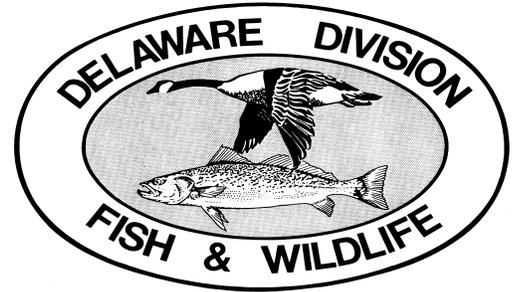


# Tournament News



## Fisheries Section Happenings

Summer 2010

Ponds sampled during spring 2010 included: Blairs, Griffith, Lums, Records, Tubmill, and Wagamons. Typically we do three 300-second timed electrofishing samples at three sections along the shoreline where we collect all fish species, then cruise the remaining shoreline collecting largemouth bass, crappie, redear sunfish (if present), and sometimes bluegill. Our results are tabulated as catch per hour (CPUE) of electrofishing (actual current flow time). Gamefish population characteristics also include calculation of Proportional Stock Density (PSD), mean weight, and proportion of largemouth bass over 15 inches. PSD is the proportion of the stock—for bass all those over 8 inches (stock size)- that are legal length. A high PSD indicates a large portion of the population is 12 inches or larger. PSD-15 is a measure of the portion of bass over 15 inches long. Catch of bass (CPUE) by size group is also calculated. These data are available in the fish tables of the Public Pond Guide online as soon as they are finalized.

Lums Pond had a relatively high catch per hour (99.6 bass) with high PSD (66%) and PSD-15 (45%). In contrast, Tubmill had a catch rate of 182 bass per hour but PSD-15 of 0, i.e. none over 15 inches. Blairs, Griffith, and Wagamons demonstrated fairly good bass populations with moderate catch rates and good population structure. Records Pond was not so good with a catch rate of only 52 bass/hour.

A population estimate was calculated for Griffith Lake. All largemouth bass collected on the first sample day were marked with a hole punched in the tail. Two weeks later, a second sample enabled us to look for these marked fish. Four marked bass were collected on day 2. The resulting population estimate was 308 largemouth bass.

Redear sunfish were collected in both Records and Wagamons Ponds. The Wagamons Pond population appeared to be much more abundant and a number of citation-size redear (over 1 pound) were collected.

White perch were extremely abundant at Lums Pond (nearly 1,400 per hour of electrofishing) and were fairly small (average size about 6 inches). Some active management—thinning of perch—may be required to improve this situation. Lums is also one of the few Delaware ponds (along with Becks and Noxontown) to have both black and white crappie. Ponds in the remainder of the State are limited to black crappie.

The Nanticoke & Broadkill will be sampled this fall.

## Telephone numbers of Interest

For tournament reports:

- Cathy Martin, 302-735-8658 (New number); [catherine.martin@state.de.us](mailto:catherine.martin@state.de.us)
- Jared Jacobini, 302-735-8661 (New number); [jared.jacobini@state.de.us](mailto: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/](http://www.fw.delaware.gov/)

Click on Fisheries, Go to More Info for Anglers, & click on Bass tournament/bass tag reports.

[www.fw.delaware.gov](http://www.fw.delaware.gov)

## Nanticoke River bass

I have heard that some anglers are wondering about the impact of annual fingerling stocking on the Nanticoke River bass population, i.e. that there are too many small fish and fewer large ones (over 15 inches). The tidal bass stocking program was designed in 1995 to supplement poor reproduction years and prevent wide variation in population abundance.

Tidal largemouth bass populations are unique and offer a challenge in management because their reproduction is erratic and natural mortality is high. In contrast, their growth is also high. This presents an opportunity to supplement poor reproduction years to minimize wide variations in abundance.

Since 1989 when the Nanticoke project began, we have found out that strong year classes (i.e. good recruitment) are produced during drought years. Poor year classes occur when we have wet summers (June & July) such as in 1994, 1996, and 2003. During those poor years, 1 in 4 fall fingerlings were stocked bass.

Some of the best recruitment years have been: 1997, 1998, 2002, 2004, and 2007 with 2007 being the strongest year class observed in 20 years of sampling. During the good years, stocked fish represented an average of only 1 in 7 fish (sometimes as few as 1 in 33) of the year class. So the impact of stocking is greatest during poor recruitment years.

Strong year classes like those listed above often impact a fish population for years. The very strong 1997 year class was still evident in 2004 at age 7, while the 2002 year class faded out by age 6. It will be interesting to see how the 2007 year class looks this fall as three year olds.

Largemouth bass in our tidal rivers grow very quickly compared to pond bass but fewer survive to old age (over age 7). In a comparison between the Nanticoke River bass age structure and that of the average pond population, I found that the number of bass older than age 6 differed markedly between the two types of habitats—pond vs. river.

