



THE "BERRY" GOOD NEWS



News and Notes from the Strawberry Anglers Association

Volume 4, Issue 2

April 2001

Briefly . . .

- Take a moment to renew your Strawberry Anglers Association Membership for 2001. Membership dues are \$10 per person. Membership renewal form can be found inside.
- Plan on attending the annual International Sportsmen's Exposition, March 15-18 at the new Sandy Convention Center. (See Page 7 inside)
- The University of Utah's Natural History Museum is hosting a fly fishing exhibit entitled, "Anglers All: Humanity in Midstream," February 10th to May 13th.

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Director Kimball Shares Views With SAA

By Kayla Willey

Sporting a beautiful fish-patterned tie, and direct from meetings earlier in the day with Governor Leavitt and the Utah State Legislature, John Kimball Jr., Director of the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, found time to visit with members of the Strawberry Angler's Association during our meeting in February. He excitedly observed that for the first time in his 30 year career, the governor of Utah had singled out a program specifically designed to improve statewide fishing. It was also the first year that there was support and lobbying at the state legislature directly from the fishing community.

Director Kimball's major concern is for wildlife habitat and where it is headed in the next 20-30 years, especially with the projected doubling of Utah's population within that same time frame.



Division of Wildlife Resources Director John Kimball discusses Strawberry's future with SAA Officer Ed Kent.

He's concerned with Strawberry in particular because of the fishing pressure the reservoir currently receives and additional pressure anticipated in the future. Kimball mentioned several ideas that are being explored to help reduce fishing pressure at Strawberry. These ideas include the management of Lost Creek Reservoir as a primary fishery, the growing popularity of tiger muskie fishing at Pine View Reservoir, the improvements planned for the Spanish Fork and

Provo Rivers, and the ongoing promotion of Jordanelle and Deer Creek reservoirs as alternatives to Strawberry fishing.

John spent a good deal of time discussing the Governor's Blue Ribbon Fisheries Initiative and other legislative possibilities. (See article entitled *Proposed Legislation to Improve Angling* on Page 3.) He is also excited about the urban fishing program and the fishing pond being built in Murray City Park that will be completed this Spring.

2001 Fishing Regulation Changes

Several important changes have been adopted and codified in the 2001 Utah Fishing Proclamation. With input from the Strawberry Anglers Association, rules governing fishing contests for cold water species, such as trout, whitefish, and salmon, may not be conducted "on those waters where the Wildlife Board has imposed special harvest rules, such as tackle restrictions, reduced limits, or size restrictions, or other exceptions to the general fishing regulations." Strawberry Reservoir's restriction on size, "only one rainbow or cutthroat trout or rainbow-cutthroat hybrid over 18 inches," and "four fish limit" are special harvest rules and thus, prohibit fishing contests from taking place at Utah's premier trout water.

Also of interest to those anglers who have not yet purchased their 2001 fishing license, the Utah State Legislature approved Senate Bill 248 last year, which eliminated the Wildlife Habitat Authorization and incorporated the \$6.00 fee into fishing and hunting licenses beginning January 1, 2001. A resident, seasonal fishing license now costs \$24.00, and a resident combination license for the year is \$32.00 - a \$2.00 savings from last year.

Fall 2000 Strawberry Gill Net Summary

By Roger Wilson
DWR Wildlife Biologist

Routine fall gillnetting was accomplished at Strawberry Reservoir during the period of October 15-19, 2000. The work was accomplished by Utah Division of Wildlife Resources personnel with assistance from the Strawberry Anglers Association, U.S. Forest Service, Department of Environmental Quality, and others. Gill netting is



DWR Biologist Wilson examines a Strawberry gillnetted trout.

the primary monitoring tool for the Strawberry fishery, and information gathered in this effort is used in evaluating such parameters as species abundance and distribution, fish health, spawning condition, sex ratios, growth, condition, feeding habitats, and year class strength for the various game species. This data serves as input into the population model which predicts numbers of cutthroat trout available by year class in the fishery, and ultimately provides the rationale for regulation proposals. Gill net data is also used to track

the relative abundance and population expansion of rough fishes like Utah chub and Utah sucker. Since the 1990 treatment, spring and fall gillnetting has been accomplished every year, and additional summer netting has been undertaken when there are special information needs.

The fall 2000 game fish catch rate of 1.10 fish per gill-net hour was down slightly from the previous 2 years, but this catch is still indicative of good game fish numbers. Of the total game fish taken, 51% were cutthroat, 28% were rainbow, and 21% were kokanee salmon. Adult kokanee salmon are typically taken in high numbers during the fall period due to the fact that they are staging and concentrating near shore regions as they look for spawning sites. Cutthroat are also readily taken as they move into shallow waters to feed.

