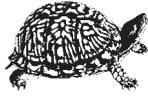




Monthly Report

www.mefishwildlife.com

284 State St., 41 SHS, Augusta, ME 04330 207-287-8000



November, 2015

RESEARCH & ASSESSMENT SECTION

Trouble by the bucketful. the cost of releasing goldfish into the wild - *Written by Tyler Grant, Fish Research Group*

It seems odd to think of the humble goldfish as anything but an innocuous little aquarium pet, but when released into the wild they can quickly become a big problem for fisheries managers.

Common goldfish are a member of the carp family, and native to central Asia, China, and Japan. They are well documented omnivores, eating everything from fish eggs and insects to aquatic vegetation, and given the right conditions are prolific breeders. They can survive very poor water conditions and freezing temperatures in the winter.

Given the right conditions and plenty of room, then can easily reach twelve inches in length, and have been documented up to sixteen inches. Their ability to multiply quickly and their tolerance for a variety of water conditions make them a very serious invasive species. When introduced into a favorable ecosystem, their numbers can quickly expand to exhaust all available resources. For these reasons, goldfish are restricted to indoor aquariums only, and cannot be kept in outdoor ponds or tanks.

Goldfish still find their way into ponds all over the state of Maine. They are most commonly found in small ornamental ponds in parks, golf courses and school or office campuses, but occasionally they will turn up in small, natural ponds. The most common cause of the introductions is a pet owner who can no longer take care of an aquarium fish and decides to let it go free rather than kill it or find a new home for it. It is important to note that this is illegal, and can carry the same penalty as stocking any other fish species into an inland water.



The various color patterns of goldfish. The bright orange "fancy" color quickly changes during successive generations in the wild to a more olive gold coloration, making the goldfish less visible to predators. All of these fish are from the same pond, and were introduced only two years prior.

Whenever one of these stocking events is detected, fisheries staff must quickly mobilize to determine the level of threat that the introduction will pose to the immediate ecosystem, and develop a plan to remove the illegally introduced fish. In small ponds, this most often results in using a chemical treatment to kill all the fish in the pond. This treatment is not easy, and it is not cheap, and of course, it results in the total removal of all the fish species in a pond. It also ties up a significant portion of time that fishery managers could be using elsewhere.

Keeping aquarium fish like goldfish is a fun and educational hobby, but like all pet ownership it comes with a responsibility. If you can no longer care for your fish, find someone who wants them, or if nothing else, call us and we can provide some options for the safe and humane disposal of unwanted aquarium fishes. Dumping them in a pond is not a solution, but can be the start of a much bigger problem.



Fisheries staff prepares to add rotenone to a small pond where goldfish were found.

The land owner drained much of the water to allow easier access. To safely apply the chemical, personal protective equipment must be worn by certified professionals administering the treatment.



Two years after the initial introduction, this photo shows the goldfish that could be easily removed from a small private pond after the rotenone treatment.

The largest goldfish were approximately 8" long. A pocket multitool was placed on the plastic for scale. It is expected that 70% of the total number of fish will sink after the rotenone treatment, making this only about 30% of the total number of fish in the pond.

INFORMATION CENTER

In October, the front office of the Department received and replied to (approximately):

- 5,271 Phone calls
- 1,867 Emails
- 409 Walk-ins



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Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife

Swan Island

Maine Wildlife Park

MAINE WARDEN SERVICE

A memorial was placed in honor of Maine Game Wardens Lyman O. Hill and Charles W. Niles by several game wardens in the Machias area. Both Hill and Lyman were shot and killed in 1886, Maine's first two game wardens to die in the line of duty. Shown here at Fletcher Field Memorial (left to right) are Sgt. Allan Gillis, Game Wardens Alan Curtis, Rick Ouellette, Joseph Bailey, Jim Fahey, and Dave Georgia. The Memorial is located in Township 36 off the Stud Mill Road.



Game Wardens Cody Louder, Eric Blanchard, Deputy Warden Harry Wiegman and Sergeant Tim Spahr seized four illegally possessed snakes from an apartment house in Biddeford. One snake, an Albino Burmese Python is illegal in Maine and also on the Federal restricted species list. This snake weighed 80 pounds and was 11 feet long. Game Warden Cody Louder shown in photo.



Game Warden Charles Brown reported that on Saturday, October 17th brought the first measureable snowfall in Southern Aroostook County. Some of the area received about four inches of wet snow. Anyone that could find birds to hunt on that day found they stuck out like a sore thumb.

Game Wardens Kim Bates, Camden Akins, Jarrod Herrick, Harry Wiegman, and Sgt. Glenn Annis worked on a triple moose kill near Canada Falls Lake.



RETIREMENTS & NEW EMPLOYEES

On October 1, after 30 years with Inland Fisheries and Wildlife including the last six as the first female Deputy Commissioner, Andrea Erskine called it a career.

"I have been most fortunate to have had all of the opportunities that working here has presented, from stripping fish eggs to holding bear cubs along with many others, my "dash" is extremely full", said Andrea. "My hope is that, along the way, I somehow made a difference in your lives as well. I will be forever grateful for the experience and hope that my next chapter can be as rewarding and fun!"

