

Swanson Reservoir

2019 Survey Summary – GAME



PARKS –

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Fish populations are sampled each fall at Swanson Reservoir using gill nets, a method commonly used to sample fish such as walleye, white bass, channel catfish and hybrid striped bass. Gill nets are set on approximately the same dates and locations each year to reduce variability. Environmental factors can play a strong role in catch data. Due to this variability, biologists look at trends over time when making management decisions.

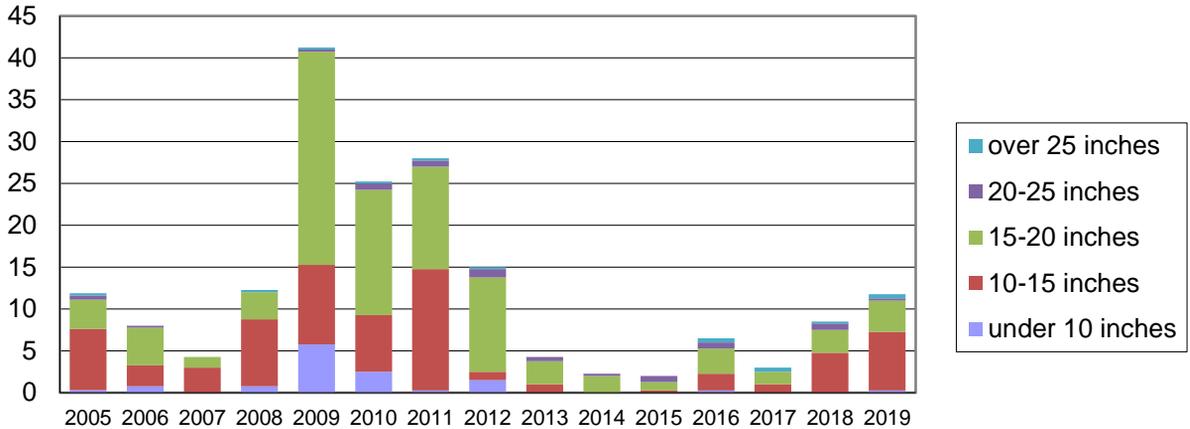
Biologists sampled 11 walleye per net in 2019 at Swanson. This was the second year in a row that an increase in walleye was observed in net catch suggesting a rebounding population. Water levels in 2013 and 2014 decreased substantially and seemed to negatively impact the walleye fishery. Fortunately, water levels have been trending up since 2015 providing quality habitat for age-0 fish. In an attempt to improve the current walleye fishery, 13,900 advanced walleye were stocked in the fall of 2018. These fish were approximately 8 inches long when stocked and are more expensive and labor intensive than our normal walleye fingerlings. Over 30% of fish sampled in 2019 were age-1 fishing suggesting the early returns on advanced walleye are positive and should help continue to boost walleye numbers in the coming years. 14,000 advanced 8 inch walleye are requested for Fall 2020.

After observing 20 wiper per net in 2018, wiper stockings were suspended for 2019 to avoid an over abundance. Biologists sampled 6 wiper per net in 2019, a much closer number to our management objective at Swanson. Wiper are managed as a trophy species focused more on size structure than catch rate. In 2020, personnel will return to current plans of alternating between fingerling and fry wiper stockings. Currently, there are 17,500 fingerling wiper requested for late spring 2020.

Channel catfish numbers were low in 2019 with biologists only catching 1 per net. Several factors could have went into such a low catch compared to pervious years. Personnel will continue to monitor channel catfish and adjust stocking plans accordingly. Blue catfish numbers in 2019 were much better with 11 sampled per net, the highest since 2014. There are 8,750 10 inch blue catfish requested for Fall 2020.

