

# Medicine Creek

## 2021 Survey Summary – GAME



PARKS –

Sean Farrier, Fisheries Biologist

Fish populations are sampled each fall at Medicine Creek Reservoir using gill nets, a method commonly used to sample fish such as walleye, white bass, channel catfish and wipers. Gill nets are set on approximately the same dates and locations each year to reduce variability.

Walleye catch remained under 2 per net and saugeye numbers dipped to under 2 per net in 2021. Reports were positive on the number of fish caught in the spring so there is not a concern on overall population strength at this time. Several factors could have affected net catch including unseasonably warm fall temperatures, lower water levels, and high catches of other species that could have saturated the nets. We will continue our alternate year stocking of walleye and saugeye in 2022 with 180,000 walleye fingerlings requested for late spring.

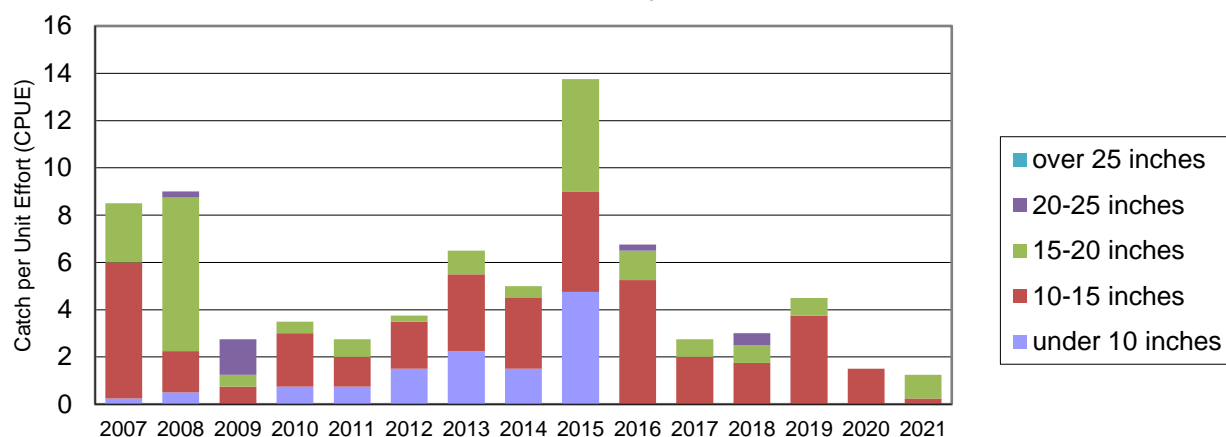
Wipers continue to be a part of our management plan at Medicine Creek. In 2021, we stocked fry after seeing high success rates with this stocking method at both Harlan County and Swanson Reservoirs. The initial results were positive with a large portion of wipers sampled being from the 2021 stocking. We hope to see more consistent recruitment from our wiper stockings by utilizing fry in the coming years. There are 275,000 wiper fry requested for spring 2022.

Medicine Creek continues to produce quality channel catfish for anglers. Biologists sampled just over 8 per net in 2021. Anglers need to be aware that blue catfish are present in Medicine Creek and are more strictly regulated than channel catfish. Proper identification is a must if anglers are going to harvest catfish. Blue catfish were sampled at over 2 per net in 2021 and will continue to grow and provide opportunities for anglers. There are 9,000 blue catfish requested for fall 2022.

In 2021, biologists began spring trap netting to gain a better understanding of Medicine Creek's crappie populations. In recent years, we have taken several phone calls concerning the size structure of crappie in Medicine Creek. This will be a multiyear study to evaluate the overall growth and age distribution of the population.

