

Giving the Nebraska Angler a Boost



STATE GAME WARDEN PLANS TO GIVE HELPING HAND TO FISHERMAN WHO USES BAMBOO POLE, A BENT PIN AND A WORM



THE BIG FISH "THAT DIDN'T GET AWAY"

By JOHN H. KEARNES.

During the past two weeks State Game Warden Koster has planted in Carter lake, for the future pleasure of Omaha anglers, a quarter of a million fish, consisting of bullheads, ring perch, blue gills, crappies, sunfish and bass, which he took from a veritable fish mine in Nemaha county.

Since the beginning of operations a few weeks ago Mr. Koster has transferred from Majors lake, situated a mile west of Peru, in the southeastern part of the state, six carloads of fish, or nearly 1,000,000 in all, which he transplanted in lakes and water courses in the vicinity of Fremont, Omaha and Wayne.

He estimates there are over 5,000,000 fish, or 15 carloads remaining in that body of water, and which will undoubtedly perish this winter when the lake freezes over.

Runs Into Missouri.

Majors lake is a body of water that covers about 80 acres close to the bluffs in the Missouri river bottoms near the Normal school town. It is only two feet in depth and is rich in marine vegetable growths which makes it an ideal feeding and propagating ground for the funny denizens. The lake is fed by three springs, and by the overflow waters of the Missouri river during the fall and spring rises. A drainage canal debouches from the body of water and runs to the Missouri river.

During high water periods this is a veritable fishway for all of the different species of fish in the stream and they make their way from the main stream to the lake in search of food and breeding grounds. There they remain, lured by the rich stores of natural food, and they become so fat, lazy and contented that they ignore the warnings of nature as given by the receding waters of the river floods and eventually become landlocked.

Greed Brings Downfall.

Some seasons their greed and content leads to a complete annihilation of the tons of fish that populate the lake and they perish because of drought, or smother when the freezing weather comes. The shallowness of water is so shallow that it freezes to the bottom. The amount of fish life in these 80 acres is inconceivable. Since operations for removing part of the fish in the lake started the men doing the seining for the game and semi-game fish have taken up scores of tons of coarse food fish,

such as buffalo leather backs, German carp, hickory shad, river pike, sheepshead and catfish.

Spectators and hungry residents in the vicinity have been the recipients of the largess of the state fish and game department, and there never was such a feasting on piscatorial food in Nemaha as there has been in the last month.

Lake a Lure.

The work of removing the fish has been supervised by Warden Koster, and the work has such a

fascination that the lake at all times has been a lure, while the seining was going on, for what are known as "river rats," as well as the outdoor men and the sportsmen and fishermen of this vicinity. I see what treasures each draft of the seine would bring up, but the professors of the normal college, the leading fishermen of the neighborhood and business men have volunteered to don waders and join the state employees in the work.

There is no part of the lake where the water is more than knee deep, and all the work of seining the fish is done by men who wade about in the muddy water. As soon as the seine is drawn there is a scramble to see the species of fish that are taken.

Countless Thousands.

In every draft there are countless thousands of bullheads, ranging from fingerlings to full grown size; frogs that are not yet in the hibernating stage, although they are sluggish; fat bass and ring perch, aliens to the Missouri river or these waters, and which must

have come from some private pond or from clear water lakes and streams during flood times; large gar and spoonbills; then many pounds of the coarse fish, such as carp or buffalo.

There are countless thousands of crappies in the water, and these are big fish, as are all of the fish taken, due to the rich feed.

Fishermen despite the richness of life in the lake, have had but poor success angling therein for the reason they never find the fish hungry enough to bite.

Destructive to Nets.

One of the species of fish taken in large numbers, and which are anathema to the workers, are the alligator gars, which run large in size and are destructive to the nets.

As soon as a half-ton of fish suitable for transplanting is procured these are placed in tubs and are taken in a truck to the state fish car, the Angler, which is 76 feet in length and is one of the best equipped cars of the kind in America.

There the fish are placed in tanks which are treated with com-

pressed air at intervals by a unique mechanism. The bullheads will stand crowding and there are thousands of these in each tank. The crappie, bass and perch are more exclusive, and as compared with the bullheads, only a few can be placed in a tank.

Notable Hatchery.

At Gretna the state of Nebraska maintains one of the really notable fish hatcheries of the United States. It is in charge of Superintendent William O'Brien, who is regarded as one of the most expert fish culturists in America.

He hatches at the plant there

countless millions of trout of the different species, bass, crappies, and other game fish with which to stock the clear water running streams in the state, most of which are located in the sandhill country. They are the aristocrats of fresh water life and because of the comparative accessibility of some of the trout streams and bass lakes of the state, and the cost of equipment for a fishing trip of a few days, only the wealthy or leisurely citizens of the

state can take advantage of the sport that is made possible by the work of the Gretna, Benkelman and Valentine fish hatcheries.

Closes to Railway.

