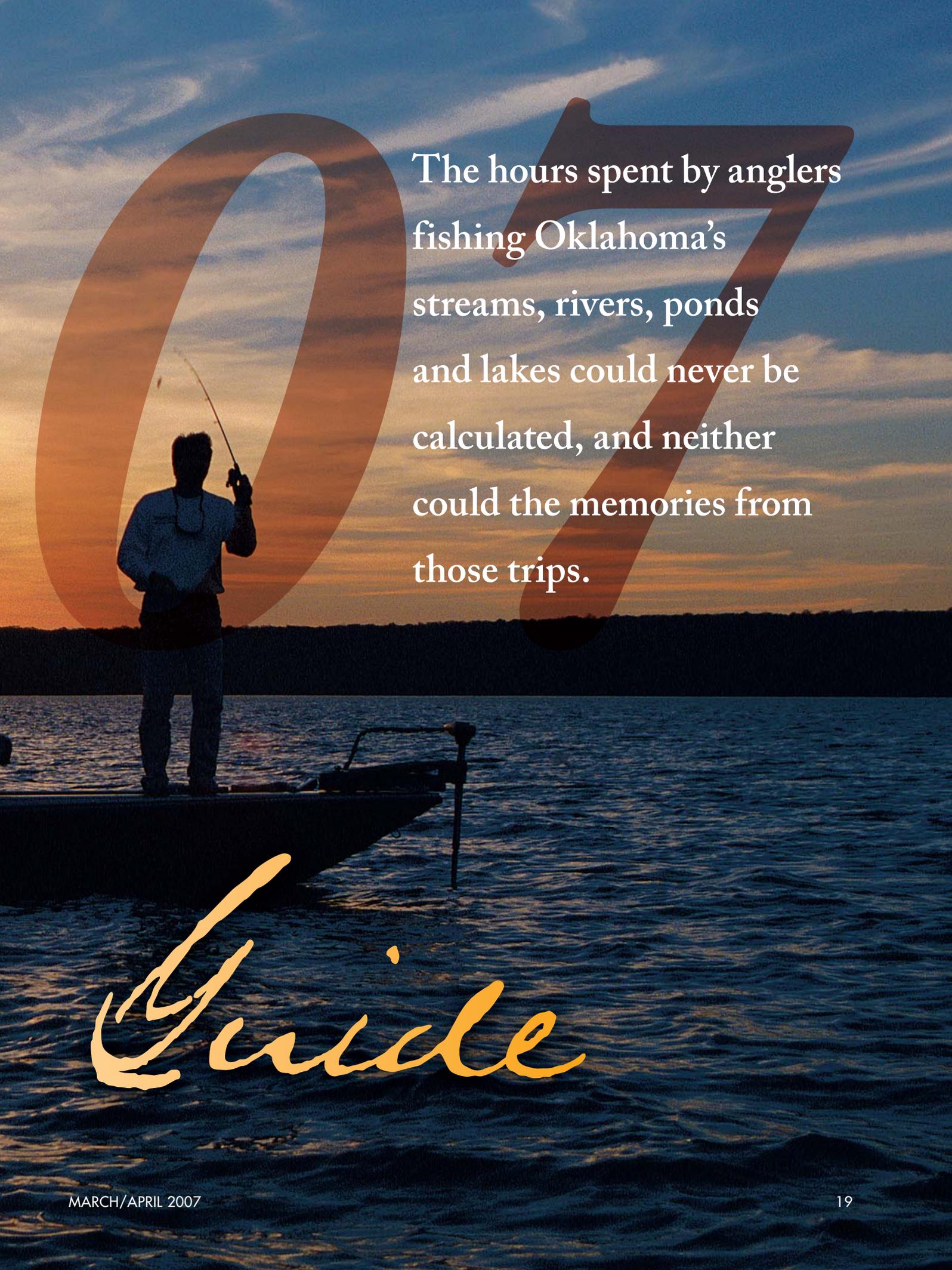


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Anglers



The hours spent by anglers fishing Oklahoma's streams, rivers, ponds and lakes could never be calculated, and neither could the memories from those trips.

