

Mount Ayr District Fishing Newsletter

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FALL 2018

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Special Points of Interest:

- *Tips for fall Walleye fishing*
- *New additions to West Lake Osceola*
- *NEW State Record Warmouth*
- *First Blue Catfish sampled at Three-Mile Lake*

Biologist Notes

It has been another busy year at the Mount Ayr Fisheries Station. It seemed like spring was never going to come as we tried to start our Walleye egg collection and we moved into summer when we got back from collecting eggs.

The unseasonably warm temperatures in late spring hurt our river-strain Walleye fingerling production. The warm weather limited the natural food supply in our hatchery pond and the fish didn't grow as big as desired. Despite their size, we harvested 140,270 river-strain Walleye fingerlings from the pond and stocked them into areas of the Des Moines and Raccoon rivers.

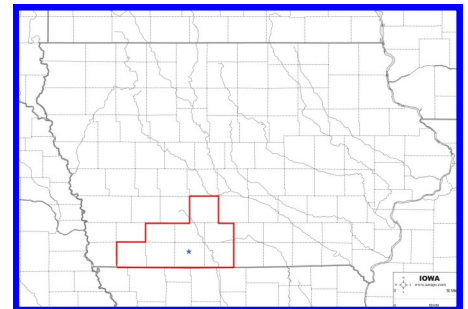
Our Hybrid Striped Bass production was fantastic this year. We harvested 519,323 fingerlings from our hatchery ponds this summer and the fish were larger than in past years. Some of the larger reservoirs, like Saylorville, Coralville and Rathbun, received extra wipers this year.

We picked up more Blue Catfish fingerlings from the East Texas Fish Hatchery this summer. These fish will be stocked into Three-Mile Lake late this fall. This is the third year of a five year study to develop a Blue Catfish population in Three-Mile Lake.

We completed many standard fish population surveys this spring and conducted additional sampling for some of our special projects. We saw some really nice fish this spring including a 14-inch crappie from Badger Creek Lake (pictured at right below).

Don't trade in your fishing rods for your shotgun just yet — there are good fall Walleye angling opportunities in our area. We also have some project updates from a couple of special projects in this issue and an article on yet another state record fish caught in the Mount Ayr district.

Good luck and good fishing this fall!



The Mount Ayr Fisheries District is based out of the Mount Ayr Fish Hatchery and is managed by Andy Jansen and Dray Walter.



Our seasonal, Jake, with a 14-inch crappie from Badger Creek Lake.

Tips for Fall Walleye Fishing in the Mount Ayr District

Fall is a busy time for many Iowa sportsmen and women. The temperature is cooling down and the days are getting shorter. Many of Iowa's hunting seasons start, pushing people to gear up and plan their fall outdoor adventures. I suggest scheduling time for fall fishing this year.

Here are some tips for fall Walleye fishing in our area and some lakes to try this fall:

What to use

Stay flexible and have multiple options available. One of the most common tactics is to cast #5 or #7 crankbaits on fish mounds, rock fields, or along the dam of the lake. If casting isn't producing fish, troll crankbaits along main lake points, the dam, or roadbeds.

There will be lots of small Bluegill and Crappie this time of year, so use a crankbait that imitates these fish. Or use a jig tipped with a minnow fished along these areas. Stay flexible and adjust your tactics as needed.

When to go

Water temperature plays an important role this time of year. Once the water temperature drops below 50 degrees, Walleyes seek winter habitats. Try to get out there before the water temperature drops below 50 degrees. Optimal water temperatures seem to be in the 55-65 degree range.

The best times to fish for Walleyes in the fall can be in the evening and even after dark. Walleyes have a special adaptation in their eye that lets them be effective at feeding at night. Sometimes the longer you wait until after dark, the better your fishing success. Make sure you check the lake's rules about fishing after dark.

Where to go

Here's our top picks for the best fall Walleye fishing in our area:

1. **Three-Mile Lake** — renovated in 2016, it was restocked immediately after the renovation. We are seeing good numbers of 16-18 inch Walleyes being caught this year.
2. **Little River Watershed Lake** — has produced quality Walleye angling for the past several years. There are good numbers of 12-22 inch Walleyes.

