



WISCONSIN DNR
FISHERIES INFORMATION SHEET

LAKE: WHEELER

COUNTY: OCONTO

YEAR: 2008

The Department of Natural Resources surveyed Wheeler Lake, Oconto County, from April 28 through May 27, 2008, to determine the health of its fishery. The primary objective of the survey was to estimate the abundance of the lake's walleye population. Wheeler Lake is a clear-water seepage lake with predominantly gravel and rubble substrate and a low-density walleye population. It has a surface area of 293 acres, 4.6 miles of shoreline and a maximum depth of 35 feet.

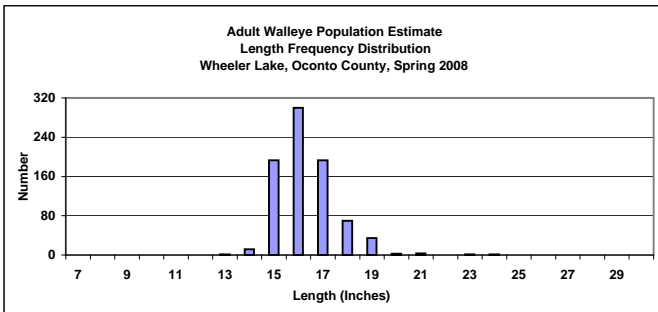


Figure 1. Length frequency distribution of 811 adult* walleye estimated to be in Wheeler Lake, Oconto County, based on a spring 2008 survey.

* Note: Adult walleye are defined as all sexable walleye and walleye of unknown sex >= 15 inches long.

Walleye

The Peshtigo crew conducted a mark-recapture survey of Wheeler Lake's adult* walleye population from April 28 through May 7, 2008. They captured and marked (fin clipped) 314 adult walleye in 10 days of fyke netting. The Peshtigo crew sampled Wheeler Lake with an electro-fishing boat on May 7th and captured 32 adult walleye. Nearly 38% (12 of 32) of those walleye bore the fin clip given during fyke netting.

Based on those results, we estimated that Wheeler Lake is home to 811 adult walleye (2.8/acre). Approximately 98% (797 of 811) of adult walleye were 15 inches long or larger. The largest walleye captured was a 24.2-inch female.

Smallmouth Bass

Smallmouth bass were not a primary target of the survey of Wheeler Lake. Most sampling occurred prior to peak smallmouth spawning. However, the Peshtigo crew did capture 66 smallmouth bass, 8-inches or larger, during their fyke netting and electro-fishing sampling. Four of those smallmouth were 14 inches long or larger. The largest smallmouth they captured was 16.4 inches long.

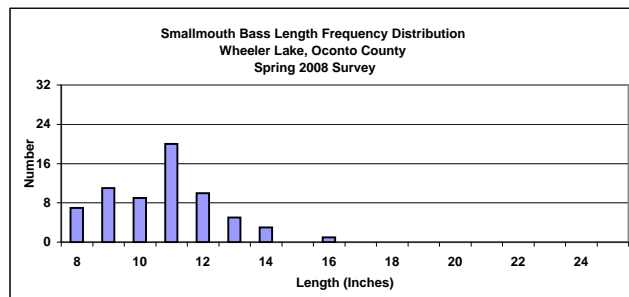


Figure 2. Length frequency distribution of 66 smallmouth bass >= 8" captured during a fisheries survey of Wheeler Lake, Oconto County, in spring 2008.

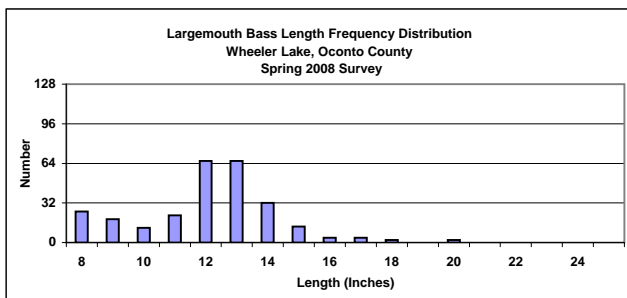


Figure 3. Length frequency distribution of 267 largemouth bass >= 8" captured during a fisheries survey of Wheeler Lake, Oconto County, in spring 2008.

Largemouth Bass

Largemouth bass were also an incidental catch in the survey of Wheeler Lake. The Peshtigo crew captured 267 largemouth bass, 8 inches or larger, during their fyke netting and electro-fishing sampling. Approximately 21% (57 of 267) of those largemouth were over 14 inches long. The biggest largemouth bass they captured was 20.1 inches long.

Northern Pike

The Peshtigo crew captured 122 adult* northern pike in fyke nets fished in Wheeler Lake from April 28 through May 7, 2008. Approximately 85% (104 of 122) of adult northern pike they captured were less than 26 inches long.

* Note: Adult northern pike are defined as all sexable northern pike and northern pike of unknown sex \geq 12 inches long.

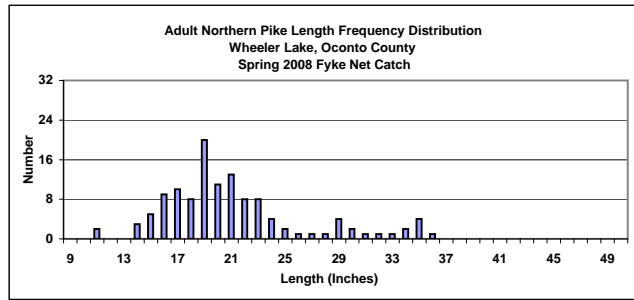


Figure 4. Length frequency distribution of 122 adult* northern pike captured in fyke nets during a fisheries survey of Wheeler Lake, Oconto County, in spring 2008.

Other Species

The Peshtigo crew captured seven species of fish in their fyke netting and electro-fishing sampling of Wheeler Lake in addition to the game fish mentioned above. White sucker were the most common of those seven species. The crew also caught moderate numbers of black crappie, bluegill, rock bass, yellow bullhead, yellow perch and one green sunfish. In-water sampling will conclude with a survey of young-of-year walleye in fall 2008.

We are also conducting a creel (angler harvest) survey on Wheeler Lake this year. Creel clerk Neal Lowery will count and interview anglers and examine their catch throughout the 2008 open-water fishing season.

Table 1. General Fishing Regulations for Wheeler Lake, Oconto County, 2008

FISH SPECIES	OPEN SEASON	DAILY LIMIT	MINIMUM LENGTH
Walleye	May 3 - March 1	3	15 inches
Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass	May 3 - June 20 (C&R) June 21 - March 1 (Harvest)	None 5 in total	14 inches
Muskellunge	May 24 - Nov. 30	1	34 inches
Northern Pike	May 3 - March 1	5	None

A brief summary of selected fishing regulations for Wheeler Lake is included above (Table 1). While the regulatory information provided was current at the time the surveys were conducted, it is not comprehensive and should not be used as a substitute for the current fishing regulation pamphlet. You may obtain a copy of current fishing regulations when you purchase your fishing license, or download a copy from our web site at:

<http://www.dnr.wi.gov/fish/regulations/>

This report is interim only; data and findings should not be considered final. Results of creel surveys should be available by June 2009. If you are interested in a summary of the creel survey or want an update on this year's fyke netting and electro-fishing survey results, contact:

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