked as the second highest in the last 12 years.

Brown trout shocking surveys and Seeforellen strain brown trout brood stock collections in the Menominee River resulted in fewer but larger browns. Brown trout averaged 27 inches with the largest 36 inches. Large numbers of whitefish were also observed during the late fall sampling. Spring walleye fishing in the Menominee, Oconto and Peshtigo rivers is very good with most fish 20 to 28 inches. Surrounding areas of Green Bay have been exceptional for the past few years with the 2003 year class of walleye dominating catches.

The DNR continues annual stocking of brown and rainbow trout, and Chinook and coho salmon in Upper Green Bay. These fish will provide future opportunities for stream angling and trolling.

– Tammie Paoli, fisheries biologist, Peshtigo

GREEN LAKE COUNTY

Lake Puckaway – This slightly impounded, wide portion of the Fox River should continue to provide excellent northern pike action. The 32-inch minimum length limit with a bag limit of one has produced a high density pike population. Lower shad numbers combined with lower fishing pressure could lead to good action for pike and walleye over the coming year. Walleye populations continue to be stable and should provide good action on the lake and river. Largemouth bass and panfish populations, although present in lower densities, do exhibit good growth rates and size structure.

Big Green Lake – Lake trout should continue to provide action as the lake's most important coldwater species. This stocked fishery continues to be comprised of fish mainly in the 20-inch range, although trophy fish larger than 30 inches are present. Seeforellen brown trout are still present in low numbers and do have the potential to grow to trophy size. Domestic brown trout have been stocked in their place and add another component to this coldwater fishery. The inland cisco population also appears to be stable and continues to be a popular addition.

Smallmouth bass thrive in this lake filled with rocky shoreline habitat. Northern pike, largemouth bass and walleye seem to be responding well to habitat improvements. A small number of musky are stocked annually and these fish have begun showing up in surveys and in anglers' catches. Panfish, particularly bluegill, have also responded well to habitat improvements and have provided outstanding action the last few years.

Little Green Lake – This extremely productive body of water has always been noted for its healthy panfish populations of bluegill, black crappie and perch. Largemouth bass populations are also doing well and these fish exhibit excellent growth rates due to the huge forage base. Walleye and musky populations should continue to provide excellent action.

Fox River – This large productive river system contains walleye, small and largemouth bass, northern pike and panfish. Channel catfish populations are high and remain one of the most sought-after species on the river.

– David Bartz, fisheries biologist, Montello

DOOR, MANITOWOC, AND KEWAUNEE COUNTIES

Lake Michigan and Green Bay – Chinook (king) salmon continue to be a top draw for Lake Michigan anglers in northeast Wisconsin. Although the Chinook catch appears to be down from the 2007 record harvest, the 2008 harvest ranks in the top 10 years for Chinook harvest in Wisconsin waters of Lake Michigan. Meanwhile, Chinook size appears to be on the rebound as the average size at age of fish returning to the Strawberry Creek Weir, the egg collection facility where salmon return in spring and fall in Sturgeon Bay, was up in 2008 from near historic lows in 2007.

Steelhead continue to be an exciting Lake Michigan fishery component. It's been on the upswing the past two summers, perhaps indicating an improvement in steelhead fishing for the next several years.

There has long been a viable commercial fishery for lake whitefish in Wisconsin waters of Lake Michigan and the bay of Green Bay. However, the last two ice fishing seasons have witnessed a developing sport fishery for lake whitefish in Green Bay.

A healthy smallmouth bass population with excellent sizes has long provided angler opportunities along Door County's shoreline and 2009 should be no exception. Incidental catches of smallmouth bass in fyke net surveys targeting musky in the Sturgeon Bay and Little Sturgeon Bay areas suggest smallmouth bass populations remain in good condition with 33 percent of fish from the nets measuring between 18 and 21 inches. Walleye fishing has benefitted from the outstanding walleye reproduction levels in southern and western portions of Green Bay. In particular, the strong 2003 year class was well represented in 2008 by a large proportion of fish in the lower 20-inch range. Northern pike fishing in and around Little Sturgeon and Sturgeon bays continues to be dependable and optimal spring 2008 spawning conditions should result in excellent future northern pike fishing opportunities in this area.

– Scott Hansen, fisheries biologist, Sturgeon Bay and Steve Hogler, fisheries biologist, Mishicot

MARINETTE COUNTY

Menominee River – Surveys in 2008 documented abundant smallmouth bass fisheries, with fish larger than 14 inches common. Evening surveys performed at Kingsford Flowage show that the flowage contains a good fishery with abundant northern pike, walleye, bass and bluegill. One mile sections of the Menominee River near Sturgeon Falls, Miscauno Island, Grand Rapids and Lower Scott Dam were also sampled and revealed abundant juvenile and adult smallmouth bass. Other game fish found during the river surveys included northern pike, musky, walleye and channel catfish. All of the flowages and river reaches have public landings and shoreline fishing opportunities.

Peshtigo River – The Peshtigo River and its flowages also provide similar smallmouth bass fisheries for anglers. The musky populations in Caldron and High Falls flowages have responded favorably to years of stocking and legal-size musky are available.

Other rivers – In 2008, stream surveys were carried out on the North Branch Pemebonwon, Little Peshtigo River, North Branch Pike River, KC Creek, Middle Inlet, Eagle Creek and Upper Middle Inlet. Quality fishing opportunities are available on these streams with legal-size brook and brown trout. The overall health of the streams surveyed was good, with natural reproduction of brook trout detected in trout waters and smallmouth bass in warmwater systems.

– Mike Donofrio, fisheries supervisor, Peshtigo

MARQUETTE AND WAUSHARA COUNTIES

Numerous small pothole lakes along with small impoundments and portions of the Fox River create a diverse fishery in these counties. The majority of these lakes are highly developed but do provide good access. Most of these small lakes contain largemouth bass and panfish species, with some having low-density northern pike populations. Some may contain small populations of walleye due to stocking efforts.

This part of the state also provides some of the best trout fishing anywhere thanks to healthy populations of native brown, brook and rainbow trout combined with specific regulations for streams. The Mecan, Pine, White and Willow are very popular streams during the "hex" hatch. Most have good access, but always ask permission to walk through private land.

– David Bartz, fisheries biologist, Montello

LAKE MICHIGAN TRIBUTARY STREAMS (DOOR, KEWAUNEE, CALUMET AND MANITOWOC COUNTIES)

Throughout 2009, anglers should enjoy a wide variety of fishing opportunities in local streams. Anglers looking for ice fishing opportunities for steelhead and brown trout should try fishing the lower reaches of the larger rivers such as the Manitowoc, Kewaunee and West Twin rivers.

Following the spring melt, anglers can catch steelhead, brown trout or northern pike in many tributaries. While many anglers focus on fishing the large streams, anglers should not overlook the opportunities small streams such as Silver and Fischer creeks in Manitowoc County, Stony Creek in Door and Kewaunee counties, and Hibbards and Whitefish Bay creeks in Door County, can provide for those anglers seeking solitude and scenic beauty. Anglers looking for a different fishing experience may want to try dip netting suckers or smelt as the fish migrate upstream in Lake Michigan or Green Bay tributary streams.

Anglers fishing the tributary streams during summer can expect to catch a variety of warmwater fish. Smallmouth bass fishing should be very good in lower sections of the Manitowoc, Branch and Kewaunee rivers. Northern pike anglers should try fishing the lower Manitowoc, West Twin and Ahnapee rivers. Those seeking catfish, bullhead, panfish or a few yellow perch should try fishing city harbors in Manitowoc, Two Rivers, Kewaunee and Algoma. Anglers looking to catch Skamania steelhead should be ready to fish the Manitowoc, East and West Twin, Kewaunee and Ahnapee rivers following a cool, late summer rainfall. These upstream movements happen quickly and end just as quickly, so be ready.

As summer ends and fall begins, fishing off piers should be very good with mixed catches of Chinook salmon, domestic rainbow and brown trout. With the onset of fall, salmon spawning migrations begin and if stream flows are good, fishing should be excellent in most tributary streams. Once again, anglers should not overlook the smaller streams.

– Steve Hogler, fisheries biologist, Mishicot

INLAND WATERS (DOOR, KEWAUNEE, CALUMET AND MANITOWOC COUNTIES)

Calumet County – The eastern half of Calumet County has several lakes and streams that are popular with anglers. Bass, northern pike and rock bass fishing can be very good during summer on the Chilton Millpond, the South Branch of the Manitowoc River and on the Killsnake River. Round Lake has abundant panfish and is stocked annually with rainbow trout.

Door County – Surveys conducted the past several years indicate that several Door County lakes have good walleye, smallmouth bass and yellow perch populations. Anglers are very successful in catching northern pike and panfish through the ice or just after ice-out on these lakes. Walleye anglers experience good fishing in spring and fall. Bass fishing is good throughout summer.

Kewaunee County – Lakes in Kewaunee County are small and dominated by bass and panfish communities. At times, ice fishing anglers can be very effective in catching panfish. Krohns Lake, located southwest of Algoma, is annually stocked with rainbow trout and is an excellent place to take a kid fishing. Several streams, including Scarboro and Little Scarboro creeks and the upper East Twin River, have either stocked brown trout or native brook trout providing anglers with inland trout fishing opportunities.

Manitowoc County – Recent surveys have shown most lakes in the county are largemouth bass and panfish lakes, although several have good populations of northern pike, as well. Walleye also are stocked in several lakes to add another fishing opportunity. Lakes in southwest Manitowoc County are popular ice fishing spots, with most anglers targeting panfish and northern pike. Horseshoe Lake is stocked with trout annually and is very popular with anglers during the winter. Open-water months find anglers targeting bluegill and largemouth bass on all county lakes.

– Steve Hogler, fisheries biologist, Mishicot

LOWER FOX RIVER, BROWN COUNTY AND SOUTHERN GREEN BAY, OCONTO AND BROWN COUNTIES

Large walleye in Green Bay and the Fox River continue to wow anglers. Fall surveys on the Lower Fox documented a strong 2008 year class of walleye with a catch rate of 26 YOY per hour and an adult catch rate of 63 per hour. Adult walleye averaged 18.7 inches. As a result of a very strong 2003 year class, 24 percent of the adult fish measured in surveys were greater than 20 inches. The lower Oconto River and lower Peshtigo River provide a lot of opportunities for shore fishing during the walleye spawning run in April and May.

