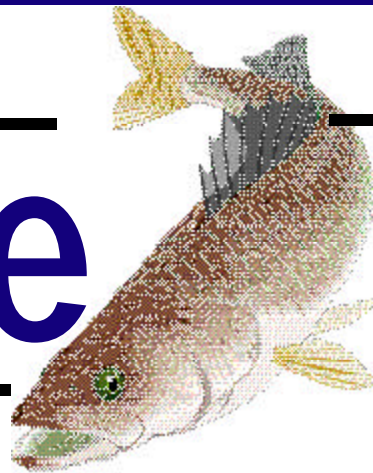


Lake Erie

Walleye



Spring 2002
Vol. 8 No. 1

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The Complete Fishing Scene on Lake Erie

Spring 2002

- Erie "Eyes" Made Simple & Fun
- Spring Walleye Success
- 2002 Fishing Forecast
- "Ice-Out" Walleyes
- Springtime River 'Eyes
- Steelhead: Lake Erie's Best Kept Secret
- Lake Erie Smallmouths: Part II
- Eastern Lake Erie Forecast



Plus

*Walleye News & Fact File
2002 Walleye Tournaments
Charter Fishing Information*

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Anytime is the right time for fishing Lake Erie for trophy walleyes. Techniques and locations will change with the season. Captain David Adams gives hows, wheres and whens on catching Lake Erie Walleye (see page 6)

It's late February at this writing and I'm getting (like most fishermen) a little restless and wish the days would go by a little faster to inch us closer to spring. There's really only so much you can do, waiting. Sure, we spend time spooling reels, sharpening some hooks, sorting through the old tackle box, attending the sport and boat shows. Just killing time, I guess.

Mother Nature continues to tease us. Last Sunday the temperature nearly reached 70 degrees and today (three days later) it plummeted back down in the 20's and there's a dusting of snow. That's a REALITY CHECK! Spring really is just around the corner, though.

By most accounts, Lake Erie fishing in 2002 is predicted to match last year's excellent season. Walleye fishermen in the western and central basins can look forward to catching many 17-18 inch three year old fish from the excellent 1999 walleye hatch along with larger 22-26 inch fish from the strong 1996 hatch.

Walleye anglers in the eastern basin are hoping to rebound from a not-so-good walleye season last year. These anglers rely on the eastward migration of walleye from the western and central basins of Lake Erie. This migration varies widely from year-to-year and is dependent on the pattern of the forage food base. Last year the walleyes didn't migrate in numbers seen in previous years. Eastern anglers are looking forward to seeing more walleyes in their nets this year.

See Editor, Page 5

Lake Erie Walleye

Rick Kubb, Editor/Publisher

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Walleye News and Fact File

Spring 2001 Hatches Above Average

Bottom trawl assessments show the spring 2001 hatches of walleye and yellow perch are well above long-term averages, with walleye abundance in the top third of the series, and yellow perch abundance the second best in the series (behind the 1996 hatch). However, few walleye and yellow perch from the 2000 hatch were present in the catch as expected. Good numbers of walleye and yellow perch from the 1999 hatches were also present in both August and fall netting surveys.

August bottom trawling surveys showed average to slightly above average numbers of forage fish with a strong showing from gizzard shad and emerald shiners and poor catches of smelt and spottail shiners.

Round Gobies Making Headway Into Pennsylvania Lake Erie Streams; Elk Creek Has Highest Density

The round goby, an aggressive, non-native species of fish introduced to the Great Lakes in the early 1990s by the ballast water of ocean-going vessels, has invaded the state's tributaries of Lake Erie according to Pennsylvania Sea Grant-supported research by a Gannon University biologist.

After collecting samples from six tributaries that feed Lake Erie, Dr. Edward C. Phillips found that the goby population was most dense in Elk Creek, where just over 137 gobies were collected per hour of electrofishing. Where present, gobies made up 17.1 percent of the fish present in Elk Creek, and were found as far as 1.4 miles from the mouth of the creek.

Round gobies had their second greatest density in Twenty Mile Creek, where almost 104 round gobies were collected in an hour. Gobies made up 30.4 percent of the fish collected, but were found no farther than four-tenths of a mile upstream, where a waterfall blocks further invasion.

The third greatest density of round gobies was found in Walnut Creek. Gobies made up 12.7 percent of the fish collected, and were found as far as three-tenths of a mile upstream. Gobies comprised only 1.5 percent of the fish found in Sixteen Mile Creek, primarily because fish were collected only from a pool just above the mouth.

No gobies were found in Twelve Mile Creek or Conneaut Creek. And no round gobies were collected in upstream areas of the sampled streams, indicating that thus far there has been no bait-bucket transfer of the fish.

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Steelhead Program Expands Vermilion River to receive 55,000 stocked steelhead

Due to the success of the steelhead trout program in Conneaut Creek and the Rocky, Grand and Chagrin Rivers, the Division of Wildlife is expanding the stocking program to include the Vermilion River. The Vermilion River is located about 35 miles west of Cleveland.

“Angler satisfaction with Ohio’s steelhead fishery continues to grow, as does our commitment to the stocking program,” said Gary Isbell, fisheries executive administrator for the Wildlife.