Guide

The hours spent by anglers fishing Oklahoma's streams, rivers, ponds and lakes could never be calculated, and neither could the memories from those trips. The time that I alone have spent with rod and reel in hand would be impossible to measure. From the time I was old enough to hold a fishing pole, I was accompanying my dad to the water. Whether it was casting a surface lure into the family pond or a hellgrammite into the smallmouth waters of the Illinois River, I took every chance I could get to fish with my dad. Nothing has really changed about that over the years.

I'm thankful to have been raised around the water, around hooks and sinkers and bobbers and lures and, of course, fish. I learned some important lessons while on my many childhood fishing trips with my dad, and I gained experiences I never would have in front of a tele-

vision. And thanks to the state's diverse fish habitat, I've had opportunities to fish for a variety of species.

Oklahoma's waters are special to me, not just because I've landed a few fish over the years, but because of the time I am able to spend with my family and friends in the outdoors. I'm sure it's the same for you. But I have to admit, the variety of species as well as the bountiful number of fish available in Oklahoma make being a Sooner State angler that much more enjoyable.

The 2007 Angler's Guide is full of information to help make your year of fishing better, but remember as you make plans for your next trip that some people have not enjoyed the pleasures of fishing. Invite someone to go fishing with you, maybe even a youngster, so they can form some of their own lasting memories.

– *Michael Bergin*

SUNFISH

A fishing pole set up with a bobber and a worm is all a youngster needs to go after the state's most plentiful fish, and fishing for bluegill, redear and green sunfish is

a great way for adults to get back to the basics of fishing as well.

To catch spawning sunfish during the months of May and June, try fishing shallow shorelines with minnows, worms, grasshoppers or small jigs.

Weedbeds are also ideal habitat for really big bluegill and redear sunfish. To fish the weeds, try using small minnows throughout the spawning season in June. Later in the summer, slip-bobber rigs can be used to fish deeper waters.

Peak activity usually occurs in the early mornings and in the evening hours, but sunfish can be active throughout the day, making them a good catch any time.

Sunfish are abundant in waters throughout the state. Good destinations include lakes American Horse (Northwest) and Pawhuska (Northeast).

Hybrid Sunfish Stocking, 2006

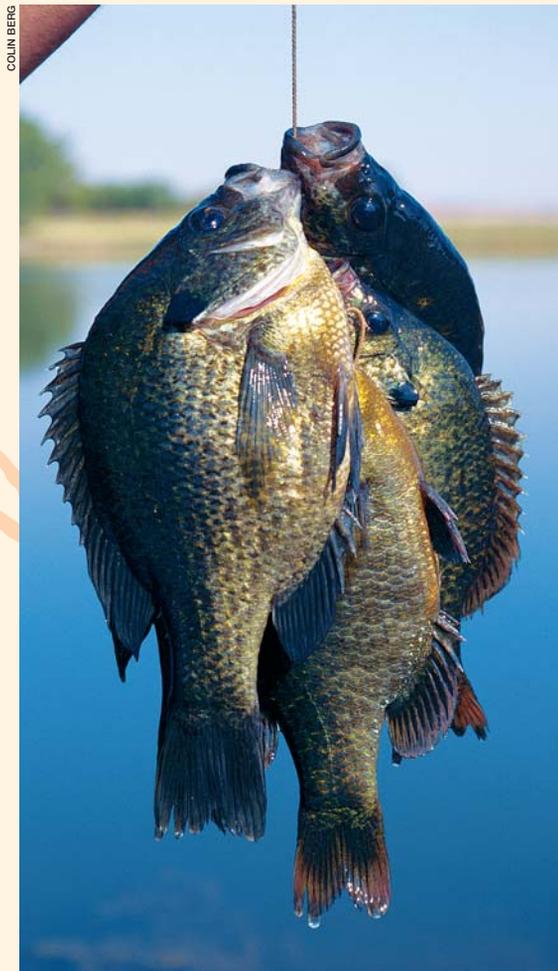
Hybrid sunfish were stocked in Arcadia/Edmond N., Arcadia/ODWC N., Big 5 Fishing Clinic, Eagle Ridge Pond, Gentry Creek Pond, Greenleaf Pond, Hafer Park, Honor Hgt. Park, Houston Pond, Lazy-E Arena, Maple Park, Marland Mansion, Mitch Park Pond, Mustang Creek Elementary, Skiatook Pond, Tenkiller State Park, United Methodist Children's Home and Willow Pond.

