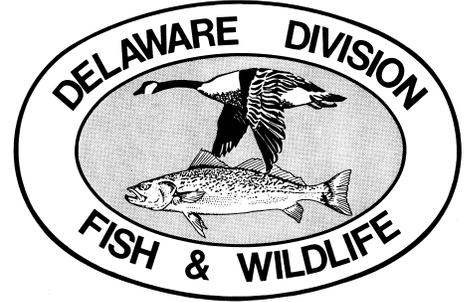


Tournament News



Fisheries Section Updates

Spring 2015

I thought spring would never get here! We are busier than ever preparing for our pond and river sampling. I know you're also gearing up for the tournament season, so I wanted to get another issue of the newsletter out to you. Please don't forget to apply for your tournament permit with the Division's Enforcement Section. Rebecca and I were thrilled to get out to the TBF Divisional Tournament held on the Nanticoke River this past September. Congratulations to the Delaware Team on a great tournament. I appreciated the opportunity to meet the participants and hope to get out to more tournaments this summer and fall.

Sincerely,
Edna

During our fall 2014 tidal Largemouth Bass population surveys we tagged another 232 bass on the Nanticoke River and 61 on the Broadkill River. Results of our bass population survey will be included in the next issue of *Tournament News*. Please report tagged bass at: <http://de.gov/basstagreturns> or contact me or Rebecca Bobola.



Cabela's

Cabela's has generously donated ten \$50 gift certificates to our Largemouth Bass tagging program. If you report a tagged bass your name will be entered into a drawing. Five certificates will be given out at the end of June and another five at the end of December!

This sign is being posted at public ponds in Delaware that have the invasive plant *Hydrilla verticillata*. Hydrilla is a non-native aquatic plant that can spread easily by just a few sprigs. It can quickly grow to high densities and interfere with boating and fishing. It is a very hard plant to control and we appreciate your efforts in helping prevent the spread of it to other ponds and water bodies. Please inspect your boat, trailer and equipment and remove any visible plants before going to another water body.

The Delaware Invasive Species Council donated the signs to us! Check out the home page at: <http://www.delawareinvasives.net/>



STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!
Prevent the transport of nuisance species.
Clean all recreational equipment.
www.ProtectYourWaters.net

When you leave a body of water:

- Remove any visible mud, plants, fish or animals before transporting equipment.
- Eliminate water from equipment before transporting.
- Clean and dry anything that comes into contact with water (boats, trailers, equipment, clothing, dogs, etc.).
- Never release plants, fish or animals into a body of water unless they came out of that body of water.



Contact Information:

• Tournament reports and tag returns:

Fisheries Biologist:

Edna Stetzar, 302-735-8654;
Edna.Stetzar@state.de.us

Fisheries Technician:

Rebecca Bobola, 302-735-8661;
Rebecca.Bobola@state.de.us

• Tournament permits:

Angela Dula, 302-739-9913

• Fish & Wildlife Enforcement Agents:

New Castle & Kent Counties:

302-739-6139

Sussex County: 302-855-1901

• Report Violations:

302-739-4580 **OR**

1-800-523-3336

24-hour Enforcement Number:

1-800-662-8802

Operation Game Theft :

1-800-292-3030

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2014 Tournament Summary

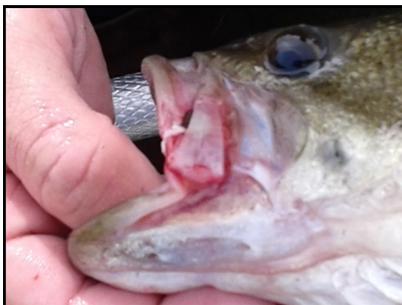
A total of 57 Largemouth Bass fishing tournament reports were submitted to the Division of Fish and Wildlife by event sponsors during 2014* (see Table below). The information is only based on the reports that were received; there are still some outstanding reports. Reports were submitted by 11 fishing clubs: 7 clubs reported on events held in public ponds and four reported on tidal events (Nanticoke River system). Tournaments were held March through November, with the majority occurring in the summer (N=31). The cumulative amount of angling hours (9,513) increased by 30% from 2013, primarily due to the three day TBF Divisional Tournament held on the Nanticoke River. The Nanticoke River was still the most popular location for bass tournaments with 12 events. Similar to 2013, Millsboro Pond, Horsey Pond, and Wagamons Pond were the most popular non-tidal tournament locations based on angling hours and the number of tournaments. The average weight (lbs) of bass weighed-in during tournaments was highest at Lums Pond (2.21 lbs), Chipman Pond (2.07 lbs) and Ingrams Pond (2.05 lbs). The largest bass (5.98 lbs) caught during a tournament was from Trap Pond. Three bass over 5 lbs were caught during tournaments held at Millsboro Pond.

