

Oneida Lake Update 2020



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For Release: Monday, February 3, 2020

DEC Announces Oneida Lake Adult Walleye Population Hits One Million Fish DEC and Cornell Study Confirms Healthy Walleye Stock, Anglers Can Anticipate Excellent Fishing

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Basil Seggos today announced that anglers have at least one million reasons to fish for walleye in Oneida Lake, according to a study with Cornell University researchers who have been tracking the lake's walleye population for more than 60 years. The population of adult walleye was estimated to be one million fish in 2019, a level that has not been reached since the 1980s.

"It has been three decades since we've seen the Oneida Lake walleye population this abundant, and it is twice the size observed in any year since 1993," said **Commissioner Seggos**. "Oneida Lake is a nationally recognized fishery and we expect the fishing to be even better in the coming years, cementing New York's status as a world-class destination for anglers. This robust walleye population is due to DEC's responsive management and the dedicated research performed by Cornell University."

Randy Jackson, Associate Director of the Cornell Biological Field Station at Shackelton Point, said, "Walleye anglers took advantage of this booming population in 2019, and experienced catch rates over 0.5 fish per hour. With another large year class expected to recruit into the fishery in 2020, we expect walleye fishing to remain excellent in Oneida Lake for several years to come."

The DEC and Cornell study results represent a remarkable recovery of the adult population of walleye, which declined through the 1990s and has remained steady at around 400,000 fish since 2000. To rebuild the walleye population, DEC implemented special regulations and managed a growing population of cormorants on the lake. Large year classes of walleye in 2010 and 2014 have contributed to the walleye population increase, and another strong year class from 2016 is anticipated to push the adult population even higher next year. DEC will continue to work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop an approach for cormorant management to safeguard our fisheries from over-predation by these fish-eating birds.

To help manage the Oneida Lake walleye fishery, more than 150 million walleye fry (newly hatched fish only a few millimeters long) are annually stocked in the lake. The legal minimum size for walleye in the lake is 15 inches, and there is a reduced daily possession limit of three walleye. Walleye season runs from the first Saturday in May through March 15. For tips on fishing for walleye visit [DEC's Fishing for Walleye webpage](#).

For additional walleye fishing destinations in New York, visit [DEC's Statewide Walleye Fishing Opportunities webpage](#).