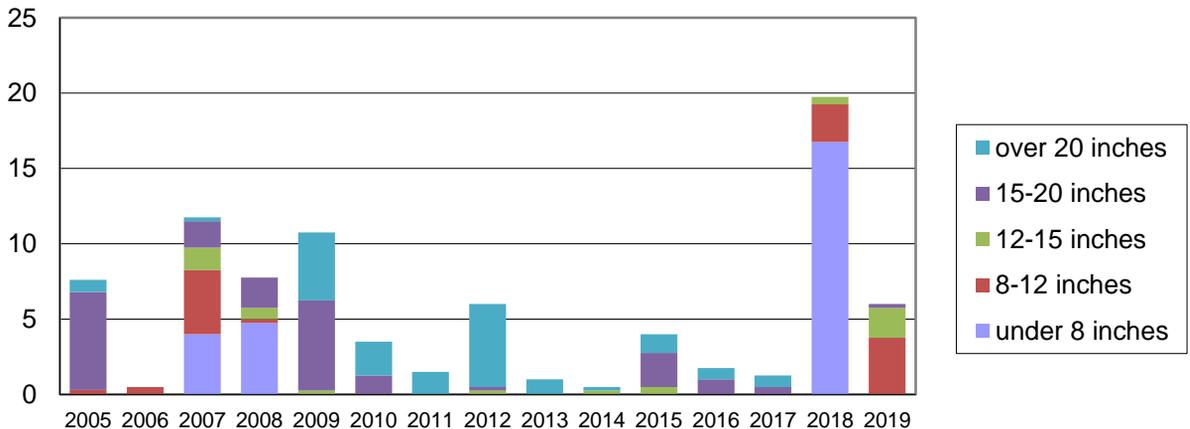
The following graphs show the average number of fish caught per net and the relative abundance of fish within several length categories. The text provides a brief explanation of the information shown in the graphs.

Walleye Catch Per Unit Effort



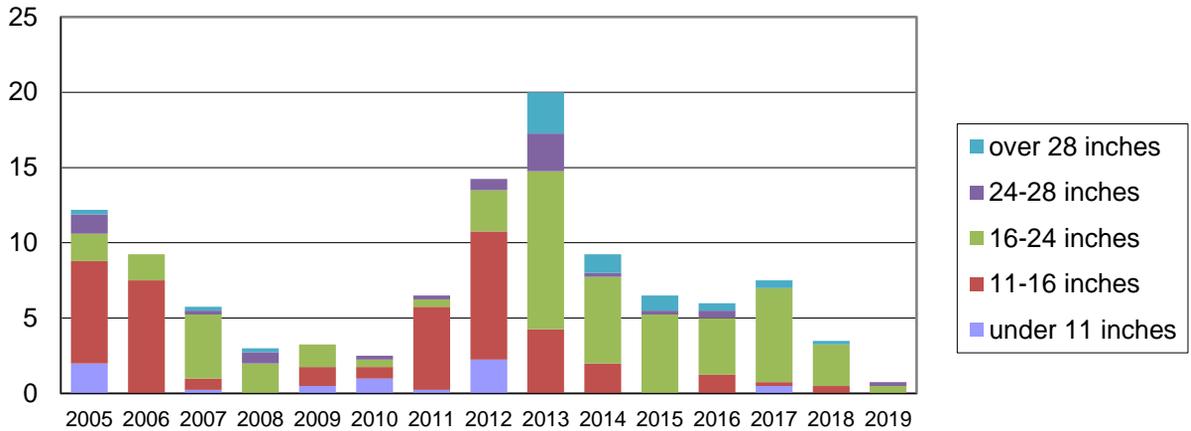
Biologists sampled 11 walleye per net in 2019. This is the second year in a row that walleye catch numbers increased suggesting a rebounding population. Over 30% of walleye sampled in 2019 were age-1 fish. Overall, length frequency shows a good distribution, with trophy fish available for anglers to target in 2020. The number of age-1 fish is a positive sign that advanced 8 inch walleye stockings could boost overall numbers in the coming years. Stocking strategies at Swanson will now consist of alternate years between advanced walleye fingerlings and fry stockings. Fry stockings were selected to compliment advanced fingerling stockings due to recent success observed at Harlan County Reservoir. There are 14,000 advanced walleye fingerlings requested for Fall 2020.

