

BRIAN GRATWICK/FLOCKR (CC BY-NC2.0)

2015 Angler's Guide

Join us on a tour of Oklahoma and learn where you can find some of the best fishing around!

Compiled by Don P. Brown, Information and Education Specialist

The days are getting longer, and warmer breezes are beginning to usher springtime into Oklahoma. It's time to gather up your rods and tackle to spend a few rewarding hours at your favorite fishing hole.

This time of year always seems to bring with it a round of fishing fever. Many of us who have been spending way too much time indoors staying out of the cold are now itching to get outside and enjoy some time at a nearby lake or the river.

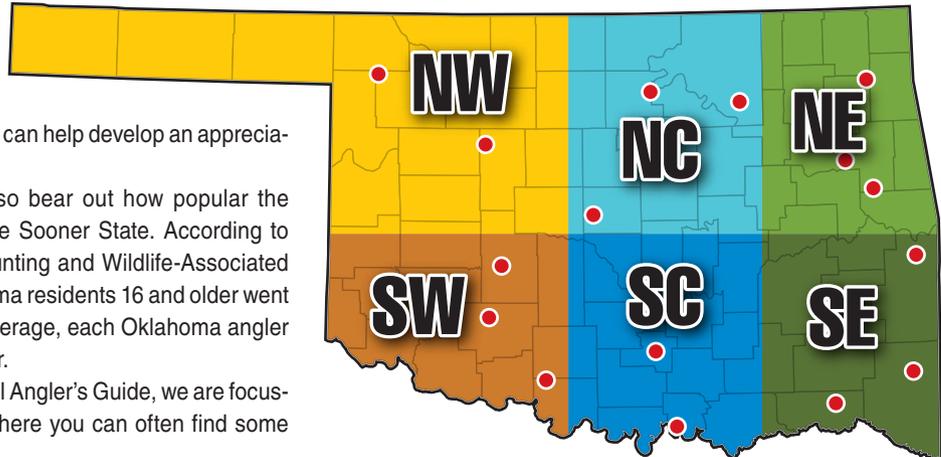
Fishing is one of America's most popular activities. Each year, more than 46 million Americans will try their best to catch some fish! While the thrill of the catch is always fun for any angler, there are other benefits of fishing, as well. Fishing can provide fun and relaxation, and it's a great way to spend quality time with family or friends. Activities that get us outdoors help keep us physically and mentally healthy. Fishing also allows adults and youths alike the chance to get close to nature, which can help develop an appreciation for our natural resources.

The statistics for Oklahoma also bear out how popular the sport of fishing is to us here in the Sooner State. According to the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, about 680,000 Oklahoma residents 16 and older went fishing at least once in 2011. On average, each Oklahoma angler went fishing 12 days out of the year.

For this 2015 edition of our annual Angler's Guide, we are focusing on places across Oklahoma where you can often find some

great fishing action! We've asked our Fisheries Division field staff to share some information about where to go to catch certain fish species in their areas. Different sites and regions of the state seem to have great fishing for a particular species: Lake Texoma is known for its trophy striped bass fishing, while the Neosho River at Miami is a mecca for paddlefish pursuits.

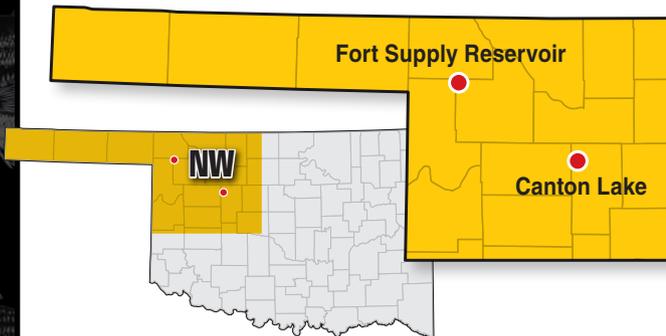
So, turn these pages and let us guide you through various regions of our state, and our experts will suggest what species you might fish for, and where! You'll get valuable insights into fishing these regions in Oklahoma: north-central, south-central, northeast, southeast, northwest and southwest. Get ready to wet your line and have some fun in Outdoor Oklahoma!



DOON P. BROWN

More than 680,000 Oklahomans enjoy fishing each year.

Northwest Region



WALLEYE AT CANTON LAKE

By Ty Harper, Fisheries Biologist



Richard Snow with a sizable walleye at Canton Lake.

What to do:

Try casting jigs along the dam from a boat or from the bank during the spawn in March. You can also try drifting nightcrawlers along the bottom in the spring and early summer.

In the area:

Camping is available around the lake. You can also find accommodations at the Canton Motel in the nearby town of Canton. The Overlook Cafe and Bait Shop can be found at the dam. The Canton Wildlife Management Area offers hunting opportunities in season, along with fishing and shooting areas, and wildlife watching. Other area attractions include Lucky Star Casinos in Canton and Watonga, and Longdale Speedway.

Other information:

Because of the low water level in Canton Lake, the only usable boat ramp is in the Canadian Recreation Area.

CRAPPIE AT FORT SUPPLY RESERVOIR

By Ty Harper, Fisheries Biologist

What to do:

Try using jigs along the reeds during the spawn in late March and April. Using jigs at the gates during winter months can be productive.

In the area:

Woodward is the closest town with hotels, restaurants and shopping. Cooper Wildlife Management Area is north and east of the reservoir. Camping areas can be found around the reservoir and within Cooper WMA.

CHANNEL CATFISH AT CANTON LAKE

By Ty Harper, Fisheries Biologist

What to do:

Bank fishing from the dam using cut shad, stink bait and shrimp is a good way to catch some channel cats.