Musky numbers in fall surveys in the Lower Fox River increased from a catch rate of 3.5 per hour in 2007 to 6.6 per hour in 2008. The average adult musky captured in the fall survey was larger than 40 inches, and there were many reports of anglers catching fish topping 50 inches in October and November 2008. These fish are growing fast and are in excellent condition, thanks to a large forage base of gizzard shad, emerald shiners, white sucker and redhorse. Anglers pursuing musky on Green Bay need to be prepared with an adequate-sized landing net, a good pair of pliers and side cutters for removing hooks. Make sure to have a camera ready!

While walleye and musky are the biggest draws to the Lower Fox River, there also is good smallmouth bass action in the spring and fall and a chance at some big channel and flathead catfish.

Bass anglers should have good opportunities on Machickanee Flowage, Chute Pond, Townsend Flowage and Oconto Falls Pond. Largemouth bass size structure on Chute Pond has improved since the statewide minimum size was implemented from an average of 8.7 inches to 14.3 inches. Machickanee Flowage largemouth averaged 16.3

Continued →

Top 10 Family Waters Northeastern Wisconsin

- Fox River at Fremont, Waupaca County
- Fox River at Voyageur Park, Depere, Brown County
- Lake Winnebago, Winnebago, Calumet and Fond du Lac Counties
- Shawano Lake, Shawano County
- Waupaca Chain of Lakes, Waupaca County
- Silver Lake, Wautoma, Waushara County
- Machickanee Flowage, Oconto County
- Lake Noquebay, Marinette County
- High Falls Flowage, Marinette County
- Green Bay at Stone Quarry, Sturgeon Bay

AL NIEBUR

Casey O'Keefe, Fox Valley Technical College student volunteer, holds a large walleye captured during a DNR fyke net survey on the Cloverleaf Chain of Lakes, Shawano County.

inches with good numbers of fish as well as healthy populations of bluegill, pumpkinseed and black crappie. In general, flowages offer a better chance at quality bluegill and sunfish fishing than do the smaller lakes, but these fish can be less abundant and harder to find in flowages. Christie Lake, which has been prone to winterkill, has a good population of yellow perch with a very strong year class from 2005, which should now be available to anglers as long as lake oxygen levels don't become depleted in winter 2009. White Potato, Anderson and Archibald offer good opportunities for walleye. The Oconto River has excellent quality and quantity of smallmouth bass for anglers who prefer stream fishing.

– Dave Rowe, fisheries biologist, Green Bay

SHAWANO COUNTY

Shawano Lake – Shawano Lake will continue to provide excellent largemouth bass and panfish angling opportunities. Annual surveys indicate largemouth bass and bluegill numbers are above average and size was average. In addition, the musky fishery has continued to expand with good numbers of large musky reported by local anglers. Northern pike abundance has declined but size appears to have increased over past surveys.

Cloverleaf Chain – Spring 2007 surveys indicated a healthy population of game fish and panfish. The Cloverleaf Chain has been stocked with musky on a biennial basis for many years and provides a high quality fishery. Seventy-eight musky were captured during spring surveys with sizes ranging from 18 to 47 inches (average 37.8 inches). Largemouth bass numbers were average with size ranges of 5.9 to 20.8 inches (average 11.9 inches and 24 percent larger than 14 inches). Surveys showed bluegill and black crappie abundant but size was slightly low.

– Al Niebur, fisheries biologist, Shawano

WAUPACA COUNTY

White Lake – Surveys conducted in 2008 showed abundant northern pike, exceeding six pike per acre. Largemouth bass populations appeared to be above average with some bass up to 20 inches. Walleye were less abundant and have not changed appreciably from past surveys. Panfish surveys indicated a healthy bluegill and pumpkinseed population with more than 30 percent exceeding seven inches. In addition, yellow perch and crappie were sampled with more than 81 percent of the crappie topping eight inches. White Lake is a very shallow water body and anglers should concentrate their efforts in spring before aquatic plants become too dense or during winter for good ice fishing action.

– Al Niebur, fisheries biologist, Shawano

WOLF RIVER (WAUPACA, SHAWANO AND OUTAGAMIE COUNTIES)

Catfishing was very good in the Wolf River during the past year and may continue into 2009. Routine surveys conducted in 2008 indicated an above average run of larger channel and flathead catfish than have been seen in previous years. While conducting a hoop net survey, DNR crews captured and tagged more than 500 flathead catfish ranging in size from 2.3 to 46 pounds (average 18.7 pounds). In addition, channel catfish net catch and size was above average with some catfish as large as 18 pounds. Setline and bankpole angling reports supported DNR surveys with average angler catch and harvest above average.

– Al Niebur, fisheries biologist, Shawano

WINNEBAGO SYSTEM (WOLF AND UPPER FOX RIVERS, LAKES WINNEBAGO, BUTTE DES MORTS, WINNECONNE AND POYGAN)

The Winnebago system will not disappoint. Clearer water longer into the summer in recent years has resulted in more rooted vegetation along shorelines and shallow bays. For anglers, this means better fishing, especially for northern pike, bass and panfish.

Starting with the system's flagship species, the walleye population continues to rank among the best in the Midwest. During the April 2008 spawning runs, state fisheries crews and volunteers captured and tagged 13,869 walleye.

Males ranged from 11.5 to 23.9 inches. Half were 16 inches or larger, with one in 10 being 18.5 inches or larger. This is down from 2007 when about 20 percent were larger than 18 inches. However, this is mostly a "numbers" game as the drop in the percentage was due mainly to a large number of three-year-old males from the 2005 year class up the river spawning for the first time. In a few years, these same fish will mature into the "medium" size range. For now they make for some fast action and great eating!

Females, or "spawners" ranged from 15 to 28.4 inches. Of the more than 1,900 captured, 55 percent were 21 inches or larger — up about an inch over the previous year. The robust population of walleye in the system, both in size and numbers, should be enough to please any walleye angler.

Bass populations continue to maintain a healthy "status quo" of small and medium-sized fish throughout the system. Anglers targeting them continue to see good numbers of fish, especially smallmouth on Lake Winnebago. The clearer water and abundant vegetation have helped to provide increased habitat for bucketmouths.

Based on the bass data collected from tournaments, smaller fish (14 to 16 inches) make up the majority of anglers' catch. Largemouth (14 to 16 inches) comprise two-thirds of the fish brought to the scales. The average length of largemouth at a popular tournament in 2008 averaged 15.4 inches and 2.08 pounds. Smallmouth averaged 16 inches and 2.2 pounds.

Panfish have been providing some uncommonly good fishing for the last couple of years thanks to the significant increase in vegetation. At first, these fish were small and considered a nuisance, but now they are larger and a tasty target for anglers of all ages. Reports of nine- to 11-inch perch and eight-plus inch bluegill are not uncommon.

This past fall while doing some shoreline electrofishing for walleye on Lake Winnebago, 106 bluegill were captured up to 8.4 inches. More than half of the gills were 6.5 inches or longer, and that was on a section of shoreline with mediocre habitat. Other anglers reported catching 10-plus inch gills and 12-plus inch perch in deeper water off the west shore of Lake Winnebago last year. Anywhere you can get them, panfish are fine table fare. When they're sized like these, they provide some great action as well, especially on light tackle.

– Kendall Kamke, senior fisheries biologist, Oshkosh

Southeastern Wisconsin

KENOSHA COUNTY

Rock Lake – This 52-acre, 33-foot deep lake has excellent water quality. The most common game fish collected during a spring 2008 fish survey was largemouth bass, with 32 percent larger than 14 inches long and some 18- to 19-inch fish. Bluegill were the most common panfish surveyed. DNR stocks this lake with legal-size brown trout in the spring. There is a carry-in access site at the lake's south end.

Hooker Lake – This 87-acre lake is another largemouth bass and bluegill water where DNR also stocks northern pike. A boat ramp is located on the lake's north side. Most bass come in under 14 inches but surveys have collected bass up to 19 inches. Northern pike are on the small side with most fish between 20 and 23 inches. DNR plans to stock walleye next year.

Silver Lake – Fish surveys confirm healthy largemouth bass population in this 464-acre lake. Average length is 13 inches, with some 18 inchers in the lake. Samples also have yielded 48-inch musky, 22-inch walleye and 38-inch northern pike. Bluegill are the most abundant panfish and 12-inch crappie have been reported. DNR stocks the lake with musky, walleye and northern pike. Public boating access is available at a DNR boat launch on the lake's west side.

– Doug Welch, senior fisheries biologist, Sturtevant

RACINE COUNTY

Waubeesee Lake – Waubeesee Lake is 129 acres and 75-feet deep. A DNR boat launch is located on the channel northwest of the lake. This is a largemouth bass and bluegill lake, and DNR stocks brown trout, northern pike and walleye. A fall 2007 fish survey showed that most bass in the lake are between eight and 13 inches long, although a few bass between 15 and 19 inches also were sampled. Northern pike are present and the fish survey collected fish up to 28 inches.

Browns Lake – This 396-acre lake is the place to go for largemouth bass and northern pike. Most bass are 14 inches long and in good condition. The minimum size limit for bass is 16 inches and there are some bass that size and larger. Northern pike are abundant and most are between 18 and 21 inches long, with some sampled up to 32 inches long. DNR stocks the lake with walleyes. A county-owned boat launch ramp is located on the lake's south side.