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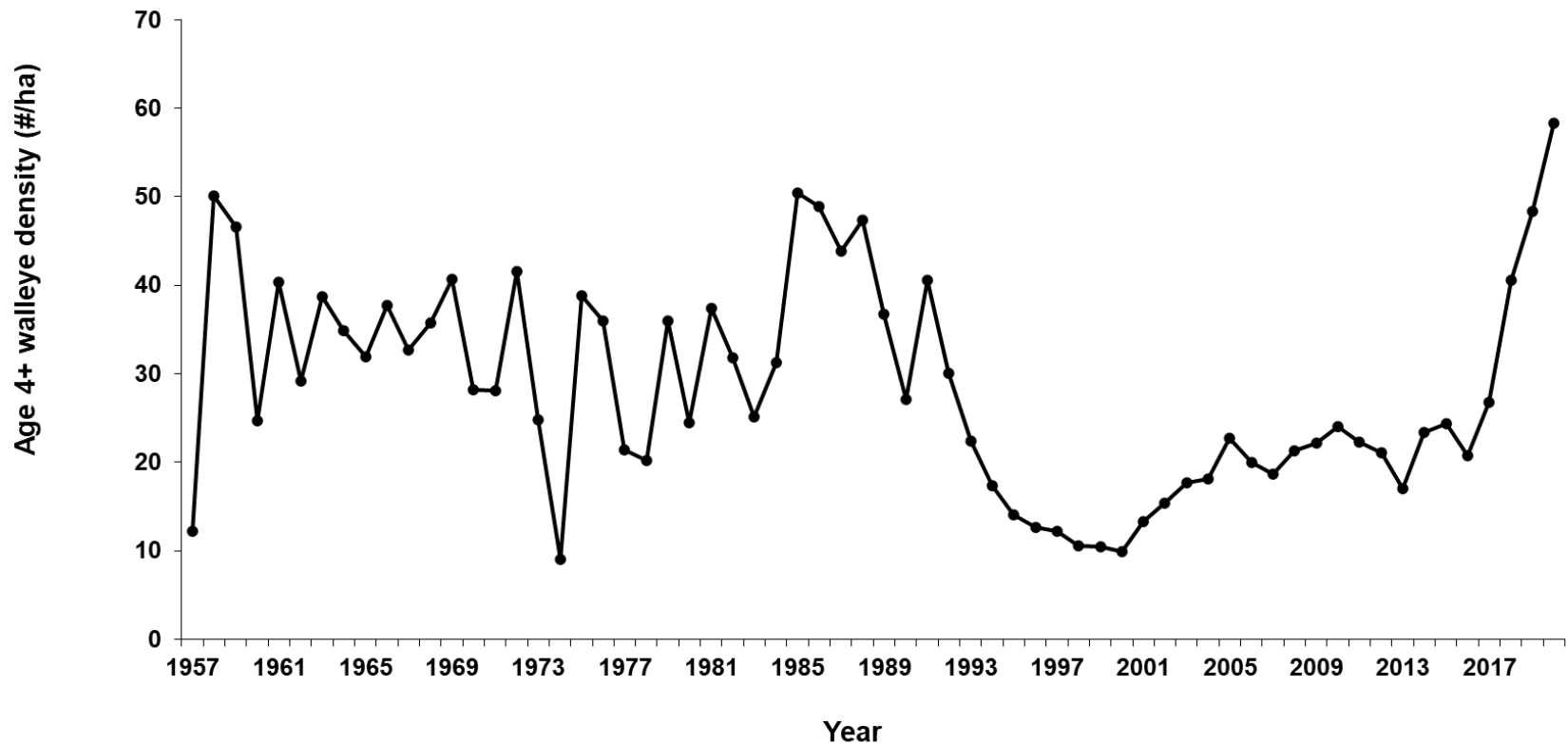
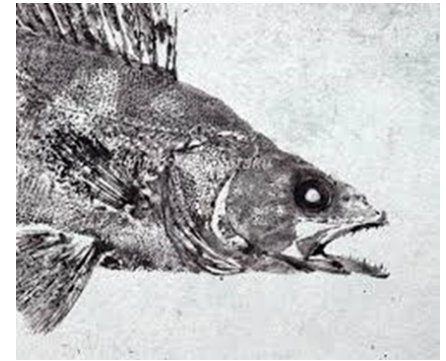
