

Notes on Tagging Walleyes on the Wolf River

By ELMER F. HERMAN

For the last three years, biologists of the Fish Management Division have been tagging walleyes on the Wolf river. Along with the tagging, lengths, weights, and scale samples have been taken of representative numbers of fish. This work has been carried on simultaneously with the spawn taking operations of the Fish Propagation Section.

Purpose of Tagging

There are a great many questions we have no answer for as concerns migrations and habits of the walleyes of Lake Winnebago and tributary waters. It has been observed that the spawning run begins shortly after the ice leaves the Wolf river and the water temperatures range from 38° to 44° F. In 1946, the actual spawning began when the water temperature reached 58° F. The walleyes were tagged in order to obtain information on course and speed of migrations, individual and average growth rate, age of maturity and life span.

Type of Tag

The tag consisted of a strip of rust-resistant metal about 1½ inches long and

¼ inch wide. On this was stamped the serial number and W.C.D., designating the Conservation Department. In 1946, a slightly wider and longer tag was used.

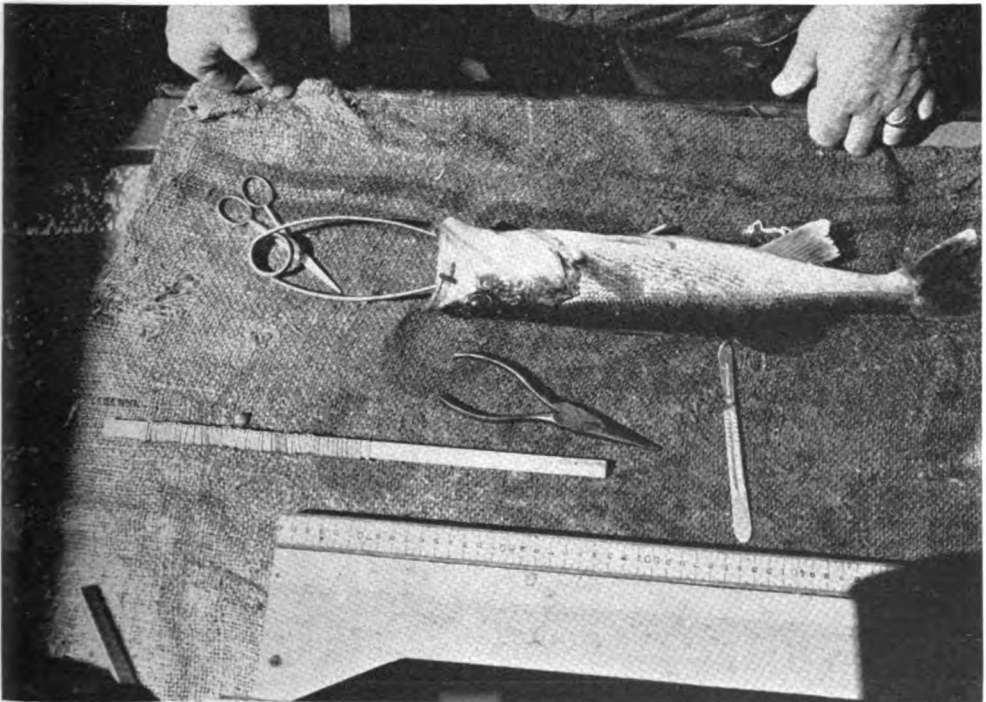
After considerable experimenting with control walleyes, this method seemed to insure the tag staying on with the least injury and impediment to the normal habits of this species.

Results of Tagging

These are not the final results of the study, but only results to date. The final results will be published in a later publication, after it is thought no more fish of the group tagged are alive.

A total of 3,694 walleyes captured on their spawning runs up the Wolf river have been tagged during the spring of 1944, 1945, and 1946. Table 1 shows the year of tagging, the number tagged, number returned, and per cent of return. Of all the fish tagged, 343 or 9.28 per cent have been returned.