– Doug Welch, senior fisheries biologist, Sturtevant

SOUTHERN LAKE MICHIGAN, INCLUDING SHEBOYGAN, OZAUKEE, MILWAUKEE, RACINE AND KENOSHA COUNTIES

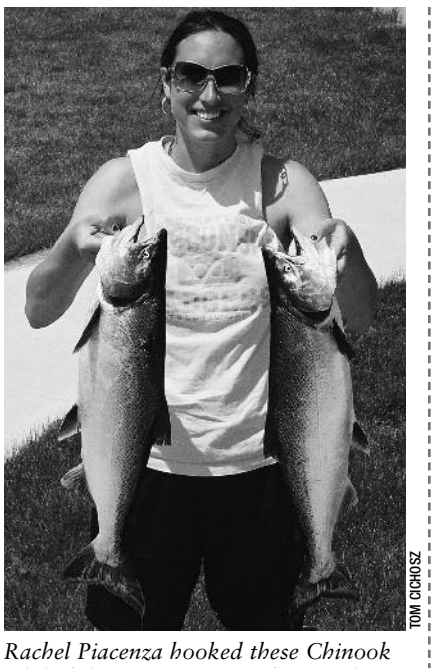
Open lake fishing – Chinook salmon fishing on Lake Michigan in recent years has been phenomenal. However, in 2008 harvest rates dropped below expectations. Cold water temperatures in conjunction with record flooding may have impacted typical summer fishing patterns. A slight reduction in Chinook stocking implemented lakewide in 2006 should improve their growth and survival in upcoming years.

In spring 2008, coho harvest was poor compared to recent years likely due to a reduction in coho stocking by Michigan DNR in spring 2007. Through an unprecedented angler driven fundraising effort, Wisconsin and Illinois anglers provided over $47,000 to Michigan DNR to raise 400,000 additional yearling coho that were stocked in 2008. These fish will mature and contribute to the fishery in 2009.

Nearshore fishing – Shore anglers should enjoy good fishing in July and August working harbors and river mouths for Skamania steelhead. The Chambers Creek and Ganaraska strains should also provide action for anglers in late winter and early spring.

In recent years, two additional rainbow trout strains have been stocked and have quickly been reaching catchable size.

Brown trout fishing was good in spring and fall 2008. Browns provide a consistent nearshore fishery during the cold months,



TOM CICHOSZ

Rachel Piacenza hooked these Chinook while fishing Wisconsin's "big pond" near Milwaukee.

Top 10 Family Waters Southeastern Wisconsin

- Lake Michigan
- Pewaukee Lake, Waukesha County
- Geneva Lake, Walworth County
- Delavan Lake,Walworth County
- Big Muskego Lake, Waukesha County
- Big Cedar Lake, Washington County
- Paradise Springs, Waukesha County
- Long Lake, Fond du Lac County
- Milwaukee River, Washington and Milwaukee counties
- Okauchee Lake, Waukesha County

Continued →

Southeastern Wisconsin *Continued*

TAMMIE PAOLI

Joe Paoli (right) used a white dodger and blue fly to reel in his first Chinook salmon weighing 16 pounds while fishing with friend Mike Kamin (left).

especially at warmwater discharges and near river mouths. Diet studies in the Milwaukee Harbor show that brown trout are feeding on round gobies and the browns stay in the harbor for an extended time. This area continues to draw good numbers of both shore and boat anglers who target brown trout in the harbor throughout the year.

Yellow perch numbers in Lake Michigan are slowly showing signs of improvement, but overall the population is still low. Perch are now averaging eight to nine inches and the 2009 perch sport fishery is expected to be similar to or better than past years. Many southeast Wisconsin harbors have seen habitat improvements over the last decade. This has translated into increasing naturally reproducing populations of smallmouth bass and northern pike, two species native to Lake Michigan.

Walleye stocking in the Milwaukee River was discontinued in 2008 due to VHS concerns. However, previously stocked walleye have shown good survival and high growth rates. Walleye anglers can be found throughout the lower Milwaukee River, the Menomonee River and canals, as well as in the harbor.

Tributary fishing – In 2008, dry conditions throughout the fall led to low flows in area tributaries and a mediocre salmon run. Good returns of Chinook and coho in fall 2009 are anticipated, provided river levels remain conducive for upstream fish migration.

Spring and fall steelhead runs have not been strong in recent years. Anglers can generally look for Skamania in the Sheboygan, Milwaukee and Root rivers as water temperatures start to cool in mid-September. Chambers Creek usually follow in late fall and can be found through March and early April. Ganaraska enter the streams as early as late November and December and again from late March through April.

For information about fishing Lake Michigan visit dnr.wi.gov/fish/lakemich/.

– Pradeep Hirethota and Cheryl Peterson, Southern Lake Michigan fisheries, Milwaukee

For up-to-date fishing information, call the Southern Lake Michigan Fishing Hotline at 414-382-7920.

SHEBOYGAN COUNTY

Great news for trout fans! A new stream has been added to the classified trout waters in Sheboygan County, and three formerly classified trout streams have been upgraded from Class 2 to Class 1 trout waters. Class 1 trout waters are the highest quality trout streams in Wisconsin. Willow Creek is a tributary to the Sheboygan River and, ultimately, Lake Michigan. Recent fish surveys revealed that Willow Creek supports YOY rainbow trout, coho salmon and Chinook salmon. All had distinct marks, which suggest that these species naturally reproduce in the creek. If so, Willow Creek may be only the second place in Wisconsin with reproducing Chinook salmon, the only Wisconsin tributary to Lake Michigan with reproducing coho, and only the second Wisconsin tributary to Lake Michigan with reproducing steelhead (rainbow) trout. Willow Creek also supports brook and brown trout.

Along with this "new" trout stream, three Sheboygan County trout streams, all within the Onion River system, were upgraded from Class 2 to Class 1. The newly reclassified streams include 2.2 miles of Mill Creek, 5.2 miles of the Onion River and six miles of the headwaters of the Onion River known as Ben Nutt Creek. Recent Onion River and Ben Nutt Creek surveys yielded brown trout from two to 18 inches. Catch rates up to 1,041 trout per mile were recorded in parts of the Onion River, representing an increase of over 1,300 percent since 1997. Mill Creek has similar numbers of brown trout, along with a substantial brook trout population.

– Susan Beyler, fisheries supervisor, Waukesha

WALWORTH COUNTY

Pell Lake – Anglers looking for big bass will enjoy fishing this 86-acre lake. Fish surveys in 2008 showed that 65 percent of the bass sampled were 14 inches or larger. A township-owned asphalt boat ramp is located on the lake's northeast side.

Pleasant Lake – This 155-acre lake has plenty of undeveloped shoreline and excellent water quality. A 2008 spring survey showed that largemouth bass are plentiful, with fish up to 19 inches. The fish survey also sampled plenty of six- to seven-inch bluegill. Pumpkinseed up to eight inches and black crappie up to nine inches also swim here. DNR started stocking walleye in 2006 and fish surveys have sampled fish up to 16.5 inches. Pleasant Lake is a no-wake lake, which makes for an aesthetically pleasing angling experience. A town-owned boat ramp is located on the lake's west side.

Lauderdale Lakes – Fish surveys in 2008 sampled largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, northern pike, walleye, bluegill, pumpkinseed, black crappie and yellow perch. Anglers looking for a lot of bass action will enjoy this lake. Most bass are less than 14 inches but some top 18 inches. Bluegill are nice-sized and fish surveys have sampled gills larger than eight inches. Black crappie 10 inches long and northern pike up to 34 inches also swim these waters. Smallmouth bass and walleye are also stocked into this lake. There are three town-owned boat ramps on the chain.

Delavan Lake – Recent fish surveys show that this 2,072-acre lake continues to support excellent populations of largemouth bass, walleye, northern pike, bluegill and black crappie. Most bass are between 12 and 18 inches and nine percent of the bass sampled were 18-plus inches. Many walleye are longer than the 18-inch minimum size limit. Northern pike up to 39 inches are present, and anglers commonly catch 32-inch and larger northerns. There are plenty of bluegill and they average six inches with an occasional eight- to nine-inch fish. Black crappie are common and average eight inches. Smallmouth bass are less common but average 16 inches and some 19-inch fish have been sampled. This lake is stocked with walleye and musky. There is a town-owned boat launch on the lake's north side.

Geneva Lake – This is the largest lake in the southeast region at 5,262 acres and it offers a variety of game-fishing opportunities, especially for larger fish. Anglers have a good chance of catching a big largemouth or smallmouth bass here. Recent surveys showed that 85 percent of the largemouth bass collected were 14 inches or larger and 10 percent were 18 inches or larger. Fish surveys also have collected black crappie up to 16 inches, yellow perch and rock bass up to 10 inches, and walleye up to 30 inches. Walleye and lake trout are stocked here with most lake trout between 24 and 28 inches with some 30-plus inchers reported. Municipally-owned boat launches are located in Lake Geneva, Fontana and Linn townships.

– Doug Welch, senior fisheries biologist, Sturtevant

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Big Cedar Lake – The 40-inch northern pike length limit is helping the population rebound. Walleye continue to enter anglers' creel year after year with many mid-20-inch fish caught. Good bluegill fishing can be found at the very north end of the lake early in the season.

Long Lake – This 423-acre gem has great diversity and health. The abundant bass population helps control bluegill numbers, resulting in excellent bluegill growth with many above nine inches. Long Lake also has fishable populations of northern pike, yellow perch and bullheads. This exciting fishery attracts the angler who likes surprises.

Gilbert Lake – Last surveyed in 2005, Gilbert Lake has a largemouth bass population worth going after. Largemouth up to 21 inches long were netted, with the average length just larger than 14 inches.

Friess Lake – Get out your heavier gear if you're going to Friess Lake. A 2007 fisheries survey revealed walleye up to 29 inches, northern pike as large as 35 inches and largemouth bass up to 21 inches.

Pike Lake – An abundant, naturally reproducing walleye population provides action and good-sized fish making Pike Lake attractive to walleye anglers.

Milwaukee River – Smallmouth fishing has been excellent in West Bend and downstream. Casting crayfish imitation baits during summer months can produce this hard-fighting fish in awesome numbers.

– Susan Beyler, fisheries supervisor, Waukesha

WAUKESHA COUNTY

Big Muskego Lake – A spring 2008 survey revealed excellent numbers of largemouth bass with an average size of more than 14 inches. Many largemouth bass near the 20-inch mark were caught, making Big Muskego Lake a destination for anglers looking for a trophy-sized bass. There's also an abundant northern pike population that averages 24 inches with a few fish reaching the 40-inch mark.