The fall 2000 catch of Utah chub (0.53 fish/gill-net hour) was the highest we have seen since the chemical treatment. However, chub numbers remain well below the levels encountered during the late 1970's and 1980's. The proportion of Utah chub in the gill-net catch is still less than that recorded during the fall of 1976, and chub competition is not currently influencing game fish abundance or production.

Over the last several years, volunteers from the Strawberry Anglers Association have provided many hours of assistance in our gillnetting effort. I would like to express my appreciation to all of those who have helped. Keep up the good work.

The proportion of Utah chub in the gill-net catch is still less than that recorded during the fall of 1976, and chub competition is not currently influencing game fish abundance or production.

Your Strawberry Anglers Association (<http://www.strawberryanglers.com>)

Officers

| | |
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| VP / Membership - Laird Spratt | (801) 571-3589 |
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| Education - Robert Spratt | (801) 568-1887 |
| Political Advisor - Ed Kent | (801) 969-1967 |

The "Berry" Good News

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Suggestions, articles, and photos are welcomed!

Next SAA Meeting
Tuesday, March 6th
6:30 pm

WorkForce Services Building
5735 S. Redwood Road

Speaker
Alan Ward
Fisheries Biologist
Utah Department of
Wildlife Resources

Strawberry Reservoir's 10th Anniversary What's Ahead?

By Don Archer
Special Projects Coordinator

It's now been ten years since Strawberry Reservoir was treated to remove the rough fish population. Since treatment, Strawberry has lived up to most every expectation though things have not gone totally as planned. The sterile rainbow program had to be prematurely suspended but was resumed with an alternative sterilization program. Kokanee salmon populations have developed slowly, and the Bear Lake cutthroat have not been voracious predators, at least not yet.

There has not been a recent angler survey but in all likelihood 1.6 to 1.7 million angler hours are being exerted on the reservoir each year, exceeding original predictions by some 400,000 hours. That kind of fishing pressure shows how successful the program has been but also presents some challenges. It appears that heavy fishing pressure

is cropping the larger trout off before they reach maturity even though creel limits are restrictive. We feel that a major factor is hooking mortality that is sharply restricting the number of trout surviving to grow beyond 18 inches in length, a problem not easily corrected. By all standards Strawberry is receiving incredible fishing pressure and most anglers are catching large numbers of fish. A portion of those fish die from the effects of being hooked and released no matter how carefully handled. Thus, further restricting limits is unlikely to have any noticeable effect.

Stocking more fish might appear to be an alternative but more fish would likely only draw more fishermen, further aggravating an already crowded situation on most weekends and holidays. Generally catch rates averaging in excess of 0.5 per hour, which is the case at Strawberry, tend to be inflationary so that increased stocking only draws more

(See: "What's Ahead?" Page 7)

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Proposed Legislation to Improve Angling

By Val John Halford

In a meeting with anglers and state legislators on Tuesday, February 6th, Governor Mike Leavitt presented "two new products" for Utah's anglers. The first product, known as the Blue Ribbon Fisheries Initiative, is a single, lump sum appropriation to improve fishing for the general public. Representative Thomas Hatch, from Panguitch, is sponsoring the Initiative (House Bill 338), which would allocate \$500,000 for the "development and preservation of high quality aquatic systems to produce healthy fish population for angling and aesthetic experiences." If approved by the Utah State Legislature, the Blue Ribbon Fisheries Initiative would take effect on July 1, 2001 and would be administered by the Division of Wildlife Resources.

Governor Leavitt's second product for Utah fishermen is the idea of developing a Dedicated Angler Program, patterned after the DWR's existing Dedicated Hunter Program. This state sanctioned

hunting program allows interested sportsmen to sign-up and volunteer their help with DWR service projects related to Utah wildlife. These service hours then reward participants with extended season hunting permits. The program costs each hunter \$150 over a three year period. In a similar manner, a Dedicated Angler Program would allow qualified fishermen access to private property ordinarily closed to public fishing. The private property owner would be compensated with funds pulled from a DWR account set-up for this purpose. As with hunters, interested fishermen would be required to donate a number of volunteer hours on DWR aquatic projects and pay a set fee to qualify as a dedicated angler.

The Utah Anglers Coalition is discussing the merits of such a program with DWR representatives and the Strawberry Anglers Association will continue to monitor and report developments on both the Blue Ribbon Fisheries Initiative and the Dedicated Angler Program. Watch for additional information in this publication or the SAA website.

