



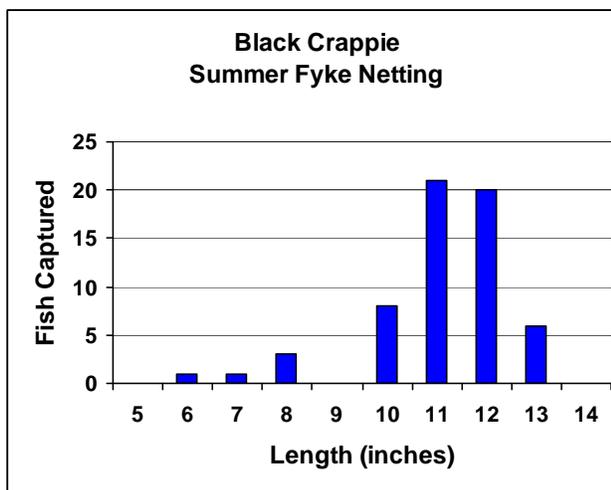
Summer Panfish Survey Summary Gile Flowage, Iron County, 2011

The Mercer DNR Fisheries Management Team conducted a fyke netting survey on the Gile Flowage during July 6-8, 2011 as part of our baseline monitoring program. Six nets were set overnight, for three nights, resulting in 18 net-nights of effort. Primary target species were bluegill, black crappie, and pumpkinseed sunfish. An electrofishing survey conducted by the Mercer team in mid May documented the status of smallmouth bass (summarized in a separate survey summary) but provided a poor sample of panfish. We believe this netting survey provides better insight into the relative number and sizes of panfish in the Gile Flowage. Quality, preferred, and memorable sizes referenced in this summary are based on standard proportions of world record lengths developed for each species by the American Fisheries Society.

Black Crappie



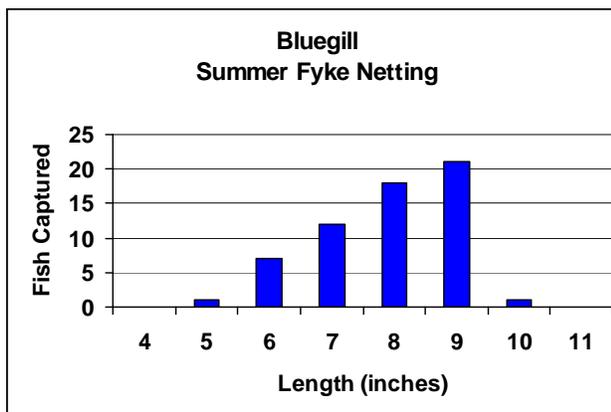
Captured 3.3 per net-night $\geq 5''$	
Quality Size $\geq 8''$	97%
Preferred Size $\geq 10''$	92%
Memorable Size $\geq 12''$	43%



Bluegill



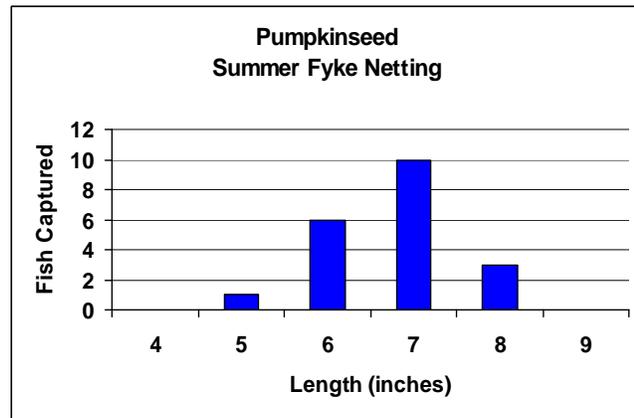
Captured 3.3 per net-night $\geq 3''$	
Quality Size $\geq 6''$	98%
Preferred Size $\geq 8''$	67%



Pumpkinseed



Captured 1.1 per net-night $\geq 3''$	
Quality Size $\geq 6''$	95%
Preferred Size $\geq 8''$	15%



Summary of Results

Fyke nets were set throughout the Flowage in habitats likely to be used by panfish species in early summer (e.g. shallow water with aquatic vegetation). Surface water temperatures were typically in the mid 70s, and water levels appeared normal. Black crappie and pumpkinseed had completed all spawning activity by the time of our survey, and mature bluegills would have finished their earliest bouts of spawning. Despite this fact, we believe that our sample is representative of the size distributions of spawning stocks present for these species.

Black Crappie

Average catch rate of black crappie was low (3.3 per net-night), but the size structure of the population was very good. Of the 60 crappies captured, 55 (92%) were ≥ 10 inches, and 26 (43%) were also ≥ 12 inches. The catch rate of black crappie was slightly below the target range (5-10 per net-night) identified in the 2005 Gile Flowage Fishery Management Plan. The proportion of black crappie ≥ 10 inches (92%) exceeded the Management Plan target range of 30-50%.

Bluegill

Average catch rate of bluegill was low (3.3 per net-night), but the size structure of the population was very good. Of the 60 bluegills captured, 52 (87%) were ≥ 7 inches, and 40 (67%) were also ≥ 8 inches. As with crappie, the bluegill catch rate was below the Management Plan target range (5-15 per net-night), but size structure (≥ 8 inches) was above the target range of 40-60%.

Pumpkinseed Sunfish

Average catch rate of pumpkinseed was also low at 1.1 per net-night. Of the 20 fish sampled, however, 13 (65%) were over 7 inches long.

Yellow Perch

Only two perch (10.4 and 12.9 inches in length) were captured during this survey. Due to the early nature of yellow perch spawning behavior (shortly after ice-out), we are planning an early-spring netting survey in 2012 to get a more representative look at the perch population.

Conclusions

Based on results of this and previous surveys, it seems there is a relatively low-density, but high-quality panfish fishery in the Gile Flowage. This is expected due to the fact that the Gile Flowage is a predator-dominant system with probable high rates of predation on young panfish. Walleye (effective predators of young panfish) recruitment in the Gile Flowage has been documented to be relatively high. Therefore, as long as walleye recruitment remains high, we will expect the panfish fishery to continue to exhibit the characteristics observed here. Although catch rates for crappie and bluegill are below Management Plan target ranges, a couple more surveys should be completed before adjusting objectives and/or management strategies. Anglers will most likely have to spend some time if trying to find numbers of panfish, but they should be rewarded for their efforts with quality-size fish.

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