



White Perch Management and Fishing in Pennsylvania

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Goal: Maintain robust sport fisheries through preservation and enhancement of essential habitats and through harvest management of wild populations. Discourage anglers from introducing this species into waters where they do not occur.

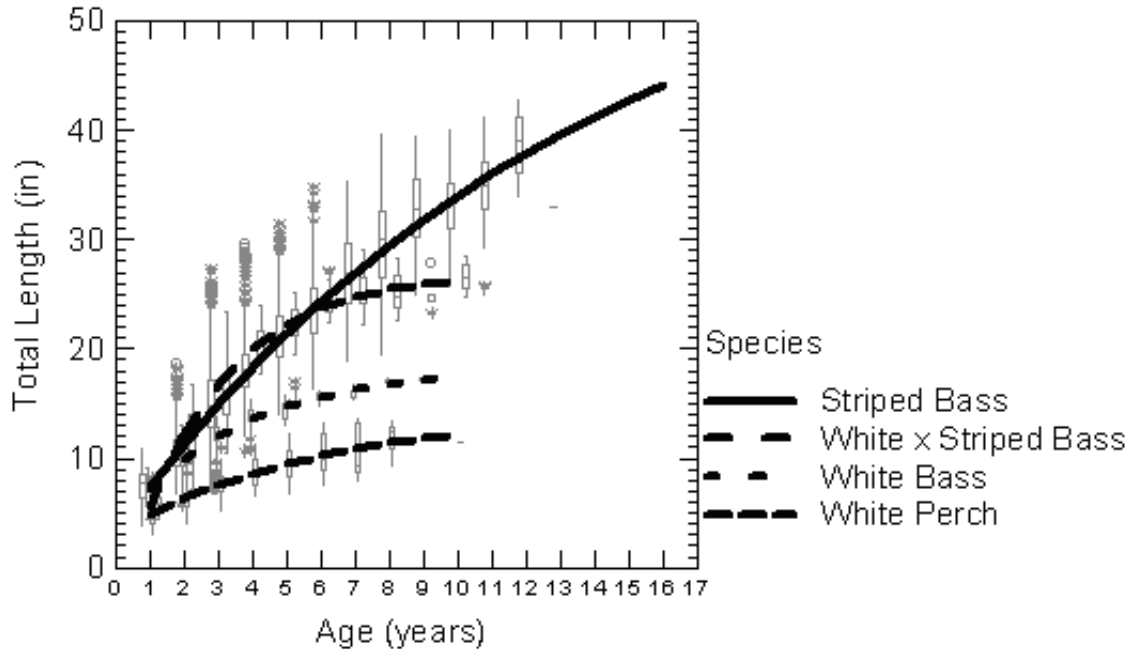
White perch are a freshwater or brackish water species (semi-anadromous) native to Pennsylvania's Atlantic slope drainage. Abundant in the lower Delaware River and Susquehanna River, the species has proliferated in some reservoirs in southeast Pennsylvania where they have been introduced. White perch have gained access to Lake Erie via the Welland Canal where they now rival abundance of native yellow perch. The first reported specimens from Lake Erie were taken by a commercial fisherman, Fred Ralph, from Erie, Pennsylvania in 1953. Based upon the number of year classes in experimental catches, white perch became self-sustaining in Lake Erie in the 1970's. Spawning in late spring or early summer, it is a species, if introduced into a reservoir or lake, that can quickly overwhelm established species and become a predominant panfish. Since the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission does not stock the species its appearance in several reservoirs in southeastern Pennsylvania were likely due to well intentioned anglers who introduced them. **We encourage anglers not to transport this species from one water to another to prevent unwanted proliferation.** Recently, white perch have been discovered in Raystown Lake, Lake Arthur, Edinboro Lake and in the Monongahela and Allegheny rivers. It is unsettling that the species has also found its way to Lake Lebofus, a natural lake within the aquatically diverse French Creek Drainage.

White perch spawn in May through June in a variety of habitats (vegetated, non-vegetated) under a broad range of conditions (slow or fast currents) (Sutton et al. 1996). In the non-tidal Delaware River spawning areas extend from Morrisville up-river to at least New Hope and spawning occurs throughout the tidal area (Sutton et al. 1996). In the Susquehanna River white perch are largely confined to the Conowingo Dam Pool.

