

Stagecoach Reservoir 2004 Fishery Survey Summary

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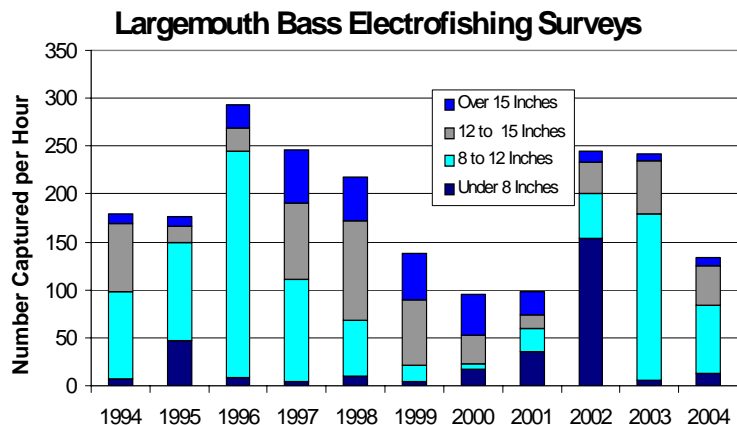


The Stagecoach Reservoir State Recreation Area is located south of Denton, NE. This 195-acre flood-control reservoir has a handicap accessible fishing pier and a concrete boat ramp. Access to many shoreline areas, and a 5 mph “no wake” boating regulation make this a popular destination for families and hardcore anglers. The reservoir was renovated in the early 90’s to remove the abundant common carp and gizzard shad, in conjunction with an aquatic enhancement project. The fish community is comprised of largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, crappie, walleye and wipers.

This fishery is surveyed on an annual basis to follow the changes in the fish community. In the spring, electrofishing surveys monitor the largemouth bass population, and trap netting is used for bluegill. In the fall, trap nets are used for crappie assessments, and gill netting for channel catfish, walleye and wiper populations. These graphs show the number and sizes sampled each year for a species.

Largemouth Bass

During the last decade, the largemouth bass population in Stagecoach Reservoir has been dramatically impacted by the presence of gizzard shad, which compete with juvenile bass for zooplankton and invertebrate prey. In 1997, the number of gizzard shad peaked and bass numbers began to decline. The severe winter of 2000-2001 resulted in a gizzard shad winter-kill, and allowed the bass population to produce strong year-classes in 2001 and 2002. These fish will provide plenty of fishing opportunities for anglers in 2005 and will eventually serve to replace the few older fish still residing in the reservoir. This replenishment of reproducing largemouth bass adults was sorely needed as a return of gizzard shad in large numbers will negatively impact future year classes. Current regulations restrict anglers to harvesting 1 largemouth bass over 21” in length, and anglers are highly encouraged to practice catch and release at Stagecoach Reservoir.

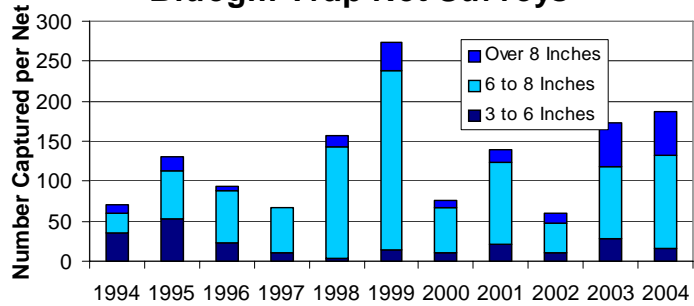


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Bluegill

Stagecoach Reservoir continues to be one of the best bluegill fisheries in southeast Nebraska. Over 20% of the bluegill sampled in 2004 were greater than 8" in length. This is an increase in density and number of large bluegill from the previous years. The bluegill population is protected by an 8" minimum length limit. Anglers can expect to catch plenty of nice bluegill again in 2005.

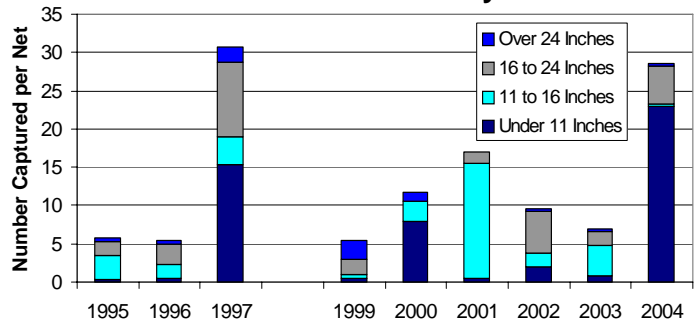
Bluegill Trap Net Surveys



Channel Catfish

Anglers seeking channel catfish frequently visit stagecoach Reservoir. A survey of Stagecoach anglers in 2003 found nearly as many catfish angler fished during the over-night hours, as did all anglers during the over-the day. While well suited to the fish community and aquatic habitat, small catfish are easy prey for largemouth bass. To reduce predation, channel catfish must be larger than 10" in length when stocked. Channel catfish were stocked into Stagecoach Reservoir in 2004 to maintain fishable populations. Additional stockings will take place in 2006 and 2008. Anglers should have success finding moderate numbers of channel catfish 16 to 24 inches long, will an occasional large fish from 5 to 12 lbs.

