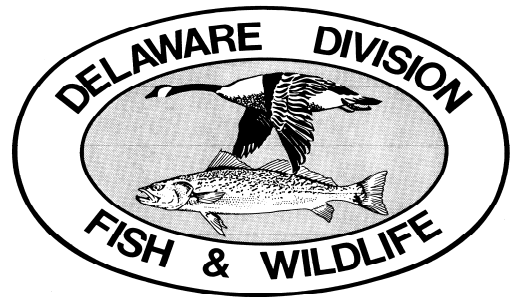


Tournament News



Fisheries Updates

Fall 2011

Bait Survey -

The increasing problems with invasive species of all types (from plants to fish to diseases) has awakened interest in many items used for bait. The release of unused bait has been implicated in the spread of invasive species such as rusty crayfish, fathead minnows, and some aquatic worms. Sometimes, the problem isn't the bait so much as the packing material used to keep the bait alive. In an effort to determine angler use of bait—both freshwater and marine—the Division is sending out a survey to a number of anglers pulled from the FIN database. The survey is being run online to cut mailing costs so if you get an email and link from "Fisheries@state.de.us", please click on the link and answer the questions. There are only 12 and the responses are sent directly back (anonymously) so we can tabulate them. Results will be presented as they become available.

A major repair effort began November 28, 2011 at the Cedar Creek access area near Slaughter Beach. The site will be closed during construction for a period of about six months. To find out the status of the repair work and closure, go to our special webpage <http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/fw/Fisheries/Pages/Fishing-Boating-Access.aspx>, or go to the Division's website, and page down for the Updated items—one is the boat access page. If you ever see a problem at one of the Division-owned access areas, please contact the Division.

The new bulkhead at Phillips Landing has been completed and should provide years of erosion protection at this popular site.

Don't forget the Delaware angler logbook online available to all anglers in Delaware waters. You can keep track of fish catches, locations, gears, and even shellfishing effort. Go to the site below, create your own login name, then follow directions to record your trip:

<http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/fw/Pages/Logbook.aspx>



This nice striped bass hybrid was taken from Lums Pond State Park one fall.

Telephone numbers of Interest

For tournament reports:

- Cathy Martin, 302-735-8658 (New number); catherine.martin@state.de.us
- Jared Jacobini, 302-735-8661 (New number); jared.jacobini@state.de.us
- For tournament permits: Carol Gondeck, 302-739-9913
- New Fish Tag Hotline: 302-653-2887, leave name & phone no.

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 for Environmental Complaints

1-800-662-8802

Operation Game Theft :

1-800-292-3030

Permit applications:

www.fw.delaware.gov/

Click on Fisheries, Go to Recreational Fishing, at top of page—App. for fishing events; under bass, see Tournament report form or tag return forms.

www.fw.delaware.gov

Changes in Fisheries Section

As many of you know, first Roy Miller then Craig Shirey, Fisheries Section Administrators, have retired. New to the positions of Program Administrator and Program Manager, but not to the Division are: John Clark and Stew Michels, respectively. John has worked for the Division as a fisheries biologist for 22 years surveying tidal fishes, the Inland Bays, and American eels. Stew has been overseeing the Delaware Estuary trawl survey and horseshoe crab monitoring. Both have strong fisheries backgrounds and experience with Delaware waters. They are located in the R&R Building in Dover and can be contacted at: 739-9914.

Pond Surveys 2011

Seven ponds were monitored in spring 2011 to check on the status of their fish populations: Becks, Chipmans, Craigs, Derby, Haven, Horseys, and Millsboro. Although the highest bass catch rates (154.5 bass/electrofishing hour) were obtained from Derby Pond, the bulk of the population was fish in the 8 to 13 inch size group. This pond should have some good numbers of larger bass by spring 2013 if growth remains stable.

