

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

INSTITUTE FOR FISHERIES RESEARCH
DIVISION OF FISHERIES
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
COOPERATING WITH THE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

April 12, 1951

Report No. 1283

R. S. Marks
R. G. Fortney
C. M. Taube
K. G. Fukano
S. N. Fortney
H. D. Ruhl ADDRESS
UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS ANNEX
ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

Ch. Hall

ALBERT S. HAZZARD, PH.D.
DIRECTOR

SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS ON THE HOMER MILL POND

(T. 4 S., R. 4 W., S. 4, 5, 8, 9)

CALHOUN COUNTY

By

Clarence M. Taube

and

K. G. Fukano

RECEIVED
APR 16 1951
FISH DIVISION

This report summarizes observations made on the Homer Mill Pond during April 3 and 4, 1951 by K. G. Fukano and C. M. Taube. The purpose of this investigation was to obtain some information on depth, vegetation and fishes of the pond in connection with the proposal to lower the pond level to aid drainage of agricultural land. The notes given in this summary supplement previous observations made by Mr. R. G. Fortney, District Fisheries Supervisor (see letter, Fortney to R. S. Marks, March 29, 1950).

A dam on the South Branch of the Kalamazoo River has made the Homer Mill Pond. The area of the impoundment has been estimated at about 200 acres; the lower part of the pond (the portion judged as having the greater fisheries value) was estimated to cover around 60 acres. The lower part, as considered in this report, is defined as all that area of the pond

which lies westward from an imaginary line drawn across the impoundment from a semi-wooded point on the north shore, this point lying about one-third mile up from the westward end of the pond.

On April 3, when the water level was about one foot lower than it sometimes is at this season (according to report from Conservation Officer Robert Curtis), a number of soundings were made at random in this lower portion of the pond. Depths ranged from 2 to 8 feet, and the average was estimated as between 3 and 4 feet.

The bottom soil is muck. Aquatic vegetation is dense and consists primarily of water milfoil (Myriophyllum). Other plants noted in the lower pond include coontail (Ceratophyllum), waterweed (Anacharis), musk grass (Chara), and yellow water lily (Nuphar). The pond is said to be mostly covered with vegetation during the summer, only the stream channel and the deeper places near the dam being open at that season.

The upper part of the pond, of course, becomes progressively shallower toward the head end. Because of shallow depth and abundance of aquatic vegetation, it was difficult to cruise this portion of the flooded area on April 3 with a row boat equipped with an outboard motor. However, no difficulty was experienced when the course of the river channel was followed. The stream was cruised up to where the New York Central Railroad crosses. Depths in mid-channel ranged from 4 to 5 feet. The stream averaged about 30 feet wide.

While the upper pond appears to have considerably less value for fishing than the lower part, fish no doubt also frequent this area, at least during the spawning season. Conditions for northern pike spawning appear good. Dense stands of cattail and other emergent aquatics occur at the edge of the pond, in the shallows, and on low islands in the upper reaches.

Mr. Fortney reports intensive fishing on the Homer Mill Pond during the 1950-51 ice fishing season. At the time of the investigation in April, 51 fishing shanties were counted on the shores of the pond. Mr. Robert Curtis, Conservation Officer in this area, has also reported considerable fishing on the pond during the winter seasons, with less during the summer. An angler encountered on April 3 said that he has enjoyed excellent pike fishing here in the spring of the year and has also taken nice catches of largemouth bass later on.

General creel census data for the pond are rather limited. Some records are available for 1939, 1941, 1943, and 1945 and these have been combined in the following table.

Season	Anglers	Hours	Catch per Fish hour	Small- mouth bass	Large- mouth bass	Blue- gill	Pumpkin- seed	Crappie	Perch	Pike	Bull- head	Sucker
Spring	13	41.0	108	2.63	-	-	-	1	-	6	86	15
Summer	26	72.5	93	1.28	2	4	74	3	-	2	6	-
Winter	1	3.5	5	1.43	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-
Totals	40	117.0	206	1.76	2	4	79	3	1	2	92	15

Six 125-foot gill nets were set over night from April 3 to April 4 in the lower part of Homer Mill Pond. Conditions for fish collecting with nets were not considered very good because of low water temperature (39° F.). It is thought that low temperatures retard movement of most warm-water species, and consequently makes their capture less likely than when moderately high temperatures prevail. The catch consisted of 13 northern pike, four black crappies, and one white sucker. The catch of pike is considered good and indicative of a considerable population of this species. These fish ranged from 15.9 to 23.4 inches long and average 19.4 inches. Size range of the crappies was 7.1 to 11.1 inches.

In addition to the net catch, bluegills and largemouth bass were observed. The pond presently is open to spearing, and a local resident reported that a party on the night of April 2 had taken dogfish, carp, and suckers.

It was reported that two parties have in the past rented out boats on the pond as a sideline business. Several permanent homes are situated on the banks of the lower pond, but there are no summer cottages.

Complete draining of the pond would be distinctly unfavorable to bluegills, pumpkinseeds, crappies and largemouth bass since these species prefer habitat of the lake type, and it would probably detract from the quality of pike fishing. It is certain that establishment of an appreciably lower level also would detract from the over-all value of the pond for fish life in view of its shallow depth at present.

Comparative evaluation of the pond's fishery resources and agricultural benefits which might result from drainage has not been attempted. The importance of the impoundment as habitat for waterfowl and fur bearing animals should also be considered in any over-all evaluation.

INSTITUTE FOR FISHERIES RESEARCH

Clarence M. Taube

K. G. Fukano

Report approved by A. S. Hazzard

Report typed by M. E. Keyser