

# El Dorado District Fisheries

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KDWPT Fisheries Section Newsletter

January 2015

## Recent District Happenings

It was a good fall season in the El Dorado District. Fall test netting went very smoothly this year and netting in the District was completed before Halloween. Favorable weather allowed the netting schedule to stay on track and the lakes to be sampled in a shorter-than-normal time frame. Management reports are being written, 2015 stocking requests have been made, and fish harvest regulation changes are being analyzed all in preparation for the 2015 fishing season.

Trout season opened November 1. The El Dorado trout stream received two stockings of trout and the season was off to a great start. The trout supplier then suffered a large loss of fish at the trout farm and the fish intended to be stocked in Kansas waters were lost. KDWPT doesn't produce trout in the state hatchery system. The fish that are stocked through the trout program come from private fish farms purchased with dollars raised from the sale of the trout permits. The loss of fish disrupted the stocking schedule at the trout stream as no fish were available through the contractor. Hatchery staff from the Milford and Pratt fish hatcheries made a 1,700-mile round trip to South Dakota to pick up trout to complete the December 3 stocking. On December 23, hatchery staff from the Farlington hatchery travelled to the Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery located below Table Rock Lake dam in Missouri to pick up trout for the El Dorado trout stream. Despite some complications, the trout season has remained productive. A change in contractors has been made and the stocking schedule is now back on track.

## Videos of Fisheries Projects Now Available on YouTube

KDWPT Fisheries Biologists conduct a variety of projects throughout the course of the year to provide quality fishing opportunities in the lakes that they manage. Many anglers have heard about gill nets, trap nets, and shocker boats but have never had the opportunity to see them in action – until now!

Beginning early in 2014, I began taking a GoPro camera while working on the water to capture video footage of the day's activities. Several videos were produced this year and anglers have been finding them interesting.

During late March and early April, the walleye egg collection project was in full swing at Milford Reservoir. Clearer than normal water conditions created a rare opportunity to capture seldom-seen underwater video of Kansas walleye that were captured via multifilament gill nets and frame trap nets. This video can be seen at this link <http://youtu.be/GpyleTf12p0>.

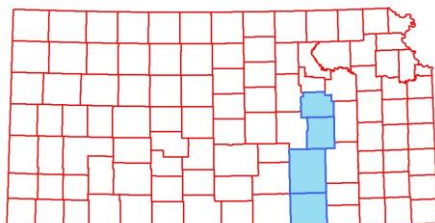
The GoPro camera saw more action in May when it was taken out in the electrofishing boat while

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Get your friends, get your family  
... and FISH KANSAS!



## Fish Videos—continued from page 1

largemouth bass were sampled at several El Dorado district lakes. Extremely clear water conditions again allowed for some underwater views that provide a look in to seldom seen views. The Spring Bass Sampling video can be viewed at <http://youtu.be/R1jK9YZJYul> .

Blue catfish can be sampled with several different types of fish sampling gear. In addition to gill nets and trap nets, blue catfish can also be sampled using the electrofishing boat. Low pulse electrofishing is used when the blue catfish are targeted. Catfish can be brought up from great distances with the low pulse setting when compared to the much shorter effective distances when scale fish, such as largemouth bass, are collected. One particular sample resulted in an unusually high numbers of blue catfish coming to the surface. The high numbers of blue catfish and near-glass water surface conditions combined for an ideal situation to see the fish. The Electrofishing for Kansas Blue Catfish video can be seen at <http://youtu.be/x8nOfJswLBg> .



*The GoPro camera makes seldom-seen underwater shots of Kansas fishes a reality. The screenshot above shows walleye in a trap net. Click the picture to watch the video.*

A research project by KDWP fisheries biologists is examining performance of channel catfish vs. hybrid catfish (channel catfish X blue catfish) in stocked lakes. In order to track the two kinds of catfish, all stocked fish are marked using two methods. A video was produced to show the marking process for the channel catfish used in the study. The Catfish Marking video can be viewed at <http://youtu.be/uMQIOIzXSHI> .