Pewaukee and Okauchee lakes – Musky enthusiasts continue to successfully hunt Pewaukee and Okauchee lakes for the elusive giant. When comparing size and numbers, Pewaukee has more action while Okauchee has bigger fish. On Pewaukee in 2007, Muskies Inc. members caught 170 muskies with an average size of 35 inches. The same report on Okauchee registered only 10 muskies with an average size of 40 inches. These two premier musky destinations annually provide anglers with a chance at a fish of a lifetime.

Pine Lake – Pine Lake continues to produce many walleye with lengths in the high 20-inch range as reported by local anglers during the 2008 season. Biennial stocking of June fingerlings by the DNR ensures new fish recruitment.

Trout lakes – Trout anglers can find many opportunities on area trout lakes where the DNR annually stocks 25,000 brook, brown and rainbow trout. Before opening day, Fowler, Lower Genesee, Lower Nashotah and Ottawa lakes are stocked with legal-sized trout. Historical creel surveys have revealed that experienced and novice anglers of all ages are very successful catching these trout.

– Benjamin Heussner, fisheries biologist, Waukesha

West Central Wisconsin

ADAMS COUNTY

Petenwell and Castle Rock flowages – Part of the Wisconsin River, these lakes are the biggest draw to anglers in Adams and Juneau counties. The most commonly sought species is walleye, and both lakes have healthy, strong populations. Musky anglers also have reported an increased catch and larger fish. These numbers should be as good or better in 2009. Bluegill and crappie are currently the predominant panfish species in both waters with good numbers and fish size. Yellow perch numbers are down, but there is a large population of white bass. In fall 2008, sturgeon were surveyed in Petenwell Lake. A total of 52 sturgeon were captured and ranged from 33 to 42.5 inches. In 2009, anglers should continue to see good numbers of walleye as well as increased numbers of muskellunge.

Neenah Creek – The 2008 survey in Neenah Creek captured 128 brown trout ranging from four to 16.9 inches with an average length of 8.3 inches. This creek has a healthy naturally reproducing population. Good trout fishing should be expected in this stream during 2009.

Big Roche-a-Cri Creek – A 2008 survey captured 345 brook trout and 12 brown trout. The healthy brook trout population ranged from four to 14.4 inches with an average length of 7.8 inches, and good natural reproduction. The brown trout ranged from seven to 15.9 inches. Good trout fishing should be expected in this stream during 2009.

– Justine Hasz, senior fisheries biologist, Wisconsin Rapids

Top 10 Family Waters West Central Wisconsin

- Pettibone Lagoon in La Crosse, La Crosse County
- Half Moon Lake in Carson Park, Eau Claire County
- Black River below Black River Falls Dam, Jackson County
- La Crosse River below Lake Neshonoc (Hwy 108 Bridge), La Crosse County
- Coon Creek System, Vernon County
- Mississippi River, Stoddard Bay, La Crosse County
- Mississippi River, tailwaters of Lock and Dam 8, Vernon County
- Mississippi River, Trempealeau Lakes, near Trempealeau, Trempealeau County
- East Channel of Mississippi River off St. Feriole Island in Prairie du Chien, Crawford County
- West Fork Kickapoo River near Avalanche, Vernon County

BUFFALO, CLARK, JACKSON, AND TREMPEALEAU COUNTIES

Rivers and streams – Monitoring surveys for the Black River continued in 2008. Catch rates for walleye increased in the Upper and Lower Black rivers. Upper Black catch rates went from 10.9 per mile in 2007 to 27.4 per mile in 2008 and lower Black from 13 per mile in 2007 to 31.5 per mile in 2008. Smallmouth bass catch rates increased in the upper Black from 51 per mile in 2007 to 102 per mile in 2008, but decreased in the lower river from 22.8 per mile in 2007 to 14 per mile in 2008. Musky catch rates increased in the upper river from 2.2 per mile in 2007 to 7.4 per mile in 2008 and remained stable in the lower river at 2.5 per mile in 2007 and 1.8 per mile in 2008.

Ongoing surveys of area trout streams found better reproduction of brook and brown trout and more 10- to 12-inch brook trout in area streams in 2008 than in previous years. Overall adult trout densities were stable. Higher catch rates of young trout last year will provide more adult fish for anglers in 2009 and hopefully more legal and larger trout in years to come.

Also waiting for anglers in spring are improved fishing conditions as a result of habitat restoration projects on Pine Creek,

Continued →

Traverse Valley Creek, Borst Valley Creek and Bruce Valley Creek. Each project area has a public fishing easement, granted by the landowners, which allows anglers to access the stream by land as well as water.

Lakes – Surveys were conducted for three lakes in 2008. Trow Lake, Jackson County, contained strong size classes of 7.5- to 8.5-inch black crappie, some walleye stocked by the local Lions Club, and northern pike up to 39 inches. Marinuka Lake, Trempealeau County, contained strong size classes of seven- to eight-inch black crappie, eight- to nine-inch white crappie, and better catch rates, as compared to past surveys of seven- to eight-inch bluegill. Mead Lake, Clark County, showed an increase in fish size for both black crappie and bluegill as compared to survey results from 2004. The majority of black crappie captured shifted from six to seven inches in 2004 to eight to nine inches in 2008. Similarly, bluegill shifted from six to seven inches in 2004 to seven to eight inches in 2008. Walleye catch rates were similar between the two years at approximately one adult walleye per acre, and total catch rates for musky increased from 31 fish in 2004 to 58 fish in 2008. Notable was the increase in musky 40-plus inches from zero in 2004 to 10 in 2008.

Handicapped accessible fishing facilities are available at some area lakes: Lake Wazee, Black River Flowage, and Teal Flowage in Jackson County; Mead Lake in Clark County; and Second Lake and Arctic Springs Pond in Trempealeau County.

– Daniel Hatleli, fisheries biologist, Black River Falls

CHIPPEWA COUNTY

Lake Hallie – A permanent aeration system was installed in 2008 and will be operated as needed to protect largemouth bass, northern pike and panfish from winterkill and to improve angling during winter.

Long Lake – A 2008 survey of Long Lake indicated a healthy and improving fishery for a variety of game fish and panfish. The lake continues to support an above average density of adult walleye. Walleye growth rates remain below the statewide average, but the protected slot-size of 14 to 18 inches is producing greater numbers of large fish. The number of adult fish larger than 18 inches improved to seven percent of the population from three percent in 2000. Long Lake is well known for its smallmouth bass angling. With an 18-inch minimum size limit, the percent of smallmouth bass larger than 18 inches in our survey catch improved to 22 percent compared to five percent in 2000. Largemouth bass and bluegill populations had declined due to an abundant rusty crayfish population destroying their habitat. With improvements in the aquatic plant population, the 2008 survey indicated a steady comeback of largemouth populations, bluegill as well as northern pike. Ice fishing for large bluegill is becoming increasingly popular, especially around the numerous fish cribs in the lake. Long Lake does not receive a lot of fishing pressure for musky, but opportunities for large fish are available. The largest fish in the 2008 survey was 46.3 inches, and 25 percent of the catch was greater than 40 inches.

– Joe Kurz, fisheries biologist, Chippewa Falls

CRAWFORD COUNTY

Several large trout were caught in 2008 including a 30-inch brown trout from the Kickapoo River system. In addition, DNR survey crews reported several brown trout topping 25 inches and brook trout nearly 17 inches in area streams. DNR crews continue to improve access, stabilize streambanks and create trout habitat.

Tainter Creek – Surveys in 2008 showed healthy populations of brown trout are available for anglers. This stream has numerous fishing easements and habitat improvement sites, along with beautiful scenery and large trout. Fish in the 12- to 18-inch range were captured by survey crews.

Plum Creek – This small stream is ideal for those looking to catch brook trout. While not exclusively brookie water, these gorgeous trout dominate the fishery and can provide some great angling action for fish up to 12 inches.

Rush Creek – Located in the northwest part of the county, Rush Creek provides anglers long stretches of stream in public ownership and that backcountry feel some anglers enjoy. You might even hook into a 20-plus inch brown trout.

– Jordan Weeks, senior inland fisheries biologist, La Crosse

EAU CLAIRE COUNTY

Altoona Lake – This lake is well-known for its year-round perch and crappie fishing. A survey found only seven percent of the yellow perch catch was greater than 10 inches. However, 70 percent of the catch was six to 10 inches long, so anglers can expect the number of large fish to improve in 2009 and beyond. Crappie are second in abundance to perch. Both white and black crappie are present in the lake. The survey found that 86 percent of crappie were larger than nine inches. Walleye are the most abundant game fish species in the lake and fish larger than 15 inches made up nine percent of the survey catch. Very few walleye larger than 20 inches were found. Largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, northern pike and muskellunge are considerably less abundant than walleye. Largemouth bass up to 20.4 inches were captured and 31 percent of the northern pike catch was greater than 30 inches.

Lake Eau Claire – Panfish populations here are receiving more attention in recent years by anglers. Only one percent of the perch catch has been greater than 10 inches, but 67 percent are six to 10 inches. For crappie, 59 percent of the catch is greater than nine inches. Lake Eau Claire has a more abundant bluegill population than Altoona Lake, with 40 percent of the catch larger than seven inches. Walleye are the most abundant game fish and fish bigger than 15 inches comprised 38 percent of the survey catch. Ten percent of the catch was larger than 20 inches with the largest walleye 29.4 inches. As in Altoona Lake, the abundance of largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, northern pike and muskellunge numbers are considerably lower than walleye. However, with the exception of smallmouth bass, the Lake Eau Claire catch was higher than the catch in Altoona Lake. Bass in the 19-inch range and northern pike larger than 30 inches are present.

– Joe Kurz, fisheries biologist, Chippewa Falls

DUNN COUNTY

Dunn County is home to brook trout, with more than 93 individual brook trout streams scattered throughout the county. With the tremendous hatch during spring 2008, adult brook trout should reach a high point during 2009 compared to the last five years. Some of the best trout streams in Dunn County include the South Fork of the Hay River, Wilson Creek, Gilbert Creek, Knights Creek, Elk Creek and Sand Creek. Headwater areas will provide the best fishing opportunities and many of these streams will produce quality brown trout as a bonus.