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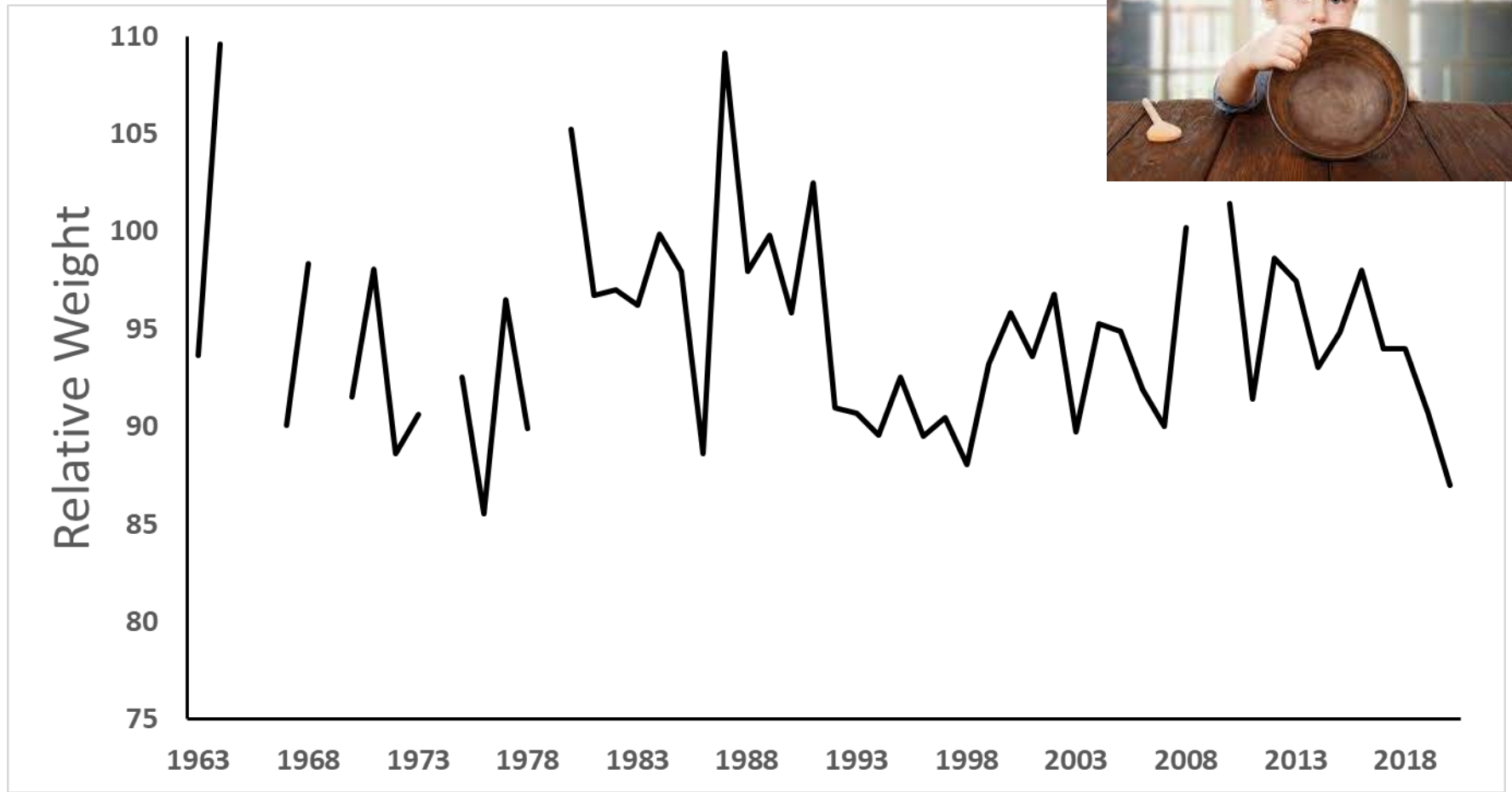
All of
New York State