Good luck to Andrea, and here's hoping that retirement brings her lots of fun!



Timothy Peabody of Northport was sworn in as Deputy Commissioner of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife on Monday, October 26, 2015.

Tim's background includes a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Science with a concentration in Fisheries from Unity College and a Master's Degree from the University of Southern Maine in Public Policy and Management. He had 21 years of service with the Maine Warden Service with the last 6 of those years as Chief Warden. Tim retired from the Department in 2004 and worked as the Center Director of the Center for Natural Resource Management and Protection at Unity College until 2014.

Photo: Deputy Commissioner Tim Peabody (left) with his wife Barbara and Commissioner Chandler Woodcock at Tim's swearing-in ceremony.

FISHERIES & HATCHERIES DIVISION

Nesowadnehunk Lake Brook Trout Project - *Written by Nels Kramer, Regional Fisheries Biologist, Penobscot Region*

Back in December of 2013, I wrote a short report documenting our efforts at Nesowadnehunk Lake to acquire an additional source of brook trout eggs, primarily for stocking a handful of waters in and around Baxter State Park. I relayed that in 1990, then Hatchery Superintendent Dave Locke requested that we provide the hatchery system with some eggs from a population of wild strain brook trout for testing both in the hatchery environment and performance in the wild after stocking. At that time the Maine hatchery system was using a domesticated strain of brook trout (Maine Hatchery Strain) and there was interest in exploring the use of a native strain from Maine.

We initiated a fall trapnet operation in 1991 to acquire sufficient eggs for a strain evaluation for replacement of the Maine Hatchery Strain in ponds with adequate habitat to hold trout over from year to year. Eggs from Nesowadnehunk brook trout were taken and utilized in the hatchery system until 2000 when they were replaced with the Kennebago Strain, another native strain of brook trout from western Maine.

There was continued interest by Baxter State Park staff to utilize a more local "native strain" of brook trout for use in the Park. Nesowadnehunk Lake is partially contained within the Park on the western border, and the outlet (Nesowadnehunk Stream) flows through the south end of the park and into the West Branch of the Penobscot River immediately below Nesowadnehunk Falls. Many of the more famed and cherished Park waters drain directly into Nesowadnehunk Stream, including Daicey Pond, Kidney Pond, Abol Pond, Grassy Pond, Rocky Pond, Little Rocky Pond, Windy Pitch Pond, Foss and Knowlton Pond, Katahdin Stream, Lost Pond, and Jackson Pond.

We were able to capture and spawn a total of 32 female brook trout in the fall of 2013 yielding 14,100 eggs. The eggs were fertilized on shore with the milt from 11 male brook trout for immediate transport to Cobb Fish Hatchery in Enfield. In the fall of 2014 we were again able to strip 21 females for another 13,335 eggs to utilize in the hatchery for the same purpose.



Year-old Nesowadnehunk brook trout from a pond in Baxter State Park..

The eggs taken in 2013 hatched over the winter of 2014 and the fry were raised through the summer, and the first fall fingerlings were stocked in September and October of 2014. The first Nesowadnehunk Strain fall fingerlings went out of the hatchery at approximately 3 to 5 inches long, and the following May additional spring yearlings were stocked at approximately 6 inches long. Size at stocking can be very important, especially when the trout are stocked in waters with predators such as bass, perch and pickerel.

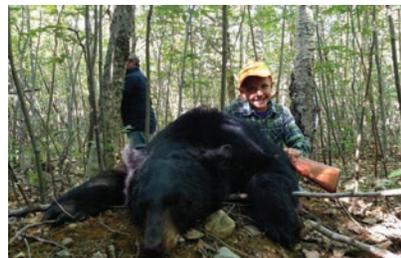
Fortunately, none of those predators exist in the waters receiving these fish, and most of the waters stocked with this native strain of brook trout are devoid of any other fish species.

This past July and August, we sampled a number of waters both inside and out of Baxter State Park that received those first stockings of Nesowadnehunk Strain fall fingerling brook trout. While we were a bit apprehensive about how much growth this initial stocking of this wild strain would have acquired in less than a year after being stocked at such a small size, our fears were quickly alleviated when we checked our nets. In some instances, we documented 1-year old brook trout that were stocked at 3.5 inches long in October that ranged in length from 9.1 to 10.6 inches long with condition factors well over expectations. In one of the ponds sampled in the Park, these fish were stocked weighing on average ½ ounce and had a mean weight the following July of almost half a pound, more than 20 times their weight at stocking. An astounding amount of growth in just nine months in the wild!

We will be going back this November to acquire additional eggs for transport to our Cobb Hatchery in Enfield to continue this small but important program to provide a local native strain of brook trout for use in Baxter State Park. There are always challenges initially with any new strain of fish in a hatchery environment, but we do have a solid history with the Nesowadnehunk strain, both in the hatchery environment and after stocking in the wild. Initial results of this latest strain evaluation are very encouraging and we are very optimistic, but we'll continue to follow-up on these populations after stocking.



