

2009 DeSoto/Boyer Chute NWR Fisheries Program Updates

As of 10/13/09:

You never know for sure what we will find in the fyke, hoop or gill nets when they are pulled each morning during our annual fishery survey, but whatever we find, the inhabitants are generally in a foul mood. This fifty pound snapping turtle was less than cooperative and was not willing to come out of this fyke net without a battle.



What we do know, is that a number of the fish and turtle species found in DeSoto Lake tend to feed at night along the shoreline, where they come in contact with one of several types of fishing nets. We have been fortunate to have several able-bodied staff assist with the retrieving, identifying, weighing, and measuring of sometimes hundreds of fish in a single net, i.e. our first net on the 22nd of September produced nearly 300 fish. Gill nets offer the greatest

challenge in retrieving fish that have probably spent the night tangled in what seems to be, endless layers of nylon.



Now you are probably wondering what did we find in all of these different nets this fall? In summary:

- 1) We didn't find *largemouth bass* in any significant number and they still are limited by the turbid water and lack of submergent vegetation.



- 2) We did find significant numbers of three different age classes (1st, 2nd, & 3rd year) of *bluegill*. This was probably the best return of bluegill in several years. Bluegills also have significant problems with the lack of quality vegetation and water quality.

- 3) Several age classes of *white bass*, with some weighing 1 ½ lbs. were measured and weighed. Their numbers and size have significantly increased in the past three years.

- 4) *Crappie* are improving in size and numbers and are probably a year away (successful age class hatch) from returning to what anglers have expected from spring fishing at DeSoto Lake.

- 5) *Walleye* numbers were not significant in this fall survey, but the size and health of the ones surveyed, indicate a continual increase in overall size. The night electroshocking scheduled later this month, will be a better indicator of walleye.

So what does all of this information tell us and what course of action does management consider: the first thing that is noted is the habitat improvements made in DeSoto Lake are making a difference. That the carp and other roughfish are not “taking over the lake” and eliminating preferred species, and that we need to continue adding quality habitat structure to the lake, as well as, experimenting with new techniques to improve the native vegetation that is needed to bring DeSoto Lake up to it's fullest potential.