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SONS VOLUNTEERS PREPARE FISH FRY FOR HOMELESS

On Friday October 4, 2024 twenty SONS of Lake Erie volunteers set up a truckload of equipment at the Emmaus Soup Kitchen on East 11th St. In Erie. All these logistics were in preparation for our annual fish fry that is prepared for our less fortunate brothers and sisters. For about ten years now we have produced this event at this facility. More than 100 lbs of walleye fillets were trimmed, battered and fried for serving to over two hundred clients of the soup kitchen. In addition to the walleye fillets the dinner included rolls potato salad and coleslaw. The meals are packed into takeout trays and paper bags and the clients can either take away for

consumption elsewhere or may be enjoyed on the premises. The walleye for the fish fry were donated by members of our fishing community who participated in three separate fishing tournaments that were held this summer. This fish fry would not take place without their generous support. Thanks are also in order for SONS Director Chuck Miller for taking the lead in planning these annual events and for the rest of our volunteers who worked preparing and serving the meals. Many of them generously volunteer every year.

Below are photos of the event.





SONS 2025 MEMBERSHIP BUTTON

is a depiction of a crappie this year. This is in keeping with featuring a native species fish on the button. You can pick up the 2025 pin at anyone of our events or meetings or you can get one by sending \$3.00 to SONS of Lake Erie, PO Box 3605, Erie, PA 16508

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PITTSBURGH PAPER FOCUSES ON LAKE ERIE WALLEYE

The following article by Outdoor Writer, Mary Ann Thomas was published by the Pittsburgh Post Gazette on October 5, 2024

Summer walleye catches in the Pennsylvania portion of Lake Erie were the second highest in more than 20 years. 'We haven't had fishing like this ever,' says Fish and Boat Commission as anglers pack marinas near Erie.

Anglers in Pennsylvania's portion of Lake Erie reported the second-highest walleye catch rates since 1993 for July and landed in the top five highest rates for August. "This has been one of our better seasons," said Mark Haffley, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's leader for Lake Erie's research unit. "These last seven years saw higher than average catch rates. We haven't had fishing like this ever," he said. The commission's July survey found a catch rate of 1.99 fish per hour, much higher than the 0.6 fish per hour satisfactory rate, Mr. Haffley said. "Lake Erie from the Ohio line to the New York line – the fishing has been phenomenal this year," he said. The commission also found above-average numbers of walleye reaching maturity, Mr. Haffley said, adding that it's hard to tell how long the trend will hold.

The walleye population is estimated at 77 million in Lake Erie from the Pennsylvania and Ohio line west to Toledo, Ohio, according to the commission. Record hatches since 2015 account for the abundance. Walleye can live more than 20 years in Lake Erie, according to Ohio's Lake Erie Fisheries. In Pennsylvania, the Fish and Boat Commission has documented a 27-year-old walleye, Mr. Haffley said. The 2024 adult walleye population estimate is within the top 25% of the past 30

years, competing with the renowned populations of the 1980s, according to the Ohio Angler Report.

In Erie County, walleye catches at Walnut Creek Access were high this year; a packed parking lot has been the norm for the past seven or eight years, Mr. Haffley said. Walnut Creek is in Fairview, about a dozen miles west of Erie. Some anglers shifted east to Shades Beach in North East, which offers quick access to deep water.

The S.O.N.S. of Lake Erie Fishing Club, with 2,500 members, has seen bountiful walleye and more anglers this year, said Jerry Skrypzak, the club's president. Most Lake Erie walleye migrate west as autumn approaches. However, a robust local population overwinters. "On weekends, parking lots are full with boats and trailers. It's been phenomenal," he said.

The Erie County-based nonprofit promotes and protects the fishery and offers fishing programs focusing on youth, Mr. Skrypzak said. The Fish and Boat Commission expects the walleye season to continue well into October, Mr. Haffley said.

In the fall, female walleye pack on weight for egg production. Most walleye migrate west as autumn approaches. However, a robust local population will overwinter. The warming of Lake Erie's western basin, with algae blooms in Toledo, has shifted the walleye population to the central basin, Mr. Haffley said. "We have adult walleye known for an incredible homing response and site fidelity at the Walnut Creek Marina," he said.

The commission has been surveying walleye using telemetry tagging there. "We're seeing more fish in higher concentrations in different areas. There's more happening locally for us," he said. The central part of Lake Erie has been prolific historically and that continues, according to Mr. Skrypzak.

