

Original: Fish Division

cc: Education-Game

Mr. R. G. Fortney

Mr. George Washburn

INSTITUTE FOR FISHERIES RESEARCH Mr. J. G. Marks

DIVISION OF FISHERIES

Institute for Fisheries Res.

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

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W.
ALBERT S. HAZZARD, PH.D.
DIRECTOR

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REPORT NO. 1011

A PARTIAL CREEL CENSUS ON OPENING DAY

(June 25, 1945) OF SWAINS LAKE, JACKSON COUNTY

by

George N. Washburn

As done for the past two seasons, 1943 and 1944, a creel check on the opening was again conducted this year. The data obtained on the opening days for 1943 and 1944 were presented in Report No. 1002. Included in that report was a brief history regarding the introduction of trout in Swains Lake. During the two former creel checks only a sample survey was obtained covering all types of fishing on the lake. At the time this seemed to be an adequate method to determine whether or not the introduction of trout was successful. Recently we have had reason to believe that the trout fishing in Swains Lake was much more successful than indicated by partial creels on the opening day. Consequently, this year it was decided to concentrate on the trout fishermen's creel and to obtain a more complete record for the trout catch. Other types of fishermen were interviewed in the possibility that a few trout may have been taken by the bass and bluegill fishermen.

Contact with the fishermen began at 6:30 A.M. and continued throughout the day, terminating at 10:00 P.M. Early in the morning,

35 boats, with an average of two fishermen per boat, were counted on the lake. About half of these anglers were fishing for trout. Separation of trout fishermen from those fishing for bass and bluegills was easily accomplished as nearly all of the former group were using the trolling technique over deep water, while the latter anglers were usually anchored or drifting in shallow water or at the "drop-off"

A total of 68 trout fishermen was contacted during the creel check, and they were found to have taken 83 rainbow trout in 135 hours of fishing, representing a catch of .61 fish per hour. These trout ranged in size from 9 to 21 inches in length averaging about 15 1/2 inches. Three different classes of trout plantings were represented in this catch, namely: fingerlings (unmarked) planted in the fall of 1941 and 1942, averaging about 4 to 6 inches in length when planted, anal fin clipped trout planted in April 1944 at an average length of 8.5 inches, and dorsal fin clipped trout averaging about 8.2 inches in length when planted in December, 1944. Presented in Table 1 are the comparative data for these three classes of trout as represented in the total catch.

The fingerling trout planted in the fall of 1941 and 1942 represented 12 per cent of the catch and were fish of an average length of approximately 19 inches. As both of these plantings were of unmarked fish, it is not known whether both plantings are represented in the above lot, but it is assumed that they are. Trout planted in the spring of 1944 represented 49 per cent of the catch. These fish had an average length of about 16 inches. Those planted in the fall of 1944, accounting for 38 per cent of the catch, had an average length of about 12 inches. No weights of the fish were recorded, but it is believed that they would average at least 1 1/2 pounds for the total lot. This would represent a removal of approximately 1.8 pounds of trout per acre of

TABLE 1

Growth and Number of Recoveries for Trout Planted in 1941-42,
 April and December 1944, Represented in the Catch for the Opening Day, June 25, 1945

Date	Stocking Record			Recoveries	Size range in inches	Per cent of catch	Growth since planted	
	Size (average)	Number	Identification mark				Per year	Total
Fall, 1941	4"-6"	1,000	none) 10	Max.- 20.9	12.0		13.8"
Fall, 1942	4"-6"	1,000	none		Min.- 15.6			
April, 1944	8.5"	1,000	anal fin removed	41	Max.- 18.0 Min.- 13.5 Av. -15.8	49.4	6.2"	7.3"
December, 1944	8.2"	1,000	dorsal fin removed	32	Max.- 12.6 Min.- 8.8 Av. -11.7	38.5	6.8"	3.5"

water on the opening day alone.

In addition to the above fish, these trout fishermen took a total of 52 warm water species composed of 12 largemouth bass, 30 bluegills, and one of each perch and bullhead.

As mentioned in a preceeding paragraph, most of the angling for trout consisted of trolling over deep water. These fishermen used spinners, and worms, and other artificial lures sufficiently weighted to allow them to sink at a fishing depth ranging from 20 to 30 feet. Many transient fishermen brought their own boats and docked at the county park, while others rented from the two local liveries. Both boat rental establishments spoke of having had their total lot of boats reserved many weeks previous to the opening day, indicating the interest in lake "trout" fishing in this part of Michigan.

Most of the fishermen were enthusiastic over the success of the trout plantings in Swains Lake and they well have reason to be. Two anglers took 12 trout ranging from 11 to 20 inches in four hours of fishing in the morning and another party of three took 11 trout during the same period. Two other parties contacted had 8 and 9 trout respectively. These fishermen were local residents and knew the lake well; whereas many "outside" fishermen failed to catch any of these fish. Of the 68 trout fishermen, 28 were unsuccessful in obtaining a trout.

The large size of these fish (averaging about 1 1/2 pounds each) is quite an incentive for fishermen to become somewhat of "meat hunters" and to assure a more even distribution of these fish, it is recommended that the daily creel limit be reduced to 5 fish per day, or in possession, for Swains Lake beginning in 1946.

Though these trout in Swains Lake do attempt to spawn along the gravel shores, no indication of natural reproduction is evident as yet and further plantings are recommended.

INSTITUTE FOR FISHERIES RESEARCH

by George N. Washburn,
Asst. ~~Junior~~ Aquatic Biologist

Report approved by: A. S. Hazzard

Report typed by: M. Klaphaak