Coppernose Bluegill Stocking, 2006

Coppernose bluegill were stocked in American Horse Lake, Elmer and Watonga.

What is a Coppernose Bluegill?

The coppernose bluegill (*Lepomis macrochirus purpurascens*) is the southern subspecies of bluegill native to Oklahoma. One could think of them as the sunfish version of the Florida strain bass. Coppernose have fewer but wider vertical bars on their sides than do native bluegill. Coppernose get their name from the copper band above the eye or forehead that is prominent on males during spawning season. They sometimes grow faster and larger than native bluegill



Sunfish are available to anglers in most Oklahoma waters and can make for a fun day of fishing action.

in small impoundments, especially when placed on a regular feeding program.

Bluegill Stocking, 2006

Bluegill were stocked in Bonham Pond, Crosslin Park, Dolese Park Pond, Etling, Great Salt Plains, MAPS Wetland Pond Penn, MAPS Wetland Pond Walker N., MAPS Wetland Pond Walker S., MAPS Wetland Pond Western, Marland Mansion, Red Slough WMA-Unit 21, Shattuck Centennial Pond, South Lake Park Pond East, Standing Bear Pond and Zoo Lake.

Redear Sunfish Stocking, 2006

Redear sunfish were stocked in Crosslin Park, Dolese Park Pond, Marland Mansion, Shattuck Centennial Pond, South Lake Park Pond East and Zoo Lake. 

Take a Trip

You have a good chance of catching sunfish in any pond or creek that holds water year-round. Luckily, such locations can be found all over the state, including in urban and metro areas.

The Wildlife Department has made that search a little easier for some Oklahoma residents. Under cooperative fisheries management agreements between Oklahoma municipalities and the Wildlife Department, there is a wide variety of "Close to Home" fishing opportunities around the Oklahoma City metro.

Consult the "2007 Oklahoma Fishing Guide" for a complete list of these areas. Tulsa anglers can log on to www.wildlifedepartment.com/tulsafishing.htm for a list of locations near their home where families can have a day of fishing fun.



Anglers can land trout with fly rods or four- to six-pound test line at fisheries all across the state, including both winter-only and year-round fisheries.

TROUT

Oklahoma is home to several winter-only and year-round trout fisheries, among them the newly renovated Lost Creek and Evening Hole areas that are adding a nice touch to Oklahoma trout fishing.

Stretching from the panhandle to southeast Oklahoma, winter-only fisheries provide trout fishing in areas where warm water temperatures are not suitable for trout during the summer. They are stocked regularly (from Nov. 1 to March 31) with catchable-size

rainbow trout and are very popular with anglers all over Oklahoma.

Anglers can also take advantage of the state's "Close to Home" trout fishery at Dolese Youth Park Pond during the months of January and February. Regulations at Dolese Youth Park Pond vary from other state trout regulations, so anglers should consult the "2007 Oklahoma Fishing Guide" before fishing for trout at Dolese. Trout fishing at Dolese Youth Park Pond is part of a

cooperative Close-to-Home fishing program between the Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation Department and the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.

Up-to-date trout stocking schedules are posted on the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's Web site at wildlifedepartment.com.

Brown Trout Stocking, 2006

Brown trout were stocked in the Illinois River.

Rainbow Trout Stocking, 2006

Rainbow trout were stocked in Blackfork Creek, Blue River, Clayton, Crystal Beach Lake, Dolese Park Pond, Etling, Falls Creek, Fourche Maline River, Gage City Lake, Guymon-Sunset, Illinois River, Mountain Fork River, Pawhuska, Pine Grove Pond, Quartz Mountain State Park, Turner Falls Park and Watonga. 

