

Original; Fish Division
cc: Institute for Fisheries Research
Education-Game

D. S. Shetter
INSTITUTE FOR FISHERIES RESEARCH
DIVISION OF FISHERIES
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
COOPERATING WITH THE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

B. V. Hughes
J. T. Wilkinson
H. L. Peterson

ALBERT S. HAZZARD, PH.D.
DIRECTOR

ADDRESS
UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS ANNEX
ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

January 26, 1948

Report No. 1150

SUMMARY OF THE USE OF THE RIFLE RIVER AREA AND OF THE
FISH, GAME AND FURBEARERS TAKEN IN 1947

by

David S. Shetter

Use of the Area (Table 1).--The Rifle River Area was visited by the largest number of people in 1947 that have so far been tabulated there (16,818), compared with 14,717 entrants in 1946, and 16,370 users in 1945.

In 1947 there were 10,532 sightseers and picnickers, 3,893 fishermen, 2,343 hunters, and 51 trappers.

Judging from the three years' data, about 61 percent of the registrants will be sightseers, about 23 percent fishermen, about 15 percent hunters and less than 1 percent will be trappers. (The above figures refer to the number of daily permits issued for the above purposes and do not indicate the number of individuals).

As in past years the area is used chiefly by residents of southeastern Michigan and the states of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. Residents of Ogemaw County, Genesee County, Wayne County, and Saginaw County contribute most to the hunting and fishing pressure.

Stream Fishing (Table 2).--The fishing on the trout streams was the best in 1947 in every respect for any year so far recorded. The biggest improvement was noted on the Rifle River where the great majority of the trout fishing is done, but improvement was noted also in the catches on Fontinalis Creek and on that portion of the Houghton Creek flowing through the area. It was encouraging to note that the angling quality improved despite an increase in pressure on the trout streams over the past two years.

Lake Fishing (Table 3).--Lake fishing dropped somewhat in quality (from 0.89 to 0.74 fish per hour) from the 1946 level, primarily because the catch of yellow perch from Spring Lake did not reach the peak experienced there in 1946. The best production in the lakes of the area has come from Dollar and Spring Lakes. This year for the first time fair catches were made in Loon Lake, and better catches were noted for Teal Lake. Fishing in Devoe and North Lakes has been generally poor since the opening year.

Small Game Hunting (Table 4).--More small game hunting was done in 1947 than in any of the previous years (374 hunter-days, 941.5 hours). A total bag was taken consisting of 17 ducks, 64 ruffed grouse, 28 woodcock, 5 rabbits and 1 fox with a total weight of 145.72 pounds. It was pleasing to note that the grouse increased from their low of 39 in 1946. Ducks and woodcock were down somewhat, possibly because of the very mild weather during October. The quality of the hunting, judged on a pounds per hour basis, was rather low as no raccoons were taken, whereas several raccoons (which contributed considerable poundage in previous years) entered the 1945 and 1946 game bags.

Rifle Deer Hunting (Table 5).--Despite a hard winter in 1946-1947 in the general region, 1,921 hunter-days expending a total of 8,806.0 hours resulted in a kill of 48 antlered deer which produced 5,498 pounds of venison in the 1947 season. This compares favorably with the kill of 1946 (51 bucks in 10,268.0 hours) and 1945 (54 bucks in 9,346.0 hours).

Bow and Arrow Deer Hunting (Table 6).--Archers were unsuccessful in 1947 on the Rifle River Area. Forty-seven hunters expended 142.5 hours. In 1946, 44 hunters stalked 132.5 hours and got one buck. In 1945, 9 archers hunted 20.5 hours and got 1 buck.

Trapping (Table 7).--The 1947 catch of 115 muskrats, 8 mink, 1 raccoon and 2 red fox appears to be fair considering about a 1/3 decrease in the number of trapping permits issued when compared with the 1946 results.

Table 8 summarizes the 1947 pressure by various groups of sportsmen and the number of pieces of fish and game taken and the weight of this fish and game, and gives comparative figures for the previous years.

Table 9 summarizes the number of pieces of fish and game taken in slightly more detail and gives the weights of the various species.

These data were collected by a staff of four men, comprised of Basil V. Hughes who was in charge of the Area, and assisted by C. J. Kohn, A. DeClaire and K. Peterson. The latter assisted only from June 15 to September 15. During the hunting season for deer with rifle the Game Division furnished the services of L. A. Davenport and Ben Jenkins. Maintenance of the roads, buildings and fences was conducted by the regular staff.

Data were accumulated during the past trout season on the relative efficiency of scatter planting of trout versus spot plantings, using brown trout as the test fish, both in the Rifle River and Gamble Creek. Trout stream population studies also were conducted in Gamble Creek,

and will be continued during the coming season.

It is felt that adequate creel census data have now been accumulated to judge what the "normal" fishing quality is on the various waters of the area and the effects of opening the area to public use so that any experimental work done in the future may be accurately evaluated. A program of management research for the season of 1948 has been drawn up as follows:

- 1) Increase the number and size of pools in Gamble Creek by use of deflectors and covers as a further test of the value of such work in a brown trout stream.
- 2) Each year for a period of 3 years plant 1,000 marked brown trout fingerlings in the fall in Gamble Creek. More definite information is needed as to the exact percentage of survival of fall planted fingerlings of this species in such a stream.
- 3) Plant in the Rifle River 300 marked legal brown trout at each of three periods in spring and open season and once in the fall to secure more exact information on the catch in the current year and the percentage carry-over in future years.
- 4) Restrict the daily limit of trout on the Rifle River to 10 and impose an 8-inch minimum size on this stream to test the value and effect of these regulations.
- 5) Install 20 marked brush shelters in DeVoe Lake to determine their effect on the catch.
- 6) Make experimental plantings in North Lake, starting in the spring of 1948, of 1,000 each marked legal-sized brown and rainbow trout to determine the relative value of these species in stocking this lake which is suitable for trout except for a lack of spawning areas. North Lake has proven to be unproductive for warm-water species.