

# Swanson Reservoir

## 2008 Survey Summary



Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

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The following text and graphs are the result of netting surveys completed during 2008 at Swanson Reservoir. For comparative purposes it also shows results from previous years. Fish populations are sampled each fall at Swanson using gill nets, a method commonly used to sample fish found primarily in open water, such as walleye and wipers.

Overall, channel catfish from Swanson ranked near the bottom among southwest reservoirs for overall catch rates. This may be due, in part, to the introduction of blue catfish in 2008 and decreased stocking rates of channel catfish. Blue catfish should do well at Swanson because of the water warmer temperature and abundant shad population. Blue cats are different from channel catfish in several ways. They are more likely to feed in the water column and prefer live bait over prepared catfish baits or dead shad. Blue catfish have a pronounced hump on their backs and lack spots like channel catfish. They are also able to grow to impressive size and will hopefully provide a unique fishery in Southwest Nebraska. Catfish anglers do well throughout the reservoir, but many fish are caught from underwater humps and near the dam and while drifting in the southwest part of the reservoir. Most flathead catfish are located near underwater humps or the rip-rap area along the dam. Anglers are encouraged to practice catch-and-release for larger channel catfish, flathead catfish.

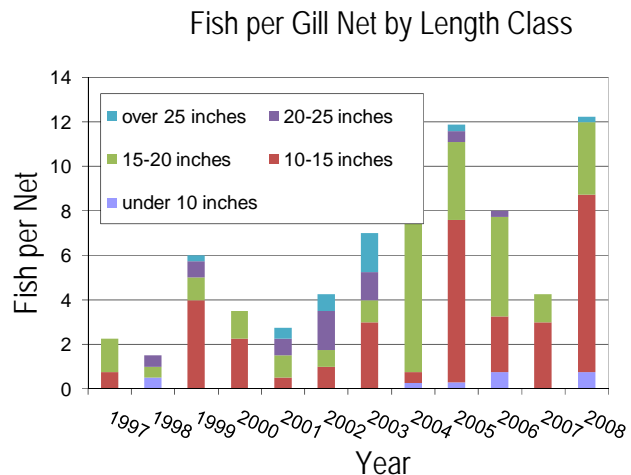
The walleye catch was good when compared to other reservoirs in the Southwest district and is up considerably compared to years past at Swanson. Catch rates for white bass and wipers fell sharply in 2006 as did the number of master angler awards for wiper when compared to 2005. White bass have rebounded nicely and are approaching 45 fish per net. These numbers are being driven by a single strong year class. Wiper numbers have improved and were approximately 8 fish per net in 2008. Beginning in 2009 wipers will be stocked every other year. This reduction is based on the data obtained by angler surveys which revealed very low demand for wipers. Also, wipers are also harvested as white bass and not allowed to reach their trophy potential. NGPC biologists will monitor the population and adjust the stocking rate as needed to maintain a fishable population but with more emphasis placed on white bass management.

Increased water levels at Swanson have resulted in lots of flooded shoreline brush. Although the current situation is good for fish and fish recruitment it can lead to decreased access and hard fishing because fish are no longer concentrated or are located in the brush. This may be aggravating to anglers but events like this have the ability to breathe new life into reservoirs for a brief time.

The following graphs show the average number of fish caught per net and the relative abundance of fish within several length categories. The text provides a brief explanation of the information shown in the graphs. Also included are graphs illustrating water level elevations and the resulting surface acres in Swanson Reservoir. Water levels rebounded slightly in 2006 and 2007.

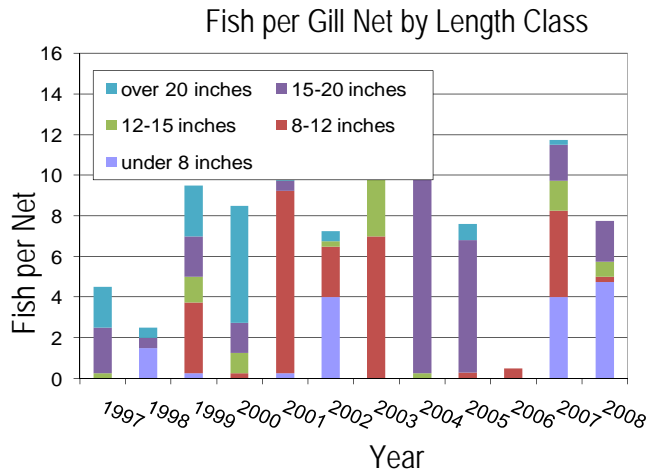
## Walleye

Walleye numbers are up considerably in 2008. We averaged a little over 12 fish per net in 2008. Most of these fish were sublegal in 2008 but some of those fish should be available for harvest in 2009. Nebraska Game and Parks will be stocking approximately 2.6 million walleye fry in 2009.