The videos should help pass the time for anxious anglers while the outside temps remain in the single digits. If you have a suggestion for topics of future video projects, email them to me.

## Little Water – Big Fish!

A lake doesn't have to be several thousand acres to produce large-sized fish. Over the past several years, Butler State Fishing Lake and Chase State Fishing Lake (SFL) have held some very nice flathead catfish. While these lakes are managed heavily for channel catfish the flathead catfish have what they need to reach large sizes. Angling pressure is relatively light on the flatheads as the majority of anglers are targeting the channel catfish. This light pressure coupled with an abundance of forage allows for these cats to grow to some impressive proportions.



*This flathead catfish was captured during a largemouth bass electrofishing sample at Butler SFL during May 2014.*

Butler and Chase SFLs, like most SFLs across the state, are managed to produce good channel catfish fishing. Channel catfish are popular with Kansas anglers, they can grow to over thirty pounds, they are relatively easy to catch from both shore and boat, and they provide some excellent eating. Department fisheries biologists annually stock channel catfish in most SFLs to produce densities that provide good angling opportunities while still allowing good growth rates from the population. Channel catfish are produced within the KDWP hatchery system and fish are stocked once they reach a size of about four fish to the pound. A put, grow, and take strategy is used to keep the channel catfish action at the SFLs some of the best it can be. Restrictive harvest regulations are in place at some lakes, like Butler, with a 2/day creel and 15-inch minimum length limit. Chase SFL has a 5/day creel and 15-inch minimum length limit. All three of the SFLs in the El Dorado District have fish feeding programs that are aimed

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## Little Water...Big Fish!

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primarily at the channel catfish population. As you can see, a lot of effort goes in to producing and maintaining the quality channel catfish opportunities at the SFLs within the El Dorado District. While the flatheads don't benefit from such intensive fisheries management as the channel catfish, they are still capable of producing some pretty impressive catches in these lakes.

Most anglers focus on catching the channel catfish. Popular baits include stink baits, dip/punch baits, shad sides or guts, night crawlers, grasshoppers, and cut bait. These baits are effective on channels, but flathead catfish are likely to ignore most of these offerings. While flatheads are occasionally caught on a bait intended for channels, crank bait, slab spoon, or jig they prefer lively baits such as bluegill sunfish, green sunfish, bullheads, crayfish, large wads of night crawlers and occasionally fresh cut bait.



*This chunky flathead from Chase SFL was also captured during a largemouth bass electrofishing sample during May 2014.*

Finding bait at a SFL is seldom a problem. A little time spent with a small hook and a piece of worm will usually yield fast action for numerous sunfish species. Keep your baits fresh and lively as this will increase the effectiveness of your presentation.

Finding the location of the low-density flatheads in these smaller lakes can sometimes be the biggest challenge in a successful fishing trip. Flatheads like cover. Brush piles, rock piles, logs, root wads, and under cut banks are all good locations to spend some time. Flatheads are ambush

predators and dropping a bait in their vicinity is important to success. The faces of the dams at Butler and Chase SFLs are good places to fish for flatheads. The irregularly-shaped rocks provide escape cover for prey species and larger holes can hold the flatheads. Toward the bottom and end of the dams, there is a transition from the larger rock to either smaller rock or mud and this transition area often holds prey fish which draw the flatheads. These areas can be fished either by boat or shore.

Other areas to look for include brush piles intended for crappie or bass. These brush piles usually provide the tight cover that flatheads prefer while also providing abundant forage in the form of minnows, shad, sunfish, or small crappie. A lively bluegill or green sunfish struggling while on a line is a great way to get the attention of a large brush pile flathead.

The fishing piers at both lakes also provide good habitat for the flathead catfish. Larger rocks were used to form the base of the piers during construction, creating large underwater voids between the rocks. Systematically "dipping" a small sunfish between the rocks along areas of rip-rap is a good way to hook up with a flathead or even a larger channel catfish, especially during the spawn.