Tournament Site	Mean Weight (lbs)	No. of Bass	Largest Bass	Number >5 lbs	No. of Events
Lums Pond	2.21	32	4.88	0	2
Chipman Pond	2.07	270	5.80	1	6
Ingrams Pond	2.05	219	5.55	1	6
Millsboro Pond	1.98	255	5.14	3	7
Haven Lake	1.88	219	5.70	2	6
Wagamons Pond	1.85	262	5.00	1	7
Horsey Pond	1.63	201	5.75	1	7
Nanticoke River/Broad Creek	1.59	1,248	5.26	1	13
Trap Pond	1.57	33	5.98	1	2
Concord Pond	1.05	2	2.08	0	1
TOTAL	17.9	2,741	-	11	57

**If catch and effort data was not parsed according to location during multiple pond tournaments the information is not included in the table; This includes multiple pond tournaments at: Millsboro Pond and Ingrams Pond, and at Haven Lake, Griffith Pond, and Blairs Pond.*

Care and Handling during Tournaments:

71% of Largemouth Bass captured during electrofishing a few days after a fishing tournament on the Nanticoke River system had hook scars, torn jaws, and body sores. Survival was questionable for some of the fish. There is more to 'catch and release' than simply keeping your livewell in good working order. Gentle handling is just as important!



Large 'hook' scars



Torn gills



Hook scar, wounds on body and head

2013 Delaware Freshwater Fishing Survey Summary

Results of the Division's mail survey of approximately 1 in every 3 anglers (resident and non-resident) who fish in Delaware's non-tidal and tidal freshwater areas has been summarized. The response rate was 28% or about 3 in every 10 anglers. The survey, originally initiated in 1978, is only conducted approximately every 5 years so the responses we receive are really important. The information obtained from the survey improves our ability to effectively manage Delaware's freshwater fishery resources and provides anglers an opportunity to communicate to the Fisheries Section which issues are most important to them. We read each and every comment and responded directly to dozens of questions. Below is a brief summary of the survey results. A more comprehensive report will be available soon and will be posted along with tables and figures on the Division's website. So please check the website in late April 2015 at: <http://de.gov/recfishing>

Public Pond Fishing: Most popular type of freshwater fishing

Over 80% of survey respondents reported angling activity in freshwater ponds. The ten most heavily fished (number of trips) public ponds were: Lums Pond, Silver Lake (Dover), Trap Pond, Coursey Pond, Killens Pond, Millsboro Pond, Hearn's Pond, Blairs Pond, Becks Pond, and Moores Lake. In terms of effort per acre, Becks Pond supported the most fishing trips per acre followed by Blairs Pond and Moores Lake. Over 52% of anglers fishing in ponds utilized a boat and although fishing activity was reported year round, most activity took place between April and September with a peak in June. Catch per trip (all species combined) for public pond fishing of warmwater species was highest at Horsey's Pond, followed by Records Pond, Craigs Pond and McGinnis Pond. The high catch rate at Records Pond indicates re-stocking efforts have been successful following a draw down to stream level in October of 2012. Total catch (all species combined and regardless of effort) was highest at Horsey Pond (96,663 fish) closely followed by Lums Pond. Other ponds with a high number of fish caught were Trap Pond and Silver Lake (Dover).

Non-tidal and tidal freshwater stream fishing: Sixteen rivers and streams included

The Nanticoke River system accounted for nearly 28% of all stream and river fishing activity, possibly due to the Largemouth Bass population and extensive use of the river for bass fishing tournaments. The Broadkill River and Marshyhope Creek were also popular fishing areas. The most popular piedmont streams were the Brandywine Creek and Christina River. The majority (55%) of anglers fishing in streams and rivers utilized shoreline access, while 44% indicated they fished from a boat. This group most actively fished between April and September with a slight uptick in activity during June and July. Catch per trip (all warmwater species combined) for river and stream fishing was highest for Red Clay Creek followed by Marshyhope Creek and the Nanticoke River. Total catch (all species combined and regardless of the number of total trips) was highest by far for the Nanticoke River (254,606 fish) followed by the Broadkill River and Marshyhope Creek.

Fish species and catch rates: Largemouth bass most popular warm water species

The majority of anglers expressed 'no preference' when asked which fish species they targeted. Of those who indicated a preference, Largemouth Bass were the most sought species in ponds, tidal streams and non-tidal streams by all angler groups (resident, non-resident, residents age 65 and older and seven-day license holders). In addition to Largemouth Bass; crappie, sunfish and pickerel were the other warmwater species most favored by pond anglers while Striped Bass, White Perch and Smallmouth Bass were most favored by stream anglers. Freshwater anglers targeting warm water species typically release their catch; over 96% of fish caught in rivers and streams were released and 98% of fish caught in public ponds were released.