The poorest bass population, as measured by electrofishing, was in Millsboro with only 14.5 bass/electrofishing hour. In comparison, the eight bass tournaments held in Millsboro during 2011 reported a total of 191 bass (0.22 per angler hour) and 426.39 lbs (0.49 lb/angler hour) including two bass over 5 lbs. This was a moderate catch rate compared to the other ponds sample but, by no means, the bottom of the pack. Over 1100 advanced bass fingerlings (3 inch plus) were stocked here in August to supplement natural reproduction in the pond.

Several of the ponds sampled during this past spring were impacted by various events later in the season. Becks Pond was the site of reproducing northern snakeheads and will be subjected to increased monitoring. Chipmans had a fishkill during August due to low water levels and a heavy planktonic algae bloom. Hurricane Irene caused an overflow (along the roadway) of Craigs Pond. All of these ponds will be resampled and the fish catch data compared to those obtained this past spring. We will continue to keep you posted about conditions in these ponds. The most recent sampling data are provided in the Public Ponds booklet now available on our website. Go to the bottom of the intro page and click on "Fish Summary Tables" to find electrofishing catch results.

The advent of Hurricane Irene also resulted in the proactive pulling of boards at many of the public ponds to increase storm storage capacity and for public safety. Unfortunately at Masseys Millpond, the pond drained faster than anticipated, and DelDOT replaced a portion of the boards within hours. However, the pond drained to stream level washing many fish downstream (to Garrisons Lake) and stranding some in the pond bottom. To hasten recovery of the fish populations of this pond, the Division purchased bluegill and golden shiners (also called mill roach) and stocked them in late October. This will provide a forage base so that largemouth bass can be stocked in 2012. Meanwhile, be aware that the fish populations of this pond are below what you might expect.

Lums Pond is the only pond in Delaware stocked with striped bass X white bass hybrids. These fish are sterile so must be stocked to maintain the population. Although not available every year due to supply issues, just over 1000 hybrids were stocked in August 2011. The fish averaged just over four inches and should provide a specialized type of pond angling in this pond. Contact the park office (302-368-6989) if you have any questions about rules and regulations governing this pond.

Invasive Species:

catfish

Two species of non-native, possibly invasive, catfish are moving into Delaware waters. Several anglers have reported (and sent photos) of flat-head catfish from the Brandywine River. An angler also reported catching one in the C&D Canal. As noted in a past issue, distinctive characteristics include a lower jaw which projects beyond the upper, a broad, flat head, and somewhat squared off tail. Coloration can be olive or brown with mottling on the sides.

The blue catfish grow to very large size—over 100 lbs— and are considered a top predator of many fishes. Blue cats are generally a slate blue on back and silvery white on belly with a deeply forked tail. Anglers should look at the anal fin which is longer and straight compared to a channel cat's more lobed anal fin to differentiate the two. Blue catfish prefer large river basins and are native to the Ohio, Mississippi, and Missouri River drainages. They are omnivorous feeders on fish, crustaceans, and shellfish. Blue catfish have been reported from the Nanticoke



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River by pound net fishermen in the area of Vienna.

Not present in the Chesapeake 40 years ago, blue catfish account for 75 percent of all fish biomass in some places. Virginia biologists surveying the Rappahannock River via electrofisher netted up to 6,600 blue catfish per hour (Chesapeake Bay Journal). Many fishery managers are worried about the impact on native fish such as American shad and river herring whose populations are in decline.

Another concern about large, long lived catfish is the uptake of contaminants. On the James River, the VA Dept of Health recommends no consumption of blue catfish longer than 32 inches and no more than two meals per month of small catfish due to contaminant loads. Fishes, like catfish which begin as bottom feeders, tend to accumulate harmful contaminants.

The Chesapeake Bay Program has initiated a Sustainable Fisheries Goal Implementation Team composed of federal, state, and private fisheries managers. In June 2010, the Team decided to focus on blue catfish management as an issue of concern.

If you catch either of these catfish, do not release them. Please contact the Division immediately and retain the fish. Call or email a photo to:

Cathy Martin (see page 1 for contact info).