"In the spring as the lake warms in Toledo, the fish are looking for 55-degree weather and that is here."

Mr. Skrypzak's son, a fishing charter captain, reported hitting the walleye limit in two hours this year, with some charters going out twice daily.

"We get a lot of tourist fishermen. The campgrounds and motels are loaded with them," he said.

Mr. Skrypzak, 82, has watched and promoted more fishing opportunities, and his club supports new developments to offer more public access to the lake. New dock projects are slated at Presque Isle State Park and Lampe Marina, near Presque Isle Bay.

Recreational fishing in Lake Erie in Pennsylvania generated a \$40.6 million economic impact for the 2016 season, according to a Penn State study.

Mr. Skrypzak said he believes that has grown in the ensuing eight years, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, when demand for fishing licenses and boat registration spiked.

Mary Ann Thomas: mthomas@post-gazette.com



How true!

Fish Stories!



Roger Hawk posted this pic on Facebook Oct. 1 at South Pier



Kurt Bitikofer poses with 15# Steelhead on Facebook Oct. 3



Even Ed Kissell with a nice bluegill Oct. 12



Not much to brag about guys!

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Nominations for officers and directors will be taken at the November 18, General Meeting and elections to be held at the December 16 meeting.



FISHING REPORT

Steelhead fishing is picking up as the rains are coming on and the fish are starting their runs. Lake conditions are affecting boating. Local marinas will be shutting down on November 1. There are still reports coming in that when boaters can get out they are catching walleye and perch. Pier fishing anglers are realizing some nice catches of perch and an occasional walleye.

NEW WEB CAMERA

The LAMPE MARINA WEB CAMERA is now up and running. It is being provided through a partnership of the Erie Western PA Port Authority, Fish USA and the SONS of Lake Erie. You may access the camera on the Fish USA web site at <https://www.fishusa.com/lampe-webcam/> or at the SONS Web page at <https://sonsoflakeerie.org/web%20cam%20page.htm>.

PI BAY HABITAT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT ENTERS 29th YEAR

On Wednesday October 9, 2024 the Habitat Improvement crew from the PA Fish and Boat Commission assembled at the Niagara boat Launch at Presque Isle State Park in order to continue the Presque Isle Bay fish habitat program. The program which was started in 1995 has resulted in the placement of over 700 habitat fixtures in to the waters of the Bay. This year the team added 80 more to the program. They were assisted by 20 SONS of Lake Erie volunteers and 10 building trades students from Erie High School. Following a brief safety briefing by Team Leader Ben Page, the structures made ready to launch by the volunteers attaching bundles of brush to them in order to make them more attractive to the fish. When the program started in 1995, the SONS purchased the raw materials and assembled them on the shore. Now the structures are purchased pre-assembled using funds appropriated from the purchase of the Lake Erie Stamp.

The assembled structures are transported out into the Bay by a specially equipped PFBC boat. Using special electronic gear they are placed in predetermined pattern. This year some were in Stink Hole and others were added to an existing row in about 14 ft of water just west of the Niagara Launch. Each of the students from Erie High was afforded the opportunity to ride out with the boat to place the structures.

A lunch for all of the participants was prepared and served by SONS volunteers. We have always enjoyed this project and it was especially enjoyable this year watching and working with the Erie High students.

A map showing the location of the structures is posted on the PFBC web site



TOP INVASIVE SPECIES RANKED

By Shealyn Paulis
Great Lakes Echo October 7, 2024

A recent study, published in the Journal of Great Lakes Research, is the first to compare all 188 nonnative species in the lakes with the same methods and pinpoint which are causing the most harm to the region, its authors said.

At the top of the list is the zebra mussel. These small but mighty mollusks are believed to have made their way into the Great Lakes in the 1980's through ballast water in ships from Europe. They can now be found in all five Great Lakes. Zebra mussels feed on plankton in the water, which has made the lakes unnaturally clear and diminished the base of the food chain, leaving less for native fish to eat. They also attach to boat bottoms and pose a risk to swimmers due to their sharp edges.

Although the quagga mussel took the runner-up slot, the species has similar impacts and is more widespread than the zebra mussel because it can live in colder, deeper waters, said Ashley Elgin, a study author and research scientist with National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Association's Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory.