Wiper Catch Per Unit Effort



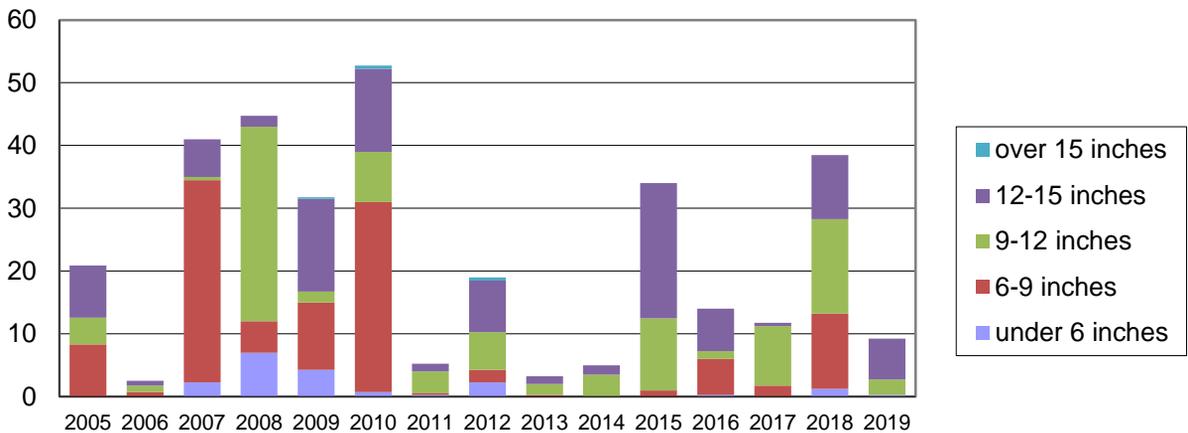
Wiper numbers have been variable at Swanson due to inconsistent stocking availability and changing stocking requests. After sampling 20 wipers per net in 2018, no stocking was requested in 2019 to avoid over abundance. Catch numbers in 2019 dipped to 6 fish per net. Most fish sampled fell in the age-1 year class from the fry stocking in 2018. Some of these fish were already pushing 12 inches in length which will provide good opportunities for anglers in the coming years. Biologists will continue to monitor the population and reduce stockings if needed to prevent an overpopulation of wipers. Currently, there are 17,500 wiper fingerlings requested for 2020 with a plan to return to a fry stocking in 2021.

Channel Catfish Catch Per Unit Effort



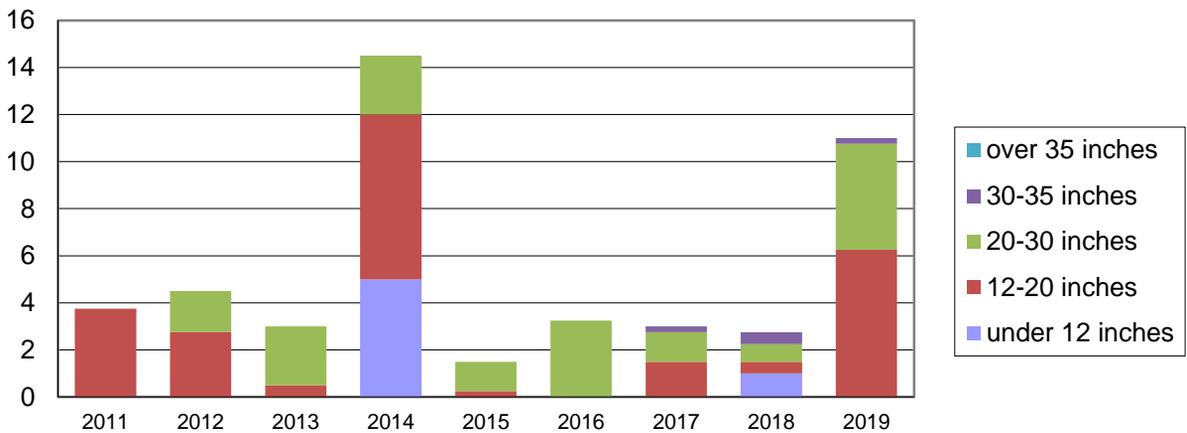
Biologists again saw a decline in channel catfish numbers in 2019, only sampling 1 per net. This is the second year in a row that numbers have appeared to decline. Due to sampling variation associated with channel catfish, it is unclear what could be causing the low catch numbers. Biologists will continue to monitor the situation in 2020 and will adjust stocking plans if deemed necessary moving forward. It is unlikely at this point that there is a major shift in catfish numbers. Anglers seeking catfish should have success comparable to the last few years at Swanson. There are 9,000 advanced channel catfish requested for fall 2020.

