Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission Biologist Report

Pymatuning Reservoir

Crawford County

2025 general lake survey

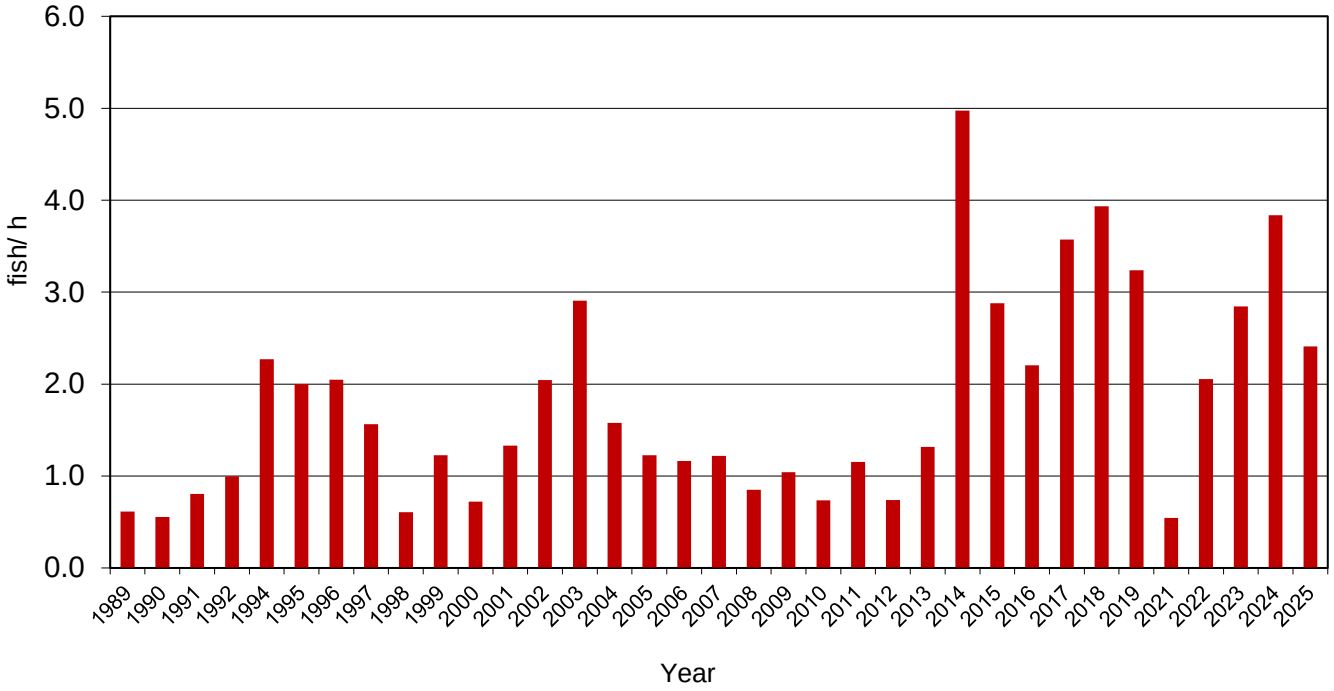
One of many male Walleyes captured in our trapnets from Pymatuning Reservoir.

Spring Trap Net Survey

Fisheries Management Area 1 performed the annual Walleye population assessment for Pymatuning Reservoir from April 4th to April 17th, 2025. We recorded catch from 41 overnight trapnet sets totaling 933 hours of soak-time. This survey caught 25 different fish species totaling 17,727 fish (including 11,411 forage fish). A total of 2,248 Walleyes were captured, with an average size of 17.8 inches. This survey yielded Walleye catch rates (catch per net hour or fish/ h) of 2.4 fish/ h. The 2025 Walleye catch rate, when compared to historic surveys since 1989 (Figure 1), shows a healthy population that is well above the average catch rate. Large numbers of legal-length Walleyes remain available to anglers in Pymatuning Reservoir in 2025.