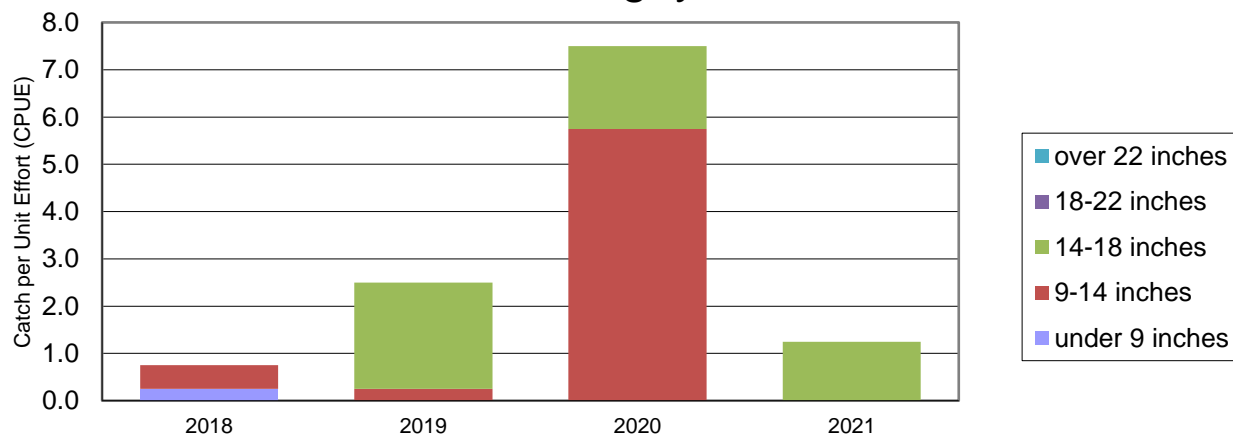
The following graphs show the average number of fish caught per net and the relative abundance of fish within several length categories. The text provides a brief explanation of the information shown in the graphs.

## Walleye



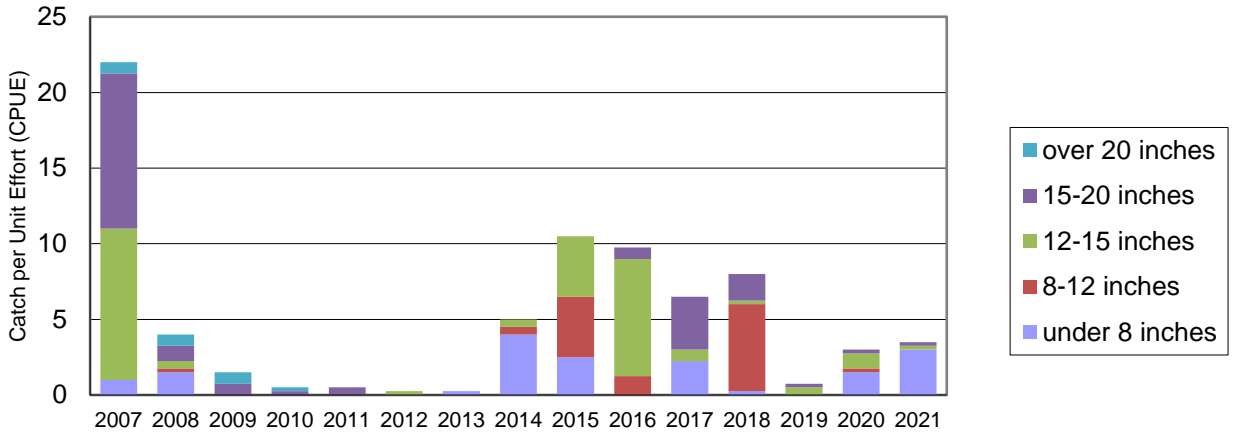
Walleye numbers remained under 2 per net in 2021. Size structure will provide anglers opportunities to harvest legal fish in 2022. Walleye will continue to be stocked on alternating years opposite of saugeye. The first year without a walleye stocking in Medicine Creek was 2019. There are 180,000 walleye fingerlings requested for late spring 2022.