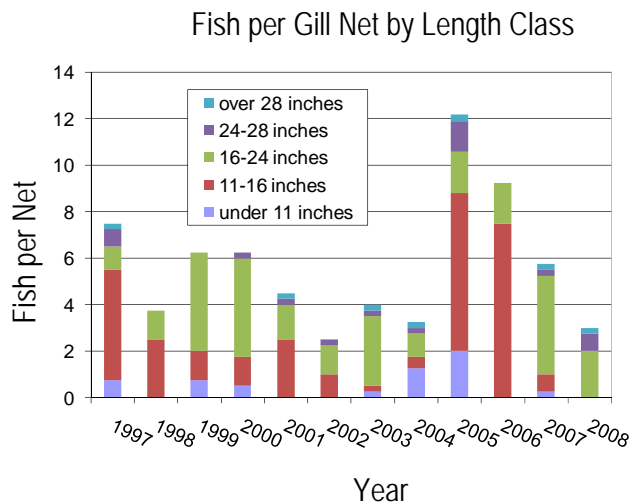
## Wipers

Wiper number have been somewhat sporadic in recent years. We had almost zero catch in 2006, 12 fish per net in 2007, and 7 fish per net in 2008. Most fish caught were on the small side which is most likely due to the fish kill several years ago. Current stocking rates have been decreased to an every other year schedule due to the large numbers of white bass and introduction of blue catfish. We will continue to monitor the population and adjust stocking rates to maintain a fishable population of wipers.



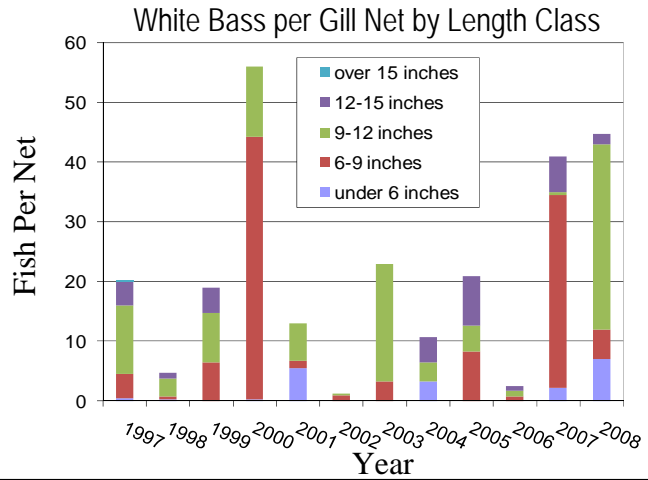
## Channel Catfish

Channel catfish numbers have been on a steady decline since 2005. We caught approximately 3 fish per net in 2008. Swanson is stocked with fish yearly but will not receive channel catfish in 2009. However there is be approximately 32,000 blue catfish stocked. Blue catfish were also stocked in the fall of 2008. We hope that the warmer water and abundant shad population will allow these fish to grow well and create a unique fishery in Southwest Nebraska.