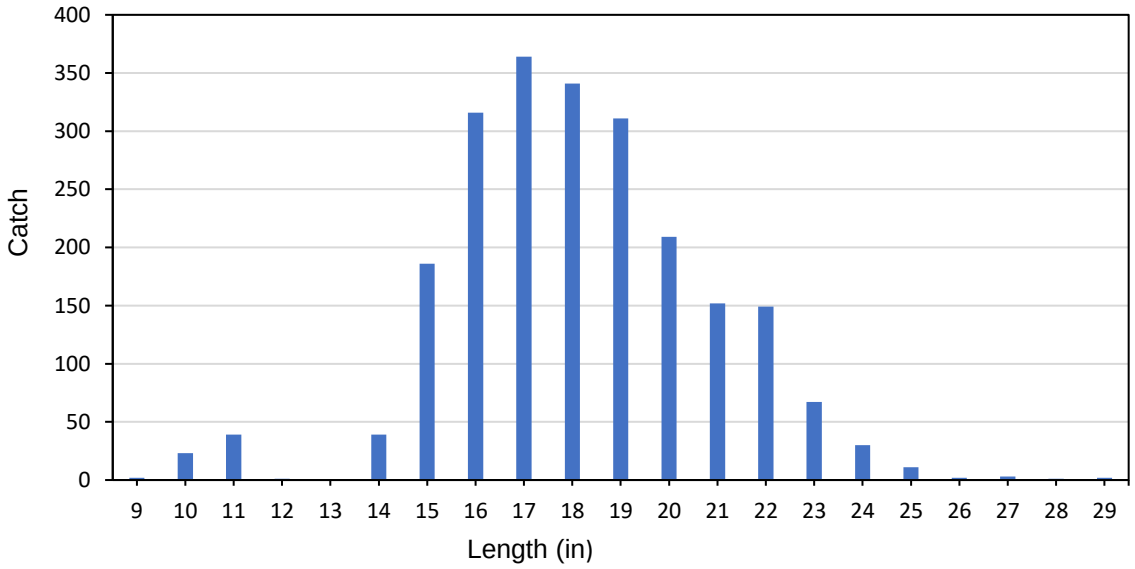
A pre-spawn female Walleye.

Figure 1: Walleye catch per trap-net hour (fish/ h) in Pymatuning Reservoir from 1989-2025.



Size structure of the Pymatuning Walleye population remains excellent, with 95% of the catch being composed of quality, legal-length fish (Figure 2). Very large Walleyes up to 29 inches long are available to lucky anglers.

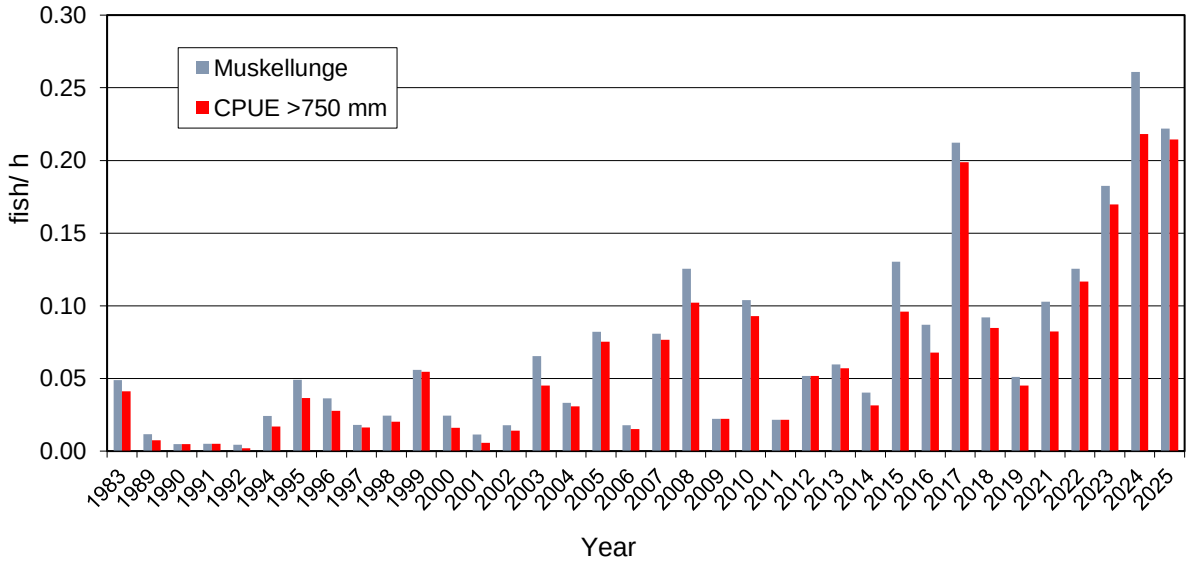
Figure 2: Length-frequency distribution of Walleyes from Pymatuning Reservoir, 2025.



Area Fisheries Manager Tim Wilson with a Pymatuning Muskellunge.