Walleye

We estimate there were 1.2 million adult walleye in the lake at the start of the 2020 season. This is the largest adult walleye population we've recorded since our surveys began in 1957.

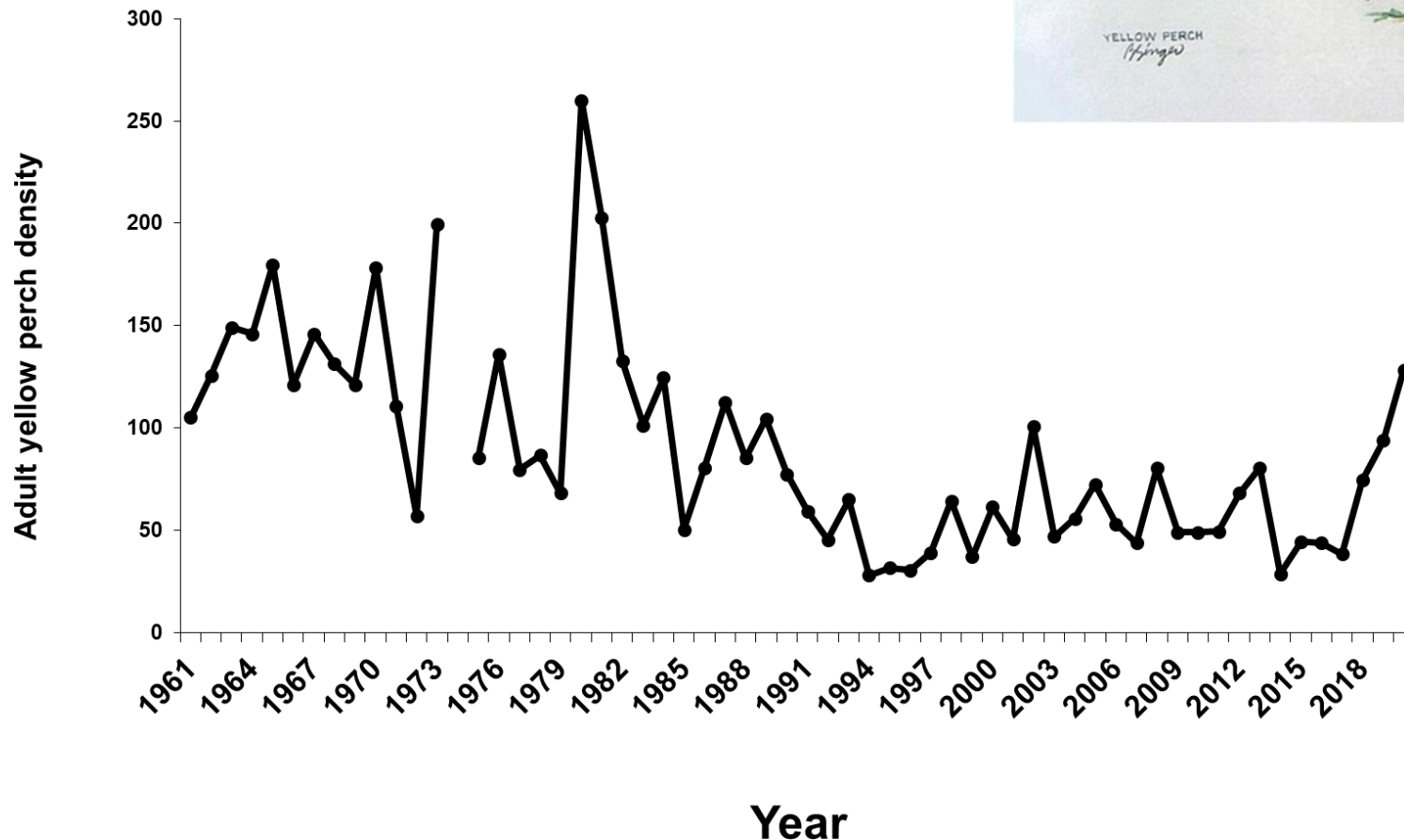


Condition (plumpness) of adult walleye has declined steadily as the population has grown. This indicates that there is not sufficient forage for a population this size.