In the area:

Camping is available around the lake. You can also find accommodations at the Canton Motel in the nearby town of Canton. The Overlook Cafe and Bait Shop can be found at the dam. The Canton Wildlife Management Area offers hunting opportunities in season, along with fishing and shooting areas, and wildlife watching. Other area attractions include Lucky Star Casinos in Canton and Watonga, and Longdale Speedway.

Summary of Species Stocked in Public Waters January through December 2014

Bluegill	163,250
Brown Trout	20,036
Channel Catfish	326,263
Florida Largemouth Bass	1,602,585
Hybrid Striped Bass	771,042
Hybrid Sunfish	3,305
Largemouth Bass	55,283
Paddlefish	2,005
Rainbow Trout	275,482
Sauger	32,000
Saugeye	959,969
Walleye	6,661,976
White Crappie	255
Total Stocked in Public Waters	10,873,638

*Preliminary data, subject to change



JIM REIFELICKER (CC BY/NC)

It doesn't get much better than catching a mess of crappie in the springtime.

Series Details Efforts to Enhance Trophy Bass Fishing in Oklahoma

This past year, "Outdoor Oklahoma" magazine brought you the story of how the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation is working to produce trophy-size largemouth bass in our state. Our yearlong series titled "Making Monsters!" followed the dedicated Fisheries Division biologists and technicians at the Durant State Fish Hatchery as they produced a near-record crop of Florida largemouth bass fry and fingerlings, and then stocked those fish into dozens of lakes across Oklahoma. This annual production effort is aimed at creating better trophy bass fishing for Oklahoma anglers, and perhaps even growing the next state-record largemouth bass!

Now, the entire magazine article series has been compiled on the

"Making Monsters!" web page at wildlifedepartment.com. Read the entire series and learn about

the amazing efforts of our hatchery personnel as they take you on a journey through the entire Florida bass production process. Also, be sure to click the link to view the "Outdoor Oklahoma" television episode that accompanies this series. Just go online to wildlifedepartment.com/makingmonsters.

MAKING MONSTERS!



An In-Depth Look at How Genetics From Florida Produce Largemouth Lunkers in Oklahoma



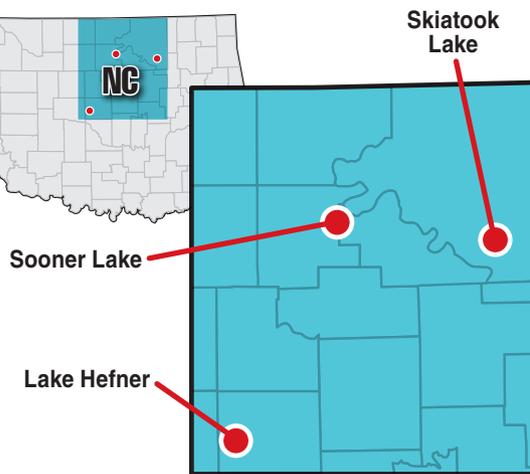
DON P. BROWN



DON P. BROWN

North Central Region

Anglers can find some great fishing for walleye, striped bass hybrids and largemouth bass in this part of the state. Here are some tips about where to go!



WALLEYE AT LAKE HEFNER

By Steve O'Donnell, Fisheries Research Biologist

What to do?

Three keys to successful walleye fishing are being flexible, adaptable and persistent. At Lake Hefner, the riprap and adjacent flat on the



Steve O'Donnell with walleye.

side of the dam are great places to try. Boaters could try the two points on the southwest side of the lake, as well. Remember that walleye are light-sensitive, so if the water is calm or shallow, the best times to fish are early day, late day and after dark.

Lure selection:

When fishing for any species, anglers should always consider the abundance and size of probable forage. The preferred forage for Lake Hefner walleye in winter is 3- to 5-inch gizzard shad. Using bait that matches the natural forage in color and size usually results in more aggressive strikes and higher catch rates. Think about it like a double-bacon cheeseburger verses something you've never tried! During winter, two size ranges of gizzard shad are available as forage: adults of 5 to 8 inches, and juveniles of 3 to 5 inches. You often catch large sport fish on small baits in winter. Like people and potato chips, a fish can't eat just one.

Bait selection:

Skinny crank baits of 3 to 5 inches, like the Rattlin Rogue, Thunder Stick or a Rapala Husky Jerk, 4-inch clown pattern, and jigs with colored plastic tails are the preferred artificial baits. Jigs tipped with chartreuse nightcrawlers also work well. If you're a boater, try trolling with a bottom bouncer with an inline multi-hooked spinner with a colored or chrome/gold blade at 2.3 to 2.8 mph parallel to the point on the dropoff. While using a bottom bouncer, adding a colored Wordens Lil' Corky or Spin N Go ball will help keep your bait off the bottom and in the strike zone.

Technique:

A spinning reel on a 7-foot medium to medium-light rod with long-casting 6-pound fishing line is my choice for lures. Cast parallel to the riprap or bank along the dropoff to cover more water than you can fish perpendicular to the bank. With this combination, long casts keep you in the strike zone longer. Using a longer rod may get you another 15 feet per cast. This technique over the course of a couple of hours is like trolling for a mile!

In the area:

At Lake Hefner, we can buy our lunch to go and eat it at the lake. Being observant where and when others are fishing, especially the "seasoned" anglers, simplifies the task. Situated in northwestern Oklahoma City, Lake Hefner is surrounded by a multitude of choices for dining and lodging. Licenses are available at Lake Stop on Britton Road west of the lake, Lucky Lure tackle shop on Britton Road near May east of the lake, and at Academy Sports and Outdoors southeast of the lake. Several trendy restaurants are found in the East Wharf area on the lake's eastern shore. Stars and Stripes Park is on the lake's southeastern shoreline, and the Lake Hefner Golf Course is found on the southern and southwestern shoreline areas.