Projects completed several years ago on the headwaters of Gilbert Creek are now providing up to 6,000 trout per mile, of which 700 per mile exceed the legal length limit of eight inches.

Walleye anglers looking for a float trip are reminded to fish the upper 50 miles of Red Cedar River north of Tainter Lake during May and early June to avoid weedy conditions found during the summer. In 2009, anglers will find lakes Menomin and Tainter provide good fishing. Lake Menomin contains good populations of walleye, pike, bass and panfish, especially large bluegill. Tainter Lake is best for walleye, smallmouth bass and panfish — mostly perch and crappie. Thanks to a cooperative project among the West Wisconsin Land Trust, Dunn County Fish and Game and the Department of Natural Resources, a new walk-in access has been purchased and developed on the Cut-Off Slough, which is part of Lake Menomin.

– Marty Engel, senior fisheries biologist, Baldwin

LA CROSSE COUNTY

La Crosse River (upstream of Lake Neshonoc) – Fishery surveys in 2006, 2007 and 2008 indicated that the upper La Crosse River has one of the state's more unique fisheries. This fishery boasts both warmwater and coldwater species. It has quality size and numbers of walleye up to 26 inches and brown trout up to 22 inches. Recent habitat improvements below Highway 108 and in Veterans Memorial Park in West Salem provide anglers with great shore fishing opportunities for catfish, walleye, black crappie, smallmouth bass, northern pike and muskellunge.

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Recent in-stream habitat improvement projects completed by DNR trout habitat crews on the South Fork of Kinnickinnic River near River Falls and Pine Creek near Maiden Rock have resulted in more than 2.5 miles of new brook trout fishing opportunities. Field surveys conducted during summer of 2008 showed phenomenal size structure (500 to 1,000 per mile greater than eight inches) and overall densities approaching 5,000.

LEE RUBESCH

Fisheries technician Matt Simonson displays a 27.4-inch walleye from Lake Eau Claire measured, then released, during spring netting surveys.

Lake Neshonoc – Anglers should expect to catch good numbers of 10-inch crappie in 2009. Surveys show crappie are the most numerous panfish in the lake and account for more than half the total fish caught in surveys during 2007 and 2008. This year class should provide anglers with excellent fishing opportunities for the next couple years.

– Jordan Weeks, senior inland fisheries biologist, La Crosse

MARATHON AND PORTAGE COUNTIES

Wisconsin River – A 10-foot drawdown on the Stevens Point Flowage Dam in 2008 to make repairs was a great success and the fishery suffered few impacts. Surveys conducted after the drawdown provided game fish catches similar to past years. Catch rates of smallmouth bass were down a little, but largemouth bass catches were nearly double the normal rate and walleye numbers were higher as well. Nearly 70 percent of the smallmouth bass and all of the largemouth bass were greater than 12 inches, and 37 percent of the walleye captured were 15 inches or greater. The greater largemouth bass catch is probably because the fish moved from the backwaters during the drawdown and had not yet returned to those areas before the survey. The fall survey typically focuses on main channel habitat. Overall, for the Wisconsin River from Wausau to Stevens Point, smallmouth bass comprised 56 percent of the total catch, then channel catfish (18 percent), followed by walleye (17 percent). About 65 percent of the smallmouth bass were greater than 12 inches, 40 percent of the walleye were 15 inches or greater, and channel catfish all exceeded 16 inches. Walleye fingerling catches below the Dubay Dam dropped from 88 fish per hour to 19 fish per hour, and below Rothschild from 20 fish per hour to seven fish per hour. This indicates walleye recruitment was likely lower this year throughout central portions of the Wisconsin River.

Tomorrow River – Last summer, trout were surveyed extensively on the Tomorrow River in central Wisconsin. From County Highway I downstream to Amherst, catch ranged from 470 to 911 brown trout per mile, and from 100 to 260 brook trout per mile. Below Amherst, the Tomorrow River contains mostly brown trout and holds 70 to 150 brown trout per mile. The Tomorrow River has plenty of harvestable fish and many habitat improvements. A few of these include a reach of the Richard Hemp Fishery Area near County Highway I above Clementson Road, the new area off of Rolling Hills Road, below the bridge in Nelsonville, and at County Highway T below Amherst. In general, anglers will find the Tomorrow River easily accessible with outstanding fishing.

Lake Dubay – Lake Dubay is a flowage of the Wisconsin River lying partially in Marathon and Portage counties. The flowage was surveyed in 2008 and preliminary results look promising for fish. The greatest catch was for black crappie (52 per net-night), followed by walleye (11 per net-night), bluegill (7.3 per net-night), channel catfish (4.2 per net-night) then northern pike (two per net-night). Nearly 30 percent of black crappie were eight inches or greater, 96 percent of the bluegill were six inches or greater, 80 percent of the northern pike were greater than 21 inches, and 11 percent of the walleye were greater than 15 inches. Smallmouth bass were captured about equally between nets and electrofishing and 40 percent were greater than 14 inches.

– Tom Meronek, fisheries biologist, Wausau

MONROE COUNTY

Lake Tomah – Due to a planned chemical treatment in October/November 2009 to eradicate carp, liberal fishing regulations have been placed on this lake for the 2009 angling season. All size and bag limits were suspended to allow anglers the opportunity to catch these fish before the treatment. Largemouth bass, bluegill, black crappie, northern pike and walleye can be caught.

Cranberry impoundments – Excellent fishing opportunities for panfish, largemouth bass and northern pike can be had in many of these lakes, but it takes a little leg work. Not all have legal public access, and even fewer have marked access, but a plat book, polite phone call, or visit to the grower can gain anglers access provided

Continued →

West Central Wisconsin *Continued*

MARTY ENGEL

Karen Rehurek (left) tag teamed with neighbor Jan Engel (right) to land a 20-inch largemouth bass on a tip-up while fishing North Bass Lake, St. Croix County.

they leave the location better than they found it.

– Jordan Weeks, senior inland fisheries biologist, La Crosse

PEPIN COUNTY

The mighty Chippewa River dominates fishing in Pepin County. Take the time to get to know the main and backwater channels and lakes. Public boat access points can be found about every five-mile section. If you're looking to get away from the crowds and enjoy a wild scenic river, give it a try. It houses a large variety of game fish, including walleye, sauger, smallmouth bass, channel and flathead catfish. Since most of the river is sand, look for deep water or structure such as rock or wood for best results.

Trout fishing opportunities in Pepin County are mostly limited to a few small streams. However, Bear Creek is an exception. A fall 2008 survey conducted by DNR crews revealed some exceptional results for brook and brown trout. While overall trout densities are moderate to low (less than 500 per mile), the stream boasts good numbers of fish larger than 10 inches and trophy-sized fish exceeding 14 inches. This is some of the best brook trout water for larger fish seen in west central Wisconsin. In addition, the number of quality (greater than 12 inches) brown trout also looks good.

– Marty Engel, senior fisheries biologist, Baldwin

PIERCE COUNTY

Just about every major stream in Pierce County contains quality trout fishing and public accesses off roadways are abundant.

Long-term monitoring surveys conducted by DNR crews during summer 2008 on more than 50 trout streams show natural reproduction of brook and brown to be excellent, which means adult fish should be plentiful during the 2009 and 2010 fishing seasons. The Rush River, Kinnickinnic River and Cady Creek are famous trout streams throughout the Midwest. However, the Trimbelle River, Eau Galle River, Plum Creek, Lost Creek, Cave Creek, Big River, South Fork of the Kinnickinnic and Pine Creek also are great choices. The Big River and South Fork are small and often brushy streams, but both will provide good spring fishing opportunities before vegetation gets thick. If you're looking for that rare 20-plus inch brown trout, give the Eau Galle River in the Spring Valley or Elmwood areas a try.

Recently, nine fishing easements were purchased on the Rush River. Look for the DNR Streambank Fishing Easement or Rush River Fishing Path Initiative signs for access to private lands open to public fishing. In addition, several other large parcels have been purchased by West Wisconsin Land Trust and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Koch Family Trust Lands donated land to the Eau Galle/Rush River Rod and Gun Club. These are now open to public fishing. Look for the appropriate signage. For handicapped access check out the new facility on the Rush River just south of El Paso.

– Marty Engel, senior fisheries biologist, Baldwin

ST. CROIX COUNTY

Cedar Lake – The crappie and bluegill fishery has blossomed on Cedar Lake thanks to recent work to improve deep-water habitat and angling on this 1,107-acre lake.

St. Croix River – Anglers interested in fishing smallmouth bass should consider the St. Croix River near Somerset. Access is available at the National Park Service boat landing on St. Croix/Polk County Line road. A DNR survey in 2008 revealed a tremendous population of smallmouth bass with great size structure. In addition, high quality walleye, catfish and musky fishing is available.

Kinnickinnic River – Trout fishing is always popular on the famous Kinnickinnic River near River Falls with more than 25 miles of excellent brown trout habitat. Anglers, however, may want to consider giving the upper Willow River near County Highway T east of New Richmond a try. This area is known for trophy 20-plus inch brown trout. DNR field surveys conducted from 2005 to 2008 found consistent production of 16- to 20-inch brown trout and an occasional fish larger than 20 inches. The South Fork, a tributary stream to the upper Willow River, is often overlooked but has a mixed brook and brown trout fishery of good quality and size.

– Marty Engel, senior fisheries biologist, Baldwin

VERNON COUNTY

Trout anglers should see excellent fishing in the coulee region in 2009. After another round of flooding in June 2008, streams remain in good shape with abundant spawning substrate exposed from high water. YOY trout hatched in 2008 are abundant and another banner year class is expected in 2009, ensuring great fishing in the future.

Timber Coulee Creek (Coon Creek) – A creel survey where anglers were asked questions about their catch and fishing experience was undertaken in 2008. Initial results indicate that anglers fishing the stream mostly practiced catch-and-release, consider 20-plus inch brown trout a trophy, and prefer to fish with artificial lures. Anglers also indicated that Timber Coulee Creek is a good place to catch quality fish (12 to 18 inches) and provides opportunity to harvest some fish under 12 inches. Final survey results will be available in fall 2009.