## Construction Update

The new boat ramp in Laurel Park has been finished & is open for business. It offers access to the upper end of Broad Creek and good parking. A small handicapped-accessible fishing pier and parking are also available at the site. Hours that the ramp will be open are limited until the electric service & lights are installed. Check it out, but don't forget that much of the upper Broad is no-wake-speed.



Bass age 7 years and older make up nearly 20% (or 1 in 5 fish) of the pond bass population. In the Nanticoke bass population, only 3% of the bass are age 7 and older. This is significant and explains why bass over 7 lbs are few and far between in most tidal rivers including the Nanticoke.

The faster growth rates of tidal bass compensate in some part for the shorter life span. A 3-year-old pond bass averages 11.5 inches, while in the Nanticoke a 3-year-old bass would be 13.2 inches. However, the fact that very few tidal bass reach age 8 and older certainly limits the possibility of many lunker bass. Each year we get only a very few older bass. In 2008, we collected 662 bass in the Nanticoke system of which only 15 were age 7 or older.

We will be sampling the Nanticoke bass population this fall and will see how the 2010 year class looks; so far the low rainfall would indicate fairly strong but the month of July has yet to come.

## Guides & Rulers

The 2010 Fishing Guides and Rulers are now available and have been delivered to all license sales agents. Advertisements were included in the Guide for the first time and caused some glitches in the process. This was done in an effort to cut our printing costs.

If you have an idea for information that you would like to see included in the Guide, please contact me ([catherine.martin@state.de.us](mailto:catherine.martin@state.de.us)). I hope you enjoy the photo gallery we included. We are always looking for good quality fishing photos in a digital format. If you have any you would like to submit, just let me know or send via email with "fish photo" in subject line.

In 2009, we put a note in the Guide asking anyone who finds a dead sturgeon to let us know. This has proven to be an excellent source of information for us. We scan for PIT

tags, check size and sex (on freshly dead ones), and determine cause of death. The help of anglers has proven invaluable in this endeavor; six sturgeon have been reported this year so far.

The rulers are always a point of contention with anglers because they are not available until late spring. The problem is that many of the marine fish species size and creel limits change frequently and are based on coastal landings.

The limits must be finalized to correspond with recommendations by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. The process is a lengthy one and does not start until the previous year's landings have been tabulated. We get the ruler designed and manufactured as quickly as possible. I hope you find it useful.

## Invasive Species Updates

This has been a busy spring as far as invasive species go. We are always busy applying herbicide to control hydrilla—the aquatic invasive that affects most of our Sussex County ponds and portions of the Nanticoke River. This year, ponds treated between mid-May and early June were: Millsboro, Griffith, Blairs, Wagamons, and Concord Ponds.

Mitten crab calls started coming in fast and furious during spring also. The first was reported on April 26, but as of June 10, 13 have been caught—all by commercial crab potters. One of our concerns is the fact that juveniles migrate into freshwater streams and build burrows. This often causes erosion of the banks and siltation in downstream freshwater areas. The adults eat a variety of aquatic plants and animals so they can affect the native aquatic food web with unknown

consequences.

Then we got a report (with photos) of flathead catfish in the Brandywine. The report spurred some fisheries sampling. The 16-ft pond and tidal river electrofisher was used to sample the holes among the boulders just below the first dam on the Brandywine. No flatheads were seen or dipped but many channel catfish were found. American shad, river herring, redbreast sunfish, smallmouth bass, white sucker, and largemouth bass were observed. Then we used the big striped bass electrofisher in the area of the Brandywine below the Wilmington Waterworks where industrial buildings line the shores. A deep area (30 ft or so) was sampled but no flatheads were found. A third specimen was taken by anglers just last week. If you happen to catch either flatheads or mitten crabs, do not release them, **please call us at 302-735-8650.**



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Fisheries Section  
4876 Hay Point Landing Rd  
Smyrna De 19977

On the Web

[www.fw.delaware.gov/](http://www.fw.delaware.gov/)

## Striped Bass with transmitters By Matt Fisher

This spring, the Division placed 25 transmitters in slot size striped bass (20-26") as part of an evaluation of the July and August recreational slot limit fishery begun in 2009. These transmitters emit a coded signal that is recorded by receivers. Each transmitter emits a unique code that allows identification of the fish carrying the transmitter. The current receiver array throughout the bay, river and near ocean (made up of waterproof hydrophone computers hung on Coast Guard buoys) logs detections of the fish which are downloaded every month. For the next 8 years, these downloaded data from the transmitter striped bass will tell us about residency and movements within the bay. Tag reports from anglers suggest that most slot-size males stay in the bay and females leave the bay. The Division wants to be sure that this is occurring because

the slot is intended to target plentiful males and not reduce the spawning biomass, which is based on pounds of females.

The Division asks that if you catch a tagged striped bass to please call the number written on the tag. If that number is unreadable you can call the Division's fish tag hotline 302-653-2887 and a biologist will assist you in making a report.



Fisheries technician Jared Jacobini making an incision in the side of a slot-size striped bass prior to inserting a transmitter.