Other interesting information:

If you catch a legal fish you intend on harvesting, cut open the stomach and get a firsthand look at what's on the menu. If you find a food item inside, you may have some bait for a catfish pole

east

while you continue catching walleye! Also, don't be afraid to spy on successful anglers. Learning tips from experienced seasoned anglers, in my case the "old timers," saves time. Think about it: If they're doing it a certain way, maybe they figured something out!

As always, remember: Fish don't have phones!

LARGEMOUTH BASS AT SOONER LAKE

By Bill Wentroth, Fisheries Regional Supervisor

What to do?

This lake lends itself to boat angling. Weed beds develop in early spring and make for good fishing with spinnerbaits. Summer months move bass deeper into cover, where jigs work well. Be careful; zebra mussels will cut your line in the brush!

In the area:

Nearby towns are Ponca City and Stillwater, both 20 miles from the lake. Easy access off the Cimarron Turnpike allows Tulsa-area anglers to get there in a hurry. A quick-lunch spot is 5 miles north on U.S. 177 at the Big-O-Burger in the Oteo gas station. Keep your eyes peeled for a look at a bald eagle! They nest in the area and can be seen all year.

Other interesting information:

There are two distinct areas on Sooner Lake: the warm-water discharge side, and the bigger, more open cold-water side. This makes fishing earlier in spring and later in fall on the hot water side! Wintertime fishing is a short walk in from the parking lot to the warm-water discharge area by the OG&E power plant. Striped bass hybrid fishing is also excellent in the spring and early summer months.

STRIPED BASS HYBRIDS AT SKIATOOK LAKE

By Bill Wentroth, Fisheries Regional Supervisor

What to do?

Collecting live shad will be difficult in Skiatook Lake, but if you can use it, I would recommend it, especially in spring. Locate schools of hybrids in the lower half of the lake below the State

Highway 20 bridge to the dam. Look for dropoffs near the river channel. Slabs will be the second choice for baits. Fish near the bottom with both methods to target feeding fish.

In the area:

Nearby Skiatook offers many lunch and lodging choices. Skiatook Lake is a short drive from the Tulsa area, but I would recommend fishing on weekdays, if possible. Weekend boat traffic, especially during the summer, can get pretty crazy, and fishing is more difficult during the late-morning and afternoon hours.

Other interesting information:

This lake also has zebra mussels, so disinfect your boats to keep them from spreading in the state.

This is a beautiful, scenic lake with rock cliffs and very clear water. Beautiful mansions dress the shorelines in the lower lake area. Smallmouth bass are a popular species in the lower end of the lake near the dam and Tall Chief areas. Zink Boy Scout Ranch is situated on the southern side of the lower lake area, and there is restricted access on the land for safety purposes.

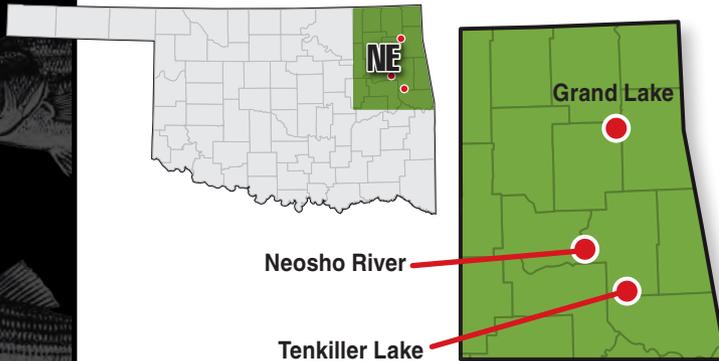


Glen Hughes with a Sooner Lake largemouth in 2014.



Avoid getting bitten by a sharp-toothed walleye.

Northeast Region



SMALLMOUTH BASS AT TENKILLER LAKE

By Jon West, Fisheries Biologist

Where to go?

Smallmouth bass can be found about anywhere in Tenkiller Lake, with greater numbers occurring from about the middle of the lake southward toward the dam. Historically we've had success in the Chicken Creek, Burnt Cabin and Snake Creek arms. Access is not a problem with 24 boat ramps, 10 marinas and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers property surrounding much of the lake. Some of the most popular parks are Cherokee Landing State Park and Tenkiller State Park near the Pine Cove area.



Try for smallmouths at Tenkiller.

What to do?

You want to target areas where the river or creek channel runs up against a bluff or points just off the channel. Look for large slab of rock that creates plenty of overhead cover for the fish to hide under. Popular baits for smallmouth include suspending jerk baits, various crank baits, Alabama rigs, and finesse worms on

shaky-head jigs. And don't forget the topwater action! If you're used to fishing for largemouth bass, remember to downsize your lures slightly to compensate for the mouth gape difference. These fish will be using different areas or depths, depending on the season. Just remember to follow the baitfish and you will find them. Size regulations for black bass on Tenkiller are different than statewide limits, with a combined daily limit of six fish and a 13-to-16-inch protected slot limit.

In the area:

The lower end of Tenkiller is known for its water clarity, and the area boasts two dive shops (Gene's Aquapro and Nautical Adventures) to train and outfit you for your underwater adventure in the Tenkiller Scuba Park. The Lower Illinois River below Tenkiller Dam is a year-round trout fishery with 7.75 miles of trout fishing, including a designated trophy zone. The Lower Illinois is also a striper fishing destination with many trophy fish being taken, including our state record at 47 pounds 8 ounces! The city of Tahlequah is just a short drive from the lake and is the capital city of the Cherokee Nation. Tahlequah is an interesting and vibrant city blending local American Indian history with the modern college-town vibe. For more information, go online to www.tourtahlequah.com.

