



Spring Fisheries Survey Summary Lac Courte Oreilles, Sawyer County, 2014

The Hayward DNR Fisheries Management Team conducted an electrofishing survey on Lac Courte Oreilles on May 30, 2014 to document the status of largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, and bluegill but also provided useful data on juvenile walleye. Eight miles were shocked throughout the lake. Quality, preferred, and memorable sizes referenced in this summary are based on standard proportions of world record lengths developed for each species by the American Fisheries Society.

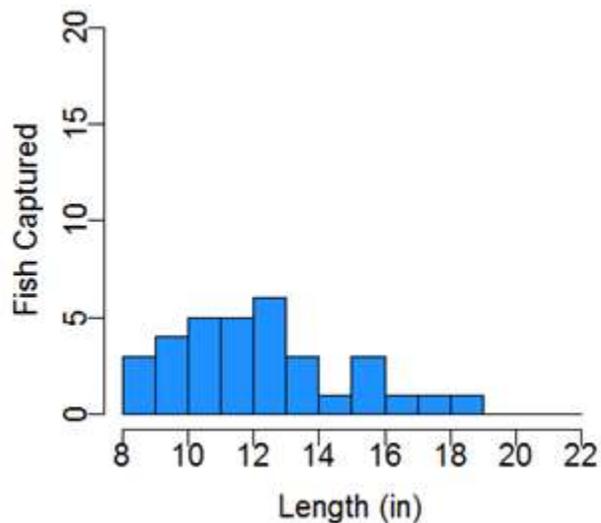
Description of Habitat and Survey Conditions

Lac Courte Oreilles is clear and deep with predominately sand and rock shorelines. However, there are several shallow muck-bottomed bays with extensive aquatic plant growth. Our survey was well timed for bass and bluegill and attempted to cover the full range of different habitat types present in the lake.

Largemouth bass



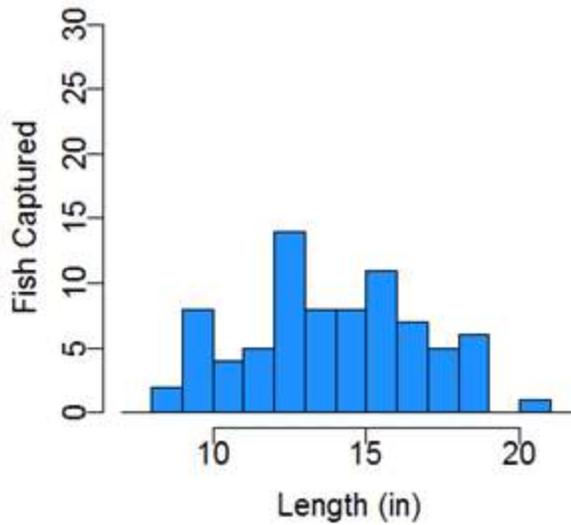
Captured 4 per mile \geq 8 inches	
Quality Size \geq 12"	48%
Preferred Size \geq 15"	18%



Smallmouth bass



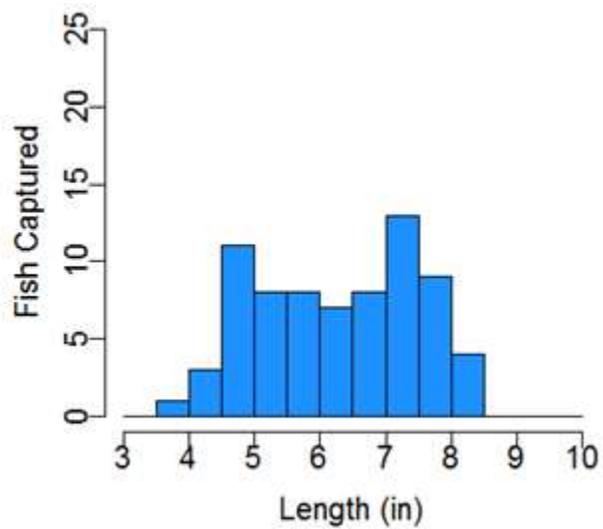
Captured 10 per mile ≥ 7 inches	
Quality Size ≥ 11"	82%
Preferred Size ≥ 14"	48%
Memorable Size ≥ 17"	15%



Bluegill



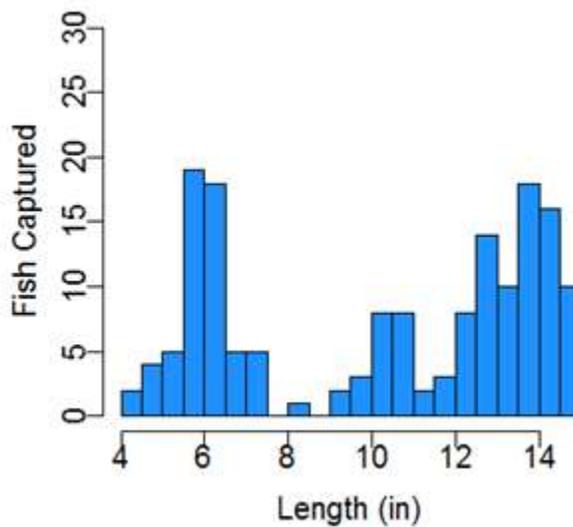
Captured 36 per mile ≥ 3 inches	
Quality Size ≥ 6"	57%
Preferred Size ≥ 8"	6%



Walleye (Juvenile)



Captured 8 per mile ≤ 10 inches
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Summary of Results

This survey was well timed for all target species. Excellent weather and superb volunteer help allowed us to shock 8 miles in one evening.

Largemouth bass were observed in relatively low abundance with most fish being less than 14 inches. Largemouth bass abundance has always been moderate in the shallow weedy bays but in recent years anglers have been reporting more small largemouth bass out on main lake points and bars. Our survey found some limited evidence to support those observations with fair numbers of largemouth captured outside of the traditional areas they occupy.

Smallmouth were more abundant and had better size than largemouth bass. Habitat in the main body of Lac Courte Oreilles is well suited for smallmouth bass with deep clear water and abundant crayfish. About half of the smallmouth in this survey were over 14 inches but only 15% were over 17 inches. Based on the habitat and success of smallmouth in nearby lakes there is an impression among anglers that this population is still not reaching its full potential. A regulation change proposal has been submitted to increase the minimum length limit to 18 inches and reduce the daily bag limit to 1 to try and improve size structure and provide more trophy opportunities.

Bluegill were captured at a relatively low rate but with above average sizes structure for the area. While most of Lac Courte Oreilles is not well suited for bluegill (sandy bare shoreline) the shallow weedy bays offer excellent habitat and are where most of the quality bluegill were observed. The bluegill population likely benefits from a healthy walleye population which appears to keep numbers in check allowing excellent growth, and in turn size, of remaining bluegill.

Juvenile walleye were captured during this survey as well. Several year classes are present in the system. These fish are the result of natural reproduction and should maintain this lake as an excellent walleye fishery in coming years.



Volunteer Todd Williamson and Fish Technician Scott Braden with a pair of nice Lac Courte Oreilles smallmouth.

Report by Max Wolter – Fisheries Biologist, Sawyer County
Survey conducted by Max Wolter, Russ Warwick (Fisheries Technician), and Scott Braden (Fisheries Technician)
Special thanks to volunteer Todd Williamson
Reviewed and Approved by Steve Avellemant

