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REPORT NO. 606

FISH COLLECTIONS FROM O'BRIEN AND CLEAR LAKES,

ALCONA COUNTY, JULY 3-4, 1940

by

John Greenbank

On July 3, 1940, W. C. Beckman and I visited O'Brien Lake and Clear Lake, in the western part of Alcona County. We set two experimental gill nets overnight in O'Brien Lake, and two gill nets and a small fyke net in Clear Lake.

Clear Lake was poisoned on August 26-27, 1937, by R. W. Eschmeyer and party. The fish population of the lake at the time of poisoning was tabulated in an Institute report.* The poisoning, which presumably killed all of the fish in the lake, rid the lake of 152 pounds per acre of goldfish. Over 18,000 sunfish, of five species and six out of ten possible hybrid combinations, were killed. Since the poisoning, there have been three plantings (one each in 1937, 1938, and 1939), each of 10,000 four-month bluegills. On October 26-27, 1939, Beckman and I made an overnight gill net set in Clear Lake, but we took only three bluegills. These three seemed to be in good condition.

In the evening of July 3, 1940, the lake was alive with bluegills, rising to the surface to feed upon a hatch of midge-flies. We were able

* Greenbank, John. A study of the fish population of Clear Lake, Alcona County. Inst. Fish. Res. Report No. 551, October 4, 1939.

to take only a few, however, on artificial flies. Our nets set that night also yielded poorly; so that we obtained a total of only eleven bluegills. The size range was from 2 1/2 to 5 1/2 inches, total length.

We took also one green sunfish, about 5 inches long. It is probable that this fish was accidentally introduced in the bluegill plantings. It is to be regretted if green sunfish, or any other sunfish beside bluegills, become established again in Clear Lake; for thus would be ruined an experiment in the development of a pure population of bluegills.

In view of the large numbers of bluegills which have been planted in the lake, and their apparent present abundance, it seems to me to be worthy of recommendation that fishing be encouraged in the lake, at least with the beginning of the 1941 season, when many of the bluegills will have reached legal size. The lake apparently isn't well known or much fished; and it would be of interest to know how well the bluegill population would hold up under moderately heavy fishing. I would also suggest that stocking of bluegills be discontinued, in order to avoid possible crowding.

O'Brien Lake was poisoned on August 9, 1939. Its fish population at the time of poisoning has been described in an Institute report.*

In September, 1939, the Federal Forest Service planted 10,500 large fingerling brook trout in O'Brien Lake. On October 26, 1939, W. C. Beckman and I took with gill nets about twenty-five of these trout, in good condition.

In April, 1940, a planting was made of 5,000 Montana grayling (9 month), and 2,500 cutthroat trout (9 month). These fish were said to have been in poor condition when planted.

* Greenbank, John. The fish population of O'Brien Lake, Alcona County. Inst. Fish. Res. Report No. 563, December 6, 1939.

In two gill nets on July 4, 1940, we took about thirty brook trout, all in good condition, and running up to 11 inches in length. We took also six grayling and six cutthroat trout, mostly about 6 to 7 inches, and in fair condition. There has been some fishing activity on the lake this summer, and quite a few trout have been taken, according to reports.

At the time of our visit, the filter dam in the outlet was still in good condition. Nothing had been done, so far, about putting gravel in the spring streams. This work should be done before fall of this year.

I should like to call attention again to the recommendations in Report No. 563; namely, that the filter dam must be kept in maintenance, that the lake should officially be designated a trout lake, and that the use of live fish for bait in the lake should be strictly prohibited. I should further recommend, now that grayling and cutthroat trout are in the lake, that the fishermen somehow be informed of the presence of these species; so that they will not unwittingly destroy any small outthroat or grayling that they may chance to hook.

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