

Fisheries Update: Little Cormorant Lake

Fisheries staff from the DNR office in Detroit Lakes completed a fisheries assessment in Little Cormorant Lake during June 2022. Below are some preliminary highlights from this survey, graphs of historical net catches, and the most recent fish stocking history for Little Cormorant Lake.

- Little Cormorant Lake's gill net catch rate for walleye in 2022 was 1.2 per net, below the lake's historical average of 2.9 per net since 1977. Walleye lengths ranged from 14.25 to 24.25 inches. Walleye stockings had mixed results as there are several missing year classes of Walleye.
- The catch rate of northern pike in gill nets (18.9 per net) was the highest ever observed for Little Cormorant Lake. It is also well above the lake's historical average of 8.1 per net. Northern pike had an average size of 24.5 inches long and ranged in size from 15 to 32 inches.
- In 2022, the largemouth bass abundance in gill nets (which are set in deeper water) was 5.2 bass per net, which was the highest recorded for the lake. Bass averaged 14.5 inches in length and the longest was right at 19.5 inches.
- The bluegill catch rate in trap nets have fluctuated over the years, but the 35.5 bluegills per trap net (set near the shore) in 2022 was double the lake's historical average of 17.3 per net. Bluegills had an average size of 6 inches with the longest bluegill being almost 8.5 inches long. Bluegill grow fairly slow in Little Cormorant Lake with a 4-year-old fish being 4.25 inches on average.
- A total of 17 black crappie were captured in the 2022 survey (8 were captured in gill nets and 9 in trap nets). Black crappie averaged 7.5 inches in length and ranged in size from 4 to 11 inches long.

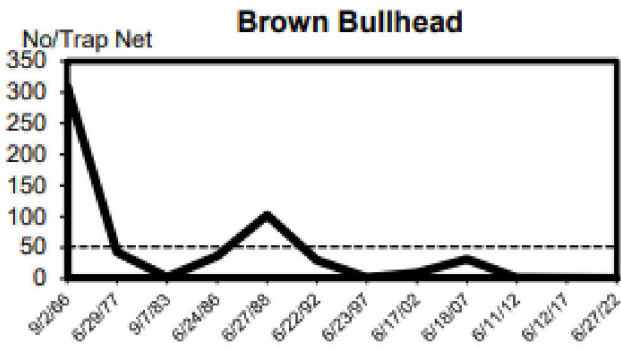
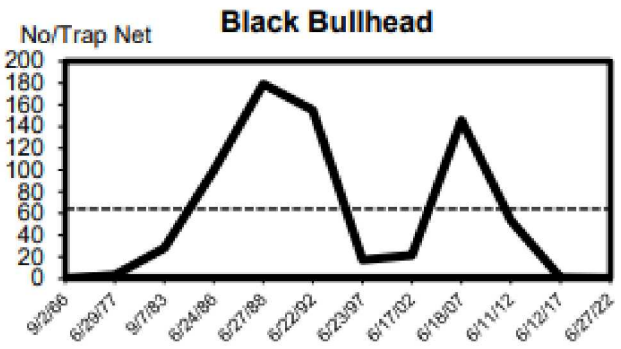
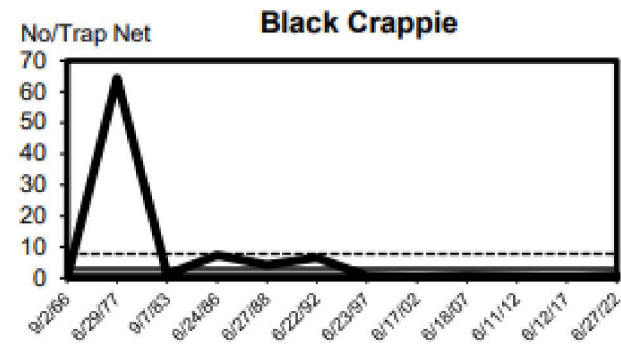
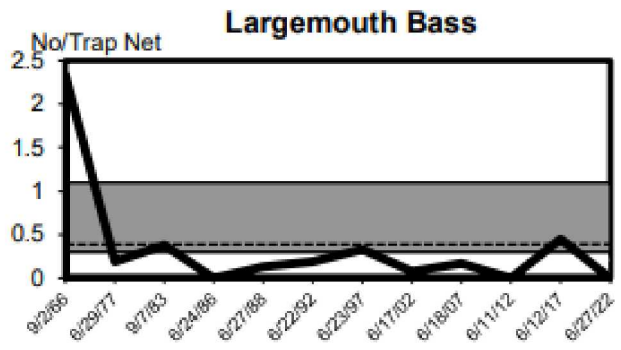
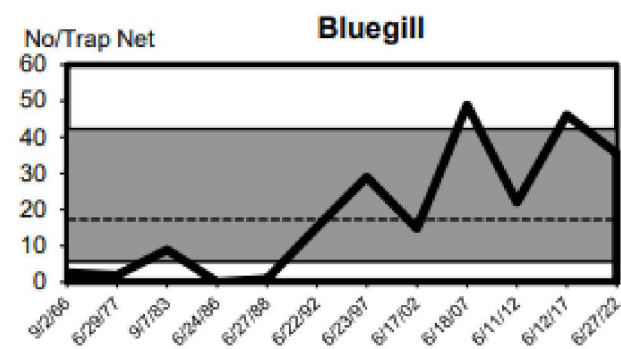
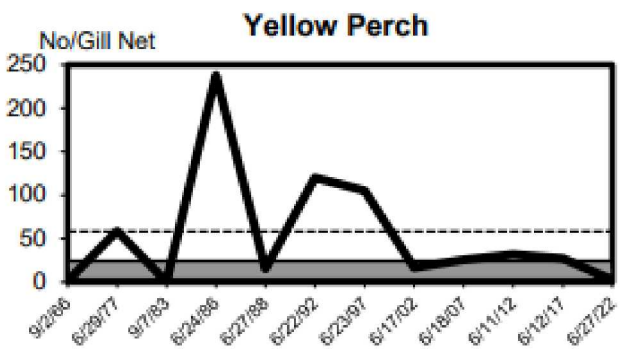
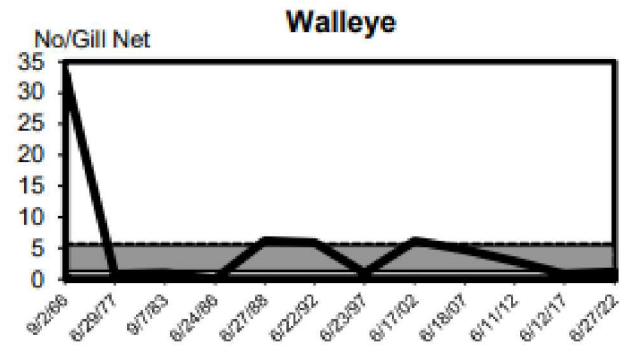
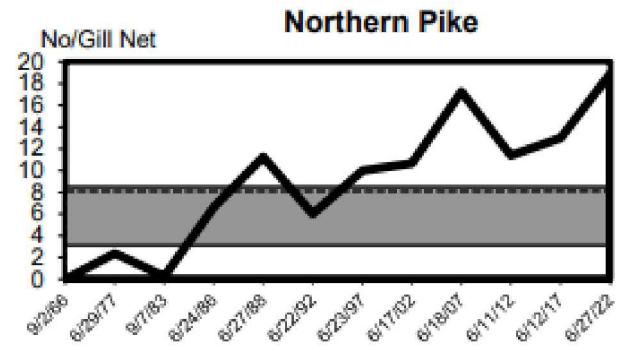
So what do these results mean for Little Cormorant Lake?