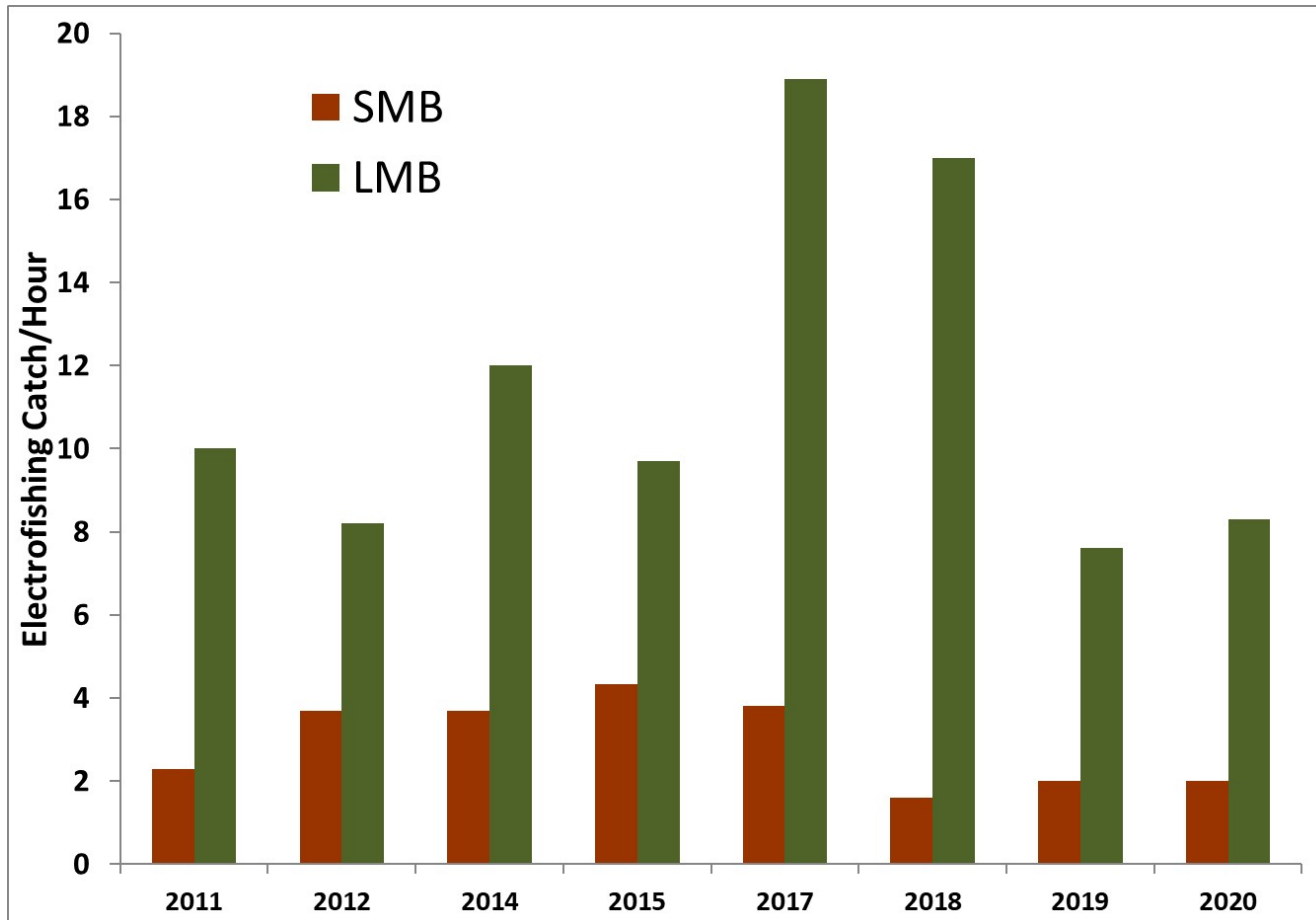
Yellow Perch

We estimate there were 2.6 million adult yellow perch in the lake in 2020. This is the largest population since 1982. Future recruitment may decline due to predation on young perch by the large walleye population.