Blue catfish, photo by VA Game & Inland Fisheries

Fisheries Section
4876 Hay Point Landing Rd
Smyrna De 19977

On the Web

www.fw.delaware.gov/

Tidal Bass Surveys

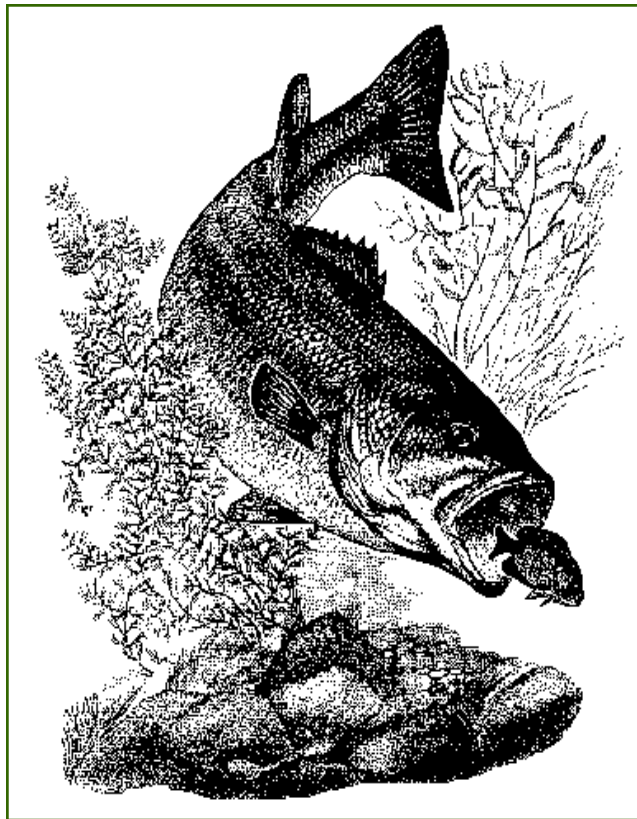
Sufficient rainfall this past summer lowered conductivities within the Nanticoke and Broadkill Rivers allowing us to complete our annual bass monitoring surveys.

This year marked the second highest bass catches in the Broadkill with a total of 360 bass collected during two sample days. An extremely low tide during the second day resulted in the fish being extremely vulnerable to the electrofisher. A population estimate of over 1300 bass over six inches was calculated for the area between the boat ramp and the overhead powerlines about halfway to Rt. 1.

The fish were in excellent condition with the most abundant size class being from 11 to 12.5 inches. However, fish 20.5 inches were collected including a 5.2 –pounder tagged in 2009 at 3 lbs and aged at 6 years.

A total of 132 bass, legal length and longer, were tagged with yellow t-bar tags. If you catch one, please give us a call.

Two thousand coded-wire tagged fingerlings were stocked in the Broadkill this year to supplement natural reproduction. Fall sampling resulted in the collection of 51 bass with CWTs indicating they had been stocked. At



least 10 of those were fish stocked this past August. A breakdown by year will be made following analysis of the scale samples.

Thankfully, we were also able to sample the Nanticoke from the stateline to Middleford and Broad Creek up to Laurel. Catches there were on the low end of the historical catches. However, numbers of small fish (below 8 inches) and largest (over 15") were average—the declines were in the 8 to 15 inch fish.

The tides during our second sampling week were extremely high, despite predicted low tide periods. High tides allow fish to move up into the pad fields and make them less vulnerable to the electrofisher. The population estimate of bass over eight inches was calculated at 6,690 less than the 8600 estimate from 2008 but within the historical range of 4375 to 11905. Analysis of scale samples taken during the fall survey should indicate the strength of year classes since the last full survey in 2008.

As usual, mean weights and proportion of larger fish were high as is typical of tidal river bass populations. Just over 8,000 bass fingerlings were stocked in the Nanticoke system during August 2011 at three sites: Bethel Hole, Seaford canoe ramp, and Phillips Landing.