– Jordan Weeks, senior inland fisheries biologist, La Crosse

South Central Wisconsin

COLUMBIA COUNTY

Lake Wisconsin/Wisconsin River – Recent surveys document the increasing success of the 20- to 28-inch no-harvest size limit on walleye and sauger, which began in 2002. Anglers continue to rave about larger walleye and sauger catches, with reports during 2008 of walleye greater than 28 inches becoming common. The fall 2008 recruitment survey indicates an above average walleye year class. The Lake Delton fishery was flushed into the Wisconsin River last June, causing anglers to comment about increased catches of largemouth bass in the river. Delton had a very good walleye fishery as well, which was washed into the Wisconsin River.

Lake sturgeon work continues on Lake Wisconsin and the river below the Prairie du Sac Dam. About 1,450 lake sturgeon larger than 50 inches are in Lake Wisconsin. Below the Prairie du Sac Dam, estimates showed that the fishery had increased to 200 50-plus inch sturgeon, up from 170 two years ago. These results indicate that the increase to a 60-inch minimum size limit is helping to preserve the fishery.

Lake Columbia – The annual fall survey continues to confirm a major change in this fishery, due to warm lake temperatures for a longer time period (April to November) because of increased power plant production. The once dominant largemouth bass fishery has declined to near zero. No stocked hybrid stripers were sampled in the 2008 fall survey, but several anglers reported excellent catches during 2008. Shad and small bluegill are abundant. The lake is open year-round and allows for carry-in boats and outboard motors at the public access on the lake's south end. A fish refuge is present near the power plant on both sides of the center dike.

Tarrant Lake – This 25-acre impoundment within the Village of Cambria was refilled during spring 2007 after the dam washed out in 2004. Bass and bluegill are being restocked. The 2007 and 2008 fall surveys showed that the fishery is on its way back. This used to be a phenomenal little fishery, used by local kids.

Silver Lake – The 70-acre lake in the City of Portage has always been plagued by stunted bluegill, but they provide good fishing action for kids. It has low densities of largemouth bass and northern pike, limited large walleye from volunteer stocking and on any given summer evening, there will be three to four boats casting for musky.

Lake George – Largemouth bass, northern pike (smaller sizes), bluegill, and crappie comprise this 36-acre fishery, south of Portage off Highway P. A boat ramp on the north side of the lake only provides access during high water. Access is located off the Highway G (right-of-way) on the south side of the lake.

– Tim Larson, fisheries biologist, Poynette

Top 10 Family Waters South Central Wisconsin

- Lake Koshkonong, Jefferson County
- Rock River, Dodge, Rock and Jefferson counties
- Lake Mendota, Dane County
- Lake Monona, Dane County
- Lake Waubesa, Dane County
- Wisconsin River, South Central Region
- Yellowstone Lake, Lafayette County
- Beaver Dam Lake, Dodge County
- Devil's Lake, Sauk County
- Fox Lake, Dodge County

CRYSTAL LAKE (BORDERS DANE AND COLUMBIA COUNTIES)

Bluegill still receive heavy pressure and 100-plus car trailers can be seen parked along the roadside in the spring. However, carp are becoming more noticeable and yellow bass are now showing up in angler catches.

– Tim Larson, fisheries biologist, Poynette

DANE COUNTY

Some of the best fishing in Wisconsin lies within 20 minutes of downtown Madison. Whether lake or stream, game fish or panfish, trophy or fish fry, Dane County blends quality fish with abundant opportunity.

The Madison Chain – Mendota, Monona, Waubesa and Kegonsa lakes total almost 19,000 acres connected by the Yahara River. Anglers have rocky shores, vegetated edges, protected bays, marshes, drop-offs and significant structures to choose from.

Lake sampling in 2008 was directed at Lake Kegonsa. Northerns came in at 2,677 fish or .83 fish per acre. For comparison, a "good" Wisconsin northern pike would rate about one-plus adult fish per acre.

Similarly, walleye nets set in the lake caught 777 spawning fish and generated a total population of about 8,080 adult fish. At 3,209 acres, this translates roughly to 2.5 adult walleye per acre, or in the "good" range on a statewide basis.

Crews also conducted summer panfish surveys on Lake Mendota. These surveys revealed a quality bluegill resource easily overlooked by anglers due to Mendota's large size. The average bluegill measured 8.1 inches with 60 percent of all fish measuring eight inches or larger. We saw 10 percent of fish exceeding nine inches, with some fish near 10 inches. These fish are typically scattered but may be found aggregating in warm shallows.

Trout were surveyed on Elvers Creek, West Branch Sugar River, Primrose Branch, Kittleson Valley, Black Earth Creek and Mt. Vernon Branch. Typical catches were fish larger than nine inches at rates of 210 to 255 fish per mile. That equates to a "keeper" fish every 21 feet of stream!

– Kurt Welke, fisheries biologist, Fitchburg

DODGE COUNTY

Beaver Dam Lake – As in most years, the severity of the winter of 2008/09 will determine the fate of upcoming fishing on Beaver Dam Lake. Fishing for channel catfish heated up in 2008 on both Beaver Dam Lake and the Beaver Dam River below the Beaver Dam Lake dam.

Fox Lake – Walleye catch rates for 2008 fall electrofishing were 57 per hour, compared to 54 per hour in 2007. The number of YOY walleye smaller than 10 inches was 7.2 per hour compared to 15 per hour in 2007. Largemouth bass and panfish catch rates were down according to 2008 fall surveys, which appear to be due to deteriorated water quality in 2007 and 2008 spring floods.

Lake Emily – Northern pike abundance on this small fertile lake increased four-fold between 1999 and 2006. The adult northern pike population size is high at an estimated 4.8 fish per acre with fish up to 32.4 inches present. Small size and heavy aquatic vegetation make this lake challenging to anglers, but good growth rates and the presence of multiple year classes should provide for abundant angling opportunities.

– Laura Stremick-Thompson, fisheries biologist, Horicon

GRANT COUNTY

Borah Creek, Little Grant River, Grant River – Located within 10 minutes driving of Lancaster, all of these streams harbor

Continued →

good brown trout fisheries. Combined, there are seven miles of public bank fishing easements available to anglers. These streams harbor brown trout populations near 300 adult trout per acre, ranging in size from seven to 21 inches. The mainstay of these fisheries is the stocking of small fingerling, feral brown trout. These fish survive well in these systems while naturally reproducing. Trophy fish in these systems will now be in the 16- to 18-inch range. There are still a few fish greater than 20 inches, but anglers looking for these larger fish will have to look farther downstream on the Grant River.

Rountree Branch – Flowing through Platteville, this stream harbors an urban brown trout population. Access is easy with a walking and biking trail running along much of the stream. Trout are present from Southwest Road upstream to the headwaters. Brown trout up to 24 inches can be found. Anglers looking for an additional species to catch will find smallmouth bass in the slow, deep pools from above Southwest Road downstream to the Little Platte River.

Smallmouth bass streams – If you are looking to fish smallmouth bass in small streams, then Grant County is the place for you. Many small streams offer a rare opportunity to catch trophy-sized smallmouth bass. While fish rarely approach 18 inches, most large adults will be 13 to 15 inches. The Little Platte River and Platte River systems offer some of the better smallmouth bass fishing with scenic views. Lower portions of the Little Platte and Platte rivers can be navigated with a canoe while the middle and upper reaches are more suited for bank fishing and wading. Blockhouse and Rattlesnake creeks are two additional streams anglers may want to visit.

– Bradd Sims, fisheries biologist, Dodgeville

GRANT AND IOWA COUNTIES

Heavy precipitation during the last two years combined with last winter's snowfall amounts have eliminated the drought conditions that existed in southwestern Wisconsin and streams have responded with base flows far above normal levels. In addition, the floods cleaned out and deepened the streams, removing stored silt from the pools and exposing or adding new gravel and rubble. This has had many benefits for our trout fisheries. Larger waters that historically were marginal have improved to very good. Many of the smaller streams that had significant size, habitat or temperature limitations have markedly improved. The trout populations have and will continue to significantly improve under these new optimum water conditions. Increased water levels and improved water quality and habitat resulted in larger and heavier trout than we've perhaps ever noted. In addition, brook trout reproduction and distribution appear to be at all-time highs for recent history. The entire coulee region should provide absolutely outstanding trout fishing for the foreseeable future.

While there are greatly improved numbers of fish in the streams throughout the entire season, these wild populations are more wary than their domestic brethren and therefore require more skill to put them on the end of the line. In the southwest part of the state, adult wild brown trout average 10 to 14 inches with big trout measuring 14 to 18 inches and trophies measuring 19 or 20 inches.

Lower Wisconsin River (LWR) – The overall fisheries are in very good shape. The walleye population has seen a significant increase in the number of 15- to 18-inch fish. A fair increase in the number of 19-plus inch fish has also been noted in the surveys. Channel catfish populations are currently in good shape and continue to be the most important fishery on the lower part of the LWR. The smallmouth bass population has a good number of fish with a number of medium and larger fish thanks to almost all bass anglers releasing the fish they catch. There are also decent populations of bluegill and crappie located in the stillwater areas of the river. These are little utilized fisheries and would provide good fishing for anglers wanting to specifically target these fish. Northern pike throughout the LWR and musky in the uppermost part of the river provide pretty good action for anglers pursuing these species.

Blackhawk Lake (Iowa County) – The over-population of medium bass on Blackhawk Lake has been reduced and the current population still consists of good numbers of larger fish that are heavier for their body length and there are more large fish. The crappie and bluegill populations remain in good shape. Walleye stocking has led to a decent bonus walleye fishery. A recently developed northern pike population with many large fish has provided a very heavily used ice fishery for the past couple of years, but the population has been very heavily harvested and is not expected to continue to sustain its recent success in the coming years.

Cox Hollow Lake (Iowa County) – The bluegill fishery remains dominated by a moderate number of medium and larger fish with limited numbers of smaller fish. Plants of large YOY have resulted in a developing walleye population, which it was never able to grow naturally when small walleye were being stocked. A few of these fish have made the legal 18-inch size limit on this lake. The lake also contains a good population of small yellow perch. The lake currently has the largest population of big pumpkinseed sunfish ever seen here, both for numbers and size. These fish battle hard, are very colorful and bite readily.