## Saugeye



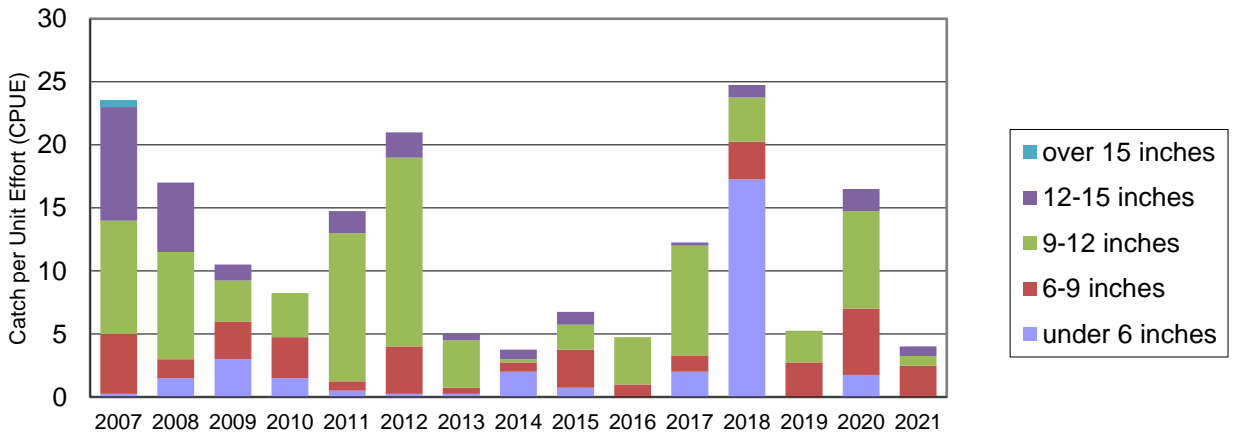
To take advantage of what should be suitable habitat, saugeye were introduced to Medicine Creek in 2017. They are managed the same as walleye so identification shouldn't concern anglers. After an excellent survey in 2020, saugeye catch dipped to just over 1 per net in 2021. Saugeye will continue to be stocked on alternating years opposite of walleye. There are no saugeye requested for 2022.

## Wiper



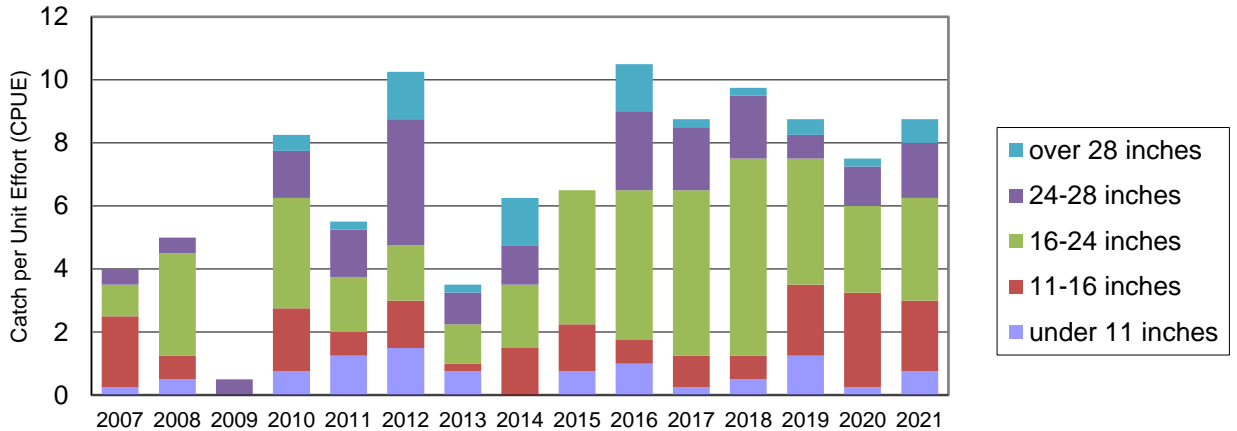
Wiper catch remained over 3 per net in 2021. Most of the fish sampled were from the initial 2021 fry stocking. This is a very encouraging sign for the future of this population. There are still adult fish available for anglers to catch but they could be difficult to find as the population rebounds. Our goal is to maintain more consistent year class strength by utilizing fry stockings. There are 275,000 wiper fry requested for spring 2022.

