

# 1985 – 2009 Lake Ontario Fishing Boat Survey

## Preliminary Monthly Summary for April and May 2009

Note: Results are preliminary. A final report of the 2009 April-September Survey will be available in spring 2010.

### April

The start of the Lake Ontario fishing boat survey was delayed from April 1 until April 22 due to administrative issues relating to hiring of creel survey agents. We received numerous reports from anglers on the eastern half of Lake Ontario that indicated good brown trout fishing, and better than typical catches of Atlantic salmon, Chinook salmon, and coho salmon. Few fishing updates were received from the western half of the lake during the first half of April. Creel survey data collected during the end of April (4/22-4/30/09) indicated relatively good brown trout and coho salmon fishing, and much higher than average Atlantic salmon catch rates.

### May

During May 2009, there were an estimated 15,360 fishing boat trips, which was the highest estimated for May since 1995, and a 50.6% increase compared to the previous 5-year average (2004-08; Table 1, Fig. 1). Boats targeting trout and salmon accounted for 14,731 boat trips (95.9% of the total May effort). This is the third year of the pre-season smallmouth bass catch and release period covered by the creel survey, and during May 2009 there were an estimated 319 boat trips targeting smallmouth bass. This was well above the number of trips estimated for May 2006 (196 trips) and May 2007 (43 trips).

The estimates of total number of trout and salmon caught (76,635 fish) and harvested (29,432 fish) during May 2009 were the highest since 1993 and

1994, respectively (Table 1, Fig. 2). For the second consecutive year Chinook salmon was the most commonly caught and harvested species (40,831 and 12,978 fish, respectively; Fig. 3), followed by brown trout (15,838 and 11,256 fish, respectively; Fig. 4). Numerous anecdotal reports from anglers indicated that Atlantic salmon catch was higher than is typically observed. May creel survey data confirmed these reports, with the highest Atlantic salmon catch (430 fish) and harvest (222 fish) estimates since 1994.

The quality of trout and salmon fishing during May 2009, as measured by catch rate, was excellent for the sixth consecutive May (5.2 fish per boat trip; Table 1, Fig. 2). This was the highest estimated May catch rate among the 25 years surveyed and was a 37.4% increase compared to the previous 5-year average. May 2009 catch rates were above their respective 2004-08 averages for Atlantic salmon (+503.1%, the highest since 1994), Chinook salmon (+88.6%, highest in the 25 year data series), coho salmon (+26.0%, third highest in the data series; Fig. 5), and brown trout (+13.7%), and were below their respective averages for rainbow trout (-17.6%, but comparable to the long-term average; Fig. 6) and lake trout (-27.0%; Fig. 7).

Only 38.4% of all trout and salmon caught were harvested, resulting in an estimated total trout and salmon harvest rate (2.0 fish per boat trip) that was well within the range of values observed throughout the data series and comparable to (+1.0%) the previous 5-year average. May 2009 harvest rates were above their respective 2004-08 averages for Atlantic salmon (+1854.3%, highest since 1994), brown trout (+23.1) and Chinook salmon (+21.4%, the highest in the data series), and were below their respective averages for coho salmon (-27.9%, but the third highest in the data series), rainbow trout (-57.9%, the fourth lowest in the data series), and lake trout (-80.7%, the lowest in the data series).

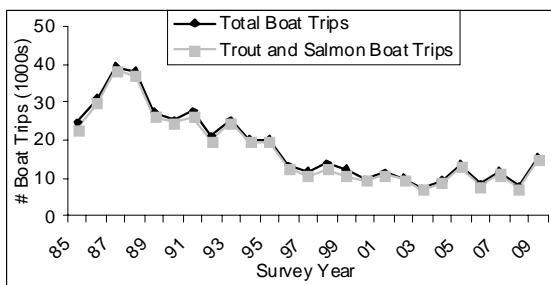


Figure 1. May Fishing effort, 1985-2009.

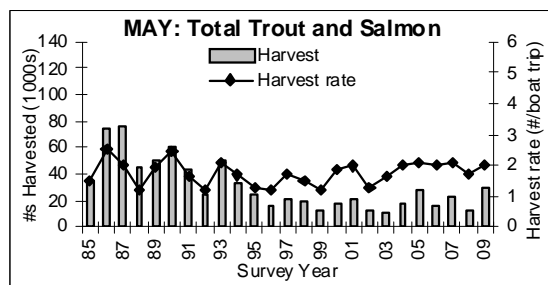
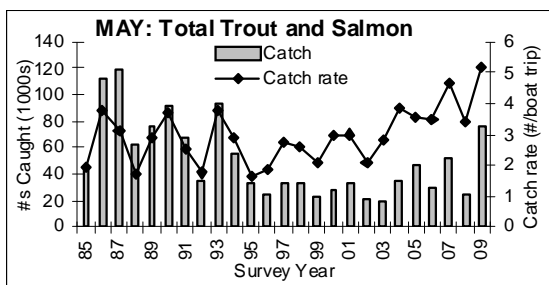


Figure 2. Total trout and salmon catch and catch rate, and harvest and harvest rate during May 2009.

