

A REAL FISH STORY



Fifteen Years of Great Fishing on Two Kansas Lakes
Milford Lake and Tuttle Creek Lake

45,024 Fish Caught

January 1st, 2003 through January 1st, 2018
Submitted by Ron Harrison

Total Catfish Caught 2003 to 2018

Year	# of Fish	Year	# of Fish	Year	# of Fish
2003	2769	2004	2875	2005	3122
2006	3249	2007	3219	2008	3072
2009	2988	2010	3094	2011	3113
2012	2971	2013	3077	2014	3066
2015	2827	2016	3039	2017	2543

Some Blue Cat caught over 50 lbs Milford Lake - 2003 to 2018

71 lbs; 66 lbs; 59 lbs; 61 lbs; 73 lbs; 63 lbs; 77 lbs; 50 lbs; 61 lbs;
75 lbs; 54 lbs; 78 lbs; 69 lbs; 55 lbs; 72 lbs; 58 lbs; 64 lbs; 79 lbs;
68 lbs; 62 lbs; 59 lbs; 51 lbs; 67 lbs; 68 lbs; 69 lbs; 57 lbs; 54 lbs;
62 lbs; 58 lbs; 67 lbs; 74 lbs; 65 lbs; 71 lbs; 52 lbs; 68 lbs; 70 lbs;
55 lbs; 58 lbs; 52 lbs; 66 lbs; 62 lbs; 70 lbs; 63 lbs; 58 lbs; 69 lbs;
56 lbs; 61 lbs; 70 lbs; 51 lbs; 64 lbs; 58 lbs; 65 lbs; 69 lbs; 53 lbs;
54 lbs; 64 lbs; 56 lbs; 65 lbs; 50 lbs; 53 lbs; 66 lbs; 61 lbs; 61 lbs;
53 lbs; 57 lbs; 64 lbs; 73 lbs; 59 lbs; 51 lbs; 63 lbs; 57 lbs; 52 lbs;
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First, this is not only a story about numbers BUT about a life that many individuals could only dream about. Can you imagine for most of your adult life being able to fish anytime you want? Not as a guide, not as a commercial fisherman, but as a choice of getting up any given day and going fishing for your own personal pleasure. I lived that life!

This story begins a long time ago, but I want to share this experience with you about my past fifteen years. I was self-employed almost my entire life. I've always been a numbers person by keeping track of every dime I spend each year. These qualities lead to my successes by having a number of businesses in Manhattan by dealing in real estate and by buying and selling stocks and bonds. This is still a part of my daily life by keeping track of numbers.

When it comes to fishing, I am no different. I keep a daily track of number of fish caught; their size, weight, and type of bait; outside temperature, water temperature, wind, barometric pressure, and time of day. All the above will make a great day or a bad day at the fishing hole. Fishing is complicated, and one will never figure out why they bite one day and not the next. Every day and year is different.

Milford Lake

Even though I fish for all species this part is about catfish. I started spending a great deal of time on Milford Lake in 2003. From 2003 to 2010 almost every boat from Madison Cove to the Causeway was fishing for walleye, wipers, white bass and crappie. Today it's just the opposite as almost every angler is fishing for Blue Cat. Due to the number of anglers on the lake the pressure to catch fish is greater and has changed fishing since the early years. In the early years, I fished from 5:00 am to 10:00 am; but within a year, I changed my hours from 2:00 am to around 7:00 am because I found I could catch larger fish.

The most productive years were 2005 to 2010. The fishing was unbelievable during these years. There were many mornings I would catch from ten to fifteen Blue Cats weighing twenty-five to fifty-five pounds. The best year for large Blue Cats was 2006. There were so many fish! I caught a total of 108, all weighing in at twenty-five to fifty-five pounds. I did no drifting, during these years, but anchored on drop offs and fished the flats between Madison Cove and the Causeway.

I learned early on that big bait catches big fish. Fresh bait is important for Blue Cat. Shad and Goldeneye work the best for me. Heads seem to catch larger fish. Large chunks of carp and buffalo also work. Small bait will attract small fish.

Tuttle Creek Lake

I have fished Tuttle Creek since 1970, and I know this lake better than most. The lake is not fished much anymore due to these conditions: deteriorating ramps; fluctuating lake levels; and muddy water.