## White Bass



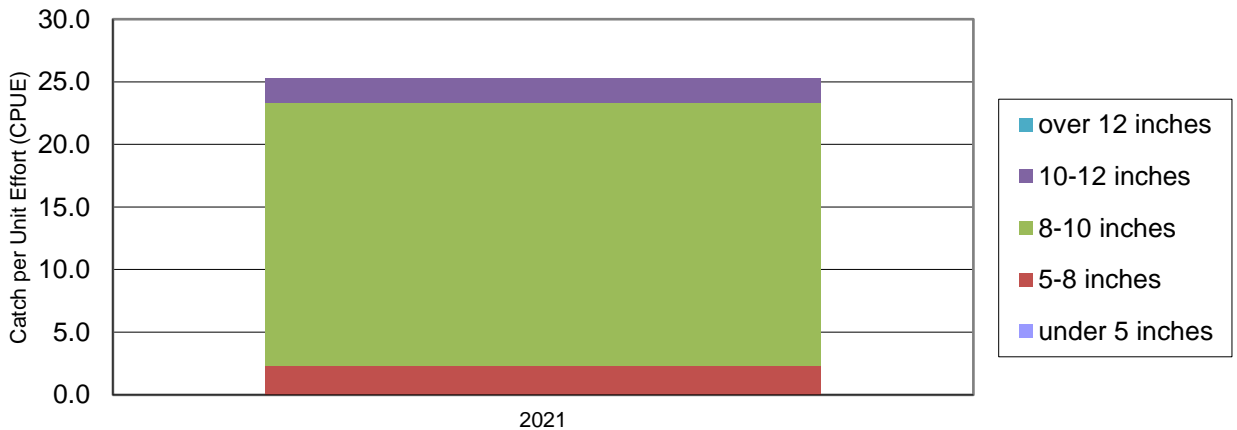
White bass numbers dipped to under 5 per net in 2021. White bass catch can be variable as historical data shows. After the strong survey in 2020, there is no concern with the population currently. There should be plenty of quality white bass still available for anglers to target in 2022.

## Channel Catfish



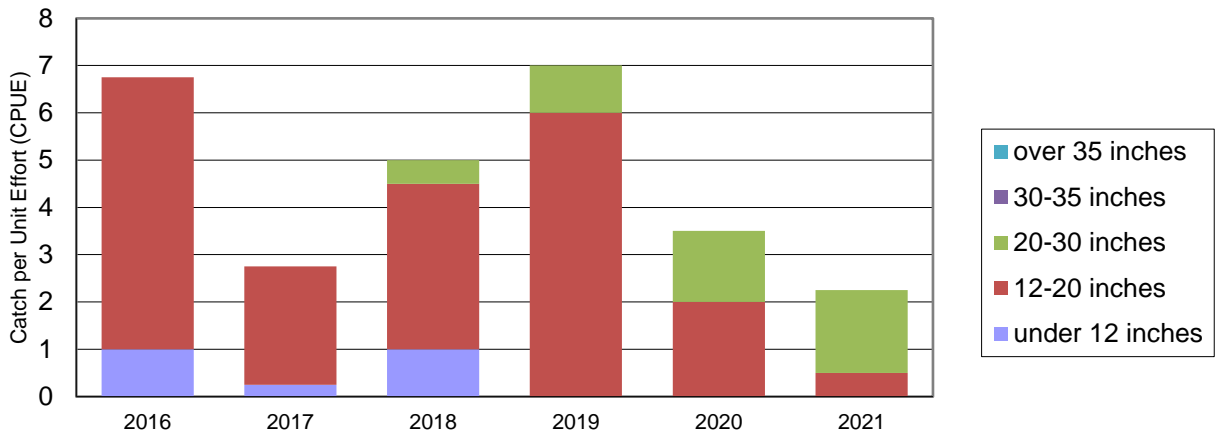
The channel catfish population remained stable with biologists sampling just over 8 per net in 2021. Channel catfish continue to maintain their population in Medicine Creek naturally. Size structure will provide anglers the opportunity to catch large trophy fish along side smaller ones for the frying pan. Any angler looking to harvest catfish at Medicine Creek needs to be aware that blue catfish are managed differently than channel catfish and need to be identified properly.

