



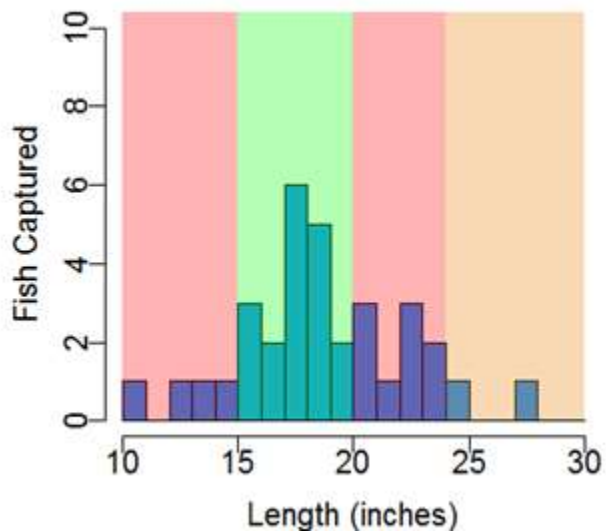
Spring Fisheries Survey Summary Lake Winter, Sawyer County, 2016

The Hayward DNR Fisheries Management Team conducted a fyke netting survey on Lake Winter (Price Flowage) from April 11-13, 2016 to assess the adult walleye, muskellunge, northern pike, and black crappie populations in the lake. Six nets were set overnight for two nights which resulted in 11 total net-nights of effort (one net was compromised by wind and waves). An electrofishing survey conducted on May 16, 2016 documented the status of bluegill, and non-game species. Four miles of shoreline were shocked. 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.

Walleye (Adult)



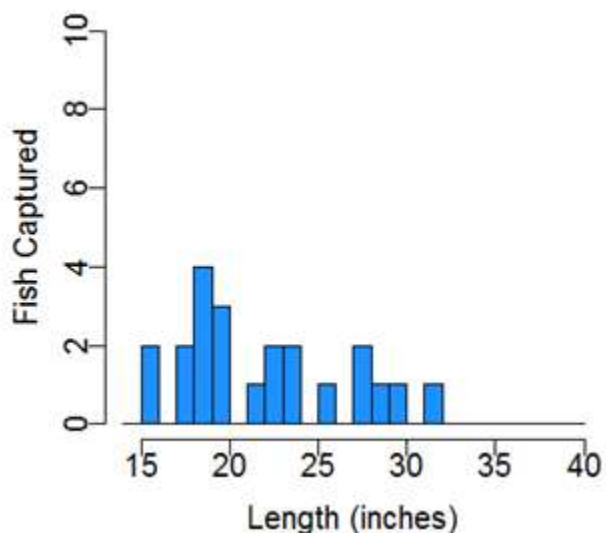
Captured 3 per net-night \geq 10 inches	
Quality Size \geq 15"	88%
Preferred Size \geq 20"	33%



Northern Pike



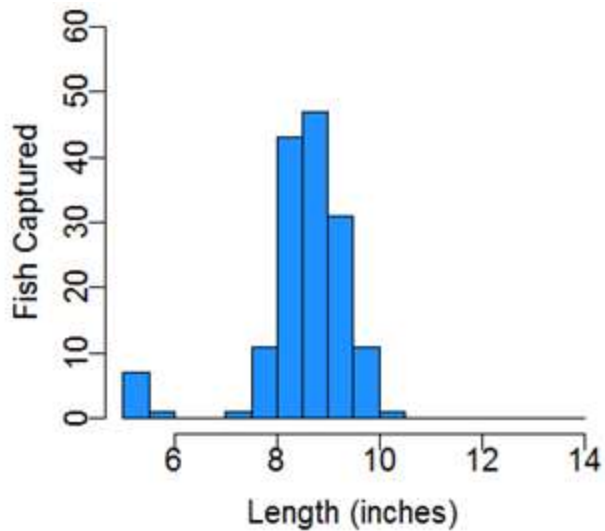
Captured 2 per net-night \geq 14 inches	
Quality Size \geq 21"	50%
Preferred Size \geq 28"	14%



