



Little River Band of Ottawa Indians

Natural Resources Department

IN SEARCH FOR NATIVE FISH

Manistee River Burbot (Mizay)

by Dan Mays

Burbot (in Anishinaabemowin, Mizay), are one of two deep-water native predatory fish species still present in the Great Lakes (lake trout being the other). Their eel-like appearance and ability to nearly wrap their tale around your hand when held often deter fisherman from keeping these fish. If you can get around this, burbot are very good eating with a cod-like taste and texture.

Burbot are a slow-growing and relatively long-lived fish reaching ages on occasion over 20 years. For most of

their life, they inhabit some of the deepest waters in Lake Michigan, only coming into shallower waters in the coldest part of winter to spawn. They are occasional captured by commercial fisheries and assessment crews, but their elusive behaviors have limited extensive sampling and have left many questions unanswered.

LRBOI's Natural Resources Department has identified burbot up to 2 years old in several of our streams during summer electro-fishing

surveys. Beginning in 2012, the Natural Resources Department began to look at when and how adult burbot are using the Manistee River system.



First Burbot Captured!

The first burbot captured during our winter survey was captured in a fyke net near Rainbow Bend on January 6th, 2014.

Manistee River Burbot Cont.

In an attempt to capture adult burbot and to further understand the origin of juvenile burbot in tributary streams to the Big Manistee River we used live traps to target adult burbot from December through February during the period when burbot spawning migrations are believed to occur. We used three types of traps; fyke nets, slat traps and traditional traps (made of willow). During Winter 2013/2014 three adult burbot were captured between January 6th and 24th.

Although relatively low numbers of burbot were captured, evaluations of trap types and trap locations will assist in improving future catch rates, and in further understanding the condition of adult burbot populations spawning in the Manistee River. Genetic data was also collected and will be used in the future to assess population structure and parentage by comparing Manistee River burbot to those caught in tributary streams as well as Lake Michigan.



Back to the River.

Fisheries Technician, Corey Wells admiring a smaller burbot (320mm TL, 450 grams) captured near Rainbow Bend boat launch, Manistee, MI.

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[Link to Manistee River Adult Burbot Assessment Report](#)

If you have any questions about the project please feel free to contact Dan Mays, Natural Resources Dept., (231) 398-2198.