



Angler reports of Lake Sturgeon increasing in upper Cumberland River



A young angler holds a Lake Sturgeon caught in the Cumberland River upstream of the mouth of Laurel River. *Photo courtesy of Jeff Ginnan*

By Matt Thomas
Department Ichthyologist

This summer marks the sixth year of a more-than-20-year project to restore the Lake Sturgeon to its historical range in the upper Cumberland River drainage of southeastern Kentucky.

Since 2007, the Fisheries Division has released a total of 16,400 Lake Sturgeon in the Cumberland River at the mouth of Laurel River and in the Big South Fork at

Alum Ford. These fish represent five year-classes and were six to 10 inches in length at the time of their release.

The Lake Sturgeon restoration project area encompasses Lake Cumberland from Wolf Creek Dam upstream to Cumberland Falls, and includes large tributaries such as Fishing Creek, Pitman Creek, Buck Creek, Big South Fork, and Rockcastle River. Monitoring the stocked fish through various scientific sampling meth-

ods is not an easy task given the large size of the project area and dispersal potential of the sturgeon.

Most of what we currently know about the survival, growth, and movements of Lake Sturgeon has been gleaned from angler feedback. Reports of sturgeon captured by anglers in the upper Cumberland River drainage below Cumberland Falls have been steadily increasing during the past three years.

Since 2010, we have received a total of 26 angler reports, including 12 from 2012 and eight in 2013 as of July 1. Most anglers reported capturing one to two fish, although two anglers reported capturing six and seven individuals, respectively. Bottom fishing after dark with night-crawlers was the most common method reported.

The size range of fish captured was 13-15 inches weighing one pound or less (eight reports) and 20-30 inches weighing two to five pounds (10 reports). We estimate that fish in the 20-30 inch range are at least three years old. With a few exceptions, most anglers reported releasing the fish upon capture.

A sonic telemetry study currently being conducted by Fisheries Division research biologists has already produced

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WE GET MAIL

Letters to the Commissioner's Office

The following note came from J. Klinker of Lexington. "Dear **Ms. Burford**, my daughter, Rachel, and I participated in the Camp Earl Wallace Fish Adventure. It was fantastic. The staff was wonderful and the location perfect. Thank you for the opportunity to participate."

This note came from Laura Collett of Crab Orchard. "Dear **Ms. Laura Burford**, Thank you for providing an amazing fishing weekend for me and my dad. We had so much fun, and made wonderful memories."

This note came from Kim, Abbey and Tori Beck to **John Coffey**. "Thank you so much for the fishing trip. Me and the girls had a wonderful time. Also, thank you for allowing the girls the opportunity to come back to camp this year. With this being their last year, they are so excited to have the experience again. We are very grateful. I also want to say I think your program and the warmth you all show the kids is heartwarming."

We received the following letter from the President of the Madisonville Noon Kiwanis club. Mr. Whitley Wardrip wrote, "Our Take A Kid Fishing event this year had about 70 participants and most were successful in catching a fish. Your **satellite office in Calhoun** provided us with 16 racks of rods and reels to loan to kids without fishing gear, as well as other hand out material for registration packets. Your **Frankfort Office** provided 5 gift packs of rod and reels with fishing lures to present to the first place finishers in the 4 age groups and one for the overall largest fish.

The Noon Kiwanis Club thanks those at Kentucky Fish and Wildlife who help make our annual fishing event a success each year. We will never know precisely how many kids we have helped get hooked on fishing instead of hooked on drugs, but

I think we can be sure that what we do offers the opportunity.

Thank you for your help in our fishing program.

This note came to us from the Knox County Unite Coalition. "Just a note to say what a great job that **John Williams** did with his presentation and instruction to our youth this week. He even brought fish for the kids to look at. The program was just "top notch." So glad he was available to assist us. Thanks so much!"

We received this letter from Matt Kubler, Council Program Director with the Boy Scouts of America. He wrote, "On

behalf of the Blue Ridge Council, Boy Scouts of America, thank you for your cooperation as your employee, **Brian Clark** generously donates time and talents to young people in Scouting. Brian recently spent a week at our Boy Scout camp, Camp Old Indian.