White Bass Catch Per Unit Effort



Biologists sampled 9 white bass per net in 2019. This was a decrease from 38 per net sampled in 2018. Due to the boom or bust nature of white bass recruitment there is not much concern in the variability at this time. However, 2019 saw the majority of fish being over 12 inches providing a positive outlook for white bass fishing in 2020. Anglers should enjoy good success in 2020 with the opportunity to catch larger white bass than recent years.

Blue Catfish Catch Per Unit Effort



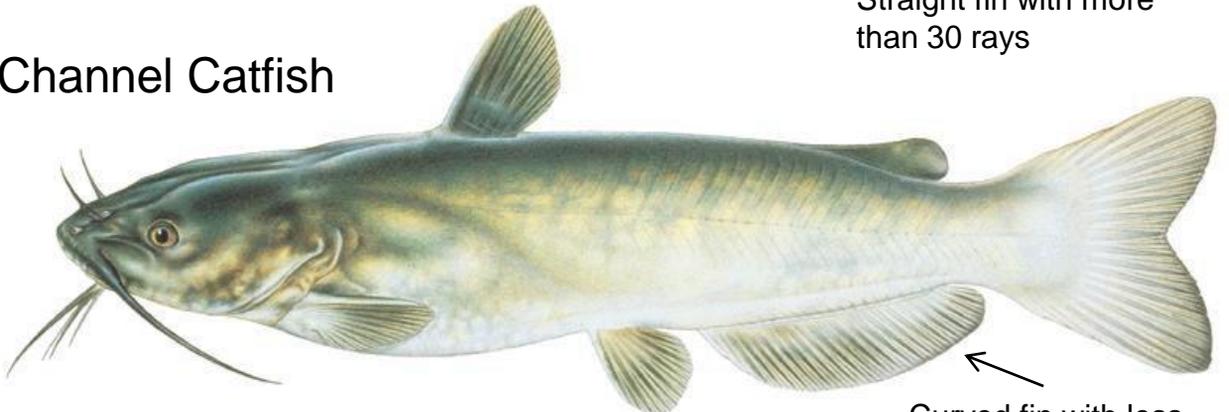
Blue catfish were introduced to Swanson in 2008, in an effort to provide a unique trophy fishing opportunity for catfish anglers in Southwest Nebraska. Blue catfish have been stocked regularly in recent years with the hope of establishing a trophy fishery in Swanson. In 2019, biologists saw a spike in catch numbers with 11 fish per net. Catch included a few fish over 30 inches that are beginning to approach more of a trophy size for anglers. It is important that anglers take care to positively identify catfish that are harvested because blue catfish are managed under different regulations than channel catfish. Due to natural variation in color, catfish species are most easily identified based on the anal fin.