The shallow lake at Peru, located close to the Burlington railway, and so economical for replenishment of the waters of the state with fish from this lake, provides the fish for hoi pollo. They

are the kind that the man of family can afford to go for when he takes his brood out for a day with nature and an old-fashioned fishing trip. They are the kind of fish that can be caught with a cane pole, a cotton line, a common fish hook with a worm for bait. Bullhead and crappie, with the ring perch, will bite for the common man and his family and will afford the same modicum of sport, especially that the aristocratic rainbow trout or Oswego bass will for the angler with his costly outfit of steel or split bamboo pole, silk lines, expensive leaders and flies.

Enough for State.

There are enough fish in the lake to supply all of the ponds, lakes, creeks, rivers and other water courses of the state with game and

fish food. The supply will never diminish, for it is constantly replenished from the Missouri river with its inexhaustible stores of fish life. In fact, Majors lake is a veritable fish reservoir.

The Honorable Ellis Good, repre-

sentative from Nemaha county,

has called the attention of the gov-

ernor to the opportunities for re-

plenishment of the waters of the

state with fish from this lake.

He has asked that an engineer from

the state highway department,

with Superintendent O'Brien and

Warden Koster, make a survey of

the lake, ascertain what require-

ments will be needed in diking and

retaining the waters near their towns

with the fish taken from Majors lake.

Contiguous to Majors lake, but

closer to the Missouri river, is another lake of considerable area,

and which is accessible for the fish

car, which is literally teeming with

fish of a different species. The

varieties found therein are the blue,

yellow and channel catfish, which

only propagate in running water.

These are Impounded.

These fish were impounded dur-

ing overflows of the nearby river,

and they are now of considerable

size. From this lake could be

stocked such streams as the Blue,

Republican, Elkhorn, Verdigris,

Niobrara, Wood, Beaver and

North Loup-rivers, and the count-

less living streams and creeks in

the state.

This would not only be a work

of conservation in the develop-

ment of a vast supply of food fish

in the state, but it would also in-

crease the possibilities for in-

dustry in the sport of angling in

sections where this is now prac-

tically impossible because of the

lack of fish life in the overfished

streams, especially in the more ac-

cessible and densely populated

portions of the state.

Economy of Handling.

These lakes could also be used

for the stocking of private ponds

and lakes of the state where fish

could be raised in large quanti-

ties for food purposes. There are

several large ponds on farms in

this part of the state which are

bringing in a good revenue to the

owners.

The possibilities of these lakes

as an auxiliary to the state fish

hatcheries where the finer game

fish are propagated in limited

quantities, and rather expensively,

are limitless, both because of vast

production and economy of han-

dling.

As it is now the lakes are neg-

lected and the tons and tons of

fish life, laboriously produced by

nature, are doomed to animal de-

struction by nature itself. The laws

will not permit citizens of the state

to seine or catch the game fish

and save them for food even when

the lakes are drying up or freez-

ing over.

Game Warden Koster estimates

that the smaller sized fish which he

transplanted from Majors lake to

Carter lake, and the waters about

Fremont and Wayne, will be large

enough to catch in three years. A

large proportion of them will bite

and the world taking home the

coming spring and summer. There

is promise of good sport for the

man of family and his aids the

coming year.



INTERIOR OF STATE FISH CAR - "ANGLER"



—Photos by Newman, of Peru.

so small and the rates so high that his work with the car was limited. In a number of cases, especially in those of Wayne and Fremont, citizens in the respective communities defrayed the cost of replenishing the waters near their towns with the fish taken from Majors lake.

Contiguous to Majors lake, but closer to the Missouri river, is another lake of considerable area, and which is accessible for the fish car, which is literally teeming with fish of a different species. The varieties found therein are the blue, yellow and channel catfish, which only propagate in running water.

These are Impounded.

These fish were impounded during overflows of the nearby river, and they are now of considerable size. From this lake could be stocked such streams as the Blue, Republican, Elkhorn, Verdigris, Niobrara, Wood, Beaver and North Loup-rivers, and the countless living streams and creeks in the state.

This would not only be a work of conservation in the development of a vast supply of food fish in the state, but it would also increase the possibilities for indulgence in the sport of angling in sections where this is now practically impossible because of the lack of fish life in the overfished streams, especially in the more accessible and densely populated portions of the state.

Economy of Handling.

These lakes could also be used for the stocking of private ponds and lakes of the state where fish could be raised in large quantities for food purposes. There are several large ponds on farms in this part of the state which are bringing in a good revenue to the owners.

The possibilities of these lakes as an auxiliary to the state fish hatcheries where the finer game fish are propagated in limited quantities, and rather expensively, are limitless, both because of vast production and economy of handling.

As it is now the lakes are neglected and the tons and tons of fish life, laboriously produced by nature, are doomed to animal destruction by nature itself. The laws will not permit citizens of the state to seine or catch the game fish and save them for food even when the lakes are drying up or freezing over.