Muskellunge catch was high again in our 2025 trap net survey, with catch rates dropping slightly from last years' all-time high for the lake (Figure 3). Almost every Muskellunge caught this spring was greater than 750 mm (30 inches)with 22% of individuals exceedeing 40 inches. The longest Muskellunge captured was 50.8 inches and the heaviest weighed 39 pounds. With high numbers of quality-length and longer Muskellunge, Pymatuning Reservoir remains a premier location for targeting these prized game fish.

Figure 3: Muskellunge catch per trap-net hour (fish/ h) in Pymatuning Reservoir from 1989-2025.



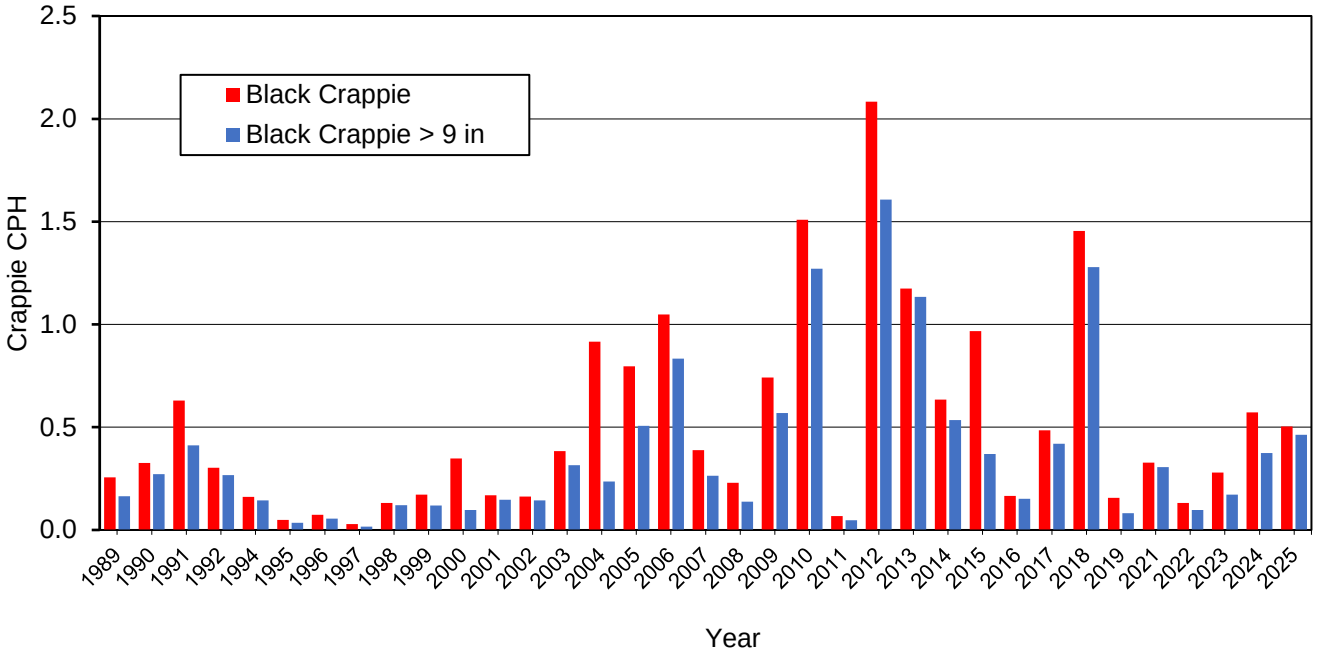
Many nice Yellow Perch are available in the lake, such as this 13-inch fish.

Along with Walleye and Muskellunge, other fish populations provide great fishing opportunities in Pymatuning Reservoir. Good numbers of quality-length Yellow Perch continue to provide a productive fishery. Bluegill abundance remains on an upward trend since 2018. Black Crappie catch was similar to last year, showing a steady increase from the low catches in 2019 and 2022 (Figure 4). Size structure of the Black Crappie population is excellent with an average length of 10.2 inches (Table 1). Numerous Channel Catfish, including individuals up to 30 inches, provide a chance to catch large, hard-fighting fish.

Table 1: Popular fish species, number caught (n), average length, and maximum length during trapnet survey of Pymatuning Reservoir, spring 2025.

Species	n	Avg. Length (in)	Max. Length (in)
Channel Catfish	554	19.2	30
Muskellunge	207	35.9	50
Bluegill	487	6.4	9
Black Crappie	469	10.2	14
Yellow Perch	644	7.4	13
Walleye	2,248	17.8	29

Figure 4: Black Crappie catch per trap-net hour (fish/ h in Pymatuning Reservoir from 1989-2025.



This pair of 12–13-inch Black Crappies are an example of the quality crappie fishing available.