All white perch populations in Pennsylvania are self-sustaining. Their prolific reproductive capacity has led to liberal harvest regulations. Inland regulations accommodate harvest of up to 50 white perch. The 50 panfish daily creel limit is a combined species creel limit, which includes white perch and a variety of other

species. No minimum size limit or seasonal restrictions apply. White perch represent Pennsylvania's smallest fish in the temperate bass family. Biologists regularly sample fish populations to measure their density and size structure; habitat characteristics of the waterway under study are also noted. In association with these evaluations growth of white perch is examined by measuring length, weight, and taking a scale sample to determine age. In Pennsylvania an 8 inch white perch is 3.4 years old and weighs 0.3 pounds, and a 10 inch white perch is 5.7 years of age and weighs 0.5 pounds (Fig. 1). We have tabulated average ages and weights for a variety of lengths of white perch in Pennsylvania (Table 1). Anglers find these tables useful in approximating the weight and age of their catch.

Figure 1. Average length of white perch (March – October), striped bass (March-June), white x striped bass (March-June), and white bass (March –June), and collected by Fisheries Biologists in assessment gear in Pennsylvania.



Inches	Pounds	Years	Inches	Pounds	Years
4	0.1	0.4	9.5	0.4	5.0
4.5	0.1	0.7	10	0.5	5.7
5	0.1	1.1	10.5	0.6	6.4
5.5	0.1	1.4	11	0.7	7.3
6	0.1	1.7	11.5	0.8	8.2
6.5	0.1	2.1	12	1.0	9.3
7	0.2	2.5	12.5	1.1	10.7
7.5	0.2	3.0	13	1.2	12.5
8	0.3	3.4	13.5	1.4	14.9
8.5	0.3	3.9	14	1.6	19.1
9	0.4	4.5			

In addition to measuring biological statistics associated with age and growth, catch and harvest by anglers is tabulated from various waterways to develop management plans that guide white perch management plans. Information derived from these creel

surveys yields information of interest to anglers since seasonal peaks in catch occur for most species. White perch can be caught most any time of year, generally though highest catch rates occur on rivers in spring (Fig. 3). In large reservoirs in Pennsylvania highest catch rates have been observed to occur in fall (Fig. 2). With fishing destinations identified from our GIS maps and information describing times of year catch rates are greatest, white perch anglers need only select an effective bait or lure. A simple worm and bobber combination is effective. Small jigs and spoons are attractive baits as well. Grubs are a popular live bait in winter. The abundance of white perch in many waters across the state should not deter anglers from keeping fish for the table. Anglers catching white perch should not transport them to another water for release.

Figure 2. Average catch per angler hour of white perch from large size Pennsylvania reservoirs.

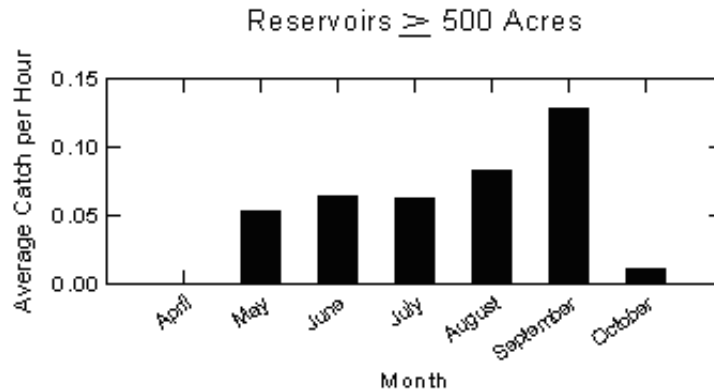
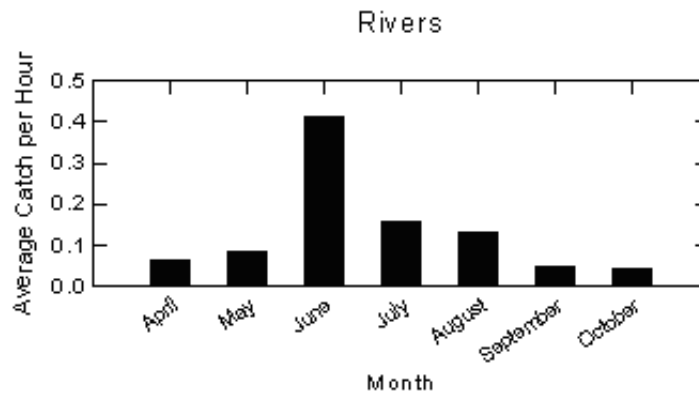


Figure 3. Average catch per angler hour of white perch from Pennsylvania rivers.



References

- Sutton, C. C., J. C. O'Herron, and R. T. Zappalorti. 1996. The scientific characterization of the Delaware Estuary. The Delaware Estuary Program (DRBC Project No. 321) Trenton. New Jersey. USA