"Here's an opportunity for quagga mussels to get more in the spotlight because they have very, very widespread ecosystem impacts and they are more widely distributed throughout the Great Lakes than zebra mussels," Elgin said.

Nonetheless, the study ranked zebra mussels as more damaging than quagga mussels because they are commonly found in shallow water by the shore. This makes them more likely to be exposed to contamination and eaten by birds, passing contaminants up the food chain.

The report based its scoring of each species on six

questions designed to gauge environmental impact, and six for socio-economic factors.

Small fish called alewives earned the number three spot due to their success in the lakes at the expense of native species. They threaten the predator-prey dynamic of the delicate ecosystem and contain an elevated level of thiaminase, an enzyme that can cause a fatal thiamine deficiency in species that eat them, the researchers reported.

The fish spread throughout the Great Lakes via shipping canals in the 1870s, eating the larvae of native fish. Their populations exploded because there weren't enough large predator fish to keep them in check, the study said.

That lack of predator fish could be partly attributed to the species ranked fourth on the list, the sea lamprey, which arrived in the region in the 1830s through canals. These eel-like fish latch onto large, predatory native species and suck their blood, sometimes fatally. The lamprey ranked slightly lower than alewives because they are not known to significantly compete with native species for resources, according to the study. Grass carp was 6th, round goby 9th, and white perch 10th.

The top ten list also consists of three plant species, including Japanese stiltgrass 5th, water chestnut 7th and common reed 8th.



SONS Pres. Jerry Skrypzak holds onto a plastic alligator (Also nonnative) on display at a Port Authority event

REMINDER- MANDATORY LIFE JACKETS REQUIRED

November 1 through April 30

Beginning in 2012, the following regulation was established:

a person shall wear a Coast Guard approved personal flotation device (PFD or life jacket) during the cold weather months from November 1st through April 30th while underway or at anchor on boats less than 16 feet in length or any canoe or kayak.



PELICANS OVER LAKE ERIE!

Rick Makowski submitted this photo of three pelicans flying near his boat while out fishing on Lake Erie.

LAKE STURGEON RELEASED INTO CUYAHOGA RIVER

by: *Danielle Langenfeld*

Posted: Oct 4, 2024 / 05:08 AM EDT

(WJW TV) – Dozens of fish with transmitters implanted into them were released into the Cuyahoga River on Wednesday.

The Ohio Division of Wildlife said in a post on Facebook that the placement of 60 juvenile lake sturgeon into the river is part of a pilot project for a larger goal of reintroducing the endangered fish into the waterway.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources explains that the fish, which can grow up to 8 feet long and weigh over 300 pounds, were historically very abundant in some Ohio waterways like the Ohio River and Lake Erie, however, their numbers have declined likely because more dams now prevent them from reaching spawning grounds in much smaller streams.

Wildlife experts said the pilot project will help evaluate their movement and survival of the fish, which will help determine release locations next year.

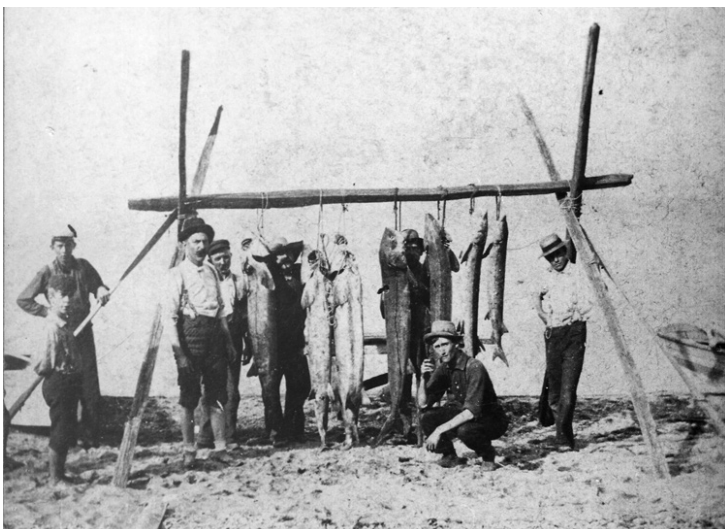
“The decision to begin reintroduction represents the culmination of many efforts and is a monumental milestone in the recovery of the Cuyahoga River,” said the Ohio Division of Wildlife in their post on Facebook.

Note: This type of transmitter being used are similar to the transmitters placed into walleye by PFBC biologists a few years ago. Lake Erie has over a 100 receivers on the lake bottom to track fish movement.