Take a Trip

An angler looking for a new place to fish for trout couldn't go wrong visiting the Evening Hole and Lost Creek areas of the Lower Mountain Fork River in southeast Oklahoma.

As part of a recent streams project undertaken by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, the areas underwent complete makeovers, and now they both provide pristine trout habitat as well as beautiful scenery.

Prior to renovation, the Evening Hole was too wide and its current too slow to offer ideal trout habitat, but through careful planning and understanding of stream management, Wildlife Department biologists successfully narrowed the stream to create the cooler, faster flowing water in which trout thrive.

While working on the Evening Hole renovation, biologists discovered a wooded stretch with a natural channel just right for the foundation of a new stretch of stream. After much effort and the use of a water diversion structure to channel water from the Lower Mountain Fork River into the new stream, Lost Creek was born. Fisheries personnel used their knowledge of streams to strategically place logs and rocks in the streambed to form just the right water conditions for trout habitat. The 1,200 foot long stream empties into the Evening Hole.

Beautiful lodging and camping is available in southeast Oklahoma for anglers looking to give the Evening Hole or Lost Creek areas a try. Beavers Bend State Park offers lodging and close access to other outdoor activities besides fantastic fishing. For more information about the park, log on to beaversbend.com.

OKLAHOMA'S BASS MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Largemouth, smallmouth or spotted bass on river, pond, lake or stream — it makes no difference. The bottom line is that black bass fishing is one of the most time-honored pastimes in Oklahoma.

Oklahoma has an immense variety of bass waters, but the three subspecies have varying management requirements. To provide the best angling opportunities in terms of quality and quantity, the Wildlife Department developed a Black Bass Management Plan that is regarded as one of the best in the nation.

Essentially, the plan helps the Department's fisheries biologists design site-specific management goals to help individual bass populations achieve their potential, which in turn enhances angling opportunities for everyone. Some lakes are better suited to producing large numbers of bass, while others are managed to produce trophy bass.

Fisheries managers use different sets of information to determine management recommendations, but some of the most important data comes from springtime electrofishing surveys. These surveys provide a wealth of information that includes specific and overall numbers of fish, average fish size and abundance of forage.

The bass electrofishing chart included in this section lists the two most important sets of data. They are: *Number of*

Bass Per Hour and Number of Bass Over 14 Inches Per Hour.

Just as anglers can use these factors to help decide where to fish, biologists use them to rate each lake in terms of quantity and quality and to develop management schemes.

Naturally, achieving the goals of the Black Bass Management Plan requires managing both harvest and habitat. By regulating harvest through the use of slot length limits, minimum size limits and modified bag limits, the Department helps create the highest quality fishing possible. However, harvest limits cannot succeed unless anglers accept and respect them.

Smallmouth Bass Stocking, 2006

Smallmouth bass were stocked in Chimney Rock and Hefner Lake.

Florida Largemouth Bass Stocking, 2006

Florida largemouth bass were stocked in Bell Cow, Bronchow, Cedar, Murray, Sportsman and Wetumka lakes.

Northern Largemouth Bass Stocking, 2006

Northern largemouth bass were stocked in Bonham Pond, Chimney Rock, Dolese Park Pond, Foss Lake, West Watkins and Zoo Lake. 

