

USGS 2009 Predator Diet Study on Lake Huron

The USGS is in need of diet information from angler caught predators during 2009 on Lake Huron to study what are the predator fish eating. In Off-Shore waters they expect there will be very few alewives, some rainbow smelt but an abundance of chubs. Their goal is to learn how predators are responding to this novel forage base. Also in Saginaw Bay we have a growing Walleye population and they want to estimate their predatory demand, especially on yellow perch. The USGS is asking anglers to remove and freeze the stomachs from the fish they catch because angler caught fish is the only way to get adequate data this year from Michigan waters.

It is important that anglers keep the samples cold until they can be frozen to stop the enzymes in the stomachs from degrading the contents so they ask that you carry plenty of ice. Keep the fish on ice until they are cleaned and the stomachs can be frozen for study. They request that the anglers remove the entire stomachs and anything that may still be in their mouth and place them in a zip lock freezer bag for analysis.

If you catch a Chinook Salmon they also ask that you remove a small scale sample and a small section (about 5 vertebrae) of their vertebrae below the adipose fin and place it in the bag as well. If you wrap the vertebrae in foil first it will help preserve the sample. The vertebrae sample is used to determine if the fish is a hatchery fish or a natural reproduced fish as all of the hatchery fish are fed food laced with oxytetracycline as fingerlings, this oxytetracycline will then show up under the microscope as a visible band in the vertebrae and thus the biologists are able to tell the ratio of hatchery raised fish vs natural spawned fish. The scale sample is used to help age the fish and determine overall health.

The species they are looking for stomach samples from are as follows: Chinook Salmon, Coho Salmon, Atlantic Salmon, Pink Salmon, Lake Trout, Steelhead, Walleye, and Smallmouth Bass. The following information is also requested; the port the fish was caught out of, the date, if it had a fin clip, length of the fish and weight.

This is a way for the USGS and the Michigan DNR complete some studies that they will not be able to otherwise complete due to budget issues and they would like our help. They will provide you with all of the necessary material and even arrange to pick up the samples. You can get more information and some bags to put the samples in and arrange for them to pick up the samples by contacting the following.

Jeff Schaeffer at the USGS - 734-214-7250 or Jschaeffer@usgs.gov

Alpena Great Lakes Fishery Station - Mich. DNR. 160 East Fletcher, Alpena Mich. 49766 or

Jim Johnson at the Mich. DNR – 989-356-3232 or Johnsoje@michigan.gov