Other interesting information:

Smallmouth bass sampling conducted by biologists in fall 2014 showed good year classes of 1- and 2-year-old fish in Tenkiller, so future fishing looks bright. A 4.75-pound smallmouth was the largest one caught in the latest sampling survey. The lake boasts a 6.4-pound smallie as the current lake record, and anecdotal stories of 5-pounders are not uncommon.

LARGEMOUTH BASS AT GRAND LAKE

By Brad Johnston, Fisheries Biologist

Where to go?

Grand Lake is full of good spots, but we suggest starting at Duck Creek or Horse Creek.

What to do?

Before the water temperatures reach the optimum spawning temperatures, I like to target windy points and throw a suspending jerk bait. Alabama rigs are also very effective when the bass are on this pattern. Once the bass move up to their spawning beds, you can catch them on a variety of different baits. I prefer spinnerbaits and soft plastic baits rigged Texas-style. Spinnerbaits will allow you to cover more area while looking for the fish. After the spawn, I prefer to pitch soft plastics into cover along the banks of coves. Don't be afraid to hit the same downed tree several times before moving on, as some fish seem to be harder to pull off of structure than others.

In the area:

The largest town around Grand Lake is Grove. There are numerous hotels there in which you can stay while enjoying Grand Lake's bass fishing. There are also some notable attractions to see while there. You can take a ride on the Cherokee Queen or the Cherokee Queen II, which are 67-foot and 108-foot riverboats. You also might want to check out the largest outdoor museum in the country at Har-Ber Village. The shoreline of Grand Lake is also home to several first-class golf courses.

Other interesting information:

Grand Lake's bass are so well known that it hosted the 2013 Bassmaster Classic tournament, which is referred to by many as the Super Bowl of bass fishing. The lake-record largemouth bass from Grand Lake is 12.3 pounds, caught during spring 2013. There are hundreds of tournaments or jackpots that take place on Grand Lake every year. So, if it's tournament-style fishing you're after or just some leisurely time out on the water catching bass, Grand Lake is an excellent destination.

PADDFISH IN NEOSHO RIVER AND UPPER GRAND LAKE

By Brad Johnston, Fisheries Biologist

Where to go?

Try snagging from Sailboat Bridge at Grove upstream to Miami Riverview Park in Miami.



Micah Holmes with a paddlefish.

What to do?

Angling for paddlefish is different than techniques used for other sport fish. To catch a paddlefish, you typically have to snag for them, which is dragging a barbless treble hook and a weight through the water in hopes of snagging the body of the fish. This requires a stout surf rod, as paddlefish can reach more than 100 pounds.

They are filter feeders, and therefore they won't bite a baited hook or lure. To pursue paddlefish in Oklahoma, a valid fishing license and a free paddlefish permit are required. See special paddlefish regulations in the

"Oklahoma Fishing" regulations guide. Paddlefish can successfully be snagged by boat or from the bank, depending on the river conditions. Boat ramp access points, downstream to upstream, include Wolf Creek, Ballerina Cove, Gray's Ranch, Twin Bridges State Park, Conner's Bridge and Miami Riverview Park. Boat snagging can occur in winter from Sailboat Bridge up to above Gray's Ranch. In February through May, fish migrate upstream and are accessible in the Ogeechee Flats area upstream to the Kansas state line, depending on river flows and water temperatures. Bank snagging access points are limited to Conner's Bridge and Miami Riverview Park in spring. Generally, late March and early April are the best times to snag for paddlefish in the Neosho River.

In the area:

Miami is regarded as the spoonbill capital of Oklahoma. Situated right on Interstate 44 and Historic Route 66, Miami offers a slice of Oklahoma culture and retro Americana while also providing modern hotels and casinos. Camping is available at Twin Bridges State Park right on the Neosho River, but make your reservations early, as paddlefish snagging season in Oklahoma is a popular attraction nationwide. Make sure you stop at Waylan's Ku-Ku Burger on old Route 66. Snagging equipment can be found at numerous area suppliers. Fishing licenses and permits are available from vendors statewide or online at wildlifedepartment.com

Other interesting information:

Paddlefish and paddlefish snagging are unlike anything else you could experience. These fish are a highly evolved yet primitive, as they have existed on Earth for many millions of years. They are unique in that only paddlefish use active electrosense in their rostrum (the bill or paddle). They can intercept weak electrical currents generated by their primary prey item: zooplankton. The electrosense allows them to filter forage efficiently. They historically inhabited the entire Mississippi and Missouri river drainages, and Oklahoma is on the western edge of the range. They make long migrations annually to spawn and can produce many independent offspring that grow rapidly. Pensacola Dam was completed in 1940, trapping the waters of the Neosho and Spring rivers to create Grand Lake. Paddlefish have thrived in Grand Lake because it has unrestricted access to many miles of natural river upstream for spawning and recruitment. Snagging for paddlefish on the Neosho has been popular for more than a century, and when you experience the thrill of hooking and landing a giant, you will understand why. The Oklahoma state record for paddlefish is 125 pounds, and we have seen fish that large in Grand Lake. Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation actively monitors and manages the paddlefish stock in Grand Lake. In fact, anglers take part in this by providing harvested fish as research specimens to the Wildlife Department. In turn, the Department cleans their fish for them at no charge. If the fish is female with viable eggs, the roe is processed into caviar and sold wholesale to supplement the Department's budget for fish and wildlife research and conservation programs statewide. Make sure to stop by the Wildlife Department's Paddlefish Research Center for more information or local intel on fishing conditions.

Aquatic Nuisance Species

Know What They Are and How to Stop Their Spread

By Curtis Tackett, Fisheries Biologist

Oklahoma offers plenty of opportunity to enjoy some outdoor fun on a lake or river. Our state has almost 3,000 lakes and ponds that are 10 acres or greater in size, creating more than 10,000 miles of shoreline.