Blue Catfish



Straight fin with more than 30 rays

Channel Catfish



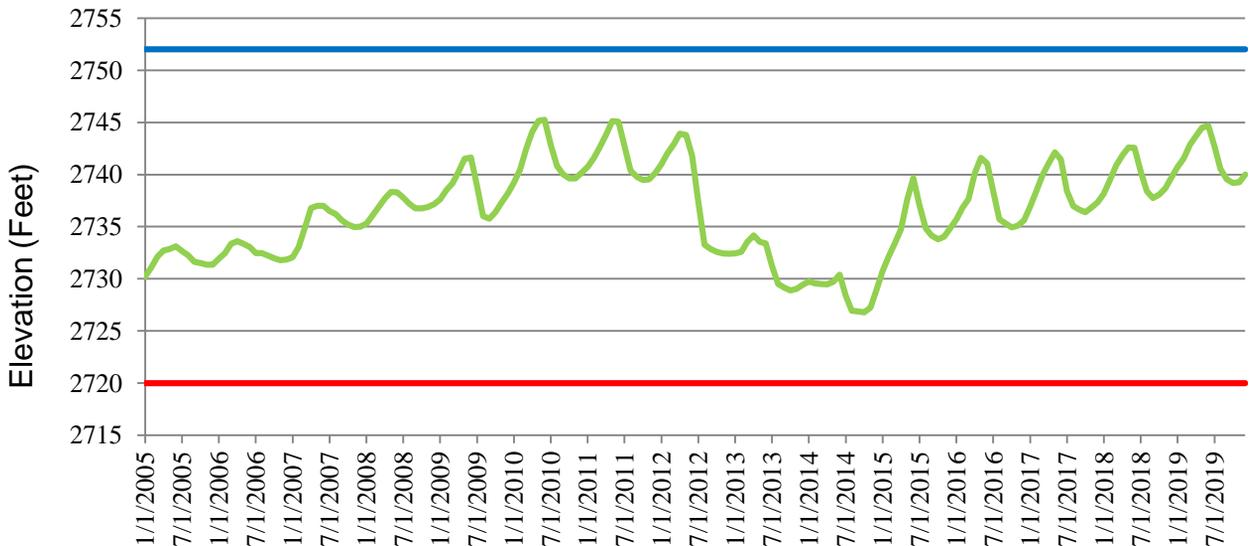
Curved fin with less than 30 rays

Swanson Reservoir Fish Stocking Summary

Year	Walleye	Wiper	Channel Catfish	Blue Catfish	Yellow Perch
2019	2,200,000 (fry)				
2018	13,910 (7")	500,000 (fry)		2,866 (12")	
2017	323,476 (1.5")	16,135 (1.5")	16,176 (5")	4,450 (13")	187,789 (1.5")
2016	3,547,800 (fry)			4,900 (7.5")	
2015	106,925 (1.5")		12,537 (5")	3,019 (10")	

Above is a table of fish stockings for the last 5 years at Swanson Reservoir. The species stocked, number stocked, and fish size are presented in the table. Multiple species are stocked annually at Swanson and a comprehensive database of fish stockings can be found at the Nebraska Game and Parks website or by following the link below. [Stocking Database](#)

End of Month Elevation, Swanson Reservoir 2005-2019



Water elevation is a constant management concern at Swanson Reservoir. The dark blue line indicates the top of the active conservation elevation, the green line indicates the end of month reservoir elevation, and the red line indicates the top of the inactive pool. More detailed information and current reservoir elevation data can be obtained by following this link: [Current Elevation](#)



STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!™

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Aquatic invasive species (AIS) have reached Nebraska! Zebra mussels are currently established in Lewis and Clark Reservoir, Offutt AFB pond, and the Missouri River. Anglers and boaters should be on the look out for personnel performing boat inspections and decontaminations statewide. Follow the link: [Nebraska Invasive Species Program](#) or call 402-472-3133 to report any possible AIS sightings or for more information about AIS in Nebraska.

Preventative Steps and Regulations

- It is unlawful for a boat to arrive at or leave any body of water in Nebraska with water other than from a domestic source except for fire-fighting purposes. Drain water before leaving an area
- It is unlawful from a boat or trailer to arrive or leave a launch area with any aquatic vegetation for that waterbody still attached. Boat blinds cannot use plants listed as invasive species or noxious weeds
- Wash mud off waders. Felt-sole waders are not allowed

Nonresident Aquatic Invasive Species Stamp

Motorized watercraft registered outside Nebraska are required to purchase and display the Aquatic Invasive Species Stamp before launching from any Nebraska boat ramp. Stamps must be affixed on the starboard side toward the rear of the boat above the waterline. The fee for each stamp is \$15 dollars and includes the \$2 issuing fee. Stamps can be purchased online or at Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Offices.



Left: Zebra Mussel
Right: Quagga Mussel