Officials say lake sturgeon can live to be 150 years. The largest one on record in Ohio was from Lake Erie in 1929 and weighed 216 pounds.

Historically Presque Isle Bay and adjacent PA waters was home to thousands of lake sturgeon in the 19th and early 20th century. Commercial fishermen hated the animal because they would tear up their nets due to the size of the fish. Later the economic value of the sturgeon was realized and they became targeted for their eggs and bladders which was used to make isinglass. Fish processors would discard the carcasses from the harvested fish on Presque Isle in an area called “stink hole” caused by the decaying fish.

Below are some vintage sturgeon photos I would like to share with you.



Sturgeon catch on Lake Erie 1898

Boy on left is Bob Wellington's grandfather, Ernest Wellington. Man with hat and suspenders on left is Torrie Wellington, Bob Wellington's great grandfather.



Fred Ralph Jr. and Mary Ralph with sturgeon caught in Pound Nets in Lake Erie off of Walnut Creek, 1960.



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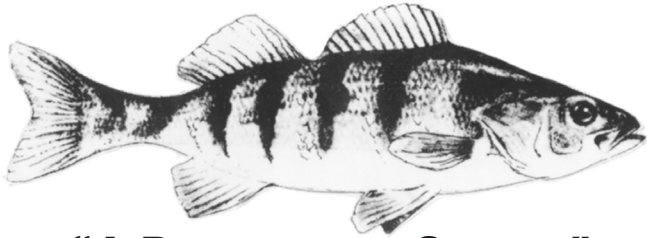
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WOULD YOU LIKE TO GET YOUR SONS NEWS LETTER BY EMAIL?

If so, send us an email to sonslakeri@aol.com list your name, address and note that you would like to change to the electronic version. . So far we have about 520 members who have requested the change so far. You can always read the current and past issues of the Bucket at our web site, sonsoflakeerie.org.at any time.



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GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

MONDAY, OCTOBER 28 7:00 PM

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431 E. 3rd Street, Erie

PROGRAM: Fish USA pro staff member Nolan Pyle will talk about shallow water and shore fishing tactics he uses for catching lake trout.

(Note: The November meeting will be on November 18, one week early due to the beginning of deer season)

WHAT TO DO IF YOU CATCH A TAGGED FISH

The walleye tagging process is essential to sustaining a viable Great Lakes walleye population. Biologists perform mild surgery while on the water to install tracking devices into select walleyes. Each fish is fitted with an external tag with an identification number and a phone number to report when and where the fish was caught and whether it was harvested or released.

PFBC fisheries biologists track fish for research purposes. There are various ways PFBC marks fish which are part of these research studies:

- a tag is attached to the fish, or
- a radio transmitter is implanted, as noted by a wire antenna, or
- a code wire tag is implanted, as identified by a missing adipose fin It is illegal to tag fish unless given a permit by the DNR.

Should you catch a tagged fish, it is very important to report promptly. The information provided by the angler helps PFBC to determine fish population estimates, and harvest and exploitation rates. Your cooperation and participation are greatly appreciated.

If you release the fish, please do not remove the tags. One common type of tag looks like a 2-inch piece of spaghetti and is located near the base of the dorsal fin (i.e., the fin along the top of the back). The tag can be of several colors. For example, it will either be orange or yellow. Look carefully, as the tag may be covered with algae and look like a piece of a weed. Another type is a metal tag found on the dorsal fin of the fish. Each tag has a unique serial number stamped on it that identifies that fish. It may also have an address to send the tag to.

Should you catch a tagged fish, it is very important to report it promptly. The information that fish biologists request is fairly simple:

- The species of fish caught.
- The date the fish was caught.
- The specific location where it was caught.
- Whether it was kept or not.
- Most importantly, the tag (i.e., serial) number.

You may also include the fish's length and weight if you know it.

If you release the fish:

- Do not remove the tag.
- Record the information requested above and send it in promptly to the PFBC in PA if you keep the fish:
- Remove the tag.
- Don't scrape off any algae, because you may also remove the lettering on the tag.
- Tape the tag to a card and send it in promptly to the DCNR. Most all states use a tagging system, in many inland lakes for various study purposes. Other species commonly tagged include most all salmon, Lake Trout, Steelhead, and Brown trout and in some states Black bass.

PFBC biologists can be reached at 814-474-1515