As you know, volunteering is usually a two-way street. While helping mold youth into responsible adults, volunteers often improve their own communication and leadership skills. I am confident that you, as Brian's employer, will reap many dividends from Brian's involvement with the Blue Ridge Council, Boy Scouts of America.

Thank you again for supporting Brian's volunteer efforts."



WILDLIFE DIVISION RECOGNITIONS

Wildlife Division Director Dr. Karen Waldrop presented the 2012 Wildlife Division Employee Recognition Program recipients during the June 12 Commission Committee Meetings. Employees nominated by their supervisors or coworkers were, front, from left, Herbie Adams, Fish and Wildlife Management Foreman of the Year; Tony Black, Wildlife Group Achievement award; and Danna Baxley, Wildlife Director's Leadership Award. Standing are Steven Dobey, Wildlife Group Achievement Award; John Brunjes, Wildlife Biologist of the Year; Jason Nally, Wildlife Thinking Outside the Box Award; Kevin Rexroat, Wildlife Rookie of the Year; and Chad Soard, Wildlife Group Achievement Award. Not pictured is Glen "Scooter" Bowman, Fish and Wildlife Technician of the Year.



Bryan Wilson (center) holds the new state record brook trout taken from the Lake Cumberland Tailwater. The fish was caught during a recent trip with guide (Mike Wlosinski, left) and Bryan's son (right). *Photo courtesy of Bryan Wilson*



Lee McClellan photo

New state record Brook Trout

Bryan Wilson shattered the existing brook trout state record by more than one half pound when he hauled in a 15½ inch fish weighing 1.83 lbs from the Lake Cumberland tailwater on June 30, 2013.

The Lexington angler was fishing with guide Mike Wlosinski, and making the day even more special was the fact that his father and two young sons were also present to observe the trophy catch.

Wilson caught the fish on a #18 zebra midge fly pattern that he was casting on a 5-weight fly rod. The former record brook trout weighing 1 lb, 5 oz held by R. James Augustus had stood since 1982. That fish was caught in the Bell County stretch of Martins Fork.

The record brook trout catch is actually not that surprising as a new state record was highly anticipated when the decision

was made to begin stocking brook trout in the Lake Cumberland tailwater in 2011.

Similar Owhi-strain brook trout have been stocked in other southern tailwaters with great success with some fish exceeding five pounds. Anglers interested in having a good opportunity to catch a state record brook trout should visit the Lake Cumberland tailwater over the next few years.

Law Enforcement Division promotes five to sergeant

The Law Enforcement Division is proud to announce the recent promotion of five Conservation Officers to the rank of Sergeant.

New sergeants include **Tony Dunker** in the First District, **Ed Mahurin** in the Third District, **Jeremy McQueary** in the Fourth District, **Jason Slone** in the Seventh and **Glenn Kitchen** in the Eighth.



From left: Ed Mahurin, Glenn Kitchen, Jason Slone, Jeremy McQueary and Tony Dunker.



Ryan Oster photos

Engineering completes Corinth Lake boat ramp renovation

The Engineering Division is pleased to announce its recent renovation of the Corinth Lake boat ramp facility.

Constructed in 1963, Corinth Lake is a small (96 acre), Department-owned lake in Grant County. The lake is managed to provide recreational fishing for quality bluegill and redear sunfish. There is a 10HP limit in effect on the lake.

The completed renovated boat ramp now includes a paved, single lane boat launching ramp and paved parking to accommodate approximately 10 vehicles and trailers. A new boat courtesy dock was installed, in addition to a new fishing pier.

This project was built using Sport Fish Restoration funds. Anglers can access

the new facility by traveling north out of Lexington on I-75. Take exit 144 east to HWY-25 and go north. Turn left onto Ragtown Road and turn left again at the sign pointing towards Corinth Lake.

This project continues to highlight the great work that the Engineering Division does to ensure that the public has adequate access to our state's lakes, rivers, and reservoirs.



CAMP WEBB BOATING

Camp Webb youth are enjoying a boating adventure on Grayson Lake. The raft was recently donated by Jim Axon. Jim retired from the department as Assistant Director of Fisheries Division.