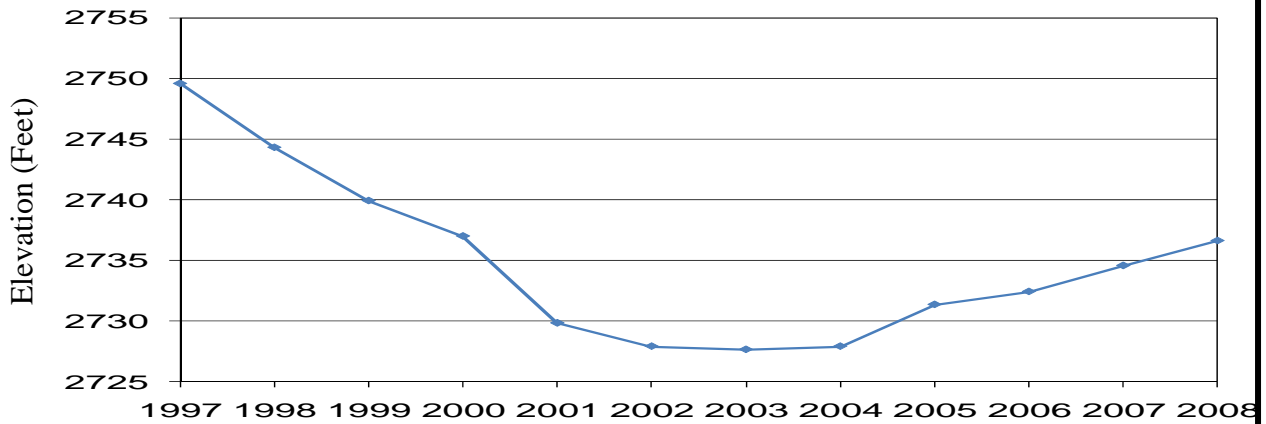


### White Bass

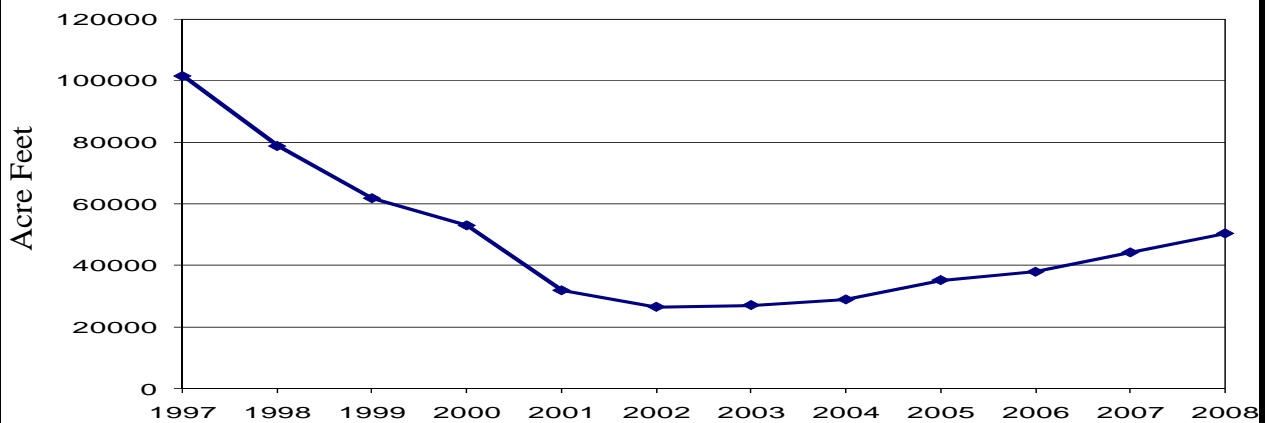
The 2008 white bass population appears excellent. There were large numbers small fish in 2007. These fish are still in the system and have grown to the 9-12 inch size class. We averaged approximately 43 fish per net. These fish should continue to grow and provide angling opportunities for several years. It may be necessary to stock white bass if the population starts to decline.



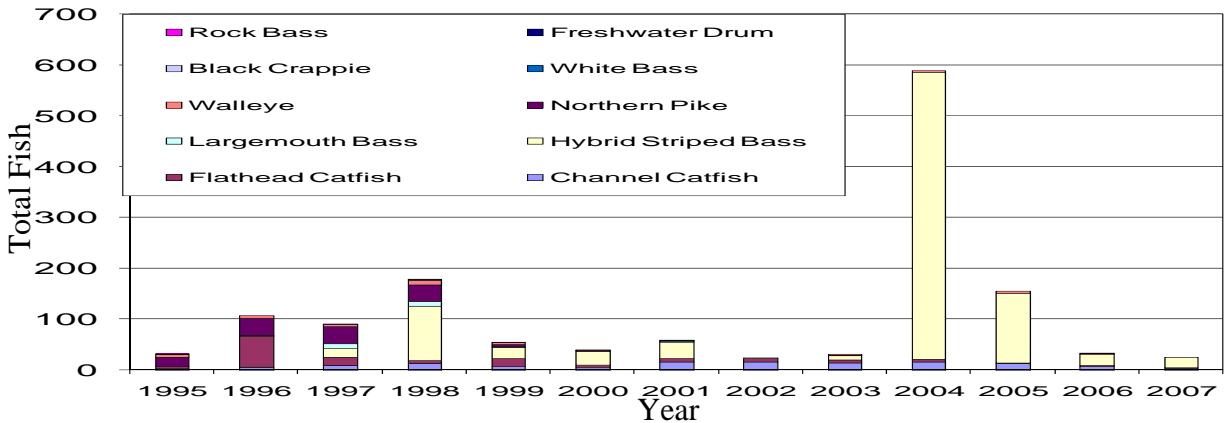
Average Annual Elevation, Swanson Reservoir 1997-2008



Average Storage, Swanson Reservoir 1997-2008



### Master Angler Awards, Swanson Reservoir 1994-2007



Water levels in Swanson are still low but have increased over the last few years. This is important to the fishery, not simply for more depth and surface area, but it also floods the terrestrial vegetation that has become established over the last 5-6 years. While the numbers of M.A. awards given may not necessarily represent the true number of large fish caught (but not reported), the information is useful for evaluating catch trends. Channel catfish and flathead catfish numbers remain similar to previous years. There was a huge increase in the numbers of wipers reported in 2004 but those numbers have returned to more normal levels. There were 4 channel catfish, 1 flathead catfish and 20 wipers reported in 2007

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