3. **Twelve-Mile Creek Lake** — quality Walleyes up to 30 inches. You may have to sort through some 10-14 inch fish, but larger ones are available.
4. **Lake Icaria** — good numbers of 10-15 inch Walleyes. Walleye up to 30 inches are also available.

Don't miss this opportunity to put some delicious Walleye fillets in your freezer before the cold Iowa winter settles in.



Three happy Walleye anglers after a day on Three-mile Lake. Photo by: Joe Mayhew

We found Yellow Bass at Three-Mile Lake during a fish survey in the fall of 2017. We are still moving forward with the restoration project, but need to make some adjustments to address the yellow bass issue. We usually stock yearling Muskies (6-12 inch fish) since they survive better than fingerlings. We had planned to stock yearling Muskies at Three-Mile Lake this past spring, but decided to hold off on that stocking and move it to West Lake Osceola. West Lake Osceola is a 320-acre lake just off I-35 in Osceola. The lake's flooded timber habitat, especially around the shoreline and main lake points, should make a good home for Muskies. We stocked 320 Muskies this spring, but it will take several years before they reach trophy size.



320 yearling Muskellunge stocked at West Lake Osceola this spring. Photo by: Wayne Hill (Afton Star Enterprise)

In addition to stocking musky into West Lake Osceola, we also made some improvements to the boat ramp area this summer. West Lake Osceola is the city of Osceola's water supply. With drought conditions and water use, the lake level has stayed 3-5 feet below normal pool since the spring of 2017. We received complaints from anglers launching their boat from the west boat ramp lane, especially when the lake level is low. It is a steep ramp and sometimes boat trailers fall off the end of the concrete ramp and become stuck.

A contractor was hired to place sections of *ArmorFlex* concrete pads at the end of the current concrete ramp to extend it. This project was funded through the DNR's Marine Fuel Tax fund. The City of Osceola Parks and Recreation Department also bought new docks this year, so this area should be ready for boaters. While the improvements to the boat ramp will help make this area more accessible, boaters need to remember that using the boat ramps is at their own risk.



The west boat ramp lane at West Lake Osceola was extended this summer through the addition of sections of ArmorFlex concrete pads. Photo by: Jason Kruse (DNR Engineering)

New State Record Warmouth...again!

We shared with you a new state record Warmouth captured by Jimmy Lawrence from Bedford City Reservoir in our fall 2015 fishing newsletter. That record was broken shortly after by another angler from the Bedford area. This spring, Celsey Rynearson caught a 10.75 inch Warmouth that weighed 1 lb, 1 ounce at a farm pond near Bedford on May 12th. Congratulations Celsey!

A couple quick reminders if you think you have caught a potential state record fish.

- Weigh your fish as soon as possible on a certified scale legal for trade (found at grocery stores, meat lockers, and some bait shops).
- Your fish must beat the current record by at least one ounce.
- Contact your local conservation officer or DNR Fisheries office. DNR Fisheries personnel must verify the species.



NEW state record Warmouth caught in spring 2018.

Elusive Blue Catfish at Three-Mile Lake Finally Captured

We stocked about 16,000 6-8 inch Blue Catfish fingerlings in Three-Mile Lake after it was renovated in October 2016 to create a unique fishery for anglers. We followed up with an additional 30,000 Blue Catfish fingerlings (about 3-inches long) in the summer of 2017. We have tried a variety of fish sampling techniques to evaluate the development of the Blue Catfish population. We were unsuccessful in our sampling efforts until this summer — we finally captured a healthy 21-inch Blue Catfish that tipped the scales at 4.28 lbs. This fish exceeded the average weight of a Blue Catfish of its size in Missouri and was bigger than most Channel Catfish of this size we observed at lakes renovated in our area.

We will continue to try different fish sampling techniques to evaluate the Blue Catfish population at Three-Mile Lake. We plan to stock an additional 6,000 Blue Catfish fingerlings this fall that will hopefully be about 8-inches long. We also plan to stock a similar amount of Blue Catfish fingerlings in 2019 and 2020.



First Blue Catfish sampled at Three-Mile Lake since stocking began in 2016. This fish was 21 inches long and weighed 4.28 lbs. The fish is held by Joe Mayhew from Union County Conservation Board.

For more information, please contact the Mount Ayr Fisheries office at 641-464-3108.