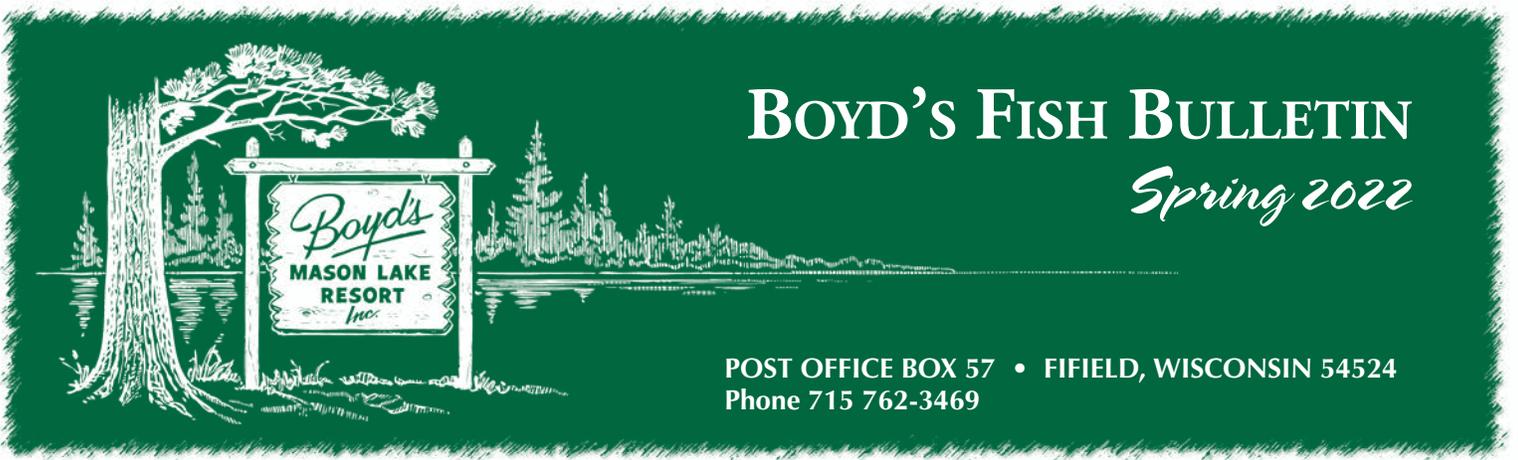


BOYD'S FISH BULLETIN

Spring 2022



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It's always a bit of a surreal feeling to sit down in the middle of winter, listen to the wind whip through the leafless trees, watch it kick up the thick fur of a fox sitting just outside the windows, and then to try and imagine that spring is just a few weeks away. Okay, maybe more than a few weeks away, but last year spring came early. Earlier than anyone I've talked to can remember. The ice was almost completely off our lakes before April, and the water temperatures had reached 50 degrees the first week of April.



With the water warming so quickly, walleye began spawning nearly two weeks earlier than usual and Aqua Tech's spring visits were moved forward accordingly. The Long Lake survey was conducted on April 8th followed by the Little Bass survey on April 11th. Both the spring surveys and fall recruitment assessments that Aqua Tech conducts utilize electrofishing as the method for sampling a target population. Through this process, six electrodes attached to two booms are extended off the front of the electrofishing boat and lowered into the water. When the electrodes are turned on, direct current electricity flows between them. Once in the electric field, fish are temporarily stunned and biologists can scoop them up and handle them without causing stress or injury. After the appropriate measurements are taken, fish are released and the collected data is then turned into reports that help give insight into population management. Though Aqua Tech was targeting walleye as the species of interest during the spring surveys, all fish in the area of the electrodes became temporarily stunned and this year almost every species from these two lakes was present along shore and easy to visually identify during the survey. As certain species prefer different temperatures, this was very unusual and it will be interesting to see if it has any impact on recruitment for various populations in the future.

During the spring spawn on Long Lake, Aqua Tech sampled walleye at a rate of 190 adults/hour. Of those, 15% were 15 inches or larger, which is down from the 23% that was found in 2019. Of course, a sample is never perfect, and we were happy to have sixteen walleye 20 inches or larger caught on Long Lake this past season. Honestly, the only thing that compares to catching the big one is being able to share the story and pictures of the catch with family and friends. There is something about fishing memories that transports everyone back to the boat, the dock, or the shoreline, and the excitement of the memory is contagious. When Gunther and Shari Bahlaj shared the story of the gorgeous 29 inch walleye Shari caught on Long Lake this fall, I felt like I stepped right back into the moment with them:

Shari put her first fish on the Boyd's blackboard since our first visit in 1973.