With such a vast array of diverse aquatic ecosystems come many threats to these habitats and the native species that occupy them. Among these threats are Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS), which are seen in all shapes and sizes. ANS are nonnative species that potentially cause economic and ecological detriment to the environment. From freshwater mussels to Asian carp to microscopic algae, all ANS pose huge threats to our aquatic systems.

Zebra mussels are probably the most notorious, and they can sweep through a lake in a very speedy manner, causing issues throughout. These freshwater bivalve mollusks have a special capability that most other freshwater mussels lack: They can adhere to objects with small projections called byssal threads. That ability is one of the main reasons zebra mussels can cause so much havoc. Since this species is a filter feeder, it will use its byssal threads to anchor to an object and filter plankton from



NOAA

Zebra mussels have invaded at least 15 lakes in Oklahoma.

the water column. Imagine a water pipe with flowing water that is infested with millions of tiny zebra mussels taking advantage of the flowing water to bring them food. Once this pipe becomes jammed with zebra mussels, the water cannot flow properly, and cleaning them out can be very expensive. They also adhere to rocky substrates, which can destroy habitat for other aquatic species and decrease spawning opportunities for some fish species. At least 15 lakes in Oklahoma are infested with zebra mussels, with Grand Lake being the most recent. We must take steps to prevent their spread to other water bodies, because once they become established, we are virtually stuck with managing them.

A few invasive fish species have taken up residence in our state. The most dangerous of these are the bighead carp and silver carp. These are two of the Asian carp species that were brought into the United States in the 1970s to control undesirable plankton in aquaculture ponds and improve water quality. These fish quickly escaped into the wild and have invaded almost the entire Mississippi River Basin. These fish reproduce at very high rates and remove extremely large amounts of phytoplankton and zooplankton, resulting in low productivity and poor biological diversity. Silver carp are also dangerous to humans because of their ability to jump several feet in the air when disturbed. Boaters are injured every year by these jumping carp. Bighead carp have been documented in Grand Lake, the Neosho River and the Red River drainage, including tributaries such as the Kiamichi River. The silver carp has been found in the Red River drainage and its tributaries.

Other ANS that have invaded Oklahoma include golden alga, white perch, didymo and hydrilla. Unfortunately, once these invasive



USFWS

Silver carp can injure boaters when they jump from the water.

species become established, it is extremely difficult to eradicate them. So, natural resource professionals are stuck with attempting to manage these populations by preventing their spread.

When boating, a few simple steps can go a long way. After boating, be sure to clean your boat of any plant fragments or mud, drain all water including live wells, bilge pumps, and ballasts, and if possible dry your boat and equipment for five to seven days.

When fishing, never dump your bait bucket in the lake or river when you are finished. Either take the baitfish home or dispose of properly in the trash or on land.

When wading, be sure to clean your waders after you have been in the water or dry them thoroughly before using in another water body.

Taking the measures mentioned above will drastically reduce the odds of spreading ANS throughout the state. Whether we are sportsmen and sportswomen, recreationists or conservationists, we all have the responsibility of taking care of our aquatic ecosystems in Oklahoma so that everyone can enjoy the outdoors for generations to come.



Bighead carp.



Didymo, also known as "rock snot."



Hydrilla.

An advertisement for Sport Fish Restoration. The background is a sunset over a body of water with a fishing boat. A large, white outline of a fish's head is superimposed over the scene, with a fishing lure inside its mouth. The text "SPORT FISH RESTORATION" is in a circular logo in the top left. The main text reads "THE SIMPLE ACT OF FISHING, PRESERVES FISHING." Below that, it says "Every time you purchase a fishing license or register your boat, a portion of the proceeds go toward preserving our nation's coastlines, lakes, rivers and streams. Protecting our memories on the water for generations to come." At the bottom, it says "Learn more at TakeMeFishing.org/Conservation" and "TAKEMEFISHING.org" with a logo.

Best Practices

Catch-and-release is a practice many anglers use, and knowing how to properly handle a fish can help to ensure the fish survives. Here are some best practices for handling a fish.

Use Barbless Hooks

If your intention is to catch fish for the purpose of sport, then using a barbless hook will help to reduce the damage the hook can cause to the fish. Hooks can be purchased barbless or made barbless by crimping down the barb. While using a barbless hook may increase the chance of losing a fish when reeling it in, it also increases the difficulty and challenge of making the catch.

Minimize Handling

The less you handle the fish the better. Many tools are available to assist you with handling the fish and avoiding any contact with it. Using pliers, rubberized-mesh net or gloves can help to reduce contact with the fish. Also try to keep the fish in the water, and return back as soon as possible.

Wet Your Hands First

If you must handle a fish make sure your hands are wet. This will help to prevent removing the protective slime coat from the fish.

Hold the Fish Horizontally

If you do plan to take a picture with the fish it is best to hold it horizontally. Do this by supporting the midsection with one hand and the other firmly grip its lip.



Hold a fish horizontally when taking a photo.

Deep-Hooked Fish

Occasionally fish are hooked deep enough that hook removal will damage the fish. In this case it is best to cut the line as close to the mouth as possible and over time the hook will either dissolve or dislodge.

For additional best practices and safe handling, go online to takemefishing.org.

Fish ID

Knowing how to properly identify a fish is important to make sure you are following regulations. If you are unable to identify a fish, how can you know what rules to apply to that fish? Here is how you can properly identify the three different species of black bass in Oklahoma.

Black Bass

Largemouth Bass

Mouth hinge well behind eye



Smallmouth Bass

Mouth hinge in front of eye



Spotted Bass

Mouth hinge even with back edge of eye



Distinguishing Black Bass

The presence or absence of a tooth patch is another way to distinguish black bass. The majority of largemouth bass have no tooth patch on the tongue, while smallmouth and spotted bass do have a tooth patch on the tongue.



