

Winni Derby Fishing Forecast 2009

Inland Fisheries staff members from the Region 2 and Concord offices, and Powder Mill Hatchery fish culturists surveyed landlocked salmon populations in Merrymeeting, Winnepesaukee, Sunapee and Big Squam lakes in the fall of 2008. We are quite pleased to report that we have excellent salmon growth in all four of the lakes surveyed. We successfully obtained 125,000 fertilized landlocked salmon eggs from Big Squam and Merrymeeting lakes for our statewide salmon stocking program. We fell just shy of our 18 inch (two-year-old salmon) management goal in Lake Winnepesaukee at 17.8 inches.

The age-class structure for Winnepesaukee landlocked salmon is diverse with 30% age 2 and 56% age 3 salmon providing the bulk of the fishery. Age 4 and 5 salmon comprised 15% of the trap net catch. Remember these ages were assigned for 2008 salmon; the fish are one year older and larger in 2009!

Our average Winnepesaukee salmon last fall was 19.4 inches in length, and weighed 2.5 pounds. Overall, salmon size is down a bit from 2008, but the age 3 and 4 salmon this spring will please our anglers. The rainbow smelt population was surveyed in the summer of 2008 with our research vessel, Forager and smelt numbers are plentiful throughout the lake.

I don't want to sound like a broken record, but hook wounding on our salmon has again increased. Each fall as we weigh and measure our sample of salmon we track hook wounds on the mouth/head and record this information as well as the severity of the wounds. This past fall, 27% of salmon examined by our staff had noticeable hook wounds. Hook-wounded fish generally have poor body condition, as the growth potential of the salmon is directed towards healing the wounds. These salmon are unfortunately caught and released several more times as they are not likely to be harvested by anglers. Please do your part in maintaining a healthy and vigorous fishery by harvesting hook-wounded fish, and carefully releasing healthy fish to sustain this wonderful salmon fishery we have here in the lakes region. I would suggest to all our anglers out there, no matter what you fish for, use rubber nets if you have to immobilize a fish in order to release it. The old style string type nets entangled fish, scraped off scales and generally hurt the fish more than helping it. Above all, if you plan on releasing fish, do it quickly and try to avoid damage to the mouth in your efforts.

Our landlocked salmon fisheries would not exist without the dedicated fish culturists at our Powder Mill Hatchery. Each spring, they provide us with quality landlocked salmon yearlings in order to sustain the salmon fishery in all 15 of our salmon lakes. Our hatchery system is number one in my estimation, and our fish culturists are dedicated to raising the best fish possible for our anglers here in N.H.

For nearly three decades, the Lakes Region Inland Fishing Association and the Winni Derby have been willing partners with the Inland Fisheries Division to promote, maintain and conserve the special landlocked salmon fisheries we are fortunate to have in New Hampshire.

Table 1**2008 Landlocked Salmon Fall Trap Netting Results**

Lake	AVERAGE LENGTH (IN.)	AVERAGE WEIGHT (LBS.)
BIG SQUAM	20.4	3.10
SUNAPEE	20.1	3.10
MERRYMEETING	20.9	3.43
WINNIPESAUKEE	19.5	2.70

Table 2**Length (in.) at Age for Winnepesaukee Salmon**

Year	<u>1+</u>	<u>2+</u>	<u>3+</u>	<u>4+</u>	<u>5+</u>	<u>6+</u>	<u>7+</u>
1999	14.9	19.1	21.3	21.4	22.5	*	*
2000	13.3	19.4	20.8	21.5	23.3	24.5	*
2001	*	19.1	21.7	21.8	24.1	*	*
2002	14.0	19.8	22.1	23.4	23.5	*	*
2003	12.8	18.9	22.4	23.2	23.7	*	*
2004	11.5	17.9	20.5	21.2	22.8	23.9	*
2005	*	18.5	20.6	21.5	22.4	*	*
2006	*	18.5	20.8	21.1	21.6	*	*
2007	13.2	18.6	21.1	21.9	21.6	*	*
2008	*	17.8	19.8	20.7	22.1	*	*

Table 3**Percent Frequency by Age for Winnepesaukee Salmon**

<u>Year</u>	<u>1+</u>	<u>2+</u>	<u>3+</u>	<u>4+</u>	<u>5+</u>	<u>6+</u>	<u>7+</u>
1999	8.0	59.0	26.0	5.0	2.0	*	*
2000	0.3	57.0	35.1	7.0	0.3	0.3	*
2001	*	59.2	31.8	7.3	1.7	*	*
2002	0.8	30.4	54.5	10.9	3.4	*	*
2003	0.9	69.9	9.3	14.4	5.6	*	*
2004	0.3	71.5	25.4	0.9	1.6	0.3	*
2005	*	37.7	51.9	9.8	0.6	*	*
2006	*	32.0	51.4	13.5	3.0	*	*
2007	*	66.0	19.0	11.0	4.0	*	*
2008	*	29.9	55.5	8.5	6.1	*	