Black Crappie



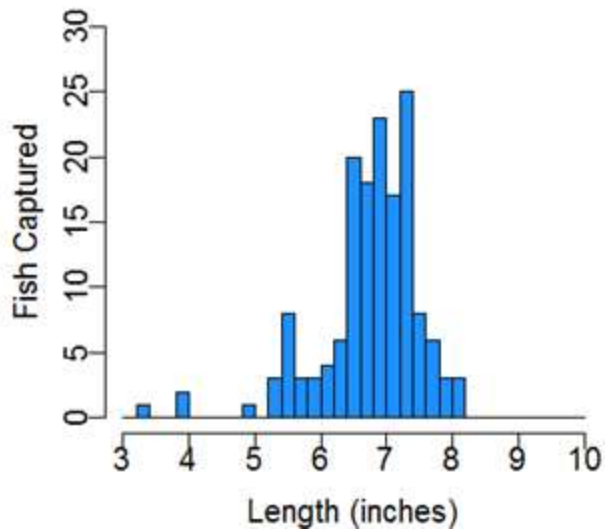
Captured 14 per net-night ≥ 5 inches	
Quality Size ≥ 8 "	87%
Preferred Size ≥ 10 "	1%



Bluegill



Captured 134 per mile ≥ 3 inches	
Quality Size ≥ 6 "	86%
Preferred Size ≥ 8 "	2%



Summary of Results

Lake Winter is a 500 acre impoundment of the Brunet River in eastern Sawyer County with a maximum depth of 22 feet. The water in Lake Winter is heavily stained. Aquatic plant growth is limited to the shallowest parts of the lake, and rocks and stumps are found throughout the lake.

Lake Winter is a large, stained-water flowage that was formed by impounding the Brunet River. As an impoundment, much of the fish community is influenced by the river that flows through. Sucker and redhorse species are common in the lake. There is an abundance of woody habitat in the form of stumps and flooded timber.

Walleye in Lake Winter do not reproduce at a high rate. Most walleye seen in this survey are likely the result of private stocking events by the Winter Lakes Alliance and Walleyes for Northwest Wisconsin in recent years. The walleye population in the lake in 2016 is considerably healthier than the last survey in 2011. Abundance is much higher in 2016 than in 2011 (only 2 total walleye were captured in 2011 despite more netting effort, 33 were captured in 2016) and there are multiple year classes present in the lake. The DNR will continue to support private walleye stocking efforts in Lake Winter given their recent success.

Northern pike are relatively low density in Lake Winter, likely a result of stained water which pike do not prefer. Size structure of pike is relatively average with only 50% of the population being over 21 inches and few larger fish being present.

We captured only 2 muskellunge in 2016 during our survey of Lake Winter. Our netting survey was not well timed to capture muskellunge. Conclusions about the population should not be made based on this survey.

Black crappie were captured at a moderate rate of 14 per net night. Size was fair with most fish in the 8-10 inch range. Crappie of that size are of some interest to anglers, but the preference is typically for crappie over 10 inches. Lake Winter was recently selected to have a reduced bag limit for panfish (25 per day but no more than 10 of any species) as a part of a statewide experiment. Based on success of reduced bag limits on other lakes in Wisconsin and other states it is a reasonable expectation that size of crappie and other panfish may improve in Lake Winter over time.

Bluegill were captured at a relatively high rate, but size structure had improved considerably since the last survey in 2011. During the 2011 survey only 3% of all bluegill captured were over 7 inches (a size where anglers start to consider harvesting bluegill). In 2016, 40% of the bluegill in our survey were over 7 inches and a few even exceeded 8 inches. It is unclear what is driving the change in size structure. But it is possible the increased density of walleye may be having a positive effect by providing a stable predator population and preventing overcrowding of bluegill. The reduced bag limit has the potential to further improve size structure.



Volunteer Mike Cookas (L) and fisheries technician Russ Warwick with a pair of walleye from Lake Winter during the 2016 netting survey. Photo by Max Wolter.

Report by Max Wolter – Fisheries Biologist, Sawyer County
Survey conducted by Max Wolter, Russ Warwick (Fisheries Technician), and Scott Braden (Fisheries Technician)

Special thanks to volunteer Mike Cookas

Reviewed and Approved by Scott Toshner – Acting Supervisor