Troutfishing: White Clay Creek most popular trout fishing location

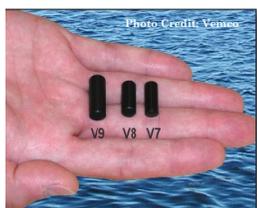
White Clay Creek supported the greatest proportion of trout angling with over 65% of the effort (number of trips). The Christina River was the second most popular location although effort and catch was much reduced compared to White Clay Creek. Newton Pond, a renovated borrow pit that opened in 2009, supported more trout fishing by residents than Tidbury Pond and effort (number of trips=2,408) was greater than four of the six designated trout streams. Over 63,000 catches of trout were reported, with the majority (78%) from White Clay Creek. As expected, the highest rate of catch per trip occurred in the White Clay Creek, followed by the Brandywine River (includes Beaver Run and Wilsons Run). Trout fishing took place year round with a peak in activity during April-June and a secondary peak in October. This coincides with opening season in the streams during early April and additional stocking that takes place in October. Periodic stockings occur from April to the early part of May, with most frequent stockings in the White Clay Creek.

Issues of concern: At the end of the survey anglers were asked "What fishing issues do you think are most important in Delaware?". The concerns expressed by anglers were similar to those relayed during the 2009 survey. Responses were categorized and the top five categories of concern were: 1) water quality/fish consumption advisories, 2) increased boat and shore access, 3) fisheries management, 4) litter/trash clean-up, and 5) stocking. Other concerns included a need to increase or improve enforcement, to promote youth fishing, licenses/fees, and a need for more information/education.

American Shad Update

As mentioned in past issues of *Tournament News*, the Division of Fish and Wildlife operates a hatchery on the Nanticoke River in an effort to restore the American Shad population, decline of which prompted a moratorium on harvest in 2000. Between 2005 when the hatchery first operated and 2014, over 6 million shad have been stocked in the Nanticoke River. The project, led by fisheries biologist Johnny Moore, entails collecting pre-spawn adult American Shad from the main stem Nanticoke River and allowing them to spawn naturally at the hatchery. The eggs and larvae are given a "jump start" in a protective environment before being stocked into the river (the adults are also stocked back into the river). Natural mortality of eggs and larvae is high, so the goal of the project is to reestablish the population until natural spawning in the wild is sufficient to sustain the population.

American Shad are an important fish species, not only for anglers, but as prey for other animals, such as Largemouth Bass. There is no doubt that migratory patterns of Largemouth Bass in the spring are partly influenced by the upstream migration of anadromous species such as American Shad (and river herring). In an effort to gain a better understanding of shad migration, Johnny and his team plan to tag shad with acoustic transmitters this coming spring. The tags will be inserted using a non-surgical, esophageal implant method. The tags will emit a series of signals that can be picked up by specially designed receivers. These receivers will be placed underwater in five key locations spanning from the mouth of Broad Creek to well upstream of the route 13 bridge in Seaford. If a tagged fish passes within proximity to a receiver, the unique signal emitted by that particular tag will be recorded by the receiver and stored until it can be manually downloaded into a computer by Johnny and his crew. The tags have a battery life of more than a year, so hopefully some of the tagged fish will provide data well into 2016.



Acoustic tags: Typical size to be used for the shad project

Tags are non-surgically implanted in the stomach via the esophagus



Photo Credit: Vemco

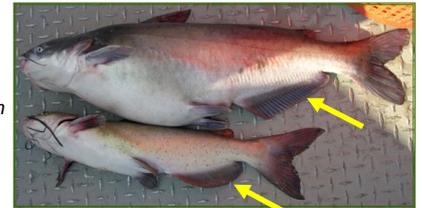
Receiver: placed underwater, either anchored or attached to a buoy, pier or dock

Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife
Fisheries Section
4876 Hay Point Landing Rd
Smyrna, DE 19977

Blue Catfish Research

Matt Ogburn, with the Smithsonian Research Center in Edgewater Maryland, is tagging Blue Catfish with acoustic transmitters and has gotten 'detections' on his most upstream receiver near the DE/MD state line. It is highly likely that Blue Catfish have invaded the Delaware portion of the Nanticoke River system and we may confirm this when Johnny deploys the receivers mentioned in the previous column. If you catch this potentially invasive species, please contact us. Early detection is very important!

Blue Catfish (top) have a straight anal fin, whereas Channel Catfish (lower) have a lobed-shaped anal fin



Nanticoke River Atlantic Sturgeon

Fisheries biologists with the Maryland DNR have recently caught eight adult Atlantic Sturgeon in the Marshyhope River. In the past few years, anglers have also reported sturgeon jumping out of the water in the main stem Nanticoke River in Delaware. I observed one in October of 2014 jump several feet out of the water in Broad Creek while we were tagging Largemouth Bass. No one really knows why they jump, but it's quite a sight if you've ever witnessed it. It's possible the adults we are seeing now were hatchery raised juveniles stocked in 1996! Genetic tests are being conducted to determine the origins of these sturgeon. For more information go to: <http://news.maryland.gov/dnr/2014/09/17/mature-endangered-atlantic-sturgeon-discovered-in-marshyhope-creek>

If you observe sturgeon jumping in the Nanticoke River or its tributaries, please record the time of day and the location and contact the US Fish and Wildlife Service at 1-800-448-8322



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<http://www.facebook.com/DelawareFishWildlife>