

both tributary and mainlake spawning populations, moved deep into the shallow, flooded cover—we believe to rest and feed after the rigors of spawning,” she notes. Indeed, the woody cover offers shelter and a baitfish buffet of bluegills, gizzard shad, perch, and other preyfish. In all, about half the walleyes occupied flooded timber when it was available.

This behavior is not uncommon in river and reservoir systems during spring, but the length of time walleyes perched in the trees is notable. Clark-Kolaks says many Monroe walleyes didn’t vacate the flooded timber until forced out by falling water levels in June and early July. As summer progressed, the fish moved out into bays and creek arms, where they typically held near secondary creek channels in 15 to 25 feet of water.

While the 40-foot-deep main channel attracted little attention, Clark-Kolaks says another type of area received a surprising walleye presence. “They really liked the lake’s three marinas,” she says. “The facilities are just floating docks with no sunken brushpiles for habitat, but they still

attract baitfish. One walleye stayed at a marina all summer; others moved in and out.” Overall, walleye movements were variable, she says. “Some fish traveled up and down the lake, while others didn’t move much at all.” Those tucked into timber or along shoreline riprap were least likely to move long distances.

Perhaps one of the oddest movement patterns recorded was what Clark-Kolaks thinks might be related to multiple spawning runs. “One of the male walleyes we captured at a spawning area near the dam was recaptured a week later halfway up the lake at another shoreline spawning site,” she says. Research junkies like *In-Fisherman* Senior Editor Steve Quinn find this particularly fascinating, since very little is known on the subject of multiple spawning runs by individual walleyes in a single season. Clark-Kolaks says further study is planned next spring to determine whether water temperature or other conditions encourage fish to migrate up the impoundment, as spawning conditions become more favorable in different areas.

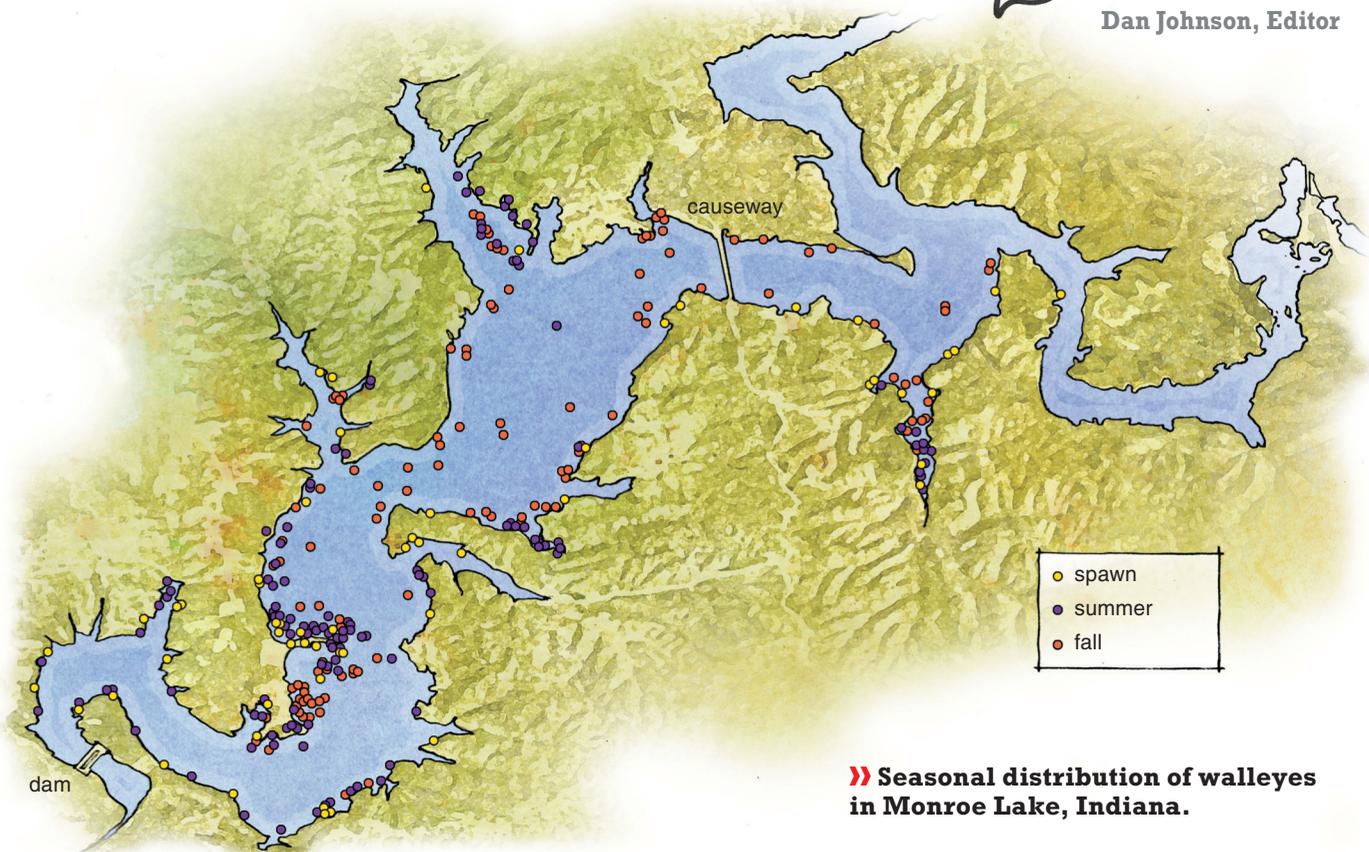
TOWARD BETTER WALLEYE FISHING

To date, response from fishermen has been good. “I receive several e-mails a week from anglers with questions or comments,” Clark-Kolaks says. Based on the research, the DNR has identified numerous untapped fishing opportunities. For example, while most early season fishing pressure on the lake occurs at riprap near the dam, Clark-Kolaks says the study revealed easily accessible riprap banks across the reservoir. “Basically, wherever there’s riprap, there’s spawning activity and fishing opportunity,” she says. The marina connection is another overlooked possibility, as is the flooded timber pattern.

“Walleye anglers do fairly well in summer and fall but not in spring,” says Clark-Kolaks. “I don’t think they realize how far back in the cover the fish go.” Ultimately, the DNR hopes such information helps a growing number of Indiana walleye fans capitalize on this lightly fished Hoosier treasure. ■



Dan Johnson, Editor



» Seasonal distribution of walleyes in Monroe Lake, Indiana.