



Gulf and South Atlantic Regional Panel (GSARP) Update for Georgia



REPORTING PERIOD:
April 1 – October 1, 2019

**Meeting: November 19-20, 2019;
Charleston, SC**

FRESHWATER SPECIES

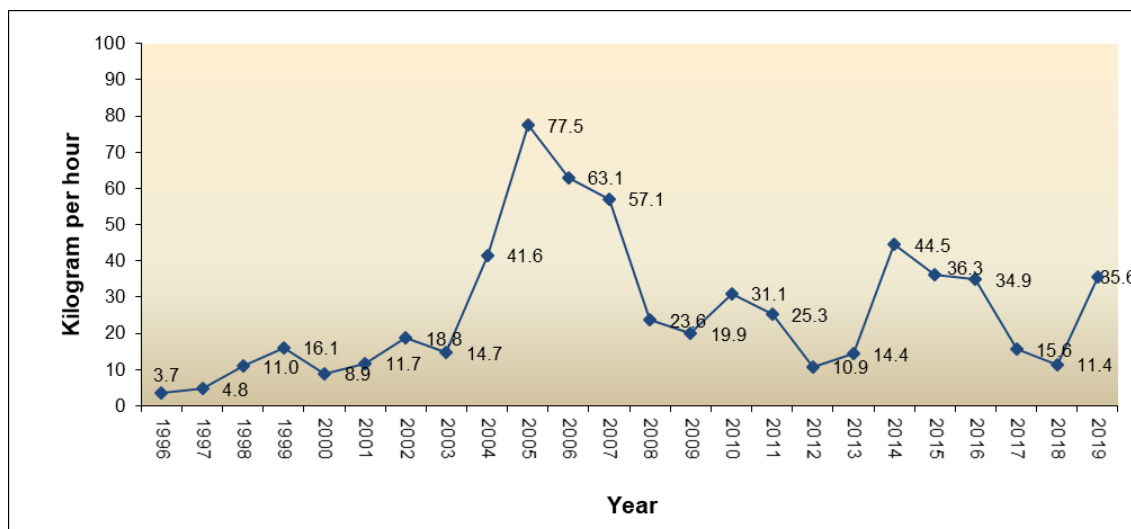
FISH

Flathead Catfish (*Pylodictis olivaris*):

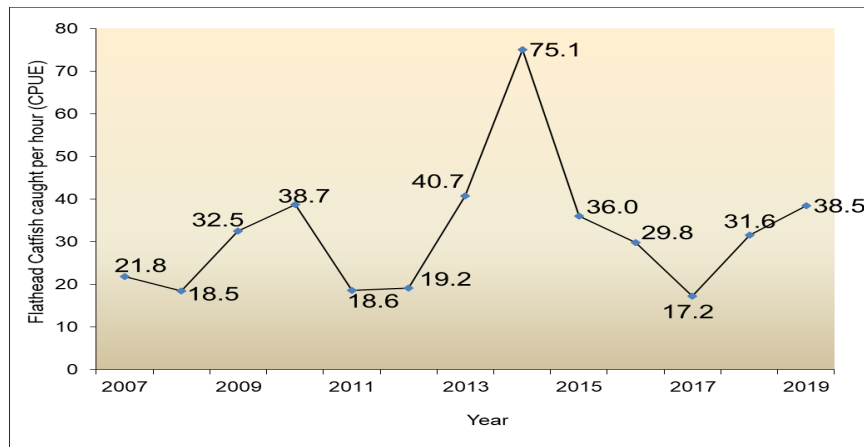
The Satilla River is one of the premier sunfish fisheries in the state of Georgia and redbreast sunfish (*Lepomis auritus*) are a highly sought-after species. Flathead catfish were likely introduced through unauthorized stocking and first observed in the Satilla River in 1996. During the mid-2000's, standardized sampling and creel surveys revealed declines in abundances of redbreast sunfish and bullhead catfishes (*Ameiurus* spp.) coincided with significant increases in the abundance of flathead catfish. In 1996, the Wildlife Resources Division (WRD) – Fisheries Management Section (FM) began removing flathead catfish from the Satilla River as time permitted and in 2006, instituted the Flathead Catfish Removal Project to control the population.

During the 2019 sampling season (May-October 1) 5,931 (12,070 pounds) flathead catfish were removed. Since 2007, more than 85,000 (187,400 pounds) of the flathead catfish have been removed. The size structure of the populations has declined with the average size fish removed progressively dropping from 5.8 pounds / 512 mm TL in 2007 to 2.0 pounds / 342 mm TL in 2019.

Biomass per effort also has declined from a high of 77.5 kg/hr in 2005 to 35.6 kg/hr in 2019.