## Crappie



In 2021, a multiyear study began to gain a better understanding of crappie populations at Medicine Creek. The goal of the study is to track age and growth relationships in both black and white crappie to determine the overall health of the population. This information will be valuable in determining if we are properly managing the crappie population to provide the most opportunity for anglers.

# Blue Catfish



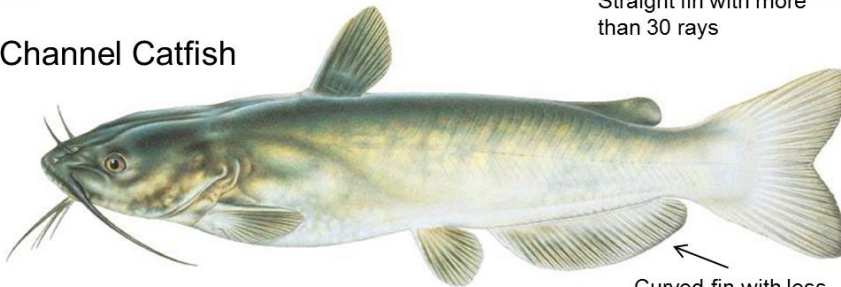
To provide anglers a trophy opportunity, blue catfish were introduced into Medicine Creek in 2015 and have been requested regularly since then. Biologists surveyed over 2 blue catfish per net in 2021. There are 9,000 blue catfish requested for fall 2022. Any angler looking to harvest catfish at Medicine Creek needs to be aware that blue catfish are managed differently than channel catfish and need to be identified properly.

Blue Catfish



Straight fin with more than 30 rays

Channel Catfish



Curved fin with less than 30 rays

Blue catfish are known to grow in excess of 80lbs and are a very popular species for some catfish anglers. It is important to point out that there is a **1 fish daily bag limit** for blue catfish statewide. Anglers need to take care to identify their catch before harvesting any catfish species at Medicine Creek. The most foolproof method to distinguish between the species is to look at the anal fin. Blue catfish have a straight anal fin with more than 30 rays while channel catfish have a curved anal fin with fewer than 30 rays. There are other cosmetic differences such as body shape, color, and spots but those differences can be misleading depending on the environment and individual fish.

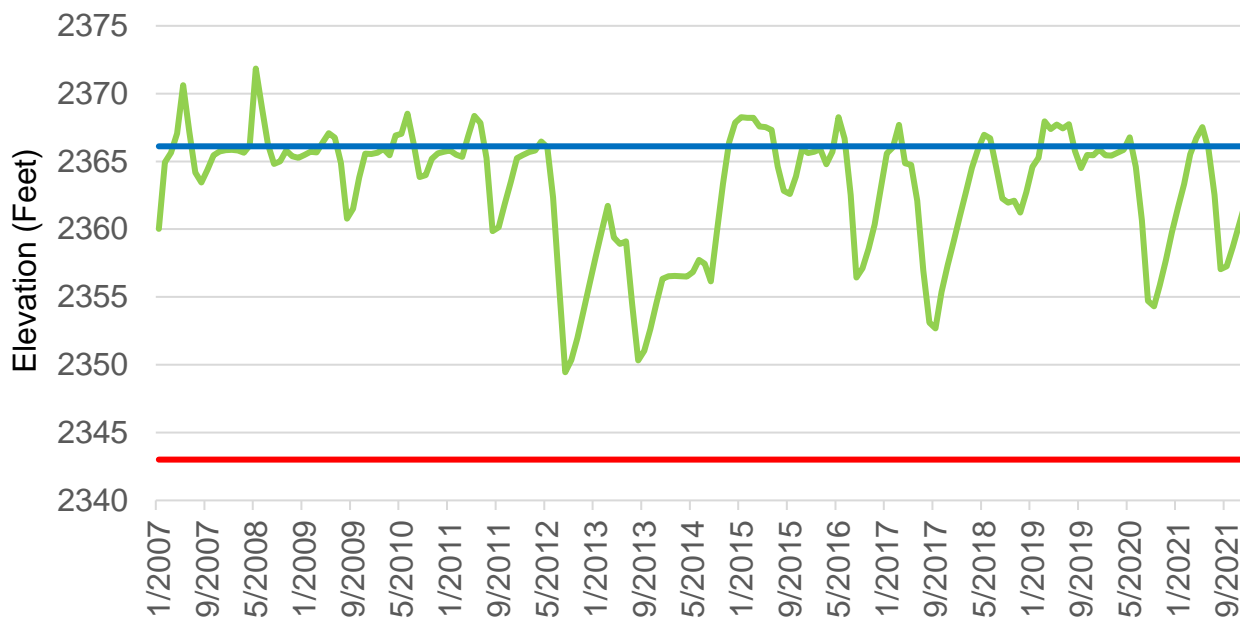
## Medicine Creek Reservoir Fish Stocking Summary