Although flathead catfish can be caught during the day many hardcore anglers prefer night fishing. When the sun sets and many forage fish slow down for the night, the flathead uses the darkness to its advantage. Having well developed senses besides sight allows the flathead to find prey in the darkest of waters. A struggling sunfish rings like a dinner bell to a hungry catfish. Flathead catfish prefer the warmer waters of summer. The higher metabolism brought on by increased warmth equates to a much more active fish when compared to the water temperatures of winter. The hot days associated with Kansas' warm water season are a perfect excuse to turn to night fishing to escape the heat of the day while also catching the flathead at its most active period.

If you are a fan of big fish and would rather catch one big fish instead of 20 smaller ones, you might look into flathead fishing on smaller waters. Some great fish are swimming at Butler and Chase and waiting to test to your tackle!

## 2015 Fish Regulations Summary

**Now Available Online** (from KDWPT news)

It's never too early to begin planning your next fishing trip – that's why an online version of the 2015 Kansas Fishing Regulations Summary has been made available to anglers at [ksoutdoors.com](http://ksoutdoors.com). Simply visit [ksoutdoors.com](http://ksoutdoors.com) and click "[Fishing / Fishing Regulations](#)" to download your copy of the free, easy-to-use, full-color pamphlet. Printed copies will be available wherever licenses are sold by mid-January.

Apart from a helpful section highlighting new regulations for the 2015 season, the summary also includes information on important fishing regulations such as special seasons, creel and length limits, license fees and legal fishing methods. Because creel and length limits vary from lake to lake, the 2015 Kansas Fishing Regulations Summary is a must-read for all anglers.

Included in a special 16-page section, the summary lists all public waters, along with their location and any special regulations in effect. At the turn of a page, anglers can see which community lakes don't charge extra fees for fishing, as well as community lakes designated as Family Friendly Facilities (FFF) that will include flush toilet facilities, security patrols, security lighting, easy access to the water and do not allow alcohol.

Anglers can also read up on aquatic nuisance species (ANS), as well as regulations governing the use of live baitfish. Five pages are devoted to fish identification, featuring color illustrations by renowned fish illustrator Joe Tomelleri. Current state record fish are listed, and there is also a Master Angler Award Application for anglers who catch fish that qualify for this certificate award program.

Make a spot for the 2015 Kansas Fishing Regulations Summary in your tackle box. You just might find it adds a little more luck to your lures this season.

If you have missed a copy of any of the fisheries newsletters, archived newsletters from fisheries districts across the state can be found [HERE](#).

## Last Cast!

The frigid, single-digit temperatures have covered the area lakes in ice. Even El Dorado's 8,000 acres are nearly 100 percent ice covered. The incessant gusty winds have made being outside a challenge not only due to the low windchills, but also just getting around can be a challenge!

Fishing had been good right up to the freeze. A few anglers have been testing the ice and catching a few fish. It takes a little time for an ice pattern to be discovered in the El Dorado District and time during the ice period is usually at a premium. Crappie and white bass are active during the coldwater season, ice cover or not. Boat anglers were experiencing good catches of both at El Dorado and Council Grove reservoirs. The forecast is showing highs in the 50s over the coming weekend so the ice may be going away soon, at least around here.

We are nearly half way through the first month of 2015. If you haven't done it already, now is a great time to pick up your licenses for the 2015 fishing season. Buying your licenses on these cold and blustery days will free you up to hit the water when the weather does allow a mid-winter fishing trip.

Fishing reports on the KDWPT website are currently in winter mode. Most fishing reports contain a general summary of what an angler can expect at a particular lake but the weekly update fishing reports are not included. The weekly reports will return in March 2015 as fishing activity increases and reports are more readily available from anglers. Do, however, keep an eye on the fishing reports this winter for information on the trout at El Dorado and any other hot bites that may develop.

As always, if you know someone who might like to subscribe to the newsletter, they can do so [HERE](#). If you would like to unsubscribe, please send your info to [Contact Us](#) with "unsubscribe El Dorado District Fisheries newsletter" and we'll get you taken off of the list. If you have any questions or comments or story ideas feel free to send them in!

Fish On!

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