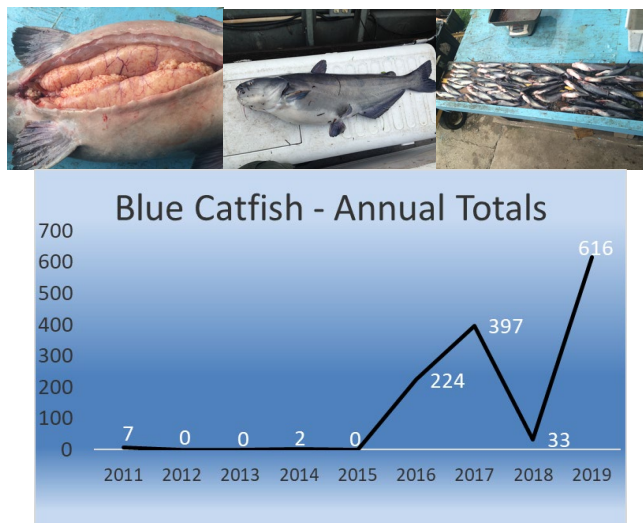
Catch per unit effort (CPUE) has fluctuated between 17 and 75 fish per hour since 2007.



Suppression of the flathead catfish population in the Satilla River has been demonstrated through measured changes in biomass, size and age-structure. However, higher recruitment and earlier maturation is being witnessed. Ongoing intensive harvest will be required to control the flathead population.

Blue Catfish (*Ictalurus furcatus*)

In addition to removing flathead catfish in the Satilla River, GADNR staff continue to remove blue catfish from the river. This second non-native species was first recorded in the river when 2 individuals were observed during a creel survey. In 2016, significantly increased numbers of blue catfish were observed and removed from the river (n=224), including a gravid female (840mm TL; approx. 15lb). In 2017, 397 individuals were removed. High water levels in 2018 likely contributed to few numbers (n=58) seen that year. Thus far in 2019, over 600 blue catfish have been removed. Increased numbers of blue catfish concerns resource managers, and thus continued monitoring / removal of this species will occur in concert with flathead removal efforts.



Other Freshwater ANS Fish Species

GADNR staff continue to receive reports of ANS species being captured in our state. Below are captures reported during this reporting period.

Oscar (*Astronotus ocellatus*)

- Capture Location: Lake Kedron: Fayette County
- Angler caught the specimen on 7/20/2019 and reported to GADNR.
- Positive ID of photo verified by Fisheries Biologist Brent Hess
- Fish was euthanized



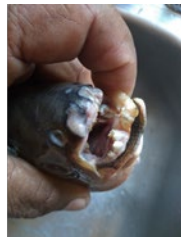
Tilapia (*Oreochromis* spp.)

- Capture Location: Lake Seminole: Seminole County
- Angler caught the specimen on 7/22/2019 and reported to GON editor, who reported to GADNR.
- Positive ID of photo verified by Fisheries Biologist Jim Page
- Disposition of fish is unknown, as GADNR was unable to contact angler



Pacu

- Capture Location: Valley Lakes Pond: Fulton County
- Angler caught the specimen on 8/2/2019 and reported to GADNR.
- Positive ID of photo verified by Fisheries Biologist Jim Page
- Fish was euthanized



Northern Snakehead (*Channa argus*)

- Capture Location: Private Pond: Gwinnett County
- Angler caught the specimen on 10/4/2019 and reported to GADNR
- Positive ID of photo verified by Fisheries Biologist Hunter Roop
- Angler released fish prior to contacting GADNR. Upon learning of fish, GADNR staff visited pond and conducted multi-day efforts to confirm occurrence of Northern snakeheads in area and perform removal efforts. Thus far, 5 individuals, including fish captured by angler, have been removed from area, resulting in first known occurrence of snakeheads in Georgia. Ongoing monitoring efforts, along with removals should fish be found, will occur.



PLANTS

Giant Salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*)

- No reports of Giant Salvinia were received during this report period.

Water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*)

- GADNR staff previously manually removed water hyacinth in the Altamaha River until 2016, when a biocontrol was first released. The biocontrol, a leaf hopper (*Megamelus scutellaris*), will have a second release in fall/winter 2019.

MARINE SPECIES

SHRIMP

Asian Tiger Shrimp (*Penaeus monodon*)

Commercial fishermen continue to periodically report catches of Asian tiger shrimp in Georgia waters, though such incidences remain low. No reports of tiger shrimp were recorded from commercial landings during this reporting period. Nonetheless, managers will continue to monitor the occurrence of this non-native species.

In addition to potential catches of tiger shrimp by commercial fishermen, GADNR staff may potentially intercept tiger shrimp during fishery-independent standardized sampling conducted monthly at 36+ sites coastwide by the GADNR, Coastal Resources Division. These monthly monitoring events utilize a 40' trawl net towed by the 60' Research Vessel *Anna*, and are designed to assess Penaeid shrimp and blue crab populations, but can capture tiger shrimp as well. Nonetheless, results of these surveys also suggest abundance of tiger shrimp in Georgia's sampled waters are low.

Standardized Sampling Results – R/V *Anna*

1976 – 2012: No Tiger Shrimp observed

2013: 3 tiger shrimp

2014: 1 tiger shrimp

2015 - 2018: 0 tiger shrimp

2019: 0 tiger shrimp

Educational Efforts

General

- Efforts continue to post *Clean, Drain and Dry* educational signs at several Georgia boat ramps:



Speaking Presentations

Third Grade Field Days at GADNR/Coastal Resources Division on May 10-13, 2019

- Presented to approximately 450 third graders from several Glynn County schools
- Talked about various invasive species, including Asian Carp, flathead catfish, apple snails, etc. using the travel trunk, which continues to be a very informative tool.



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