Twin Valley Lake (Iowa County) – A massive summer kill of crappie in 2008, reduced the crappie population to a fraction of what it had been. This will result in larger fish but significantly lowered catch rates. The bluegill numbers, while reduced, remain on the small to medium size and should be readily caught. There is a fairly decent number of yellow perch with some large enough to keep. The number of largemouth bass is not particularly high but there are many large fish. The lake has a limited, but fair, population of 12- to 15-inch walleye. While these fish are growing well, they have not been in the lake long enough to reach the legal 18-inch size limit. While not a trophy musky producer, the number of 36- to 40-inch fish is outstanding for a small lake.

– Gene Van Dyck, fisheries biologist, Dodgeville

JEFFERSON COUNTY

Rock Lake - Fall surveys conducted in 2008 produced largemouth bass up to 16.5 inches and smallmouth bass up to 18 inches. Overall catch rates for walleye remain consistently low at 2.5 per hour, compared to 3.7 per hour in 2007. Walleye ranged from 13 to 24 inches and no YOY walleye were sampled. Bluegill up to nine inches and yellow perch up to 8.6 inches also were sampled. Rock bass were the second most abundant panfish species, at 50 fish per hour and up to 10.8 inches in length.

– Laura Stremick-Thompson, fisheries biologist, Horicon

LAFAYETTE COUNTY

Yellowstone Lake – Yellowstone Lake is looking good for walleye, bluegill, channel catfish, smallmouth bass and largemouth bass. Only crappie are still recovering from an extensive kill in 2007 as a result of a *Columnaris* bacteria outbreak. Anglers can expect smallmouth bass and walleye in the fall, walleye in the spring, and bluegill, channel catfish, and largemouth bass in spring, summer and fall. Ice fishing will primarily be a bluegill bite with a few crappie showing up. Musky and northern pike populations are considered low-density, high-quality fisheries. Numbers of smaller musky are up, so future fishing seasons may bring a desirable musky fishery. Musky up to 45 inches have been sampled.

Smallmouth bass streams – There are many small streams offering a rare opportunity to catch trophy-sized smallmouth bass in the southern portions of Lafayette County. Some of the more productive streams include the Galena River, Yellowstone River and Shullsburg Branch.

Gordon Creek - With more than four miles of public fishing easement, Gordon Creek supports one of the better brown trout fisheries south of Route 18. With an estimated 330 brown trout per acre and fish larger than 20 inches, Gordon Creek offers anglers the opportunity to catch trophy-size brown trout. Fly and spin fishermen will find pastured vegetation to their liking in parts of the public fishing area. Gordon Creek is located on the eastern edge of Iowa County.

Steiner Branch – Flowing through public lands just outside of Yellowstone Lake State Park, this small stream supports the only brook trout population in Lafayette County. Once supporting no trout, this stream now produces a quality brook trout population with fish 12 inches sampled in 2008. Fishing is more appealing during the early catch-and-release season, as vegetation becomes overgrown in the summer. Habitat work has been completed in the upper portions of the stream about three-quarters of a mile above County F. Anglers will have a hike of about half-mile from the parking area to get to the habitat work areas.

– Bradd Sims, fisheries biologist, Dodgeville

SAUK COUNTY

Devil's Lake – The brown trout fishery continues to grow in popularity. Typically 15 percent of the catch is comprised of two-year-old trout (14 to 17 inches) that have survived one summer. Stocked at nine inches in April, they grew to 12 inches by fall. Anglers enjoy ice fishing for the trout using fathead minnows. High water during summer 2008 restricted boat access and likely trout harvest. Chances of catching larger size, carryover trout should be good. The lake touts a stable, trophy northern pike fishery with its 32-inch size limit. Largemouth, smallmouth bass and jumbo bluegill are present.

Lake Redstone – According to surveys, smallmouth bass are thriving in equal numbers to largemouths. The stocked walleye fishery continues to provide an average fishery. Panfish data (crappie, bluegill and perch) reports a stable fishery. Redstone is a crappie factory, but heavily harvested at eight to nine inches.

White Mound Lake – Sampling in 2007 found plenty of small gills, although anglers were reporting larger bluegill and crappie caught in deeper water. The bass numbers (larger than eight inches) are up 27 percent compared to a 1999 survey.

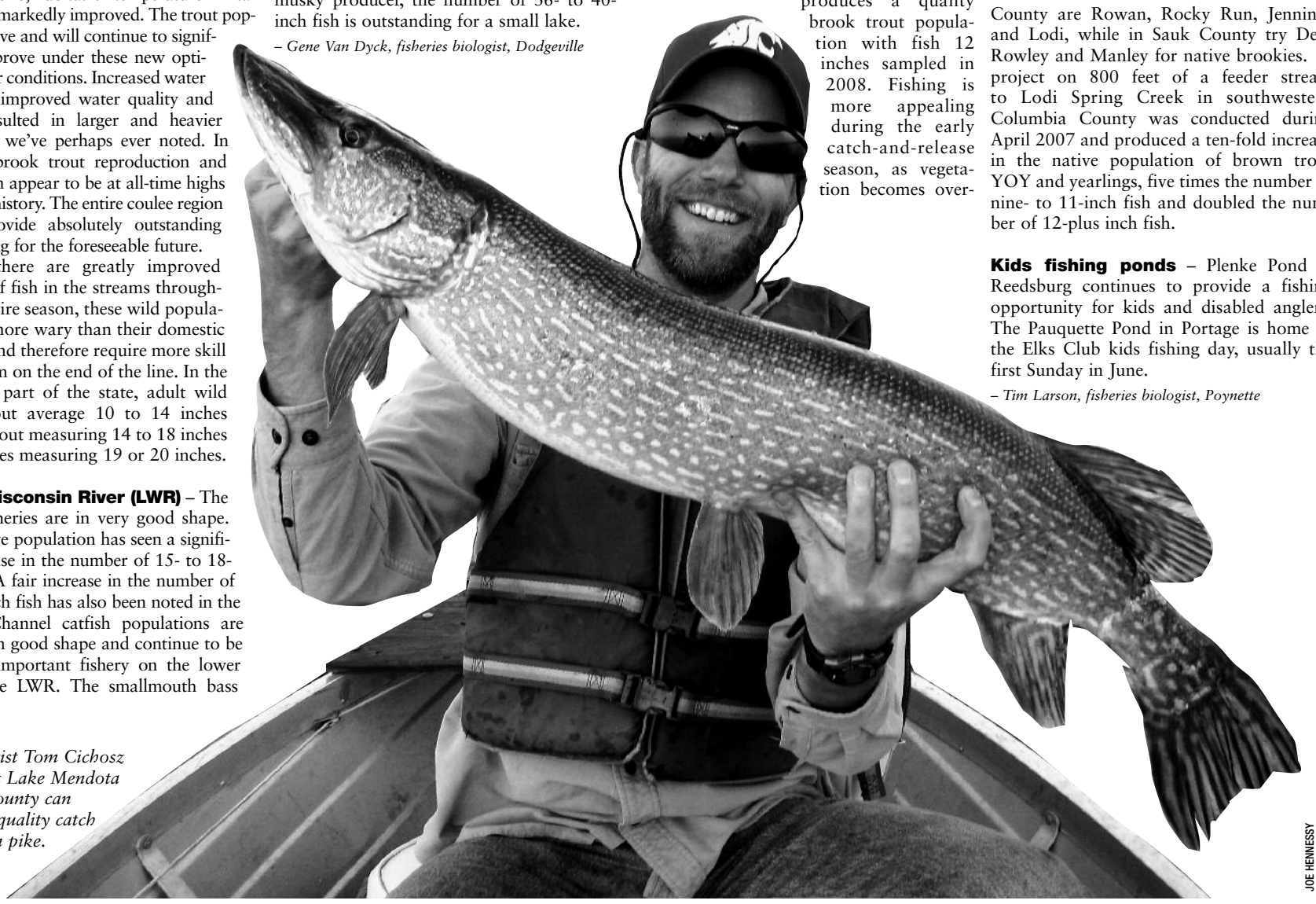
Mirror Lake – The most recent survey in 2006 reported that this 137-acre state park impoundment continues to support an excellent largemouth bass population. Native northern pike and stocked walleye add to this good fishery. Bluegill, black crappie and yellow perch provide plenty of action as well. There is a township boat landing on the lake's northwest side and access via the state park.

Dutch Hollow – This very deep, clear water impoundment can make daylight fishing difficult. The lake is noted for large bluegill and crappie. A 2006 survey found a good number of 16- to 24-inch walleye and good numbers of 10-plus inch bass.

Sauk and Columbia county trout streams – About 80 percent of the streams are stocked. The better streams in Columbia County are Rowan, Rocky Run, Jennings and Lodi, while in Sauk County try Dell, Rowley and Manley for native brookies. A project on 800 feet of a feeder stream to Lodi Spring Creek in southwestern Columbia County was conducted during April 2007 and produced a ten-fold increase in the native population of brown trout YOY and yearlings, five times the number of nine- to 11-inch fish and doubled the number of 12-plus inch fish.

Kids fishing ponds – Plenke Pond in Reedsburg continues to provide a fishing opportunity for kids and disabled anglers. The Pauquette Pond in Portage is home to the Elks Club kids fishing day, usually the first Sunday in June.

