

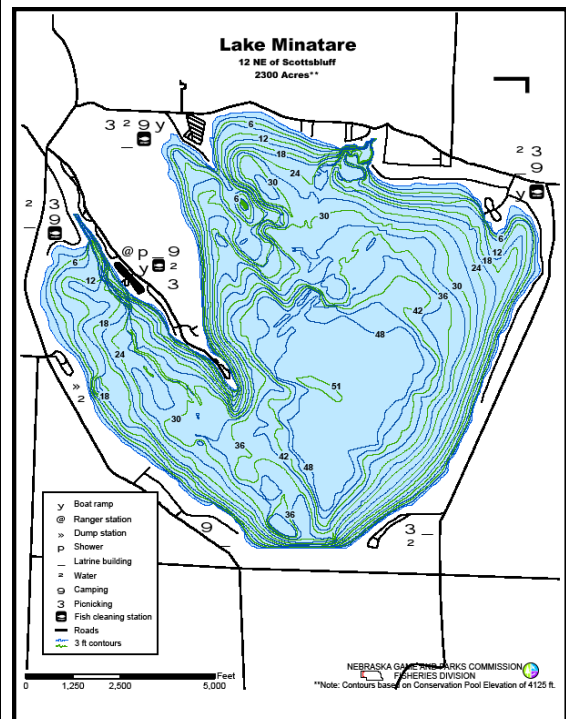
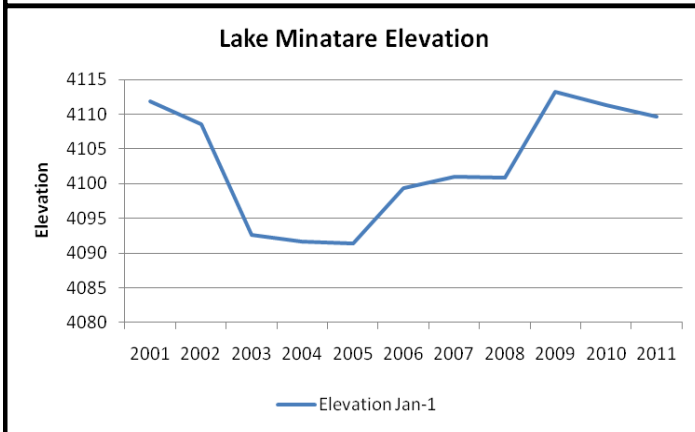
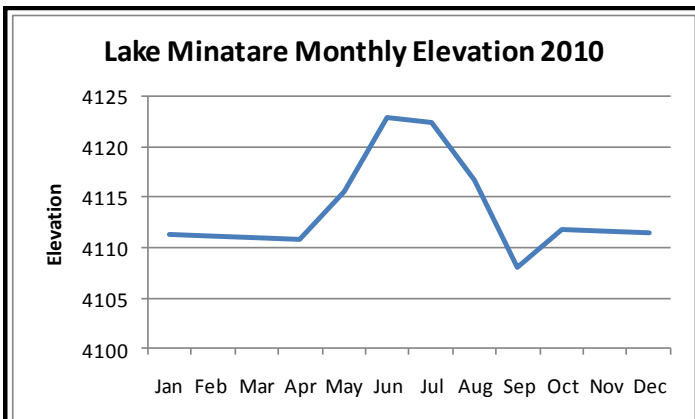
Lake Minatare 2010 Fall Survey Summary



Zac Brashears Fisheries Biologist

Lake Minatare State Recreation Area is located 6 miles east and 8 miles north of Scottsbluff, NE in the North Platte River Valley. The area encompasses 2,873 acres, including a 2,147-acre reservoir when full. The reservoir was built in 1915 by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation primarily for irrigation purposes. The water and land adjacent to the reservoir is managed by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission for recreational activities. Fishing is available at Lake Minatare for a variety of fish species which include walleye, white bass, wiper, channel catfish, blue catfish, smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, and yellow perch. The lake was once part of the North Platte Wildlife Refuge and because of its history as a refuge for migrating waterfowl, it is closed to public use from October 15 through January 14.

Lake Minatare has a total storage capacity of 58,795 acre-feet of water or 2,147 surface acres. The water levels currently (3/7/11) are approximately 50% at 29,198 acre-feet of water or 1,590 surface acres. The storage capacity at Lake Minatare over the past 30 years has averaged 30,336 acre-feet, or approximately 1,648 surface acres. Graphs showing monthly and yearly lake elevations since 1995 can be seen below.



The following text and graphs are the result of gill netting surveys completed during 2010 at Lake Minatare. For comparative purposes it also shows the results from previous years. Gill nets are used to sample fish species that are primarily found in open water such as walleye, white bass, wipers, and catfish. The nets are set each year at approximately the same locations and dates as previous years to allow for trend comparisons.

Walleye

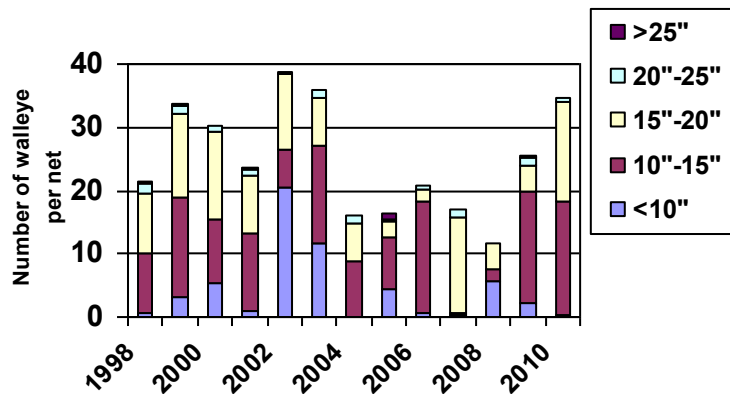
The walleye gill net catch in 2010 of 34.6 fish per net continues an upward trend and was well above the average of 24.9 fish per net. Stable water levels over the past few years have probably contributed to the rebounding walleye numbers. Strong year classes produced in 2008 and 2009 make up approximately 95% of the population and has provided the highest catch of 10-15 and 15-20 inch walleyes seen in several years. Seven different year classes of walleye were sampled and the average size of

walleye that was sampled was just over 14 inches. Approximately 47% of the walleye sampled were over the statewide minimum of 15 inches and the largest fish sampled was 22.5 inches. Lake Minatare will be stocked in 2011 with 880,000 walleye fry.