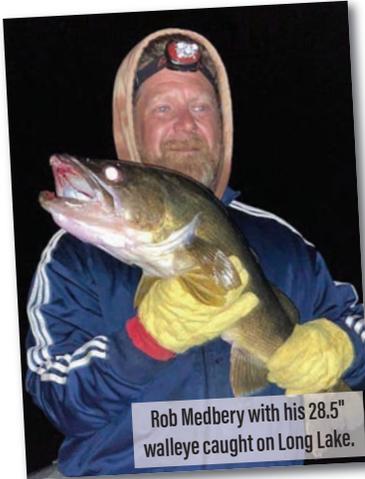
Shari caught the fish and deserves full credit. A #4 hook and minnow is what "did the deed." But, as she was on the bow end and we had two anchors out on the side the fish was hooked at, she ran into a bit of a problem when it (naturally) swam towards the first anchor line and started to take aim at the stern side line. At that point, she gave me her rod and I "coaxed" the fish around that next anchor line. Still not yet out of "the woods", the fish then took aim at the prop of the motor, something that was not going to be "allowed", at least on OUR watch. One of the last attempts at a get-a-way was to then try its "luck" by heading under and near the center point of the boat. But, we were able to muscle Ole Marble Eyes away from that hazard, while still keeping it close enough for a netting. Shari firmly grasped the net, and the "negotiations" began! After all kinds of evasive maneuvers, amazingly, the fish was still hooked and Shari skillfully brought the net deep enough into the water to successfully net the Pisces of her life. Of course, as per usual, once in the net AND boated, the hook simply fell out'a'da mouth without further persuasion!



By this time, the fish needed to be placed back into the water, ASAP. Luckily, it took only two (I counted) back and forth strokes until it dove down and away on its own.

Who now feels the urge to go look over their gear and triple check that everything is ready for the upcoming season?!

Not only did our anglers find some very healthy large adults, but on the other end of the spectrum, Aqua Tech observed that a large portion of our population is 13 inches to just under 15 inches. These fish will soon be entering into the harvestable size range, which is very good news for upcoming seasons, and we will be factoring this information into our future stocking plans.



In October, Aqua Tech returned to Long Lake and conducted our fall recruitment assessment. This particular assessment is specifically looking for young-of-the-year walleye and juveniles. Sadly, once again, no young-of-the-year were found, which leads us to believe that we still have no natural reproduction in Long Lake. Juvenile walleye from our 2020 plant were found at a rate of 12 fish/hour, which indicates good survival over the past year and we look forward to seeing lots of these fish continue to grow over the coming seasons and eventually reach harvestable size.

Jumping over to Little Bass Lake, this spring's sample was composed entirely of fish over 15 inches. 87% of the fish sampled were between 15-17 inches, just preparing to enter into the harvestable fishery. In 2019, 71% of the fish sampled were smaller than 15 inches and thanks to the adjusted size limits they have been given a chance to grow into a nice harvestable size. Additionally the body condition of the adults sampled was excellent and there is nothing tastier than a fat walleye!

With the spring survey showing the size structure of the Little Bass population shifting further into the teens, it's important that we keep an eye on juvenile recruitment (in our case the number of fish to survive and actively join the population after stocking) and population density. A metric that

helps give us insight into population density is fish/hour, which is calculated by an hour meter that records the actual time power is on in the water (when the sampling method is electrofishing). Depending on the survey objective, specific stretches of shoreline or "index stations" may be sampled, or a complete shoreline sample may be done. Regardless of the length of time a lake was sampled, total fish captured is divided by the total time power was on in the water. This spring, adults were sampled at a rate of 230 fish/hour, which is up from 195 fish/hour in 2019. To see such a significant increase in this particular parameter with all the fish still being in good body condition, is a very good indicator that we have increased population density through stocking while not exceeding the resources required to support the population. Just like the adults observed in the spring, the juveniles captured in the fall were in excellent body condition. Unfortunately, weedy shoreline conditions made fall sampling difficult, but juveniles stocked in 2020 were still caught at a rate of 4 fish/hour and ranged in size from 9-13 inches. Even though the condition of our stocked fish is exceptional, there is sadly still no evidence of natural reproduction on Little Bass.

With the information we have after years of surveys and research, we know that we need to continue to support our walleye fishery through stocking. Unfortunately, this has become more difficult in recent years because the DNR requires a specific genetic strain to be stocked in each watershed basin. In 2019 and 2020, Silver Moon Springs Hatchery had the genetic strain of walleye that we needed to stock Long and Little Bass Lakes. Sadly, this year, we were unable to find a hatchery with a strain of walleye deemed genetically appropriate to do any stocking this past fall. We cannot express how incredibly frustrating this is, but Aqua Tech and everyone at Boyd's remains committed to the health of our lakes and our fisheries. Thankfully, Jeff has found a hatchery that operates out of both Madison and Stevens Point and which should be able to raise acceptable strains of walleye and (hopefully) musky for us to stock next year. Jeff will be following up with the hatchery in the spring to confirm details regarding the number of genetically appropriate fish of both species that we need to have raised for our lakes.