Year	Walleye	Wiper	Yellow Perch	Saugeye	Blue Catfish
2021		250,000 (fry)	59,902 (1.5")	180,430 (1")	5,620 (4")
2020	137,859 (1")	9,250 (1")			
2019		9,658 (1")		252,380 (1.25")	
2018	93,210 (1.25")	9,296 (1.25")			2,711 (12")
2017	92,622 (1.25")	9,336 (1.5")	59,939 (1.5")	129,980 (1.25")	3,500 (13")

Above is a table of fish stockings over the last 5 years at Medicine Creek Reservoir. The species stocked, number stocked, and fish size are presented in the table. Multiple species are stocked annually, and a comprehensive database of fish stockings can be found at the Nebraska Game and Parks website or by following the link below.

[Stocking Database](#)

End of Month Elevation, Medicine Creek Reservoir 2007-2021



Medicine Creek is the only Southwest reservoir that irrigates annually but also refills due to high inflows and the NCORPE stream augmentation flow. The graph above is a representation of monthly mean elevations. The dark blue line indicates the top of the conservation pool, the green line indicates the end of month elevation, and the red line indicates the top of the inactive pool. For current lake elevations visit this webpage:

[Current Elevation](#)



# STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!™

Prevent the transport of nuisance species.  
Clean all recreational equipment.

[www.ProtectYourWaters.net](http://www.ProtectYourWaters.net)

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) have reached Nebraska! Zebra mussels are currently established in Lewis and Clark Reservoir, Offutt AFB pond, and the Missouri River. Anglers and boaters should be on the look out for personnel performing boat inspections and decontaminations statewide. Please email: [ngpc.ais@nebraska.gov](mailto:ngpc.ais@nebraska.gov) or call 402-471-7602 to report any possible AIS sightings or for more information about AIS in Nebraska.

## Preventative Steps and Regulations

- It is unlawful for a boat to arrive at or leave any body of water in Nebraska with water other than from a domestic source except for fire-fighting purposes. Drain water before leaving an area
- It is unlawful for a boat or trailer to arrive or leave a launch area with any aquatic vegetation from that waterbody still attached. Boat blinds cannot use plants listed as invasive species or noxious weeds
- Wash mud off waders. Felt-sole waders are not allowed

## Nonresident Aquatic Invasive Species Stamp

Motorized watercraft registered outside Nebraska are required to purchase and display the Aquatic Invasive Species Stamp before launching from any Nebraska boat ramp. Stamps must be affixed on the starboard side toward the rear of the boat above the waterline. The fee for each stamp is \$18 dollars and includes the \$3 issuing fee. Stamps can be purchased online or at Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Offices.



Left: Zebra Mussel  
Right: Quagga Mussel