Adult male brook trout from Nesowadnehunk Lake in full spawning color.



INFORMATION & EDUCATION

Trap netting at Rangeley Lake - *Written by Bonnie Holding, Director of Information & Education*

October 30 was not a day for the faint of heart in Oquossoc, Maine. I joined Liz Thorndike and Bob VanRiper, biologists out of our Strong office for a little trap netting. It was a typical fall day, spitting snow with high winds and just plain cold, but, I did get to see the biologists in action.

The trap nets were set out far enough that it required a boat to reach them, so off we went. With lots of fish in the nets, Liz and Bob worked quickly to get them out and into a big barrel full of water. After bringing the fish into shore, they put an anesthetic in a tub of water. Liz or Bob would then scoop a net full of fish and put them into this tub. By anesthetizing the fish, it allows for quick handling and less stress on the fish as they gathered their data. Liz began by putting one of the salmon on her board for measurement, then weighed, marked and returned it to the water, all in about 30 seconds.

Not only did they record weight and length of fish, they also took note of injuries from hooks. When asked, they said that depending on the severity of the injury, it can impact the growth of the fish. Minor injuries from hooks usually have no long term effects, however, many injuries prevent fish from foraging at their normal levels and this can have a significant impact on overall growth of a fish.

If the fish was a wild salmon, they would take a scale sample. A scale can tell us current age, number of years spent in stream before dropping into the lake, number of times the fish has spawned and at what ages the fish spawned. Also, injuries from hooks, if severe enough can be observed while interpreting the scales.

I asked questions of course and got some good answers, like, why trap net? Liz said the trap netting of Rangeley Lake is important because the Department is currently supplementing the population with hatchery fish and there is a delicate balance between the number of salmon and the food source. Trap netting gives us the opportunity to look at a large percentage of the spawning salmon population and monitor wild cohorts along with returning hatchery age classes.

I also asked what the overall result of this sampling might be, and Liz said that they adjust stocking rates annually based upon the data gathered during trap netting. If the data shows a high percentage of wild fish or poor condition factors due to a low forage base we would decrease or cease stocking.

There were some nice fish gathered, and I for one, wondered where they were when I was fly fishing that area in late September!



Becoming an Outdoors Woman in Maine

Fall Intro Skills Weekend at Bryant Pond 4-H Camp & Learning Center

BOW held its annual three day fall skills workshop October 9-11. A wide variety of classes were offered throughout the weekend and fun was had by all! Special thanks to all of the volunteer instructors & speakers who joined us throughout the weekend.

The winter skills workshop schedule will be out soon and will take place February 26-28, 2016. Please contact Britt Humphrey at brittany.humphrey@maine.gov with any questions.



OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

- The Commissioner attended the annual Sportsman's Congress on October 19th at the York County Fish & Game Club in Kittery.
- The Commissioner and several staff members attended the Landowner/Land User of the Year Awards Ceremony on October 20th at the Augusta Civic Center. Congratulations to the award winners!
- On October 26th Timothy Peabody was sworn into office and began his role as Deputy Commissioner. Tim's previous employment with IFW included 21 years of service with the Maine Warden Service with the last 6 years as Colonel. If you are in Augusta feel free to stop by and say hi and welcome back!
- Commissioner Woodcock and Deputy Commissioner Peabody attended the annual fallen officers tribute at the Fallen Officers Memorial in Augusta.
- The Commissioner attended the York County Fish and Game sportsman's forum in Lyman on October 29th.

WILDLIFE DIVISION

Predation Management Program - *Written by Ryan B. Robicheau, Wildlife Management Section Supervisor*

On October 2, three days after the start of the early fox/coyote trapping season, the fifth year of a program geared towards the reduction of predation by coyotes on deer kicked off. Working with hunters and trappers, the Department is able to harness their recreational efforts and focus them in areas where deer congregate during the winter months.

The program is focused on removal of coyotes in and around specific Deer Wintering Areas identified by Regional Wildlife Biologists. These Deer Wintering Areas have been identified on the basis of importance to deer and the lack of recreational hunting and trapping activity.

Working with both hunters and trappers, the approach is multi-faceted. First, an effort to focus trapping activity in and adjacent to the Deer Wintering Areas is made before deer have moved into the wintering areas. As the winter nears and deer move to the yards, a second effort via hunting is started – depending on the year, this effort usually begins mid-December and continues until deer leave the wintering areas in the late winter/early spring. The third component is monitoring deer predation and presence as well as coyote presence within the yards. The monitoring effort allows for efforts to be focused in areas of greatest need as well as a measure to gauge effectiveness of the program.

The program allows the Department to capitalize on the hunting and trapping interests of the folks participating in the program to reduce one of the factors in deer mortality in the winter months, creating a win-win situation!



Colton holding the antlers of a deer shot by a family friend.



*One pound away!
Bo with his 9 point, 199 pound buck.*



*Siblings that hunt together,
stick together!*