Currently, the major concern in Little Cormorant Lake is the high northern pike abundance and low abundance of yellow perch, the latter which serve as forage for the game fish species. Many other lakes in Becker County also have had increases in northern pike abundance, causing difficulties with walleye management as pike can eat stocked walleye fingerlings. To help reduce the abundance of small northern pike, the statewide regulation requires the release of larger northern pike (22 to 26 inches) and a bag limit of 10 (only 2 over 26 inches). Anglers are encouraged to harvest pike under 22 inches. The walleye population appears to be slightly down compared to past surveys, but the numbers are what would be expected compared to other lakes across Minnesota that are similar to Little Cormorant (the gray bar in the graphs). The DNR stocks Little Cormorant Lake every year with walleye fry, and that is planned to continue. Future surveys (next one planned for 2027) will be used to continue to evaluate the success of walleye stocking and evaluate whether the special regulations on the lake should continue.

Zebra mussels were confirmed in Little Cormorant Lake in spring 2026. It is expected that the lake will have clearer water and thus more aquatic vegetation growth going forward. Aquatic vegetation is also expected to grow to deeper depths. Future evaluations will monitor how zebra mussels impact the fish populations in Little Cormorant Lake, but other lakes in the Detroit Lakes area continue to have strong fish populations despite the presence of zebra mussels.

Little Cormorant Lake Historical Net Catch

Lake Class 25



Recent fish stocking history for Little Cormorant Lake. More years of data available upon request.
 WAE=Walleye, FRY=fry-sized fish, FGL=Fingerling-sized fish, and PVT=Private stocking.

Little Cormorant Lake			03050600		
YEAR	SPECIES	SIZE	NUMBER	POUNDS	STOCKED BY:
2025	WAE	FRY	619,000	6.02	DNR
2024	WAE	FRY	619,000	5.80	DNR
2023	WAE	FRY	619,000	5.07	DNR
2022	WAE	FGL	5,000	200.00	PVT
	WAE	FRY	619,000	5.39	DNR
2021	WAE	FRY	619,000	5.23	DNR
2020	WAE	FGL	1,998	111.00	PVT
2019	WAE	FRY	619,000	5.00	DNR
2018	WAE	FGL	1,665	111.00	Private
	WAE	FRY	619,000	5.40	DNR
2016	WAE	FRY	619,000	5.36	DNR
2015	WAE	FGL	1,350	90.00	Private
	WAE	FRY	680,500	6.12	DNR
2014	WAE	FRY	619,000	5.41	DNR
2013	WAE	FGL	2,500	90.00	Private
2012	WAE	FRY	619,000	5.48	DNR
2010	WAE	FRY	619,000	5.53	DNR
2009	WAE	FGL	2,500	125.00	Private
2008	WAE	FRY	619,000	5.63	DNR
2006	WAE	FRY	619,000	5.63	DNR
2004	WAE	FRY	619,000	5.63	DNR
2002	WAE	FRY	619,000	5.63	DNR
2000	WAE	FRY	619,000	5.63	DNR
1998	WAE	FRY	619,000	5.63	DNR
1996	WAE	FRY	619,000	5.63	DNR
1994	WAE	FRY	619,000	5.63	DNR