Ice Fishing At Strawberry

By Val John Halford

It's 7:05 AM, and there is barely enough early morning light to see what you're doing. The temperature is a chilling -10 degrees, but there's only a slight breeze and no mist or fog shrouding the lake - perfect conditions for a day of ice fishing fun on Strawberry Reservoir. The minute you step out of the truck and begin to unpack your gear, frost starts to form on your clothing and equipment. If you're still a little sleepy or tired at this early morning hour, the cold air will shock you awake. Several layers of thick winter clothing, a good hat, gloves and warm boots help make the cold weather conditions tolerable. You load up your sled with an ice auger, depth finder, tackle, ice scoops, chairs, a thermos full of hot soup, and ice rods, and begin the walk through the drifted snow on the shore toward the frozen expanse of lake. All indications promise a great day of fishing.



On January 1, 1984, the Division of Wildlife Resources initiated a year around angling season for most waters in the state of Utah, including Strawberry Reservoir. Initially, local retail stores and fishing shops were slow to stock specialized



A group of Strawberry "cold-footers" enjoying the day at Jakes' Bay.

equipment needed to take advantage of this extended fishing opportunity and Utah's seasonal anglers were unfamiliar with how to catch fish

through the ice. However, with each passing year, ice fishing has gained in popularity as anglers have come to recognize and appreciate the



A fine trout caught through the ice at the 'Berry.

festivity of a day spent with family and friends in a very unique setting. On any given weekend during the winter months, often despite even severe weather conditions, hundreds of fishermen can be seen enjoying the day on Strawberry Reservoir.

As with all forms of angling, it's often knowledge, not luck, that makes for a safe and productive ice fishing trip. Strawberry's shallow bays, areas that are first to freeze over, are usually the most productive. Initially, trout can be graphed throughout the water column and often form pods according to age group and size. Kokanee Salmon, which can be enticed to take a brightly colored ice fly, travel in schools and remain deep throughout the season. As the winter advances, fish trapped under the ice become more lethargic as the oxygen content of their environment diminishes. When this occurs, fish will seek out those areas that hold greater amounts of oxygen, such as stream inlets or underwater springs. Even with their metabolism slowed for the winter, trout must continue to eat to survive and the shallow bays and inlets offer the best feeding grounds. For much of the ice season, Strawberry's rainbow trout can be caught by fishing the edge of weed

beds in 15 to 25 feet of water using a variety of standard ice rigs and bait. Cutthroat trout are prone to inhabit deeper water, usually 30 to 40 feet in depth and can be picked up using standard ice fishing tackle - artificial lures and ice flies tipped with bait. If an area proves unproductive, don't hesitate to pick up, move to a new location, and try again.

Close observation using underwater cameras reveals that trout, especially larger fish, are leery of bait tipped static set-ups and ice flies. However, providing movement in the form of jigging can entice what seems to be a preconditioned response to strike at moving prey. Fish have been observed to take static bait in their mouth and, while remaining almost completely stationary, attempt to gently work the bait off the hook. Often, clever fish will remain in the area waiting for the next baited hook to drop down through the hole. Angling patience is required, and seasoned ice anglers will attempt a hook set at the slightest indication. As the season wears on, try using smaller lures and droppers. Slower, less frequent jigging techniques often work. Scented jelly or sprays can help draw and keep the fish near your bait. Finally, offering different types of attractors or ice flies, may be the ticket needed to produce late season results.

Strawberry Reservoir is one of the best bets in the state for ice fishing fun. For those individuals confined to fishing from the bank during the regular season, ice fishing can open up a whole new world of angling possibilities. Cold season fishing can be a great social activity. The experience of sharing the day ice fishing on Strawberry Reservoir with family, friends, and fishing companions can be rewarding and memorable. Make sure to bring your camera along to capture the fins and the grins.



Ice fishing at the 'Berry can be a rewarding family experience. Bring your children along for the fun.

If an area proves unproductive, don't hesitate to pick up, move to a new location, and try again.

Winter Creel Survey

Fisheries Biologist Alan Ward and the Division of Wildlife Resources conducted a creel survey of ice fishermen at Strawberry Reservoir during the month of January. The results surprised biologists, particularly the increase in ice fishing popularity. The total number of angler hours, 98,400, has grown sharply from the estimates of 50,000 hours for January, 1996. However, biologist

Roger Wilson is not overly concerned. According to Wilson, "January is the peak ice fishing month. Pressure will decrease in February and drop even further in March. Fish harvest during the entire winter typically represents less than 10 percent of the total yearly harvest at Strawberry Reservoir." The following table summarizes the results of the recent DWR winter creel survey.