**Summary Of Species
Stocked January
Through December 2006**

Public Waters

Bluegill	68,490
Brown Trout	11,040
Certified Florida Largemouth Bass	345,220
Channel Catfish	576,759
Coppernose Bluegill	1,500
Grass Carp	13
Hybrid Striped Bass	494,367
Hybrid Sunfish	3,266
Northern Largemouth Bass	1,612
Paddlefish	12,557
Rainbow Trout	348,903
Reciprocal Hybrid Striped Bass	83,000
Redear Sunfish	271
Saugeye	650,484
Smallmouth Bass	17,284
Striped Bass	26
Walleye	10,639,032
White Bass	204

Total Stocked in Public Waters 13,254,028

Size of Fish Stocked

Fry Stocked	10,151,142
Fingerlings Stocked	2,397,002
Subadults Stocked	284,841
Adults Stocked	1,251
Catchables Stocked	419,792

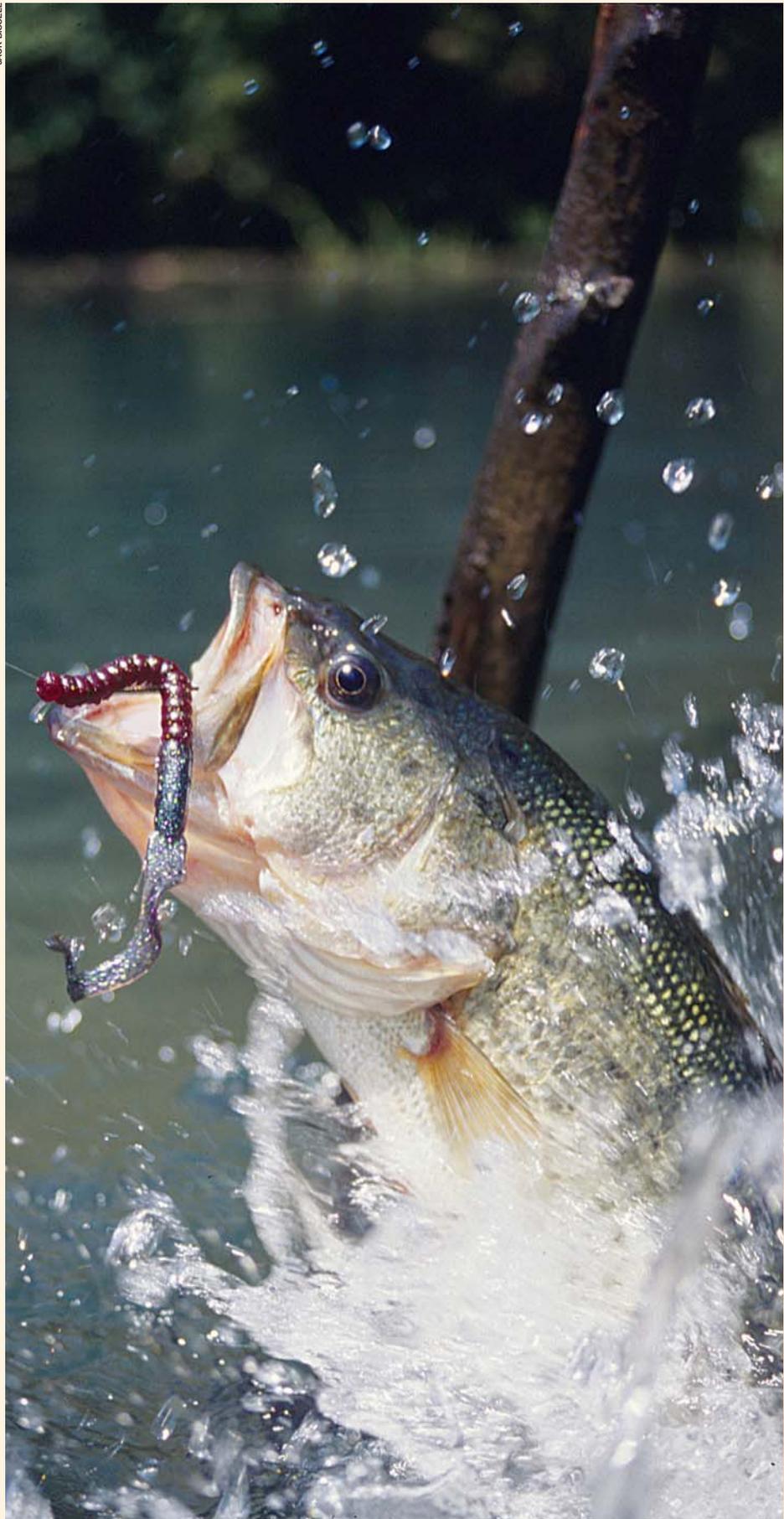
Private Farm Ponds

Bluegill	296,681
Channel Catfish	62,800
Largemouth Bass	50,568

Total Stocked in Private Farm Ponds 410,049

Grand Total Stocked in 2006 13,664,077

JACK BESSELL



Bass Thumb

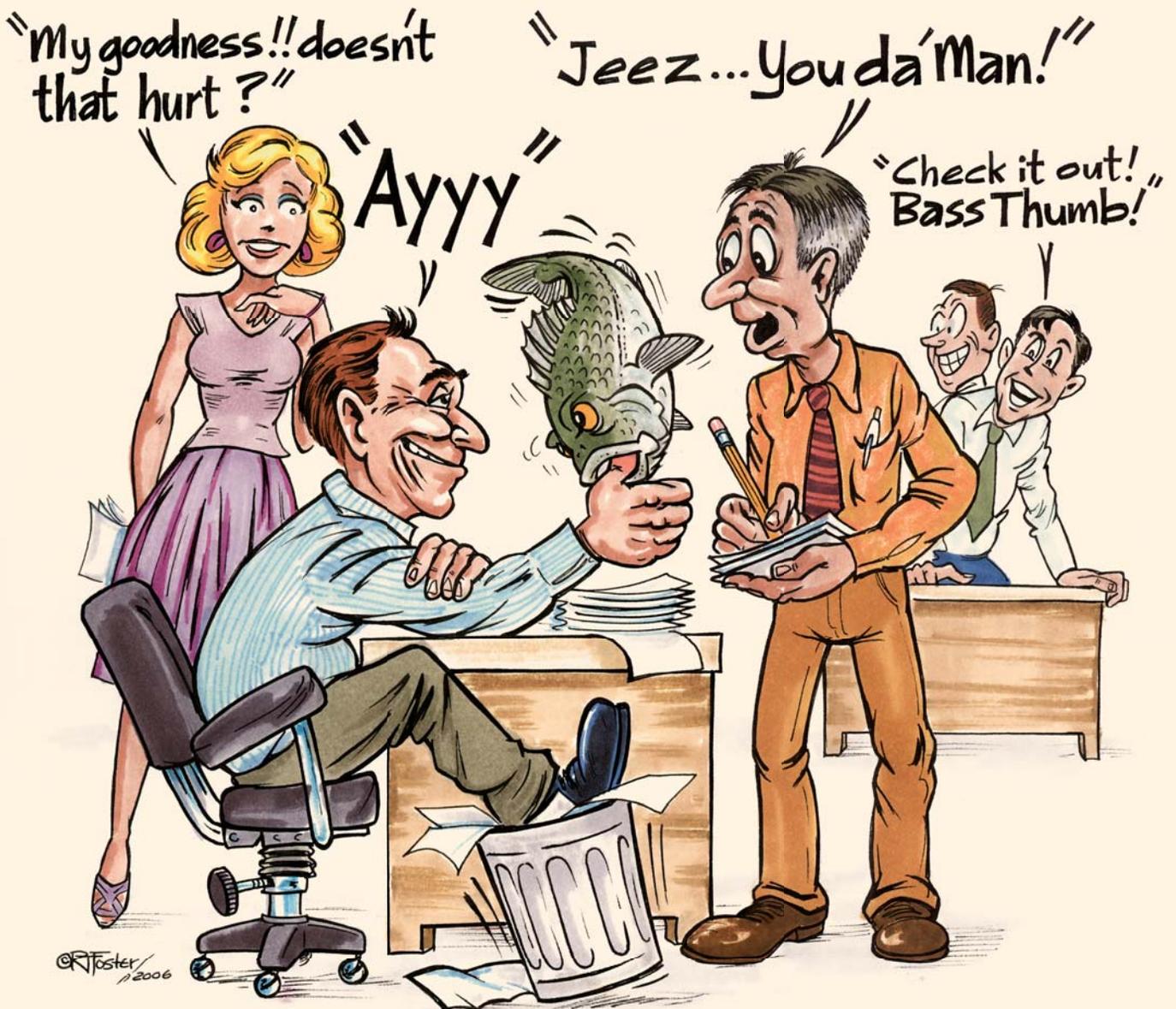
THE FINER POINTS By Andy Whitcomb

Each species of fish brings a unique experience, and I do my best to recognize and appreciate each of them. Channel catfish bring stamina. Pumpkinseed bring color. White bass bring spunk. Largemouth bass? They bring bass thumb.

“Bass thumb” is a thumb’s roughed-up condition after repeatedly landing bass by grabbing their lower “lip.” Bass thumb is not an accident, like say, “bullhead

palm puncture,” but is not necessarily intentional either. Although it should not be the goal, it is, however, a great indicator of success. It is the essential culmination of a complex chain of events known as bass fishing.

Just to see a bass, a staggering amount of factors have to fall in place. For example, just finding the time to get on the water is difficult. The weather, water temperature, clarity, dissolved oxygen, and vegetation