Tuttle Creek offers some of the best Channel fishing around. In the past 15 years I caught 147 Channels which weighed twenty to thirty-three pounds. It's very rare to catch a channel over twenty pounds today.

There's so many different ways to fish it. In the spring when all the ice is gone, one can catch large Blue Cat twenty-five to fifty pounds at the north end.

Gar spawning starts around April 25th. One has eight days of the best channel fishing you can get anywhere. The Gar spawn in two feet of water and

the Channels are underneath them eating their eggs. Fish with a bobber, twenty inches deep, and use leeches and worms. Do not use live or cut bait. It has to be a bait that the Gar won't bite. One can catch forty Channels every morning, and it is nonstop! Then in thirty to forty-five days later the Channels are spawning in the same location.

When the rains begin and the water flows in from the north, the fishing couldn't get any better. One can then get up in the river and fish the rise and the fall. These conditions are great for fishing. One needs to know the following: when the flow arrives; how many cubic feet is coming; and where it came from. The understanding of how all this works is beneficial for catching many fish.

Most mornings on the river, one is able to catch thirty to forty fish ranging from three to twenty pounds. Sometimes all Channels, sometimes all Blues, and even a few flatheads. Fishing with shad works well most of the time, but as the water clarity changes you will need to change baits because of the Gar. Switching to leeches and worms will eliminate the Gar. This works best in the current.

If there are heavy rains and the river rolls, wait a day and let the trashy water come in and then fish the cleaner water behind it. All this information is on the computer. You can follow the water down the Little and Big Blue Rivers from Crete, Nebraska and Fairbury, Nebraska all the way to Tuttle Creek. There are seven satellites between the two that gives all of this information. When the lake comes up twenty feet, it floods all the area up north. When it drops, all the food spills back into the channel. These conditions provide for nonstop fishing all over again.

Tuttle Creek Lake offers more action than Milford Lake. This is because there are so many more ways to fish Tuttle Creek. One will not catch the 85-lb. Blue but the action up to 35 lbs. is much greater. When the lake is high and the water starts to recede downstream, the gates will open at the outlet and the lake drops a foot a day. When this occurs; the water drops out of the flooded area and follows certain low spots. This creates small streams that will dump back into the river channel. When this occurs, the Channels and Flatheads will be waiting right at the mouth of these small waterways. Sometimes these are only six-feet-wide. The fish are stacked in waiting for all the minnows, bugs and everything else which was living on the flats when the water flooded the area. Time again for non-stop fishing! Depending on the rains, this could go on for weeks or even months and there's not any better fishing anywhere!

Looking several years forward, both lakes will offer some of the best fishing when it comes to Blue Cat. Kansas, and neighboring states are fortunate to have two large lakes right at their doorstep.

Good fishing doesn't exist everywhere. Previous experiences have proven this fact having fished the United States, Canada, Alaska, Central and South America, Mexico, Belize and a number of the British Islands. In many of these places, one spends too much time on coming and going. Some of these areas are fished out because of having no limits.

In comparison Kansas has new slot limits. Starting in 2018, new fishing regulations on both lakes will create catch and release for some Blue Cat. Some don't agree with the new laws and would have preferred keeping all fish up to 35 inches and releasing all over 35 inches. From my point of view, both lakes are full of Blue Cat. Time will only tell if their plan works. Another new regulation regarding the Zebra Mussel outbreak, one cannot transport fish in live-wells from either lake to any location for the fish to be cleaned. Those days are gone. The landscape of fishing has changed just like all other aspects of life.

During these past fifteen years of fishing, a total of 15,600, catfish were kept and transported to the Tuttle Creek Outlet. These catches were within the daily limit, and had an average weight of four and one-half pounds. The gross weight was 70,200 pounds of fish, with a net weight of 17,550 pounds. Bill Leupold was more than willing to clean, rinse, bag these fish for eating. The bags were then given away to others who fished the outlet. Other bags were given to various residents and organizations in the Manhattan area. Thanks to Bill for all the time spent, so everyone would have plenty of fish for their fish fries.

At 69 years of age, I will still fish four or five days a week until the clock tells me otherwise. The plan, for 2018, is to continue to bend the pole as much as possible on both lakes. Maybe one day, I will break my eighty-seven-pound record. The plan also includes continuing to spend sixteen weeks a year fishing for red fish and other salt water species in the Venice, Louisiana area. This area offers some of the best salt water fishing in the nation.