David Baker, Fisheries Biologist II, assists with landing a channel catfish caught by one of the attendees of the Hospice Kids Fishing Event. In the background, several other children can be observed also landing fish. *Katie Emme photo*



Paul Wilkes, Fisheries Technician, also assists with the landing and hook removal of a channel catfish caught by one of the young anglers. *Stephanie Brandt photo*

Fisheries hosts annual Hospice Kids Fishing Event at Pfeiffer Hatchery

The Fisheries Division hosted the annual Hospice Kids Fishing Event on June 18 at the Pfeiffer Fish Hatchery in Frankfort.

This event continues to be sponsored by the Kentucky Chapter of the American Fisheries Society.

Similar to previous years, the event began with a cookout of burgers and hot-dogs at the hatchery. Following the cookout, many of the children were able to take a quick peak into the display pool to see a variety of fish species (many of which they had never seen before, including alligator gar, paddlefish, and lake sturgeon).

After lunch, the children and staff quickly moved over to one of the hatchery ponds to spend a few hours catching fish. This year's pond contained abundant channel catfish.

This year's event was attended by 10 children. In all, 34 individuals took part in the event and included Fisheries Division staff, as well as nurses and Hospice staff.

This event is always one of the highlights of the year for many of the Fisheries staff as it provides us the opportunity to

partner up with children who are not exposed to fishing and watch the enjoyment on their faces as they catch fish after fish.

This year's group was particularly memorable as many of the children were initially afraid to even touch a fish; however, by the end of the day, many of them were taking their own fish off of the hooks and releasing them.

As always, a big thank you goes out to **Steve Marple and the staff at Pfeiffer Fish Hatchery** for providing the

pond space and fish for the event. Special thanks to **Nick Keeton, Jason McDowell, Ryan Kausing, Don Bunnell, Stephanie Brandt, Katie Emme, Danny Duvall, David Baker, Paul Wilkes and Chris Bowers** who helped prepare and cook food for the event.

Thanks also go out to the many Fisheries Division employees who assisted with other aspects of the event. This event could not occur without everybody's help and participation.



The group poses for a team photo at the end of a successful day. *Katie Emme photo*

*Kevin Frey photos*

New Letcher County boat ramp now complete

Engineering Division has completed a new, single lane, paved boat ramp facility on the North Fork of the Kentucky River in Letcher County.

The new ramp is located near the junction of Hwy 7 and KY-1103 near the small town of Ulvah, just upstream of where Line Fork meets the North Fork of the Kentucky River.

This ramp was the result of a new

bridge crossing by the Department of Transportation (DOT) who left the grade for Engineering Division to place the concrete ramp. The actual boat ramp and the majority of the gravel parking lot are constructed on DOT right-of-way. A small section of the parking was constructed on the adjacent landowner who was very excited about the project.

This new boat ramp facility is an-

anticipated to be used heavily as the next closest boat ramp on the North Fork of the Kentucky River is located a considerable distance downstream, just below the City of Hazard. This new boat ramp is also ideally located, as Line Fork is listed as one of the Department's trout streams and receives annual stockings of rainbow trout during April and May.

Cub Scout Day Camp boating safety

At a Cub Scout day camp held in Shelbyville in June, volunteers eagerly assisted **Zac Campbell**, KDFWR's Boating Safety Coordinator, with a demonstration of inflatable lifejackets for their fellow Scouts.

Campbell discussed boating safety, demonstrated types of personal flotation devices, and proper fit of lifejackets.

The camp hosted over 100 elementary and middle-school-aged Scouts for a week of outdoor skills instruction and fun.



Native shrub establishment

The Wildlife Division's Research and Small Game Programs have teamed up to investigate the most effective way to establish native shrubs for wildlife habitat.

When managing for small game such as bobwhite quail and rabbits, shrubby cover is often one of the most overlooked habitat components. However, this important habitat feature should be a top priority when managing for these species.

Quail and rabbits experience multiple benefits from shrubs; one of the most important being escape cover from aerial predators like hawks. Animals also seek shelter from extreme weather conditions in these areas during the summer and winter months.