Anglers targeting walleye should have excellent success at Lake Minatare in 2011. Survey results indicate high numbers of walleye in the 15-20 inch range. Also, good numbers of smaller fish should hopefully contribute to the walleye fishery over the next few years. Anglers are reminded that they are allowed a daily bag limit of 4 walleye that must be greater than 15 inches and only one walleye over 22 inches may be included in the daily bag. Anglers are also reminded that waters within 150 feet of the dam are closed to fishing from sunset to sunrise March 1-April 30.

Walleye Gill Net Catch

Lake Minatare



Channel Catfish

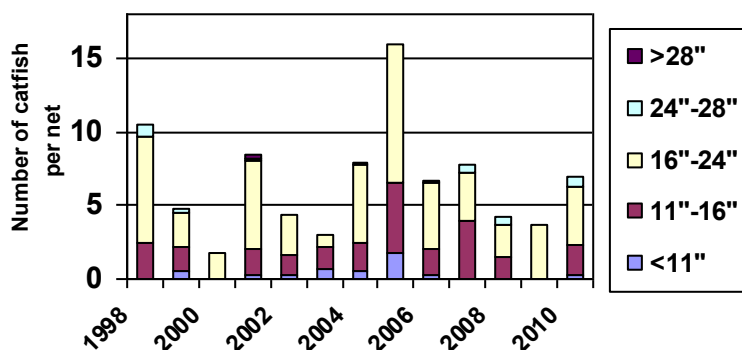
The channel catfish gill net catch in 2010 was 7 fish per net and slightly above the 1998-2009 average of 6.6 fish per net. Catfish that were sampled showed excellent size structure and the average size of channel catfish sampled was 18.4 inches. The largest channel catfish sampled during our fall gill netting effort was 27.6 inches.

Anglers who target catfish at Lake Minatare should see decent numbers

of 16-24" channel catfish with the possibility of fish larger than 24 inches in length. Anglers should also know that blue catfish were initially stocked in Lake Minatare in 2007 to add species diversity and a potential trophy fishery. It is the angler's responsibility to be able to differentiate species because channel catfish have a bag limit of 5 fish per day and blue catfish are managed as a trophy fish statewide with a bag limit of 1 per day. Blue catfish and channel catfish will be stocked in alternate years based on hatchery availability.

Catfish Gill Net Catch

Lake Minatare



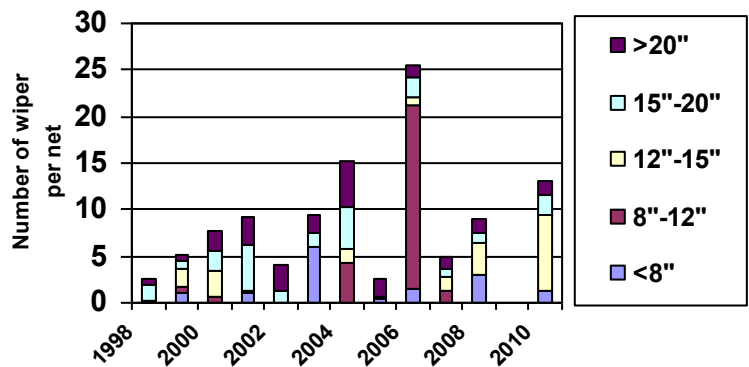
Wipers and White Bass

The wiper gill net catch of 13 fish per net continued an upward trend since 2007. This catch was also above the 1998-2009 average of 7.8 fish per net.

Approximately 90% of the wipers that were sampled were greater than 12 inches in length and 10% of those fish were greater than 20 inches. The average wiper sampled was 15 inches and the largest fish sampled during the 2010 fall gill netting effort was 25 inches.

Wiper Gill Net Catch

Lake Minatare



White bass are also present in Lake Minatare, and in 2010 the gill net catch was 7.3 fish per net. These fish showed excellent size structure with the average white bass sampled being 14.8 inches and the largest collected being 15.9 inches.

Anglers who fish for wipers and white bass at Lake Minatare during 2011 should have excellent fishing and great chances at wipers ranging from 12 inches to over 20 inches in length. Anglers should also have opportunities at large white bass that range from 14 to 16 inches in length. Anglers are reminded that the bag limit for wipers and white bass in combination is 15 fish in which only one can be over 18 inches in length.

Gizzard shad

Gizzard shad are a primary prey species in many Nebraska irrigation reservoirs. This prey species sometimes has a tough time surviving the winter season due to Lake Minatare sitting on the northern edge of their geographic range. Shad adults are surveyed annually each spring and if catch per unit of effort is low or recruitment is low, adult shad are stocked by biologists prior to their spawning. This is done to assure there is an adequate forage base for fish such as walleye, wipers, white bass, and catfish.

For additional information about fisheries management at Lake Minatare please contact the following personnel by phone or email addresses listed below.

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