

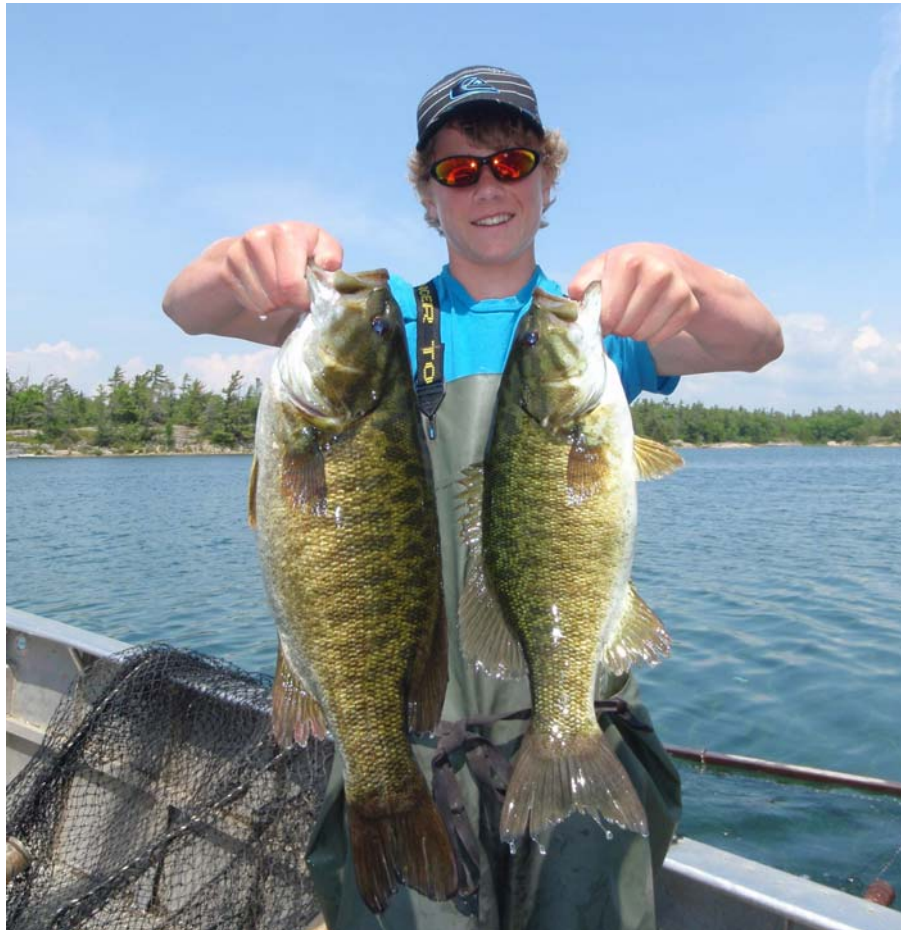


Eastern Georgian Bay Stewardship Council

www.helpourfisheries.com

Media Update – 2010-08

2010 Wah-Wah-Taysee Near-shore Fisheries Survey



Parry Sound high school student and volunteer – Adam Logan, with a nice pair of Wah-Wah-Taysee smallmouth bass captured during the survey

Was 2010 the 'year-of-the-smallmouth bass' on Georgian Bay? It is sure was in the Wah-Wah-Taysee area south of 12-Mile Bay! The release of results from a spring-time, near-shore, trap net survey jointly conducted by the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Eastern Georgian Bay Stewardship Council shows several strong year classes that bodes well for bass fishermen in the area.

Project leader – Eric McIntyre of the EGBSC noted: “I’ve been working on Georgian Bay for almost 30 years; this is the best looking smallmouth bass population I’ve ever seen. We averaged almost 15 bass per net set; pretty good when you consider the Georgian Bay average is less than half that in our reference dataset.”

Most of the smallmouth bass captured were juveniles – less than 30 cm (12 inches) in length, but as McIntyre noted: “In a few more years these fish will really start to put on the weight and begin moving into the lunker category. Bass fishermen are going to be pretty happy in the Wah-Wah-Taysee area for some time.”

The survey used a standard Ministry protocol that includes live-capture trap-nets, which allows fish to be enumerated, size sampled and subsequently released unharmed. Almost 2000 fish weighing more than half a ton and comprising twelve different species were captured in the survey.

The most abundant species caught in the survey was rock bass – over 1450 fish. Smallmouth bass were next at 432, then way down to 43 for northern pike. By weight, smallmouth comprised 36% of the total catch and rock bass and northern pike 23% each.

Other game fish such as walleye, black crappie and largemouth bass were not plentiful. McIntyre ascribed their low abundance largely to habitat; citing clear waters and limited aquatic vegetation at netting sites – more suitable for rock bass and smallmouth.

Besides assessing the status of the near-shore fish community, McIntyre also mentioned a more ominous purpose of the survey. “Over the past half-dozen years, round gobies have proliferated unbelievably throughout eastern Georgian Bay. We don’t catch them in trap-nets because of their sedentary habit of lying on the bottom, and most can pass through the coarse mesh of the net. They are an invasive species originating from Eastern Europe. We were apprehensive their presence would have a detrimental impact on smallmouth bass by consuming their eggs and predation on bass fry, but this was not evident in our survey results however.”

Only eight walleye were captured in the survey, but the Wah-Wah-Taysee area is not known for harbouring the number one sought after game fish in Ontario. One interesting observation however was the capture of a walleye that was tagged in an MNR survey only a few weeks prior in the Port Severn area of the Bay – approximately 45 kilometres away.

The complete project summary report is available on the website of the Eastern Georgian Bay Stewardship Council at www.helpourfisheries.com; under the “Reports and Documents” tab.