Largemouth Bass

Most largemouth bass have no tooth patch on the tongue.



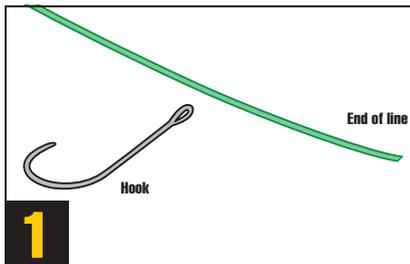
Smallmouth Bass

Smallmouth and spotted bass display a tooth patch on the tongue.

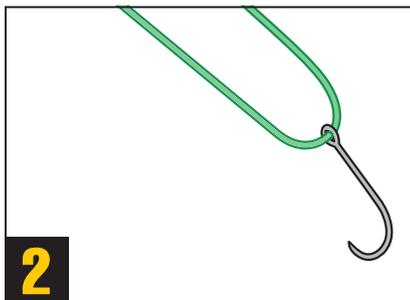
Fishing Knots

Nothing is more important than the knot used to tie on your hook. Without a successful knot, your line will either break or the hook will slip off. One sure way to “lose” the big one is to tie an improper knot. Here is a very simple knot that will ensure success on your next fishing trip.

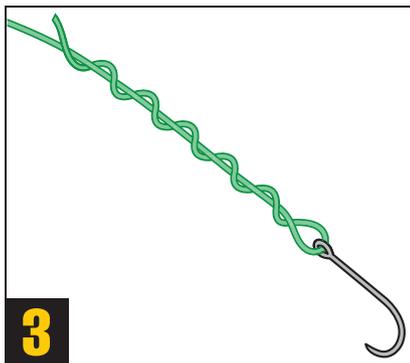
To learn about additional knots, go online to takemefishing.org.



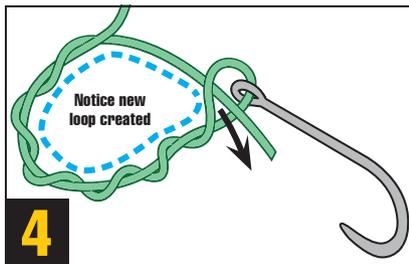
Have your hook and the end of your fishing line.



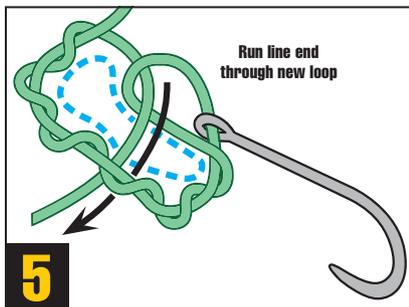
Run the end of your line through the eye of the hook.



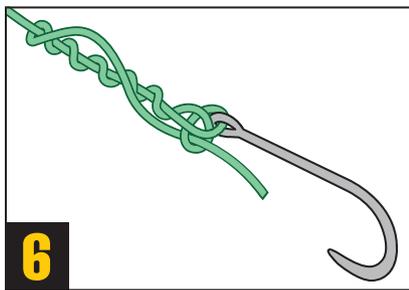
Twist the line around five or six times.



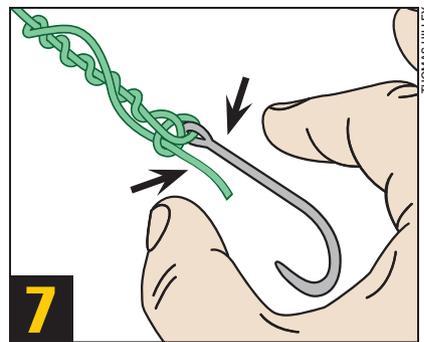
Run the end of the line through the loop above the hook's eye, but notice the new loop you are creating as you run the line through the loop.



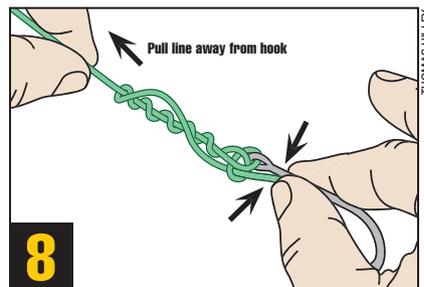
Now run the end of the line through the new loop you created in the last step.



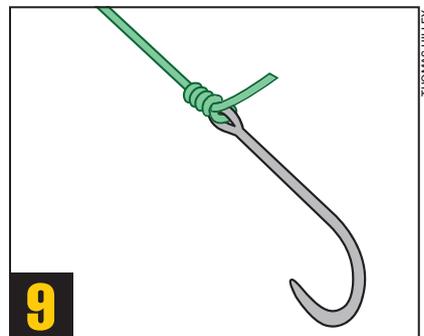
Straighten your line for the next step.



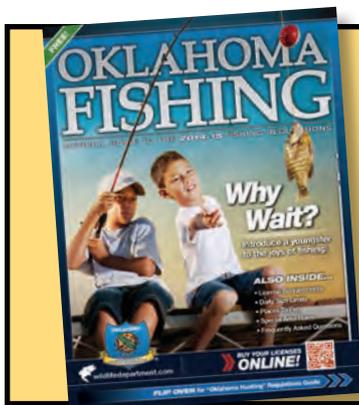
Hold down the end of the line and the hook together with one hand.



With the end of the line and hook in one hand, gently pull the other end of the line away from the hook. Remember you have a hook in your other hand, so be careful not to pull too hard or you could hook yourself.