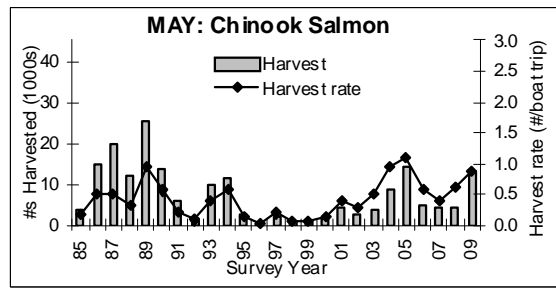
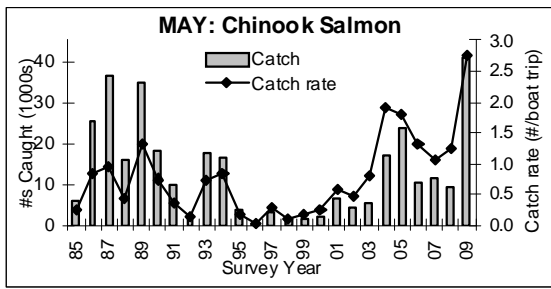


Figure 3. Chinook salmon catch and catch rate, and harvest and harvest rate during May 2009.

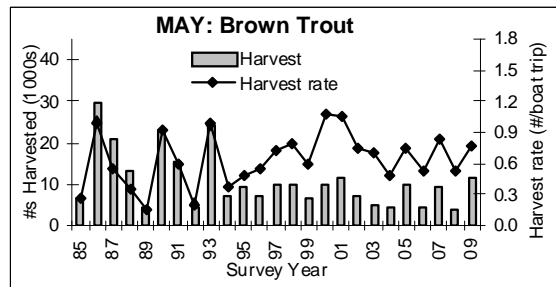
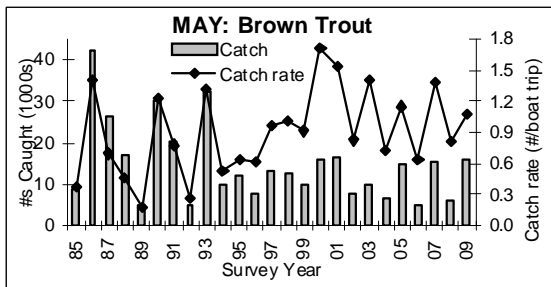


Figure 4. Brown trout catch and catch rate, and harvest and harvest rate during May 2009.

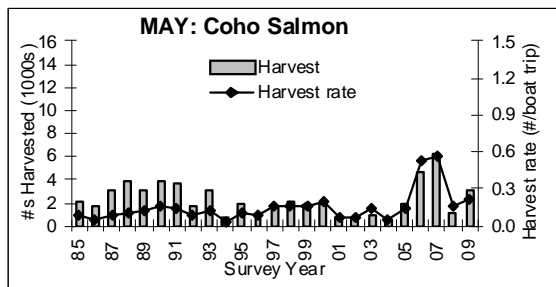
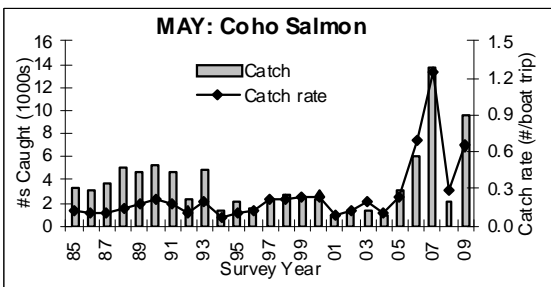


Figure 5. Coho salmon catch and catch rate, and harvest and harvest rate during May 2009.

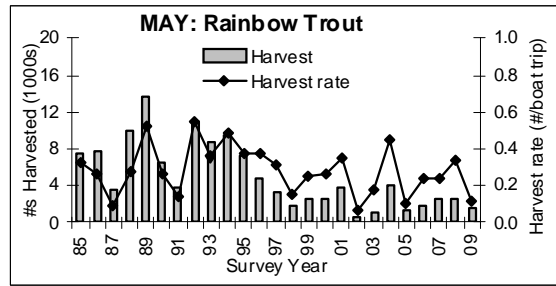
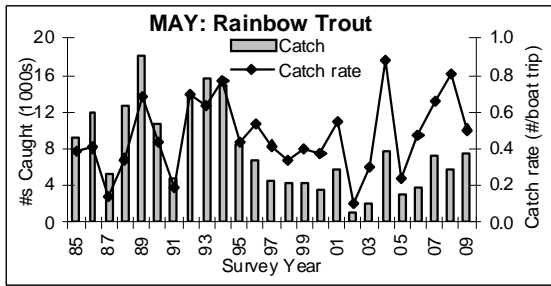


Figure 6. Rainbow trout catch and catch rate, and harvest and harvest rate during May 2009.