“As more and more anglers seek out this exciting steelhead fishery, we wanted to provide additional fishing opportunities. Given biological factors and access opportunities, the Vermilion River was our best option,” he said.

The first good run of stocked fish in the Vermilion should occur in the fall of 2003. By then, stream anglers can expect an average steelhead trout to be 25 inches long and weigh five to six pounds.

The Lorain County Metro Parks, Ohio Central basin Steelheaders, North Coast Fly Fishers, and Pennsylvania Boat and Fish Commission were consulted in regards to the proposed changes for the steelhead program.

As part of both state’s increased focus on the steelhead fishery, an agreement has been secured with Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission to cooperatively stock steelhead in Conneaut Creek. Each agency will annually stock up to 75,000 yearling steelhead into Conneaut Creek.

“Conneaut Creek offers good public access and water quality,” said Kevin Kayle, supervisor of ODNR’s Fairport Harbor Fisheries Research Station. “We met with Pennsylvania fisheries biologists and decided that by working together, we could improve fishing opportunities for both Ohio and Pennsylvania anglers. And, Pennsylvania’s contribution toward stocking the Conneaut will make it much easier for us to begin placing fish in the Vermilion River.”

To provide opportunities for a quality Vermilion River steelhead fishery, stocking numbers in three other Ohio steelhead streams will be slightly adjusted. This spring, the Grand, Chagrin and Rocky Rivers will each receive 90,000 yearling steelhead. The Vermilion River will receive 55,000 yearling steelhead.

Sturgeon Sightings Continue

Nineteen sturgeon were reported from Ohio and Michigan waters of Lake Erie during 2001. Four were surprise catches by ice fishermen, nine others were caught by anglers on the open lake, and another was reported by a recreational boater. Three sturgeon were caught and released from commercial fishing nets. Two observations were from shoreline residents.

An especially noteworthy sturgeon report was a 7-inch fish caught by a perch angler a couple miles north of the Portage River mouth in Western Lake Erie last October. This fish would have been spawned last spring. This young-of-the-year fish in addition to a number of catches of juvenile sturgeon three to six years old (measuring 14-24 inches) lends credence that sturgeon are reproducing.

Over 4,000 sturgeon have been tagged in an inter-agency tagging study to collect information on sturgeon populations in Lake Erie and connecting waterways in the lower Great Lakes. Recaptures of these highly migratory fish will help biologists learn more about the population, migration movements and possible spawning grounds.

Anyone who catches a lake sturgeon should release it back into the water immediately and report it to the Division of Wildlife at (419) 625-8062 or 1-800-WILDLIFE. Helpful information would include the date and place of the observation, length of the fish, and any tag information and a photograph if possible.

From Editor, Page 2

Yellow perch prospects are excellent for 2002 for the western, central and eastern basins of Lake Erie.

Anglers will continue to see limit catches and the fish will again be LARGE! Many of the fish will be from the 1996 year class which was the largest hatch in 10 years. These fish will measure 10-12 inches.

Smallmouth bass prospects are also good for 2002.

This is not really surprising though. The fishing for smallies just keeps getting better and better. Most anglers (6 out of 7, from a creel survey) continue to practice catch and release for this species.

Central basin anglers can look forward to another excellent steelhead year. With the annual stocking approaching 400,000 steelies into neighboring Lake Erie streams, this species continues to thrive in Lake Erie, providing much enjoyment by anglers willing to make the journey to the deep central basin waters in July and August. The early spring stream steelhead action (March through Mid-April) also continues to be excellent fishery for shoreline anglers. This year the Division of Wildlife will begin stocking the Vermilion River with steelhead. This is in addition to the current stocking programs for Rocky River, Chagrin River, Grand River and Conneaut Creek.

Many anglers missed out on the great fishing in 2001. Anglers were a little reluctant to make the trip to Lake Erie last year as a result of below par fishing in 1999 and 2000 and the high gasoline prices that occurred. Once word is out, many of these anglers will be 'back in the saddle, again'. This is good news for the Charter Captains, many of whom reported fewer charters last year.

Till next time, GOOD FISHING!

Lake Erie Fishermen
Find up-to-date fishing reports
at
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Fish Ohio's Lake Erie Artificial Reefs!

Updated Locations of All Lake Erie Artificial Reefs Based on ODNR/GEO Survey Side-Scan Sonar Data Updated August, 2000

Lorain

Polish Fisherman's Club Reef

41 28 .076 N

82 12 .758 W

The Mountain Reef

41 28 .150 N

82 12 .750 W

Lakewood

Cuyahoga County Commissioners Reef

41 30 .175 N

81 47 .266 W

1984 Experimental Reef Site "A"

41 30 .271 N

81 47 .533 W

1984 Experimental Reef Site "B"

41 30 .256 N

81 47 .041 W

Cleveland Stadium Artificial Reefs

Edgewater

Cleveland Stadium Reef West #1 (north)

41 30 .148 N

81 45 .575 W

Cleveland Stadium Reef West #2 (south)

41 29 .970 N

81 45 .416 W

Euclid

Cleveland Stadium Reef East (Euclid)

41 35 .933 N

81 33 .804 W