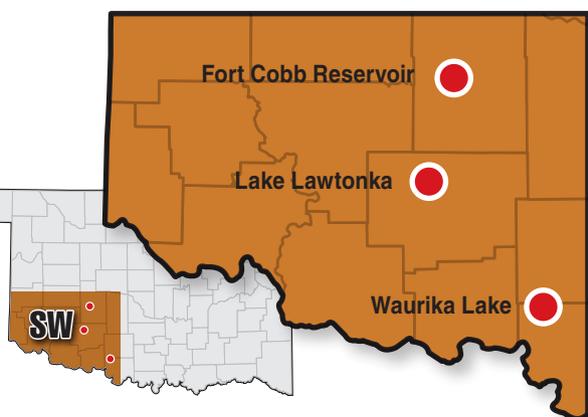
Once your knot is pulled down tight, this is what you should have. If you have excess line hanging from the knot, you can cut it. But don't cut it too close to the knot or it will come undone.



To help you identify fish and apply the proper regulations, be sure to carry a copy of the “Oklahoma Fishing” regulations guide with you when out on the water, or review the regulation guide before going fishing. The guide includes a section on how to properly identify many of the important species of fish in Oklahoma. You can check out the “Oklahoma Fishing” guide online at www.wildlifedepartment.com.

Southwest Region

By Ryan Ryswyk, Fisheries Biologist



SMALLMOUTH BASS AT LAKE LAWTONKA

Where to go:

Lawtonka is the best place in southwestern Oklahoma to catch a smallmouth. The south and west sides of the lake are dominated by rocky substrate. Boulders and rocky dropoffs can be found along the south side of the lake. The west side of the lake has a more gradual rocky slope.



John Perry with a Lawtonka smallmouth bass.

A City of Lawton fishing permit is required to fish the lake, and there is a 23-inch minimum length limit for smallmouth bass. The length limit protects the smallmouth in the lake long enough to let them grow into great trophies.

In the area:

You can enjoy some time at the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. The town of Medicine Park has several restaurants and various shopping opportunities. Medicine Creek, a designated trout-fishing area, runs right through town, and anglers can try their luck during trout-stocking season.

What to do:

Smallmouth can be caught on a variety of baits both from the bank and from a boat.

Other information:

The current state record smallmouth came from Lawtonka in 2012.

HYBRID STRIPED BASS AT WAURIKA LAKE

Where to go:

Waurika has historically been a great place to catch striped bass hybrids.

What to do:

Many people catch them from boats using topwater baits in late spring and early summer. This is probably the most exciting way to catch them. Watching a school of hybrids busting the surface as they chase shad will surely get any fisherman excited. If you can't find them with topwater lures, try using a depth finder and locating them in deeper water on points or dropoffs. They can be caught in deeper water using slabs, jigs or live shad.

In the area:

Camping is available around the lake. The Waurika Wildlife Management Area offers hunting opportunities in season.

Other information:

The water level in Waurika Lake is extremely low at this time. However, fishing can still be good if you put in the time.

SAUGEYE AT FORT COBB RESERVOIR

Where to go:

The water level in Fort Cobb Reservoir is also low, but that gives you a great chance to see the underwater structure such as points, humps, and dropoffs that are normally out of sight. These subtle changes in the topography of the lake bottom are great places to target saugeyes. If the lake level returns to normal, you



Ryan Ryswyk and Josh Johnston with a Fort Cobb saugeye.

will be able to visualize what the bottom looks like when trying to catch saugeyes. If the lake level remains low, you can use a depth finder to try to find similar areas still under water.

What to do:

Saugeyes can be caught in the springtime by dragging a curly tail grub or crank bait along the bottom around points and dropoffs. Live bait is also a great option for saugeyes.



RYAN RYSWYK

Lincoln Keck of Oklahoma City with a Fort Cobb saugeye.

Nightcrawlers, minnows or leaches are great baits to try, as well. For simple saugeye fishing, just grab a lawn chair and a lantern, and head out to your favorite fishing point at sunset. Cast out a 1/4-ounce jig head tipped with a live minnow. Just let it sit on the bottom and enjoy the evening.

In the area:

Camping can be found around the lake in Fort Cobb State Park. The state park also has a golf course. Check out the historic Ski Boy restaurant just south of Fort Cobb Reservoir for a great burger after your fishing trip.

Other information:

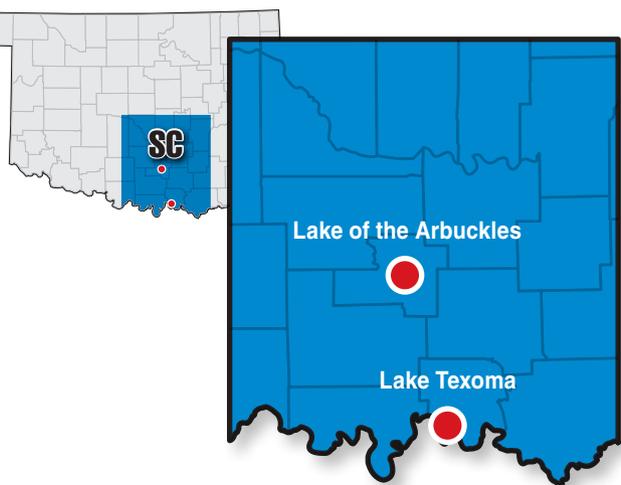
Saugeyes are able to tolerate warmer water as well as more turbid water than their close relative, the walleye.



DRAIN HOOK/FLOKOR (CC BY-NC-SA/2.0)

Beware of the saugeye's sharp teeth.

South Central Region



STRIPED BASS AT LAKE TEXOMA

By Cliff Sager, Senior Fisheries Biologist



Texoma lake record striped bass, 24.7 pounds, caught by Barbara Pope in 2014.