*"I DON'T GO FISHING TO ESCAPE MY LIFE;
I GO FISHING TO LIVE MY LIFE"*

Tuttle Creek April 26, 2003 49 Channels Caught 4 lbs. - 19 lbs.	Tuttle Creek April 28, 2003 41 Channels Caught 4 lbs. - 11 lbs.	Tuttle Creek May 2, 2003 44 Channels Caught 3 lbs. - 17 lbs.	Tuttle Creek August 25, 2004 31 Channels Caught 5 lbs. - 27 lbs.
Tuttle Creek May 14, 2005 46 Channels Caught 3 lbs. - 21 lbs.	Tuttle Creek May 16, 2005 49 Channels Caught 4 lbs. - 19 lbs.	Tuttle Creek September 4, 2005 39 Channels Caught 5 lbs. - 17 lbs.	Tuttle Creek August 19, 2006 31 Channels Caught 5 lbs. - 27 lbs.
Tuttle Creek April 25, 2007 41 Channels Caught 4 lbs. - 11 lbs.	Tuttle Creek June 19, 2007 51 Channels Caught 3 lbs. - 13 lbs.	Tuttle Creek April 27, 2008 53 Channels Caught 3 lbs. - 16 lbs.	Tuttle Creek April 30, 2008 51 Channels Caught 3 lbs. - 16 lbs.
Tuttle Creek April 29, 2009 61 Channels Caught 3 lbs. - 13 lbs.	Tuttle Creek June 9, 2009 44 Channels Caught 3 lbs. - 17 lbs.	Tuttle Creek April 27, 2010 51 Channels Caught 3 lbs. - 13 lbs.	Tuttle Creek May 1, 2010 31 Channels Caught 5 lbs. - 27 lbs.
Tuttle Creek May 3, 2010 44 Channels Caught 3 lbs. - 14 lbs.	Tuttle Creek May 5, 2010 42 Channels Caught 4 lbs. - 11 lbs.	Tuttle Creek July 29, 2010 32 Channels Caught 4 lbs. - 13 lbs.	Tuttle Creek June 4, 2010 47 Channels Caught 4 lbs. - 17 lbs.
Tuttle Creek May 1, 2014 42 Channels Caught 4 lbs. - 11 lbs.	Tuttle Creek June 13, 2014 46 Channels Caught 4 lbs. - 14 lbs.	Tuttle Creek June 14, 2014 43 Channels Caught 4 lbs. - 14 lbs.	Tuttle Creek May 11, 2015 39 Channels Caught 4 lbs. - 13 lbs.
Tuttle Creek May 13, 2015 46 Channels Caught 3 lbs. - 13 lbs.	Tuttle Creek May 14, 2015 46 Channels Caught 3 lbs. - 21 lbs.	Tuttle Creek May 16, 2015 51 Channels Caught 3 lbs. - 16 lbs.	Tuttle Creek August 7, 2015 51 Channels Caught 3 lbs. - 16 lbs.

Some of my better days on the water when fishing was Non-Stop!

There were so many through the years!

Fishing Highlights

Days, weeks and years I will never forget!

- 2003 – Milford Lake: 39 Wipers caught in year **10 lbs. to 14 lbs.**
- 2006 – Milford Lake, May 10: 16 Blue Cat **27 lbs. to 56 lbs.**
- 2008 – Milford Lake, March 23: 14 Blue Cat **23 lbs. to 41 lbs.**
- 2008 – Milford Lake, May 2: 13 Blue Cat **21 lbs. to 47 lbs.**
- 2009 – Tuttle Creek Outlet: **108 Flatheads in 7 days**
- 2009 – Tuttle Creek Lake, April 29: Gar spawn **61 Channels**
- 2011 – Tuttle Creek Lake, May 9: Gar spawn **49 Channels**
- 2013 – Tuttle Creek Outlet: **408 Saugeye** caught in year
- 2013 – Tuttle Creek Outlet: **27 Saugeye** caught in one morning
- 2014 – Milford Lake, April 15: Blue Cat **71, 64, 73, 67 lbs.**

THIS IS FISHING AT ITS BEST!

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