

## **FISHING REPORT, TOM DUBENSKY**

### **Spring/Summer 2020 Report:**

Lake Somerset fish came through the 2019 winter in good shape and had a good spawning season. I know that the dredging has made accessing some parts of the lake more difficult this year, but I have seen some improvement in the lake in areas that were basically unfishable in the past.

### **Fall 2020/Winter 2021 Fishing Forecast:**

- Walleye – a popular fish that we frequently stock. These fish represent a true put and take fishery as they are unlikely to successfully spawn in Lake Somerset. On October 21, 2020 we will stock 3100 fingerlings. PLEASE thank our board for their ongoing support of this stocking program!!!!
- Northern Pike – another popular sport fish for some anglers. We are now seeing some natural reproduction of pike and are not currently planning to stock Pike in the near future.
- Largemouth Bass – the most common predator fish in our lake system. The bass population is strong and has some real nice trophy fish available. Keep in mind that releasing most of the bass back into the lake helps keep our fishery strong.
- Sunfish including Bluegill, Red Ear and Pumpkinseed – these fish are doing well on the lake, reproduce very well and in some cases may spawn multiple times in the summer. They are great eating and are good average size. They should be our focus for harvest when we want that fresh fish meal. We are planning on bolstering our Red ear sunfish population this spring, by stocking 5000 3-inch fingerlings right after ice out. The goal is to get the Red ear population a boost as they do eat mollusks including Zebra and Quagga Mussels. The hope is that these fish will take advantage of the newly dredged areas to spawn and increase in number.
- Black Crappie – are doing well and the average size seems to have improved in the last two years. There is a strong year class of 8-inch fish that should be good sized next summer (10-11 inches).
- Stocking Plans for 2021 – we plan on stocking 5000 Red ears in the spring and 1500-2000 Walleye in the fall.
- Dredging and Future Activities –dredging is wrapping up and I am seeing fish colonizing the newly dredged areas, in fact I caught a 14-inch walleye in late August way up Goose Creek inlet. Before dredging that defiantly would not have happened. This spring I will survey the whole lake with my recording sonar and try and make a new depth map, If I am successful, I will make it available to the association. For those living in the newly dredged areas keep an eye on the habitat changes, including new types of lake vegetation, spawning fish and use by different species.

Next summer I hope to start developing a Fish habitat plan for some of our newly dredged areas and help people develop a “fish plan” for around their docks. Next fall I will do a follow up survey of our fisherman to gauge the angler attitudes and help determine where we can improve. I can be contacted at [tomdubensky@yahoo.com](mailto:tomdubensky@yahoo.com).

#### **Past Five Years of Stocking at Lake Somerset**

2015 Walleye 2400 + Northern Pike 500  
2016 Walleye 4000  
2017 Walleye 3800  
2018 Walleye 3600  
2019 Walleye 3100 (stocking mid-October)  
2020 Walleye 3000 (Oct 21, 2020)  
2021 Planned: 5000 Red Ears (spring), 1500 Walleyes (fall)

#### Fish of Lake Somerset 2020 assessment by Tom Dubensky



Bluegill is the most abundant fish in our lake self-sustaining and popular with anglers, they breed at least once and year and sometimes more often, they also make up a large portion of the base of the food web, all of the major predator fish eat bluegills. Our population contains a good amount of harvestable fish (>7inches) and anglers seeking a fish meal are encouraged to harvest Bluegills within the legal framework Michigan ( 25 fish limit)



Largemouth Bass is our most abundant predator fish in the lake, and we have a very good self-sustaining population, most of our anglers practice catch and release on Bass, and due to this our fishery is strong with the possibility of master angler fish (> 22 inches) and good number of “keepers” (>14 inches)



Redear sunfish (called shell Crackers in the south) were stocked in Lake Somerset years ago, and have a self-sustaining population, although at the northern end of their range these fish do quite well in our lake and good sized fish are present. Fish in the master angler size range (>10 inches) are taken annually. They are not as prolific breeders as Bluegills but also make up part of our food web, and small ones are regularly eaten by the predators in the lake. Because they typically eat snails and other mollusks (like zebra Mussels) The plan is to bolster our population with another stocking event in spring of 2021.



Black Crappie are a moderately abundant self-sustaining population of sunfish that switch from eating insects to small fish when they reach 7 inches in size. Many anglers target them in the winter and spring when they are easiest to locate. Crappies in Lake Somerset Avg 9 inches and have good years/bad years of reproduction depending on environmental factors.



Pumpkinseed sunfish- a native species present in moderate numbers; they are often caught when fishing for bluegills. They are self-sustaining and crossbred with both bluegills and redears so hybrids of all three species are present in small numbers in the lake. Size is approximately 6-inch avg.



Northern Pike – a large predator in Lake Somerset, this self-sustaining species is low in number but stable in the lake while a large specimen (>35 inches) are taken occasionally, most of the fish are just around the legal limit (24inches). Pike have been stocked in the past, however there is plenty of evidence of successful spawning and the difficulty of finding fish to stock, has led to not regularly stocking this species



Walleye – very popular predator fish that is successful in Lake Somerset but does not have the ability to spawn and become self-sustaining. Most of the stocking in the last 10 years has been done to maintain this fishery. The fish is so popular as a fighter and eating that most fish above the legal limit (15 inches) are taken and eaten. Winter Walleye fishing on Lake Somerset is becoming well known in the local community, which may be bring some level of trespassing during ice fishing.



Yellow Perch- a popular fish in the great lakes region, unfortunately the size of most of the perch in lake Somerset never reach a harvestable size (>7 inches), in conversations with the regional biologist, it has been determined that the food web in Lake Somerset will not likely provide a good perch fishery, the fish are there, they just do not have the right type of food to get to a large size, and they can reproduce at a small size (4-5inches), so stocking would not provide any advantage to this situation. While the perch in the lake are small, they do provide a critical part of the food web as they spawn and produce a great deal of small fish that are eaten by all of the predators. Most of the good perch lakes in our region are very deep, clear or part of the Great lake system. For anglers wanting to fill a bucket with good perch I suggest doing what I do, which is a day trip to Lake Erie.

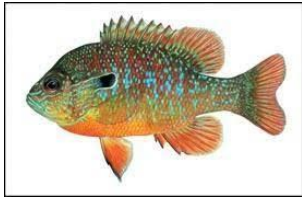


Channel Catfish – originally stocked 20 years ago, they do not seem to be successfully reproducing or reproduce at a low level. These fish live a long time and, the remaining fish in the lake are quite large, fight well and seem to be popular with only a few fishermen. If we want to expand this fishery we could easily stock more, but when Anglers were surveyed last there was low interest in further stocking.

There are other native and introduced species in lake Somerset that are either small or infrequently encountered by most fishermen they include:



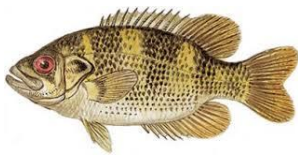
Dogfish -Native low density tolerates low oxygen environment like our over silted channels before they were dredged.



Long ear sunfish – small native sunfish rarely over 4 inches that typically inhabits small streams, left over from damming Goose Creek. Very colorful, some people keep them in aquariums.



Brown bullhead – native catfish small numbers exist usually less than 10 inches



Rockbass – Native low numbers



Common Carp – introduced to North America in the 1700s, a popular sport and food fish in Europe, seen as destructive or a nuisance in North America, they grown quite large in lake Somerset, and typically seen in early mornings in the spring when they spawn. When small they are eaten by all of the predator fish.

Minnows and other forage include:



Golden Shiner