type and quantity can all affect fish behavior. Then there are mechanical aspects that can affect my behavior negatively. The truck and boat motors must start and be maneuvered to likely locations. The reel has to cast. The line needs to shoot unimpeded through the rod guides. The cast should be accurate. Close enough to attract attention but not spook. The retrieve must be at a perfect speed. Then, if the lure of the right size, color, smell, and movement is presented tantalizingly enough, and the fish happens to be in the right mood, and I set the hook, and the knot holds...

This is what I have been waiting for. This is what has kept me up at night and why I have worked so hard. All the meticulous planning has just paid off. My favorite stringed instrument is playing a tense but wonderful medley. It is an epic fight — theoretically, one of us could die. I am tethered to a wild animal from an underwater world.

We battle...and I win. I ease the fish up to the boat and...now what? Fish don't exactly have handles.

A net is the classical solution. Lead the fish's head into the bag and scoop it up. But a net says, "I'll fight up to a point, then I'll spring this trap on you."

For me, a net has always been something to forget and leave at home. Or when I do remember, it is more to trip over in the boat, has a bowling ball-sized hole in it, or I end up spending 25 minutes trying to remove embedded treble hooks from it. I might even have to remove some hooks from the net before I use it.

Then there are various grabbers, some with built-in scales. All are perfect for dropping overboard. A gaff is too medieval.

