



Newsletter No. 4, May 2014

A word from Leon

During the first week of March 2014 I concluded the 20th fish survey for the 2013/2014 summer season at Saulspoort Dam just outside Bethlehem. The weeks thereafter were spent on summarizing and processing all the data of the fish surveys that were done. As we all know and experienced, April 2014 was a challenge with all the public and schools holidays, but as we are heading towards winter and a quieter time, I will hopefully have more time to process and interpret all the data I have collected the past two years. As part of my research, I also collected and summarized data and records of commercial fishing and records and results of angling competitions held at state dams, some data sets dating back as far as 1974. I also collected information on the fluctuation of the water levels of the dams where I did my surveys. With all this information and data my aim is to better understand the freshwater fish populations and inland fisheries in the Free State and ultimately to compile recommendations for the development of a Free State Inland Fisheries Policy.

The media were a buzz a few months ago with the beautiful largemouth yellowfish that was caught in Van der Kloof Dam. Shortly after that on the social media news were spread about a proposal to establish a commercial fishery based on gillnets in Van der Kloof Dam as the "*dam is supposedly over-populated with smallmouth yellowfish which threatens other fish species*". I received a number of calls and sms'e from concerned individuals but please note that the management of all aspects relating to the fauna and flora at Van der Kloof Dam **does not fall** under the jurisdiction of the Free State Province and in no way is the FS DETEA and its officials involved. After doing some enquiry, it was determined that the proposed fishery is still in the early stages of development and that public participation processes will be done. All concerned people are therefore encouraged to make sure they are part of these processes to ensure the yellowfish fly fishing fraternity's voice is heard. Unfortunately, and as proven by the preliminary results of the more than 40 fish surveys I did in the Free State, gill nets **will** also catch largemouth yellowfish, despite what mesh size been used.

In the November 2013 Newsletter, an urgent plea went out to all OVRYMA members to become more involved and to provide ideas and suggestions for the future of the association. Despite the urgent plea, only two people responded but to ensure the future existence of OVRYCMA, we need more people **and** other provinces to become actively involved. So please, if you still have any ideas or suggestions, please do send it to me. If you think OVRYCMA has no more role to play please let me know.

Hope you have a relaxing winter time. Fix your gear, tie new flies and rest well for the 2014/2015 summer season!

2014 Yellowfish Working Group (YWG) Conference

As you may be aware, the National Yellowfish Working Group is experiencing the same challenges as OVRYCMA with a dwindling support base and little commitment from members and provinces.

The next Yellowfish Working Group Conference will be held on Sunday, 22 June 2014 at the Black Mountain Leisure and Conference Centre just outside Thaba Nchu, ± 90km from Bloemfontein. The registration fee for the day conference that includes teas and lunch, is only R270,00 per person. Peter Ardene has already posted the preliminary programme of the conference on FOSAF's website – just follow the YWG link. The annual conference of the Southern Africa Society of Aquatic Scientists will start directly after the YWG conference to enable other aquatic scientists and ichthyologists to also attend the YWG conference. Unfortunately very few people have confirmed their attendance of the YWG Conference so far. During the afternoon session when provincial reports will be presented, it is foreseen that the future existence of the YWG will also be discussed.

PLEASE support the YWG conference and try your best to attend! Without your support and commitment, it will follow the same path as OVRYCMA.

For more information and to register, contact Peter Ardene @ mwardern@mweb.co.za

So where and how many yellowfish are there in state dams in the Free State?

During the 2013/2014 summers season, fish surveys were done at 20 state dams. Follow-up surveys were done at 11 dams surveyed during the 2012/2013 season, and first time surveys were done at Tierpoort, Armenia, Egmont, Mockes, Metsi Matso, Bloemhoek, Jimmie Roos, Serfontein and Saulspoort Dam.

The following equipment was used to collect fish: three sets of multifilament nylon gill nets comprising of six panels of 20m long x 3m deep, with stretched mesh sizes of 28mm, 44mm, 50mm, 75mm, 100mm and 144mm respectively; a 10m long x 2m deep seine net with a stretch mesh size of 10mm for collecting small fish species and fry; a 100m long x 3m deep seine net with a stretch mesh size of 75mm for collecting fish species like carp and sharptooth catfish. For the 2013/2014 season's surveys three fyke nets were included (see picture to the right) and all gear, except the seine nets, were left in the water for two nights.



