The WDNR surveyed two large waterfowl management waterbodies (2990 total acres) in the Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge (TNWF) located in Pool 6 of the Mississippi River during August of 2019 using electro fishing equipment to determine the health of the fishery. A total of 423 fish were collected with 18 species represented. Gizzard shad was the most abundant followed by yellow perch, brown bullhead, and bigmouth buffalo.

Similar sampling was done in from 1991 through 2001. Since then, average yellow perch sizes increased by almost one inch to 5.8 inches. Brown bullhead (11.3 inches), increased 3.1 inches. Compared to other 29 other Mississippi River surveys from pools 4 through 10, Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge yellow perch were the same as four and smaller than twenty-four.

TNWR had a relatively low population density of gamefishes. Abundance of combined bluegill, black crappie, largemouth bass, northern pike, pumpkinseed, and yellow perch (5.2 per hour) ranked near the bottom tier among values for all other similar Mississippi River surveys which averaged 37.7 per hour. Similarly, young-of-the-year (fish born in 2019) combined gamefishes were well below other similar surveys. TNWR
brown and black bullhead abundance (6.8 per hour combined) was higher than all other similar surveys which averaged 0.3 per hour. TNWR has the highest concentration on the Mississippi River bordering Wisconsin. Prior to about 1985, spring bullhead fishing was very popular and has since severely declined. The refuge is the only remaining place where bullhead fishing may be worthwhile on the Mississippi River. Sizes are good. We found fish up to 14 inches, and 12 inches was the most common length category.

Yellow perch abundance (3.4 per hour) was lower than 13 other surveys and the same as 24. The average of these 37 other surveys was 7.0 per hour.

Compared to other recent Mississippi River surveys, the TNWR has a relatively poor abundance of game fish. Yellow perch abundance was low, and average size was relatively small. Reproduction of game fishes appears to be low as well. Abundance of game fish less than one-year-old was low suggesting poor reproduction of survival. Abundance of brown and black bullhead are very high compared to other Mississippi River locations.

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