– Tim Larson, fisheries biologist, Poynette

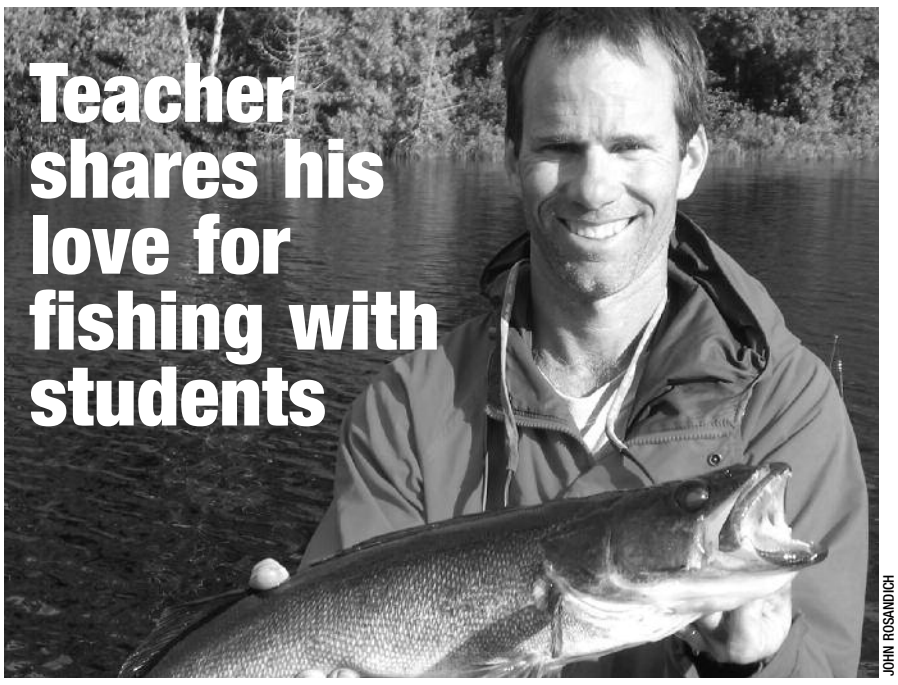


Fish biologist Tom Cichosz proves that Lake Mendota in Dane County can produce a quality catch of northern pike.

JOE HENNESSY

Angler education workshops help others start fishing clubs

Teacher shares his love for fishing with students



JOHN ROSANDICH

Middle school teacher Bob Wiedholz started an after school fishing club to share his passion for fishing with students at Madison's Hamilton Middle School.

Bob Wiedholz has been passing on his angling passion to students at Madison's Hamilton Middle School for nearly 10 years as a Certified Angler Education Instructor and director of the school's fishing club.

"With all the choices for the average sixth-grader these days, such as computer and video games, it's refreshing to see that kids still choose to be outside and involved in activities like fishing," says Wiedholz.

He started offering the after school club after talking with Theresa Stabo, who directs the aquatic resources education program for the DNR, and whose son was in Wiedholz's class at the time. The department offers angler education workshops to help train adults and provide them with materials and access to loaner equipment to help them start their own fishing club.

The Hamilton Fishing Club is free and open to all Hamilton Middle School students. The club typically has about 12 to 15 students participating each year, with some from families with a long fishing tradition but most who are discovering fishing for the first time.

The club starts in January and meets once a week after school for five months. The hope is not only to teach kids how to fish, but to teach them a variety of skills by doing hands-on activities, Wiedholz says.

Club members take an ice fishing trip in mid-February and learn to identify fish, as well as clean and cook them. They learn how to tie knots, paint jigs and cast. They also take a canoe trip which supports teamwork. Some kids even express interest in future fisheries careers. A field trip to tour the Nevin State Fish Hatchery in Fitchburg and talk with a DNR fish biologist is also included in the schedule. The Yahara Fishing Club assists with some of the outings, and a family fish fry brings the club to a close near the end of the school year.

Angler education workshops give you a great opportunity to follow in Bob Wiedholz's footsteps and share your passion for fishing with the next generation. Visit dnr.wi.gov/fish/kidsparents/anglereducation/instructor.html or contact Theresa Stabo (608) 266-2272 or Rachel Piacenza (608) 261-6431 to find out about upcoming workshops.

- Rachel Piacenza, aquatic resources education assistant, Madison

2009 Wisconsin Fishing Report
Wisconsin Department
of Natural Resources
Box 7921
Madison, WI 53707

Editors:
Alisa Santiesteban, Lisa Gaumnitz,
WNR magazine staff

Graphic Design:
Tom Senatori Designs

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides equal opportunity in its employment, programs, services and functions under an Affirmative Action Plan. If you have any questions, please write to Equal Opportunity Office, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

This publication is available in alternate format (large print, Braille, audio tape, etc.) upon request. Call 608-267-7498 for more information.

Printed on Recycled Paper

Family Outings

June 6 and 7, 2009 - Free Fishing Weekend
Reel in a child or new angler and cast out to Wisconsin's waters for Free Fishing Weekend. All the waters of the state are open, including state waters of the Great Lakes and rivers bordering Wisconsin. For more information visit dnr.wi.gov/fish/kidsparents/freefishingweekend.html.

Year-round - Visit a hatchery or egg-taking facility
Keep our state fish hatcheries in mind when planning your next day trip. These facilities are open to visitors and provide unique opportunities to see lots of fish at all stages in their life cycles. Hours and days of business vary seasonally and certain times of the year will provide more fish action than others, so visit dnr.wi.gov/fish/hatchery/hatmap.htm to find information on a facility near you.

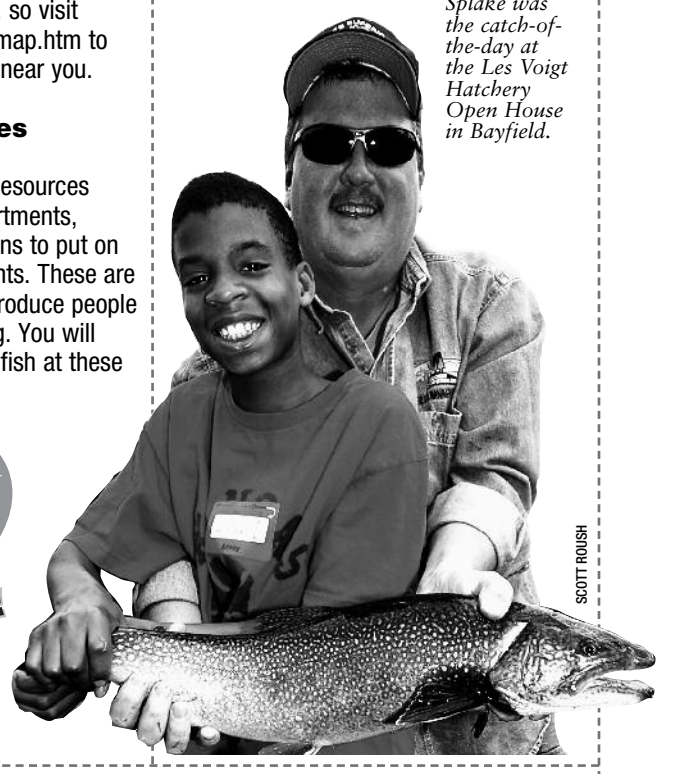
Hatchery open houses and fishing clinics
The Department of Natural Resources works with local parks departments, fishing clubs and organizations to put on fishing clinics and other events. These are excellent opportunities to introduce people both young and old to fishing. You will need a fishing license if you fish at these events, other than those taking place on Free Fishing Weekend.

Additionally, Wisconsin has 17 state fish hatcheries, egg collection facilities and rearing stations and many have scheduled special open house activities.

For a complete list of events,visit dnr.wi.gov/fish/kidsparents/learning opportunities.html.

■

If you are planning an event, the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) www.rbff.org/ will promote all registered events through a national public relations campaign centered around National Fishing and Boating Week, the first full week of June. So be sure to register your event with them!



SCOTT ROUSH

Splake was the catch-of-the-day at the Les Voigt Hatchery Open House in Bayfield.

EEK! JUST FOR KIDS!

A website full of fishy fun just for kids! dnr.wi.gov/eek

Fish watching is fun for the whole family!

During much of the year, many fish are moving about in Wisconsin's waters. They are exciting to watch as they dance, wiggle, and sail through the shallow waters of our rivers and lakes to find their breeding grounds. Here are some hot spots for watching fish.

Walleye (late March-early April)
- Eureka Fishway at the Eureka Dam on the Fox River (Winnebago Co.)
- Spoehr's Marsh, five miles north of Shiocton on HWY 187
- Turtle-Flambeau Flowage, Lake of the Falls County Park on HWY FF, southwest of Mercer

Northern Pike (April-June)
- During high water, flooded ditches which feed into Green Bay, Green Bay

Steelhead (migratory rainbow trout) (March-April)
- Lake Michigan tributary streams: Root River, Racine
- Keltzch and Estabrook parks on the Milwaukee River, Milwaukee
- Menomonee River at Miller Park, Milwaukee
- Kewaunee River, Kewaunee
- Menominee River, Marinette dam
- Peshtigo River, Peshtigo
- C.D. Besadny Anadromous Fish Facility, Kewaunee

Lake Sturgeon (mid-April-early May)
- Highway X crossing, Wolf River between New London and Northport
- Shawano Dam, Wolf River, Shawano
- Shiocton along HWY 54 near "Bamboo Bend"
- Sturgeon Trail, New London

Suckers (April-June)
- Red River County Park north of Dykesville
- C.D. Besadny Anadromous Fish Facility, Kewaunee
- Peshtigo River at railroad bridge, Peshtigo

Chinook Salmon (late September-October)
- Strawberry Creek Spawning Facility, Sturgeon Bay
- C.D. Besadny Anadromous Fish Facility, Kewaunee
- Root River Steelhead Facility, Racine
- Keltzch and Estabrook parks on the Milwaukee River, Milwaukee
- Menomonee River at Miller Park, Milwaukee
- Sheboygan and Pigeon rivers, Sheboygan and Sauk creeks, Port Washington
- Big Rock County Park, Sioux River near Washburn
- Horlick Dam, Racine
- Quarry Park, Racine
- Pikes Creek Dam, Bayfield (park cars at Les Voigt Hatchery; follow trail)

Brown Trout (Late September-November)
- C.D. Besadny Anadromous Fish Facility, Kewaunee
- Big Rock County Park, Sioux River near Washburn

Coho Salmon (October-November)
- C.D. Besadny Anadromous Fish Facility, Kewaunee
- Root River Steelhead Facility, Racine

Muskellunge (April and early May)
- Below the Okauchee Lake Dam, Oconomowoc
- Below the Lake Wingra Dam, Madison

SCOTT ROUSH

Who has the larger smile? This budding young angler gets eye-to-eye with a rainbow trout.