Several of these fish were caught at the mouth of the Fox river and in Lake Winnebago 10 days after being tagged in the



The tag was put on over lip and through the tough, white tissue behind lip and then locked.

Generated on 2023-11-02 15:41 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uiug.30112118335006
Creative Commons Attribution / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#cc-by-4.0

Table 1
SUMMARIZATION OF TAGGING STUDY UP TO
FEBRUARY 15, 1947

Year	No. tagged	No. returned	Per cent returned
1944.....	1092	81	7.4
1945.....	1162	135	11.6
1946.....	1440	127	8.8

vicinity of the confluence of the Wolf and Waupaca rivers. The distance by the water route covered in that span of time being between 50 and 60 miles. Tag returns seem to indicate that the majority of the wall-eyes return almost immediately to Lake Winnebago after spawning. A few fish, however, did move farther upstream.

787 scale samples for age and growth determinations were collected during the three years. These have been aged with the results shown in Table 2.

The study thus far seems to indicate that on the spawning runs the four and five year age groups are predominant for the males and the five and six year age groups for the females.

Excellent Cooperation

At present, we are receiving about five tag returns per week. Most of these are from the group tagged in 1946. We are very appreciative of the excellent cooperation sportsmen have given us in returning of tags for this study. We want to appeal to their continued cooperation, for every tag returned gives us more information on the problem. Thus far, we have sent 343 individual letters to cooperating sportsmen, giving them the history of the tag they sent in and an explanation of our objective.

On January 17, 1947, we received the following information by letter from Mr. William Klug, Cedarburg, Wisconsin:

"For your information enclosed find one fish tag. The enclosed tag was almost lost

but when I came upon a friend of mine who had just come back from a fishing trip this summer and was hard at it cleaning fish, he discovered the tag and remarked, 'What fish don't swallow.'

"I said, 'Wait a minute. Give me that thing.' Then I explained what it really meant to your group. That the tag was for experimental study and not only an ornament.

"This party had caught a northern pike weighing 11.5 pounds and measuring 35 inches long. The northern pike had swallowed a smaller fish. In my estimation, it could have been a walleye about 15 inches long. The northern pike was caught in Lake Poygan, about May, 1946 and the tag was attached to the bones of the smaller fish."

Information on Tag

Following are excerpts from a letter sent to Mr. Klug on February 5, 1947:

"Dear Mr. Klug: The tag that you recently sent in for our records was from a male walleye, tagged on April 7, 1946 at the Weyauwega State Fish Hatchery at Weyauwega, Wisconsin. Your report that the tag was taken from the stomach of a northern pike is a most unusual one. Of the several hundred tags we have had returned, this is the first one taken from the stomach of a fish.

"Ordinarily, a walleye 15 inches long is not swallowed by another fish, but your tag is proof that it can be done. Lake Poygan is about 20 miles down river from Weyauwega. In a months time, this particular walleye must have had many adventures, that of being swallowed a fatal climax.

"Thus far, we have tagged over 3,000 walleyes on the Wolf river in the vicinity of Weyauwega, Wisconsin. The tagging operations have taken place during the spring of 1944, 1945, and 1946. Eventually, we hope to gather information on the mi-

Table 2

SUMMARIZATION OF AGE CLASSES, NUMBER OF MALES AND FEMALES, TOTAL NUMBER, AVERAGE WEIGHT OF MALES AND FEMALES DETERMINED FROM SCALE SAMPLES (1944, 1945 AND 1946)

Age Class	Males	Females	Total Number	Average Weight	
				Males	Females
II.....	8	4	12	10 oz.	9 oz.
III.....	40	21	61	14 oz.	15 oz.
IV.....	149	54	203	1 lb.	1 lb. 5 oz.
V.....	148	106	254	1 lb. 7 oz.	1 lb. 15 oz.
VI.....	58	114	172	1 lb. 10 oz.	2 lb. 6 oz.
VII.....	9	42	51	2 lb. 10 oz.	3 lb.
VIII.....	1	33	34	2 lb.	3 lb. 12 oz.
Totals.....	413	374	787		

Total average weight of males—1 lb. 4 oz.
Total average weight of females—2 lb. 3 oz.
Total average weight of males and females—1 lb. 11 oz.