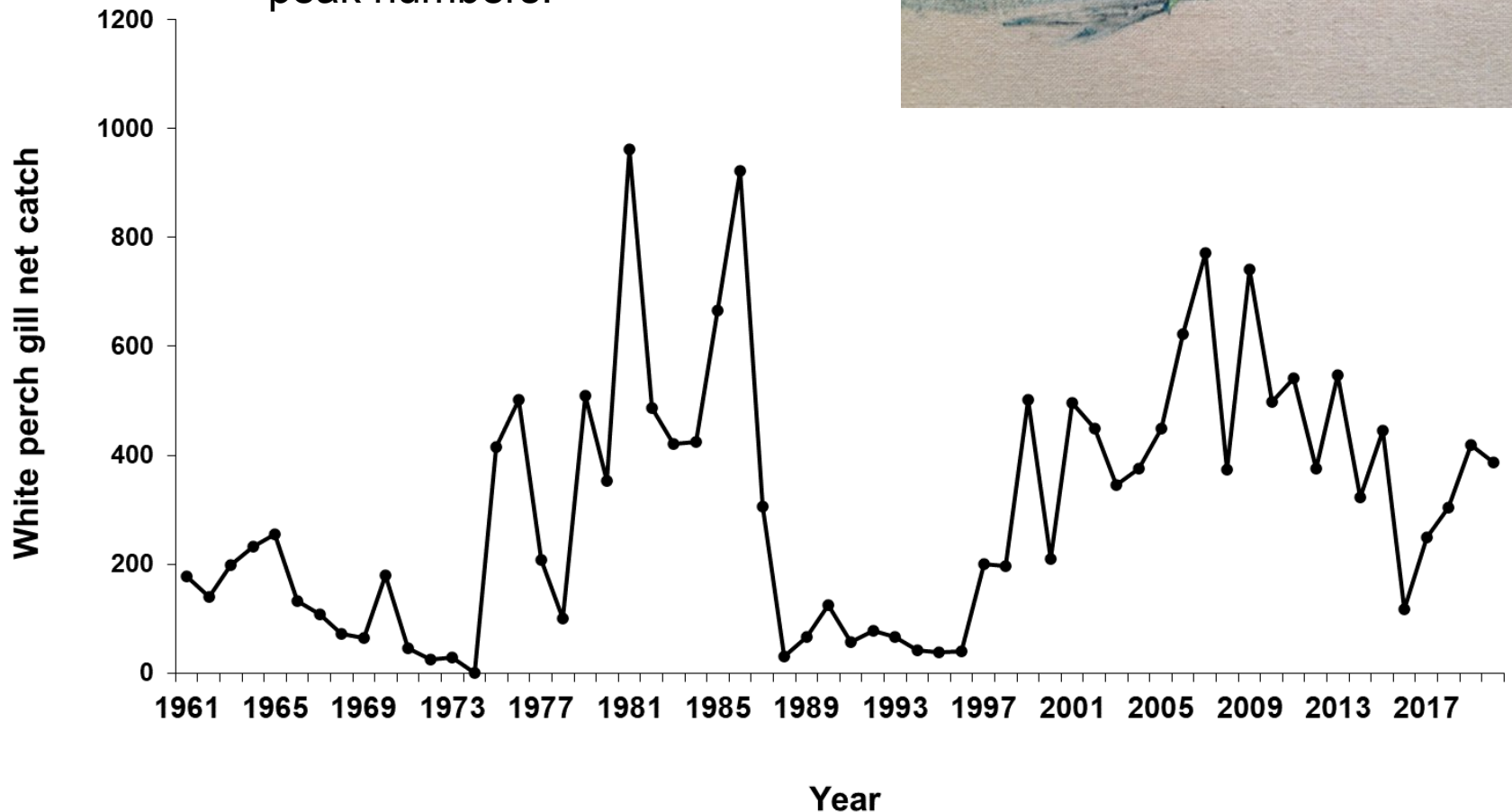
Bass

Populations of smallmouth and largemouth bass are down from 2017, but there is no sign of ongoing declines.



White Perch

We think the declines in the white perch population from 2009-2016 played a role in walleye and yellow perch populations by predation on fry. White perch have recovered from the 2016 low, but still below peak numbers.



Lake Sturgeon

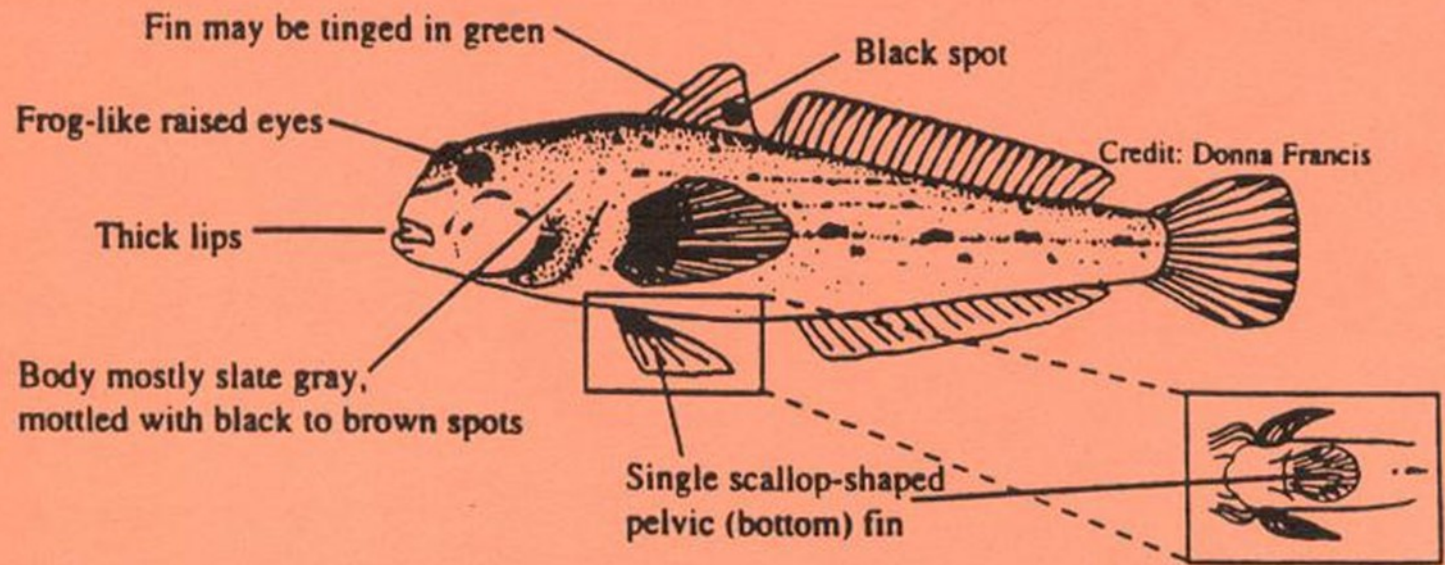
Documented wild reproduction
has occurred every year from 2011 to
2017.