Other fish species of interest were captured during the spring 2025 survey (Table 2). Brown Bullheads remain present in catchable numbers and are underexploited. Bowfin up to 29 inches long may surprise anglers with a hard fight. Spottail Shiner, Gizzard Shad, and Alewife, the main forage species in the lake, are extremely numerous. This could lead to challenging fishing since food sources for game fish are so readily available, but also supports increased growth rates.

White Perch numbers rose rapidly, after a steady increase since their discovery in Pymatuning Reservoir in 2017. It is important to avoid spreading fish and other aquatic organisms from one waterbody to another to prevent such unwanted introductions. Another introduced species, the Flathead Catfish, made an appearance in our nets for the first time in 2025 after several years of angler-reported catches.

Table 2: Other fish species and number caught (n) during trap-net survey of Pymatuning Reservoir, spring 2025.

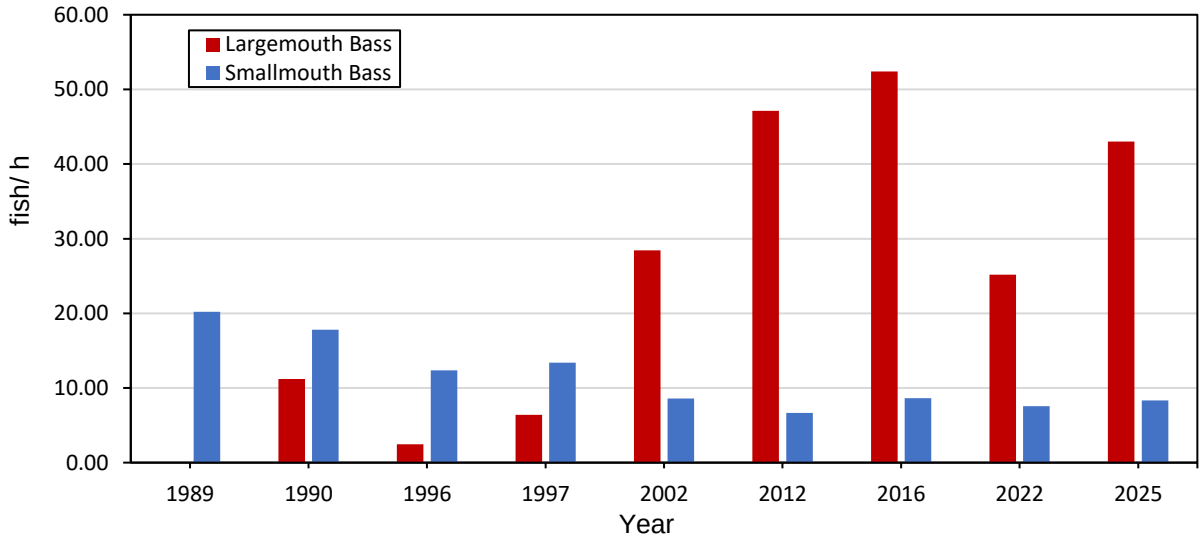
Species	n	Species	n
Bowfin	14	Yellow Bullhead	42
Alewife	4,298	Brown Bullhead	123
Gizzard Shad	5,543	Flathead Catfish	2
Spotfin Shiner	1	White Perch	1,507
Common Carp	34	White Bass	18
Golden Shiner	55	Rock Bass	2
Emerald Shiner	3	Green Sunfish	1
Spottail Shiner	1,515	Pumpkinseed	88
Quillback	94	Warmouth	1
White Sucker	2	Logperch	1

A 39-inch Flathead Catfish, one of two caught from Pymatuning trap nets this spring.

Spring Black Bass Night Electrofishing Survey

Fisheries Management Area 1 staff conducted night electrofishing surveys for Largemouth Bass and Smallmouth Bass on the nights of May 13, 14, and 15, 2025. Eighteen 20-minute runs were performed for a total effort of six hours of electrofishing, yielding a catch rate of 51.33 fish/h. This catch rate is well above average and an increase from our last bass survey in 2022, showing that Pymatuning Reservoir continues to provide good Largemouth Bass fishing (Figure 5). The biggest Largemouth Bass captured was 21.4 inches long and weighed 6.7 pounds. Smallmouth Bass up to 18 inches were also captured, but numbers are low relative to Largemouth Bass.

Figure 5: Black bass electrofishing catch per hour (fish/h) at the Pymatuning Reservoir from 1989-2025.



Fisheries Biologist Aide Lindsay Wilson with the biggest Largemouth Bass of the survey.