What to do:

Live caught shad are always the best bet. Artificial lures can be effective as well. Slabs, spoons, crank baits, topwater and soft plastics that imitate shad work best. Look for actively feeding seagulls in open-water areas to find large schools of actively feeding striped bass.

At 88,000 acres, Lake Texoma is a border lake between Oklahoma and Texas. A valid fishing license for the state in which you are fishing is required. A special Lake Texoma fishing license is available that covers fishing anywhere in the reservoir. For additional information, consult the "Oklahoma Fishing" regulation guide or the Texas fishing regulations.



REED GEORGE/FELICKER (CC BY-SA/2.0)

In the area:

Nearby towns include Madill, Kingston and Durant on the Oklahoma side of the lake. For a complete list of area amenities and attractions, go to the Lake Texoma Association website at www.laketexomaonline.com.

Other information:

Lake Texoma is among the premier inland striped bass fisheries in the world. A new lake record for the Oklahoma side of Lake Texoma was caught in December 2014, weighing 24.7 pounds.

BLUE CATFISH AT LAKE TEXOMA

By Cliff Sager, Senior Fisheries Biologist

Where to go:

The upper section of both the Red River and Washita River arms of the lake are best.



State-record blue catfish, 98 pounds, caught by Billy Nabors in 2004 at Lake Texoma.

WILDLIFEDEPARTMENT.COM

What to do:

Live or cut shad is best when rod-and-reel or jugline fishing. Cold-weather months are most effective for large blue cats.

At 88,000 acres, Lake Texoma is a border lake between Oklahoma and Texas. A valid fishing license for the state in which you are fishing is required. A special Lake Texoma fishing license is available that covers fishing anywhere in the reservoir. For additional information, consult the "Oklahoma Fishing" regulation guide or the Texas fishing regulations.

In the area:

Nearby towns include Madill, Kingston and Durant on the Oklahoma side of the lake. For a complete list of area amenities and attractions, go to the Lake Texoma Association website at www.laketexomaonline.com.

Other information:

In 2004, the former world record blue catfish was caught at Lake Texoma, weighing 121.5 pounds.



Lake of the Arbuckles record largemouth bass, 14.5 pounds, caught by Allen Gifford in 2008.

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LARGEMOUTH BASS AT LAKE OF THE ARBUCKLES

By Cliff Sager, Senior Fisheries Biologist

What to do:

Traditional artificial bait bass-fishing techniques work well. The 2,350-acre lake is deep and clear, and it has predominantly rocky shorelines.

In the area:

The nearest town with hotels, shopping and dining is Sulphur. Excellent camping and recreational vehicle sites are available through the National Park Service, which manages the area. Go online to www.nps.gov/chic/index.htm for more details about things to do at the Chickasaw National Recreation Area.

Other information:

Lake of the Arbuckles has gained a reputation as one of the best bass lakes in the region. Over the past several years, the lake has produced record tournament results as well as bass weighing more than 14 pounds.



Remarkable five-bass stringers of more than 40 pounds have been caught in recent years at Lake of the Arbuckles. (photos provided)

Southeast Region

CRAPPIE AT HUGO LAKE

By Kyle James, Fisheries Biologist

What to do:

Try a variety of different colored soft-plastic lures on 1/16-ounce or 1/8-ounce jig heads, or live minnows around structure (cedar tree brush piles marked with "Fishing Area" buoys and button brush surrounding the shoreline) in the spring and fall seasons for the best chance at catching some 2- to 3-pound slabs. Fishermen find success catching crappie below the dam on the east side during water releases.

In the area:

The town of Hugo has an interesting history because three traveling circus companies have called Hugo home during the winter for many years. Angie's Circus Cafe has plenty of circus memorabilia to look at while eating great food. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and State Park offer camping and lodging at the water's edge.

Other information:

Black crappie are caught often, some with the black racing stripe down their nose. But big white crappie are mostly caught in



KYLE JAMES



Kyle James helps daughter Alaina after she caught a bluegill sunfish.

Hugo. The lake record crappie is more than 3 pounds. The lake is also home to trophy-size blue catfish.

WHITE BASS AT BROKEN BOW LAKE

By Kyle James, Fisheries Biologist



Anglers may also catch striped bass hybrids while fishing for white bass.

What to do:

Use white, white and red, or pink curly-tailed soft plastics on 1/8-ounce or 1/4-ounce jigs. Silvery flukes and sassy shad work really

well, too. During the spring spawning run up the river, launch a boat at McCurtain County Wilderness Area and navigate upstream to the first shallow rocky shoal to catch some big sandies. Trolling to the shoal could help you find staging females weighing from 3 to 4 pounds each.

In the area:

Hochatown offers lodging and restaurants. The Forest Heritage Center within Beavers Bend State Park showcases the area's rich logging history.

Other information:

You might also catch a 10-pound striped bass hybrid while fishing for white bass at Broken Bow. There is also a year-round trout fishery in the Lower Mountain Fork River below the Broken Bow dam.

SUNFISH AT NEW SPIRO LAKE

By Kyle James, Fisheries Biologist

What to do:

Come early for bluegill and redear sunfish that can be 6 inches or longer. March and April tend to be when larger fish begin actively feeding near the shore. Tie on jigs, rooster tails or road-runners and fish near structure. Try fly fishing topwater dry flies and poppers for a fun experience closer to summer.

In the area:

Visit the Spiro Mounds or Heavener Runestone while in the area near Poteau. Cavanal Hill boasts to be the tallest hill in the world, being just shy of the elevation required to be considered a mountain.

Other information:

A city permit is required before fishing New Spiro Lake. The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation is one of many entities engaging in a watershed-wide water quality monitoring program in that area.



White bass, also called sand bass, is Oklahoma's official state game fish.