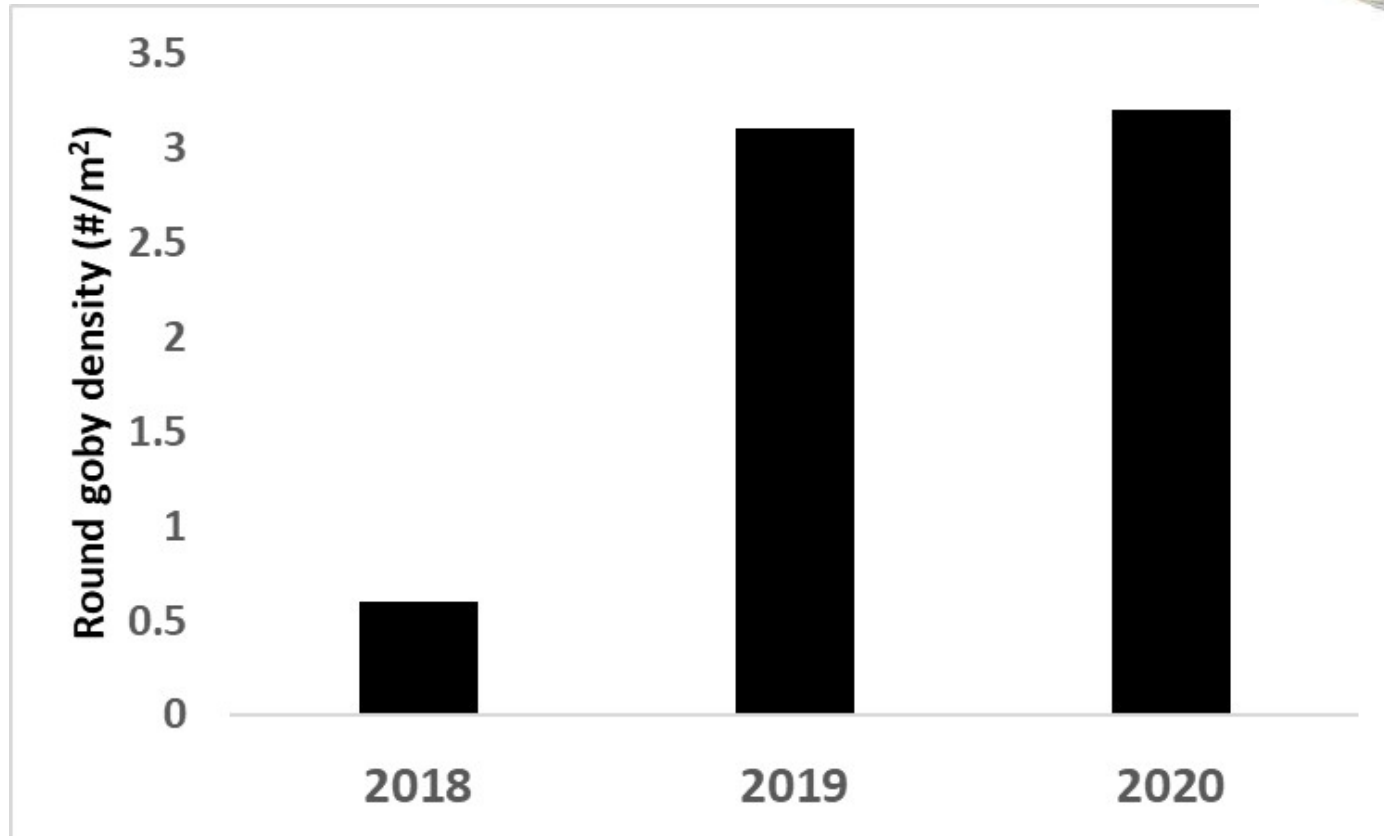
Round



How to Identify a Round Goby (adult shown)



Video surveys showed that density of round goby increased significantly from 2018 to 2019, but remained stable in 2020.



Creel Surveys



We were unable to conduct a creel survey in 2020 due to covid protocols.

We will be back out there this year, so please take the time to talk to our clerk if you encounter him.



Saturday:

A morning shower or flurry for the higher elevations. Breezy and cool with clouds and sun. Highs in low 50s.