STRAWBERRY RESERVOIR CREEL SURVEY JANUARY 2001

| JANUARY 2001 | CUTTHROAT TROUT | RAINBOW TROUT | TOTAL TROUT | PERCENTAGE |
|------------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|------------|
| Number Caught | 50,431 | 10,094 | 60,525 | 100% |
| Number Released | 34,131 | 5,435 | 39,566 | 65% |
| Number Harvested | 16,300 | 4,659 | 20,959 | 35% |

Friends of Strawberry Valley

SAA President Jim Carter has brought together a number of special interest groups to form the "Friends of Strawberry Valley," a unique committee whose primary purpose is the preservation of this valuable watershed resource. The mission statement of the organization claims its purpose is: "To promote ecosystem health through balanced integration of multiple use interests, providing input and support to Strawberry Valley management agencies."

Membership in "The Friends" is varied and includes representatives from the Strawberry Anglers Association, Wasatch County Commission, Daniel's Summit Lodge, Mud Creek Cattle Permittee, Back Country Horsemen of Utah, Wasatch County Planning Office, Strawberry Bay Marina, Salt Lake Fish and Game Association, Trout Unlimited, Utah State Water Conservancy District, East Daniel's Permittee, Division of Wildlife Resources, Great Salt Lake Audubon Society, Utah Off Highway Vehicle Council, Utah Wild-

life Federation, Sierra Club, Strawberry Water Users Association, Central Utah Water Project, and Strawberry Pines Developers. SAA's Jim Carter is currently serving as the chairman of the organization.

The Friends of Strawberry Valley has a number of important, sometimes conflicting, issues to deal with including the location of future campgrounds and facilities, regulation of off highway vehicles and their impact, horseback trail location, livestock grazing rights, streambed rehabilitation, and the maintenance of minimal stream flows in the Strawberry River. The group meets once a month in Heber City and thus far has established goals for the reservoir and its tributaries, watershed and aquatic habitat, recreational and special use, terrestrial wildlife habitat, domestic livestock grazing, public education and awareness, forest commodity products and indigenous vegetation. A valley wide conservation is being developed and will be available this year.

STRAWBERRY ANGLERS ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM

YES! I wish to renew my Strawberry Anglers Association membership and help shape the future of Strawberry Reservoir. My yearly membership dues are \$10.00 per person.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

DAY PHONE: _____ EVENING PHONE: _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

YES! I am interested in volunteer work projects for Strawberry Reservoir. (Check all of the following that apply.)

- Fish Planting
- Gill Net Surveys
- Public Education
- Legislative Monitoring
- Newsletter Articles

Mail this form and your check to:

STRAWBERRY ANGLERS ASSOCIATION
735 Labrum Avenue
Murray, Utah 84107

For more information, please call (801) 269-0619



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What's Ahead?

(Continued from page 3)

anglers without improving catch rates or fish size. Stocking more fish does not appear to be the answer, either.

What is the answer? We feel that improved angler handling of the fish they catch; voluntarily limiting one's catch, especially during the heat of the summer; and utilizing less destructive terminal gear such as flies and lures can do much to reduce harvest and incidental hooking mortality. But in the final analysis we need to recognize that the system is close to being saturated with people and that the only effective means of leveling off the spiral of increasing use is to stabilize stocking rates even though to do so will result in lower catch rates as angling pressure increases. Otherwise, the fishery at Strawberry will slowly escalate to a glut of anglers jousting for a chance to fish for "stockers" direct from the hatchery, providing nothing close to the quality experience we enjoy today.

SAA Is Non-Profit Organization

On January 17, 2001, the Strawberry Anglers Association received notice from the Internal Revenue Service that our application for recognition as a non-profit organization was successful. Our Association's goals and purpose were acknowledged by the U.S. government as a worthwhile cause that directly benefits the natural environment and wildlife of our nation. What does this mean for Association members? You may now deduct voluntary contributions to the SAA on your yearly income taxes, claiming that amount on IRS "Schedule A - Charitable Contributions." Tax deductions are allowed to all donors, members or non-members, only to the extent that their contribution is a gift, with no considerations received. According to a new IRS ruling, those persons wishing to contribute \$250 or more to our worthy cause will need to obtain a receipt, signed by the Association's treasurer, for their tax records.

So, as you write your annual donation check to PBS, the March of Dimes, MADD, the American Red Cross, or similar organizations, you might consider making a cash contribution to the Strawberry Anglers Association. Your check will not only help support the SAA's ongoing efforts to monitor and protect Strawberry Reservoir, but whatever amount you generously provide can now be deducted from your federal income taxes.

735 Labrum Avenue
Murray, Utah 84107

Jim Carter, President
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