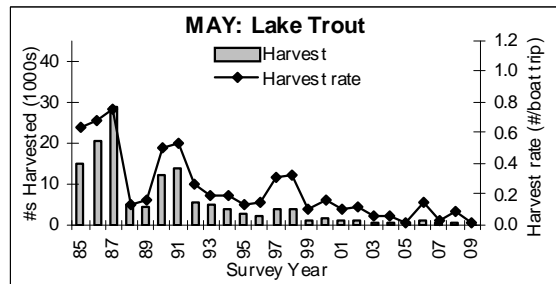
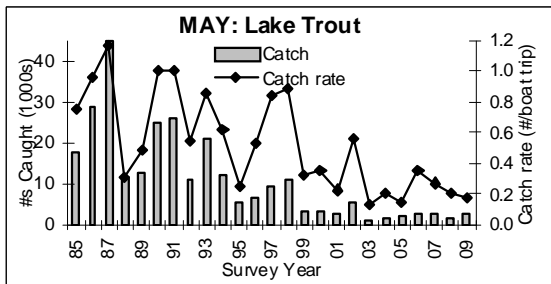


Figure 7. Lake trout catch and catch rate, and harvest and harvest rate during May 2009.

**Table 1. Preliminary summary of May fishing boat trips, fish caught and harvested, and catch rates and harvest rates per boat trip for trout and salmon among boats seeking these species, from the 1985-2009 New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Lake Ontario fishing boat survey.**

	14yr avg 85-98	5yr avg 99-03	prev 5yr 04-08	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
<b>Fishing Boat Trips</b>	24,158	10,166	10,200	13,581	8,558	11,796	7,784	15,360
<b>Number of Fish Harvested:</b>								
Coho Salmon	2,400	1,153	2,883	1,820	4,759	6,168	1,176	3,087
Chinook Salmon	8,851	2,539	7,200	14,209	4,513	4,422	4,385	12,978
Rainbow Trout	7,075	2,159	2,456	1,320	1,872	2,619	2,481	1,698
Atlantic Salmon	209	28	6	0	0	0	28	222
Brown Trout	13,149	7,977	6,213	9,655	4,117	9,083	3,828	11,256
Lake Trout	8,982	1,037	570	264	1,173	345	594	190
Total Trout and Salmon	40,668	14,892	19,328	27,268	16,436	22,638	12,493	29,432
Smallmouth Bass	85	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yellow Perch	1,236	493	839	1,588	0	1,220	1,357	0
Walleye	130	55	41	106	73	0	28	14
<b>Number of Fish Caught:</b>								
Coho Salmon	3,342	1,658	5,177	3,025	6,022	13,798	2,107	9,559
Chinook Salmon	13,656	4,060	14,298	23,378	10,597	11,611	9,057	40,831
Rainbow Trout	10,099	3,334	5,547	3,100	3,736	7,264	5,840	7,418
Atlantic Salmon	564	114	41	0	17	72	88	430
Brown Trout	17,383	12,031	9,564	14,907	5,181	15,302	5,983	15,838
Lake Trout	17,369	3,099	2,211	1,910	2,855	2,993	1,539	2,558
Total Trout and Salmon	62,555	24,313	36,911	46,320	28,660	51,039	24,727	76,635
Smallmouth bass	6,709	6,943	2,483	5,883	691	915	1,180	1,264
Yellow Perch	1,809	1,168	3,236	6,152	462	5,980	3,443	95
Walleye	137	103	92	146	286	0	28	28
<b>Harvest Rates Per Boat Trip Among Boats Fishing for Trout &amp; Salmon</b>								
Coho	0.107	0.125	0.290	0.141	0.533	0.560	0.162	0.210
Chinook	0.337	0.283	0.726	1.098	0.567	0.402	0.604	0.881
Rainbow	0.320	0.222	0.274	0.101	0.235	0.238	0.342	0.115
Atlantic	0.008	0.003	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.004	0.015
Brown	0.566	0.835	0.621	0.746	0.517	0.825	0.527	0.764
Lake Trout	0.354	0.107	0.067	0.020	0.147	0.031	0.082	0.013
Total Trout and Salmon	1.692	1.575	1.978	2.105	2.001	2.056	1.720	1.998
<b>Catch Rates Per Boat Trip Among Boats Fishing for Trout &amp; Salmon</b>								
Coho	0.149	0.177	0.515	0.234	0.692	1.253	0.290	0.649
Chinook	0.514	0.451	1.470	1.806	1.331	1.055	1.247	2.772
Rainbow	0.459	0.344	0.611	0.238	0.469	0.660	0.804	0.504
Atlantic	0.022	0.012	0.005	0.000	0.002	0.007	0.012	0.029
Brown	0.744	1.278	0.944	1.152	0.644	1.390	0.816	1.074
Lake Trout	0.729	0.318	0.238	0.148	0.359	0.272	0.212	0.174
Total Trout and Salmon	2.622	2.581	3.787	3.577	3.498	4.636	3.397	5.201