Speaking of the DNR, it has been several years since any of the wardens have visited our lakes, so we expect to see them stop by during one of our upcoming seasons. If the DNR decides to pay our lakes a visit, it means that fishing licenses will be checked, along with stringers, coolers, and fish cleaning areas. The state and private regulations that exist on various waters throughout our area exist for a reason (even if it's sometimes frustrating). I want to take a moment to remind everyone to make sure the fish they are keeping fall within the legal size limits. I know it can be hard to remember all the various size limits, bag limits, and possession limits for various species in various waters, so here is a refresher on the walleye regulations for Long and Little Bass Lakes:

For 2022, please observe a daily bag limit of 3 fish (when one fish is over 24 inches) which is the total kept from both Long Lake and Little Bass Lake combined. This means that at the most, 3 walleye may be kept per day by each angler.

On Little Bass, walleye must be at least 18 inches long and up to but not including 20 inches in order to be kept. At the most, 2 walleye from this slot limit may be kept per day.

On Long Lake, walleye must be at least 15 inches long and up to but not including 20 inches in order to be kept. At the most, 2 walleye from this slot limit may be kept per day.

In order to keep a total of 3 walleye per day, one fish must be 24 inches or longer, and may be kept from either lake. At the most, one fish of this size may be kept per day.

Walleye from either lake's slot limits may be combined, but may not exceed two. An angler can keep a 15 inch walleye from Long Lake and an 18 inch walleye from Little Bass Lake, but the last walleye of the daily bag limit would need to be 24 inches or larger. An angler could not keep two 18 inch walleye from Little Bass and then keep a 15 inch walleye from Long Lake as their 3rd fish. One fish has to be over 24 inches.

Please observe a total possession limit of 5 walleye, which is the total kept from both Long Lake and Little Bass Lake combined.

Since committing this information to memory is probably not on everyone's Top 10 Most Exciting Things To Do List, please don't hesitate to ask for a copy of our "Things to Know" handout when you visit the office. This handy little sheet gives a brief synopsis of pertinent resort fishing and boating regulations. We also have booklets of all current Wisconsin fishing and water safety regulations. Yes, it's kind of dry reading material, but it's important for everyone to know so they can have fun safely and avoid fines on any and all Wisconsin waters.

As long as we're on the topic of fun Wisconsin regulations, I have some updates on our Dave Lake trout (which you need a special Wisconsin stamp to keep).

This spring we stocked 500 Kamloops and 400 brook trout in Dave Lake. The Kamloops stocked this year were 10 inches or larger and the brook trout were an average of 8-10 inches. Our overall reported catch numbers for the 2021 season were still down significantly from our pre-covid season reports, but they were up from last year. This year 231 fish were reported on our creel survey sheets, with 80 of those fish being released. Of the 155 trout harvested from Dave Lake, 74% were Kamloops and 26% were brook trout, with many of the Kamloops having grown to 20 inches or larger.



Bluegill also continue to thrive on Dave Lake. Our population density has increased slightly from 7 fish per net lift in 2020 to 10 fish per net lift in 2021, with the majority of new fish being younger fish under 7 inches. In 2020, 86% of the bluegill population was over 7 inches and 67% was over 8 inches. This past year, those numbers had changed a bit with 81% of the sampled population being over 7 inches and 55% being over 8 inches. As a result, we will be keeping our current daily bag limits and total possession limits in place to protect the size structure of the fishery. We will also be stocking additional forage fish to help with the growth rates and body condition of our current Dave Lake trout and bluegill populations.

Bluegill were also sampled on Dog Lake this spring and Aqua Tech's survey showed that 58% of our Dog Lake bluegill are currently between 7-9", which means that a nice portion of this fishery is harvestable. Additionally, we were very encouraged by the reports of large and healthy fish being caught by our guests. When asked about this year's bluegill fishing, Gary Staudacher, a long time guest had some pretty great experiences to share:

One thought I have about fishing at Boyds is that it has never been better than now. Back in the late 60's and thereafter, we never caught perch over 12 inches and certainly we did not catch bluegills out of Dog or Bass Lakes that were over 11 inches. The size of those fish are very close to Wisconsin records for Bluegills. Years ago you would catch a ton of small, stunted gills on Dog Lake, now you rarely see anything less than 9 inches. I have also seen some whopper bluegills in Long Lake, another rarity 30 years ago. To close, one thing that I notice is that those favorite fishing holes might not be so productive every year or ever. But there are always new ones to take their place, and the fun is in finding those spots. While you wait for bites you sure cannot beat the scenery!!!

