

# From their perch, anglers aim to help Yuba

**Repopulation:** A DWR fish-in at Jordanelle Reservoir catches perch to become walleye food at the refilled Yuba Reservoir

By **BRETT PRETTYMAN**  
*The Salt Lake Tribune*

**JORDANELLE RESERVOIR** — George Sommer, president of the Utah Bass Federation, often catches perch unintentionally while fishing for other species. On Wednesday, he accidentally caught smallmouth bass while fishing for perch.

A couple of dozen volunteer anglers and Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) employees gathered at this reservoir between Park City and Heber City to try to catch 500 perch for transport to Yuba Reservoir in Juab County.

The panfish seemed reluctant to leave Jordanelle: Fishing was tough, at least for perch. Only about 150 fish were caught.

"Ideally, I would have liked to get 300 to 500 a day," said DWR fisheries biologist Richard Hepworth. "We could have caught a lot more, but the fish are out too deep and it doesn't do us any good to catch fish only to have them die."

Perch caught below about 30 feet will die because their air bladders expand on



STEVE BAKER/The Salt Lake Tribune

the way to the surface.

Those that survived are on their way to Yuba to become another species' food. Yuba Reservoir, just east of Interstate 15 near Levan, was drained for dam repairs this past summer. The work is done and the reservoir is filling again.

Fueled by a productive perch population, Yuba has been one of the state's best walleye fisheries the past decade.

"Our problems at Yuba are due to a lack of good spawning habitat for perch.



STEVE GRIFFIN/The Salt Lake Tribune

**Brad Cutler pulls in a perch he caught at Jordanelle Reservoir on Wednesday. Anglers and employees from the DWR were catching perch for transport to Yuba Reservoir.**

It doesn't take long for the walleye to catch up to them," Hepworth said. "They can wipe out a perch population really quick. Our goal is to get as many adult perch in there as we can so they can spawn in the spring and hopefully stay ahead of the walleye."

The program will continue today and Friday. Officials say they have enough volunteers through the Utah Bass Federation and Rocky Mountain Anglers fishing clubs, so others shouldn't show up at the reservoir looking to help.

DWR employees had gill nets set out

Wednesday, but the majority of the fish were caught one at a time by anglers.

Salt Lake City fisherman Jerry Opheikens couldn't have cared less how good the fishing was Wednesday. Volunteering for the project was a good excuse to get out of the house, and it will help one of his favorite fisheries.

"It sounded like a lot of fun, and it is a chance to contribute to a good cause," Opheikens said. "I love to fish; catching is just an aftermath. Hopefully, this will help kick-start things at Yuba."

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