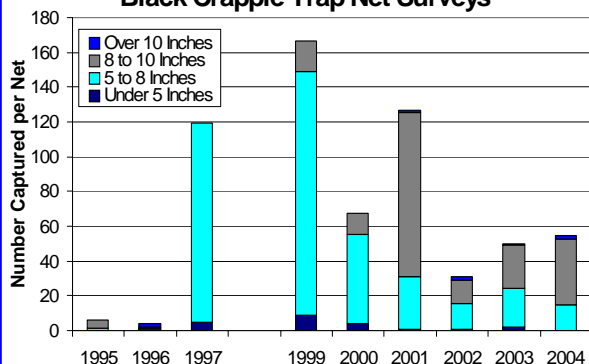
Channel Catfish Surveys



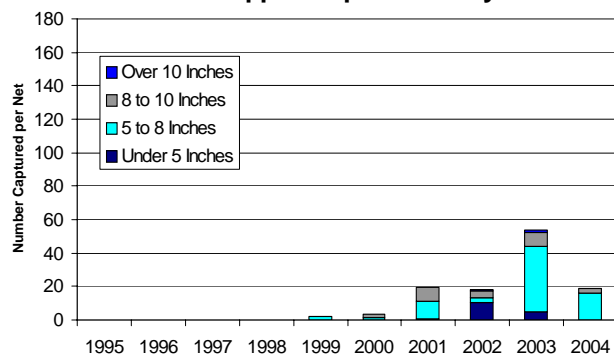
Crappie

Black crappie were stocked by the NGPC following the renovation of Stagecoach Reservoir in the early 90's. However, the current crappie population is comprised of both species and anglers harvest nearly 10,000 a year. As the density of gizzard shad increases they will compete for invertebrate prey, and growth rates of both black and white crappie will decline. However, anglers can still expect to catch plenty of crappies in 2005, with many fish less than 9" in length.

Black Crappie Trap Net Surveys

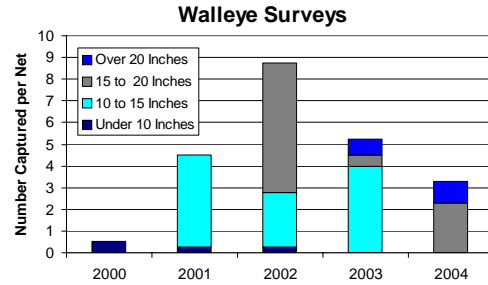


White Crappie Trap Net Surveys



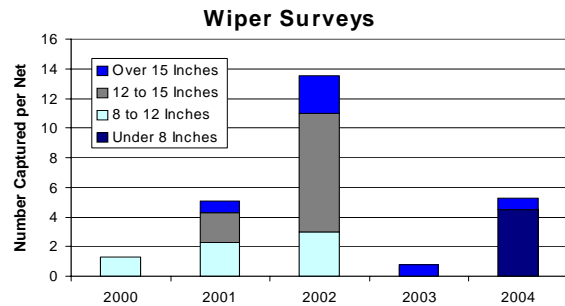
Walleye

Beginning in 2000, fingerling walleye have been stocked into Stagecoach Reservoir as part of a research project aimed at enhancing angling opportunities for this species in Eastern Nebraska. Initial results indicate that these stockings have been moderately successful. While walleye densities will never approach those found in large western reservoirs, they provide additional angling opportunities to the current bass/bluegill/crappie/catfish fishery. Anglers are reminded that a statewide 15" minimum length limit restriction is in place.



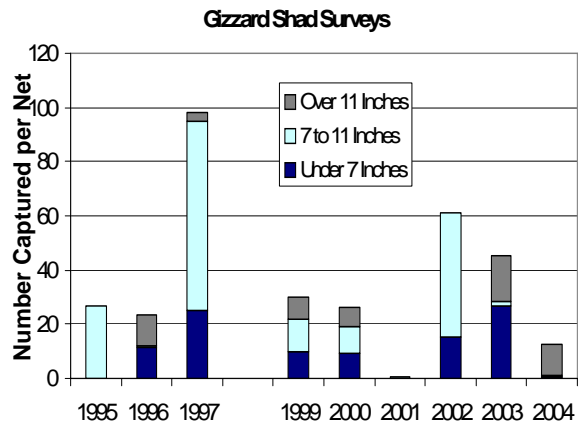
Wipers

The hybrid offspring of striped and white bass, "wipers" are aggressive schooling predators that feed voraciously on schooling prey species like gizzard shad. The high density of gizzard shad prompted the stocking of wipers between 1999 and 2001. The winter-kill of gizzard shad suspended these stockings, and subsequently the number of wipers within the reservoir decreased in 2003. The rebound of gizzard shad numbers prompted the wiper stocking to begin again in 2004. Anglers are likely to encounter numerous small wipers from Stagecoach Reservoir in 2005, with an occasional large fish acting as a bonus.



Gizzard Shad

While gizzard shad are an important prey species in our large western irrigation reservoirs, they are extremely detrimental to young fishes and invertebrate communities in small waterbodies in Eastern Nebraska. Research indicates that schools of gizzard shad can completely filter entire lakes within days. The severe winter of 2000-2001 temporarily suppressed the gizzard shad population. However, the number of adult shad continues to increase, further suppressing recruitment and growth rates of largemouth bass, crappie and bluegill.



For additional information about fisheries management at Walnut Creek Reservoir please contact the NGPC District V Fisheries Office at 402-471-7647 or by email at the addresses listed below.

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