Further encouraging news is that Aqua Tech noted a large young-of-the-year presence for our Dog Lake bluegill, which means that our population has healthy natural reproduction. To help keep our larger size classes happy and increase the chances of survival for our smaller bluegills, we continued with our annual stocking of 25 gallons (200 pounds) of fat head minnows as forage this fall. To be sure that we don't have too many fish competing for resources in this lake, we will not be stocking bluegill in the spring of 2022 and will evaluate the size structure this upcoming spring/early summer to determine stocking plans for 2023.

Not only did we receive positive reports from our Dog Lake bluegill anglers, but this fall everyone was delighted by the musky activity on Long Lake. In 2020 a total of 109 muskies were caught by our guests on waters in our area. Of those, 31 fish were from Long Lake. In 2021, 123 muskies were caught by our guests and 63 of those were from Long Lake (with 18 of those fish being caught after September 20th). The excitement over this fall's musky activity on Long Lake was palpable over the entire resort. While working in Roadside, I happened to walk back and forth past the office and hear snippets of an enthusiastic conversation between Peter Geuther, a veteran of Long Lake fishing for over 50 years, and some of our other guests. Those happy wisps of musky stories stayed lodged in my brain until I had a chance to give Peter a call this winter and get all the details of his most recent 5 day fishing trip:

I'm not kidding, this was the best Boyd's fishing trip I've ever had. We raised multiple muskies each morning and each afternoon with the exception of one day. It didn't matter what the weather was or what time of day it was or where we were on the lake. I've never seen anything like it. We probably raised about 20 fish and had 3 that just got away. Every fish John or I had on looked super healthy and the 43 incher I caught fought like you wouldn't believe. We even saw a little 4-5 inch guy that came up and just tagged the lure before swimming away.

In case anyone wants to know what the magic bait was last fall, Peter generously shared that all the action was on a Mepps #5 with a chartreuse dot on the spinner.





Guests weren't the only ones excited about the musky activity toward the end of last season. Aqua Tech was delighted to capture and release several yearling muskies during the walleye recruitment survey conducted on October 5th. While it remains to be seen if any of these fish will be recruited to the population, this is very good news regarding natural musky reproduction on the lake, especially as we continue the quest for suitable musky strains to stock.

Last year, I mentioned that 2020 was one of the most challenging years Boyd's has faced in our history. 2021 was different, but no less challenging. Between Covid and frustrating stocking regulations, monitoring our lakes and keeping our fisheries stocked and healthy this past year was definitely a challenge. Of course, seeing healthy fish and happy anglers made every second worthwhile. We would not be able to provide the quality fishing experiences we do without the help of our fish fund contributors, and we cannot thank these wonderful people enough for their assistance in helping us continue with our management practices and aspirations to provide the best fishing experiences possible for everyone.



None of the research, stocking, and providing of forage would be possible without the help of everyone who contributes to our Fish Fund. We extend our sincere appreciation to everyone who helps make our fish management program possible!

- *Mike and Linda Schwindenhammer*
- *Anna Castagnoli and Ciara Dandridge*
- *Dan Brown*
- *Ken Simpson in Memory of Derek Simpson*
- *John Breidster in Memory of Dan Beyler*
- *The Buecher Family in Memory of Tim Buecher*
- *Mary Sue Kreitzer in Memory of Art Kreitzer*
- *Dave and Ann Pateros*
- *Dave Price*
- *Barb Jeselnick*
- *John and Theresa Novotny*
- *Rudy and Arden Carlson*
- *Gail Sullivan in Memory of Art Kreitzer*
- *John and Chris Kunz in Memory of Art Kreitzer*
- *Tom Castagnoli*
- *Henry and Suzette Jaskie*
- *John Breidster*
- *Virginia Jones*
- *Mary Baribeau in Memory of Art Kreitzer*
- *Randy and Joan Rolfs in Memory of Art Kreitzer*
- *John Breidster in Memory of Bill Breidster*
- *Bob Bevill*
- *Gary and Jayne Studacher*
- *"The Goss Boys" in Memory of Joe Smagala*
- *Jeff and Edie Patterson*
- *Jack and Cassie Gurnon*

As always, we'd love to be able to include lots of guest photos with this letter. If you have a great Boyd's fishing photo or story that you would like to share, please email it to us at Boydsresort@gmail.com!

I hope that this report finds all of you happy, safe, and mentally preparing yourselves for another fishing season! Even though the ice is thick, the snow is deep, and the winds are cold, spring truly is just around the corner. We can't wait to see everyone when we open for our 2022 season on May 12.

Until then, best wishes from your family at Boyd's!

And because no newsletter or fishing report is complete without a picture of Gert, here you go!