Generated on 2023-11-02 15:41 GMT / https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uid.30112118335006
Creative Commons Attribution / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#cc-by-4.0

gratory habits and growth of this important game fish.

"We certainly wish to thank you for sending in the tag to us. It has a most unusual history.

Very truly yours,
FISH MANAGEMENT DIVISION."

Greed and Carelessness

W. C. Shaffer, chief of the division of law enforcement for the Pennsylvania Game Commission, has written a book on the problem of national hunting accidents together with a discussion of means of promoting greater safety. He contends that the great causes of accidents are "Greed and Carelessness", the title of the book. The volume is produced by the Telegraph Press, Harrisburg, Pa., and it retails for \$3.

Mr. Shaffer, together with others who have given much thought to accident prevention, doubts that much can be accomplished by more laws on the subject. He contends that the answer is education and training. He points out that some states have given little attention to the matter of hunting accidents and suggests department gun safety divisions with every effort being made to gather complete statistics with a view of correcting accident causes wherever possible.

He says:

"Nobody denies that the conservation of life and limb is highly important; nobody denies that the critics of hunting accident causes are becoming more numerous and vociferous; nobody denies that the problem is difficult to solve. Eight and one-half million licensed hunters in the United States would like to know the solution; so too would millions more across our international borders, all the way from the broad Canadian Northwest territories to tiny Ecuador, and the forty-eight top flight officials charged with the responsibilities of administering wildlife programs in these United States.

"While it is unfortunate, and decidedly distasteful, it is just as well to admit right here that a majority of the conservation agencies, both state and private, are more interested in propagating and conserving game than they are in conserving the bodies and lives of those in quest of the game—the hunters. A lackadaisical attitude is obvious in some quarters; others exhibit an 'it doesn't apply to us' attitude. More fortunate are those states which are suffering from 'growing pains'. These states are bent upon designing a sound safety pro-

gram for the hunters and the general welfare of the citizens of their state, so that the loss of life and limb, with its attendant suffering and displacement, may be materially reduced. These states are entitled to all the encouragement and help we can give them. Others should take heed of awakening public demands that something worthwhile be done before it is too-little-and-too-late."

About Hunting Accidents

Sergeant Joseph Konicek, Jr., of the Racine police department, presents his views on hunting accidents in a letter to the Bulletin. His letter follows:

Dear Sir: For many years I have had the privilege of receiving the Conservation Bulletin and it is one magazine I look forward to receiving each month with a great deal of avidity. For some time now I have become more and more alarmed at the increase in the accident toll, the type of accidents, and especially those during the deer hunting season.

After a careful analysis of the 1946 accident reports as published in the December issue of the Bulletin, we might feel grateful that there were only eighty-six as no doubt it could have been much worse, seeing the large increase in hunters. The needless loss of life and limb each year due to carelessness could be avoided by the application of a little common sense, good judgment and caution.

One must realize of course that when you send an army of hunters into the fields each fall, and that many of them without the fundamental knowledge about the firearms they use, and especially during the deer season when over one hundred thousand of them are hunting deer from morning until night for several days, using various types of weapons, that accidents will sometimes happen, but these can be materially reduced by following the ten safety commandments, education and abiding by the law.

Of the total amount of accidents reported for 1946 it is very gratifying to see that only a small percent were caused by boys under eighteen years of age and that over eighty-five percent were caused by adults. When you look at some of the accidents caused by the adults you wonder where their brains really are. What gripes me most is the hunter who shoots another hunter and claims he thought it was a deer.