

## LAKE TRACE ELECTROSHOCK REPORT MAY 27, 2008

### Summary:

We did the electroshock for three hours this morning, and the fish population was pronounced in **excellent health** by a fish biologist who has worked with the NC Wildlife Resources Commission for over twenty years.

In attendance were Bill Collart, son of Al Collart (NS) and fish biologist from NCWRC and Libby Bibb (HL), "Novice Netter", on the state-owned electroshock boat. "Spotters" following in two boats included: Lee Amcher (GW) and Carl Woodard (NS); and Karl and Donna Heidinger (GE) and party. (Sometimes it would take awhile for a larger fish to get to the surface. The spotters would call to us and we would back up and net them.) The sampling started at Harbor Creek Marina and continued close to shore on the south side of Carolina Trace Lake and ended at the north side of the dam. The netted fish were placed in a large tank that had been filled with lake water with oxygen bubbled in. Over fifty fish were netted and all were examined and released unharmed.

### Results:

(1) There is an overabundance of white bass which compete directly with the bass and bluegill for food. At around 3" to 5", the perch are stunted because of their high population. ***Fishermen are encouraged to cull them out for their garden or cat.*** Bill said the cormorants are here in high numbers because they will feed on this size of fish. We also netted some blue gizzard shad which predator fish and birds prefer.

(2) We netted a good sampling of bluegills from yearling to adult sizes, and bass from year-old size of around 4" to six pounders. The bluegills and bass were examined and deemed in excellent health and in good numbers for this size of lake. They were not stunted or skinny, and had no signs of sores or parasites. Also in the mix were crappie, white catfish, eels and a sucker (type of carp). Five large grass carp came to the surface and were noted, but not netted. (Note: Our survey wasn't effective at depths greater than 5-6 feet, hence we didn't see large catfish, multitudes of Grass Carp, or lots of crappie,)

### Suggestions:

(1) Rather than re-stocking the lake with predator fish (which would compete with the current population), it was suggested that a "food" fish, such as the **fathead minnow**, be introduced in various areas around the lake. They will take up residence under docks and around structure and quickly establish a new population. Libby will investigate prices from various fish farms. Turning one of the CTCC ponds into a minnow farm could also be an option

(2) The State has measured the effectiveness of structure. Permanent structure (such as the Bill Dance Porcupine Fish Attractor) does work well at providing cover for fry and food for baitfish when algae and plankton form on the structure. Members of the JLC Wildlife Preservation & Control Sub-Committee are investigating various forms of permanent structure & costs.

(3) The State has been evaluating fish in various bodies of waters around NC to test for pcbs and mercury content. Libby will contact local U.S. Soil & Water Conservation agent Tommy Brooks at McSwain Center to see if there has been testing in the creeks that run into Carolina Trace Lake. The only recent advisories have been issued in Crabtree Creek and Walnut Creeks in Raleigh, due to an industry dumping old batteries into these waters. If no testing has been done to Lake Trace feeder creeks, the State will come and test these waters for us. Note: only large fish will have trace amounts of mercury, and it is advised that children under eleven and women of child-bearing age avoid consumption.

(4) If we had a problem with the invasive weed hydrilla before, it will probably come back when our grass carp start dying off. Due to floods and hurricanes, a lot of grass carp have been washed into the Cape Fear River basin and are unfortunately eating all the native vegetation and screwing up the eco-system. Therefore, there are new rules when adding grass carp to Lake Trace, i.e., a special netting that would have to be a foot above the dam to keep them contained.

5) While the nature of the lake has changed due to the rapid elimination of the hydrilla cover with the grass carp introduction in 2002/2003, the fish population remains healthy and normal, although somewhat reduced in scope. **Fishermen need only to re-direct their fishing patterns to adjust to the new situation.** Previously, the bass used hydrilla as protective cover and the smaller fish used it as a sanctuary. Now they have acclimated themselves to differing structure. Our Christmas tree program and other artificial structure being made by members of the JLC Wildlife Preservation & Control Sub-Committee and the CT Fishing Club (TUFF) will help supplement natural cover to promote even more quality fishing habitat. The Sub-Committee and Club may soon launch a CT Fishing School to help resolve this issue and identify hot spots and describe new techniques.

(6) All of the fish found in our lake during the State Survey were robust, had great color, no sores/mutation/anomalies, and appeared to be typical examples of the species. Our lake water was adjudged to be clear, devoid of destructive algae bloom, and other than being of a higher acidic content, was adjudged a superior body of water, and one which didn't pose a problem for eating its fish. The suggestion for the Lake Committee was to find a way to raise the PH level. Liquid liming 60 acres of bluegill spawning beds helped raise the pH for increased fry survival. **Placing 5-6 tons of coral limestone at Little River and feeder creek entrances to Lake Trace is another option to explore.**

Special thanks go to Bill Collart for providing this info and FREE evaluation from the State, Carl Woodard and Al Collart for their networking to get it done, plus "Spotters" Lee Amcher and Karl Heidinger.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Libby Bibb "Novice Netter" and Chair, CTA-CTCC JLC, 499-1300, and  
Karl Heidinger, "Spotter" and Vice-Chair, CTA-CTCC JLC, 498-3056