

Getting to Know Your Farm Pond

By Brent Gordon, Fisheries biologist

There are some 250,000 farm ponds in Oklahoma totaling more than 500,000 surface acres. Although farm ponds are an important resource for anglers, it just isn't feasible for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation to sample private ponds. However, the following information should help you develop your own management plan.

There are two secrets to managing your pond. The first requires your getting to know the fish population in your pond. Second, involves managing people. Since you own the pond, you should be the authority on how the pond is managed.

Gathering information about your fish population doesn't require expensive sampling equipment. You can get all the information you need using a rod and reel. Keeping a daily journal of your angling success is a good starting point. The journal should include species caught, size, abundance and the condition.

Anglers should fish regularly during the year and they should use a variety of artificial lures and live baits. Be sure to keep track of the hours spent on each outing. This will help determine your hourly catch rate.

When measuring a fish, measure it with its mouth closed and

tail lobes pressed together. The weight should be recorded in pounds and ounces. If you are unable to weigh the fish, be sure to use the following ranking in condition: poor - skinny; good - normal; and excellent - fat. Use a paperhole punch to punch a hole in the tail of fish caught and released. Mark the log if you recapture a hole punched fish.

Once you have compiled this data over an entire fishing season, you will want to consult a Wildlife Department fisheries professional. Armed with the information you have collected, a fisheries professional can give you specific suggestions on how best to manage your pond.

NOTE: The Department has a publication entitled *Managing Pond Fisheries in Oklahoma* which can be purchased from any Department installation. This handy booklet may also be purchased by mailing a \$3 check to: Oklahoma Department of Wildlife, C/O License Section, 1801 N. Lincoln, OKC, OK 73105.

Daily Fishing Log

| Month _____ | Day _____ | Hours Fished _____ | _____ | Year _____ | _____ |
|----------------|-----------|--------------------|----------|------------------------|-----------|
| | Species | Length | Weight | Kept(K) Released(R) | Recapture |
| Fish 1 | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Fish 2 | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Fish 3 | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Fish 4 | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Fish 5 | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Fish 6 | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Fish 7 | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Fish 8 | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Fish 9 | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Fish 10 | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Total | LMB _____ | BG _____ | CC _____ | O _____ | |
| Average Length | LMB _____ | BG _____ | CC _____ | O _____ | |
| Average Weight | LMB _____ | BG _____ | CC _____ | O _____ | |

Species Code: LMB=Largemouth; BG=Bluegill; CC=Channel Catfish; O=Other

Field Notes: _____