Table 1: Fish surveys done during the 2013/2014 summer season and yellowfish caught

Date	Dam	Dam level (%)	Total N of fish	Total weight of fish (kg)	Total N smallmouth yellowfish	Total N largemouth yellowfish
4 till 6 Nov. 2013	Moutloasi Setlogelo	10.15	346	307.406	0	0
6 till 8 Nov. 2013	Rustfontein	27.3	242	138.288	69	3
18 till 20 Nov. 2013	Knellpoort	42.94	488	375.983	78	0
20 till 21 Nov. 2013	Krugersdrift	29.7	705	550.178	22	0
25 till 27 Nov. 2013	Tierpoort	12.4	505	458.132	83	8
27 till 29 Nov. 2013	Kalkfontein	37.9	768	714.908	17	5
2 till 6 Dec. 2013	Koppies	58.3	1136	982.401	229	50
9 till 11 Dec. 2013	Erfenis	23.1	1904	176.797	261	39
11 till 13 Dec. 2013	Allemanskraal	17.3	273	104.679	13	10
17 till 19 Dec. 2013	Sterkfontein	100	261	58.122	24	0
7 till 9 Jan. 2014	Bloemhof	36	1029	498.261	50	0
13 till 15 Jan. 2014	Metsi Matso	100	8	3.272	0	0
20 till 22 Jan. 2014	Armenia	15.9	655	271.758	300	17
27 till 29 Jan. 2014	Egmont	54.5	1707	180.114	83	0
10 till 12 Feb. 2014	Bloemhoek	20	627	182.303	1	3
12 till 13 Feb. 2014	Serfontein	100	54	127.388	1	0
17 till 19 Feb. 2014	Mockes	100	779	132.13	9	3
19 till 21 Feb. 2014	Jimmie Roos	50	562	1279.845	0	0
22 till 24 Feb. 2014	Gariiep	78	880	489.314	204	4
4 till 6 March 2014	Sol Plaatjie	100	116	61.928	35	0
TOTAL			13 045	7 093.2		

Looking at the preliminary results above, it is clear that smallmouth yellowfish is still abundant in many Free State dams, while largemouth yellowfish is found only in small numbers as expected from a predator fish on the top of the food chain. This then leads to the next section of this newsletter which will focus on the current legislation protecting the two species in the Free State.

The current applicable and enforceable legislation pertaining to the catch and keep of smallmouth and largemouth yellowfish in the Free State Province

<p>In terms of the Nature Conservation Ordinance, No. 8 of 1969 and Nature Conservation Regulations published under Administrator's Notice 184 of 12 August 1983, and as amended on 17 March 1995, no person shall -</p>	<p>In terme van Natuurbewaring Ordonnansie, No. 8 van 1969 and Natuurbewaring Regulasies gepubliseer onder Administrateur Kennisgewing 184 van 12 Augustus 1983, en soos gewysig op 17 Maart 1995, sal geen persoon -</p>
<p>Keep any of the fish of the species shown in the following list, which is less than the minimum length stated (measured from the tip of the snout to the fork of the tail = fork length), but shall immediately return such fish to the water:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smallmouth yellowfish <i>Labeobarbus aeneus</i> – 45cm • Largemouth yellowfish <i>Labeobarbus kimberleyensis</i> – <p style="text-align: center;">CATCH AND IMMEDIATE RELEASE</p>	<p>Enige van die spesies soos aangetoon in die volgende lys hou nie wat korter is as die minimum lengte aangetoon (gemeet vanaf die punt van die snoet tot die vurk in die stert = vurklengte), maar sal die vis onmiddellik terugplaas in die water:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kleinbekgeelvis <i>Labeobarbus aeneus</i> – 45cm • Grootbekgeelvis <i>Labeobarbus kimberleyensis</i> – VANG EN ONMIDDELLIKE VRYLAAT
<p>Catch and keep more fish of the following species than the number shown:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smallmouth yellowfish <i>Labeobarbus aeneus</i> – 10 • Largemouth yellowfish <i>Labeobarbus kimberleyensis</i> – <p style="text-align: center;">NONE</p>	<p>Vang en hou meer vis van die volgende spesies soos die aantal aangetoon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kleinbekgeelvis <i>Labeobarbus aeneus</i> – 10 • Grootbekgeelvis <i>Labeobarbus kimberleyensis</i> – GEEN
<p><i>Above implies that all smallmouth yellowfish smaller than 45cm fork length must be returned to the water from where it is caught, but that anglers are allowed to keep 10 smallmouth yellowfish that is larger than 45cm fork length per day.</i></p> <p>NO largemouth yellowfish may be kept or killed but should be returned to the water immediately.</p>	<p><i>Bogenoemde impliseer dat alle kleinbekgeelvisse kleiner as 45cm vurklengte moet in the water teruggeplaas word waar dit gevang is en dat hengelaars toegelaat word om wel 10 kleinbekgeelvisse wat groter as 45cm vurklengte is, per dag mag hou.</i></p> <p>GEEN grootbekgeelvisse mag gehou of doodgemaak word nie maar moet onmiddellik in die water teruggeplaas word.</p>

PLEASE NOTE that the information on the back of the Free State Angling Licenses is incorrect and as from April 2014, the information on the back of the licenses will be corrected.

The whole matter regarding the catch and keep of especially smallmouth yellowfish will be investigated further during the research project as during the 2012/2013 and 2013/2014 seasons' fish surveys, very few smallmouth yellowfish with a fork length longer than 40cm were caught and at some dams indeed this species occurs in very large numbers and bait anglers, especially at Gariep Dam, sometimes complain that every second fish they catch, is a smallmouth!