One of the biggest challenges encountered while establishing native shrubs is damage caused by deer, rabbits, and rodents. Deer regularly browse on the leaves and stems while rabbits and rodents such as mice and shrews girdle the base of the stems.

Damage can be prevented by using tree shelters. These shelters come in a variety of types and range in price from a few

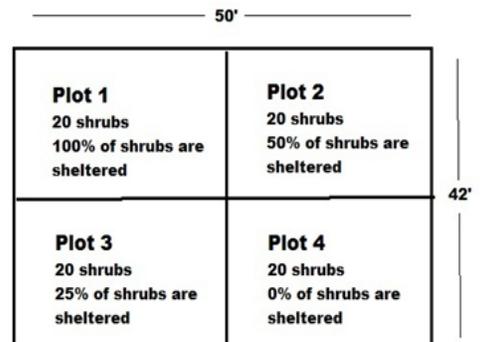


cents to several dollars per shelter. Studies have been conducted on the efficacy of tree shelters and results indicate that tree shelters increase survival and growth of trees and shrubs.

Since we know that tree shelters greatly reduce herbivory damage, we are most interested in minimizing costs associated with installing protective tubes across large landscapes.

Using the Shaker Village Quail Focus Area in Mercer County as our study site, we are attempting to determine how many tree shelters are required to successfully establish shrub blocks (American plum) for wildlife. We created 20 replicates across the property. The diagram below represents one replicate. Shrubs will be surveyed annually for three to five years to determine survival.

Ideally, the 25 percent sheltered block would be considered successful, as it would contain the fewest shelters resulting in a lower cost per shrub block. Early observations on our study site indicate that unsheltered shrubs are highly susceptible to herbivory and stand little chance of survival.



Fisheries staff assists with annual Emma B. Ward Elementary Outdoors Day

May 21 marked the third annual Emma B. Ward "Outdoors Day" held at the Anderson County Community Park. Emma B. Ward is one of three elementary schools in Anderson County.

As part of this event, several Fisheries Division staff took time out of their busy schedules to conduct a children's fishing event at the Anderson County Community Park Lake.

This fishing event was one of several events aimed at promoting outdoor recreational activities and having fun in the outdoors.

Staff from the Fisheries Division provided fishing poles, tackle, and bait in order to teach the children about fishing. Prior to fishing, each group of children received a short instruction about identifying Kentucky's most common fish, such as bluegill, channel catfish, largemouth bass, and rainbow trout.

Each Fisheries employee was paired with two or three children and spent approximately 40 minutes fishing around the lake. Most children caught at least



Ryan Oster photos

one fish, with several children catching as many as eight fish.

Approximately 127 third graders attended the fishing event.

When asked about their favorite part of the day, the overwhelming response was the fishing portion of the Outdoor Day. It brought smiles to Fisheries staff faces to see that fishing can still outrank basketball, soccer, and kickball.

Special thank yous go out to **Steve Marple and the entire staff at Pfeiffer Fish Hatchery** for providing channel catfish and bluegill sunfish for the event, and also to the **staff of the Folks of Elk-**

horn Fish Transportation Section for coordinating the stocking of the Anderson County Community Park Lake prior to the event.

Thanks also to the **FINs** (Fishing in Neighborhoods) program for providing additional channel catfish prior to the event. This event would not have been possible without the assistance of many Fisheries Division employees including **Danny Duvall, Jason McDowell, Chris Hickey, Ryan Kausing, Dane Balsman, Joseph Zimmerman, Dan Stoelb, Stephanie Brandt, Katie Emme and Jeff Crosby.**

"Sturgeon," continued

some preliminary data on movements, indicating that some individuals had moved over 35 miles within the project area while others remained close to their stocking locations.

The fish that showed movement in

2012 entered Lake Cumberland during the summer and early fall, and most of those appear to have remained in the reservoir downstream of Burnside. These results, along with the valuable information provided by anglers, provide some encouraging evidence of survival, growth, and movements of Lake Stur-

geon in the upper Cumberland River drainage.

For more information about the Department's efforts to help restore Lake Sturgeon to the upper Cumberland River drainage, please call (502)564-3400 for Matt Thomas (ext. 4463) or Stephanie Brandt (ext. 4547).