Protective gloves at least get us closer to direct contact. But I do not like to fish with gloves on. This sets up a tense situation where I end up wrestling to put on a glove one-handed, tugging at the sides with my teeth, all the while twirling to keep the line tight. I don't need that kind of stress.

This brings us back to the most satisfying landing tool — bare hands. The question that remains is where to grab a fish. This greatly depends on the species.

The tail at least looks like a handle. However, subduing the tail first means that the other end, which may have teeth or spines, is free to come back at you. Trying to grab a fish in the middle, often in a rush, is a slippery task. You may find that there is very little to hang on to or that the sharp fins may find you. Gill coverings are often used as handles, but this is a quick way to damage sensitive gills. As a fishing buddy once said, "Just because there is an opening, doesn't mean that you should stick your thumb in it" (he wasn't a noodler by the way). The mouth of a largemouth bass is an exception, though.

"Lip everything" used to be my philosophy while growing up fishing Oklahoma farm ponds. Mostly I was "lipping" bass and bluegill. Then I began to travel and experience new, toothy species. I learned the hard

way with pike, walleye, and bowfin that "lipping" these fish was not without its hazards. It was like extreme, full contact fishing. I used to believe that a successful fishing trip meant that I returned bleeding. Grin and bare it. Then bandage it.

Now many years later, I have reached a point where I do not have to have an open wound after a fishing trip for it to be successful. However, a slight disfigurement not requiring surgery isn't all bad. I have come to appreciate some of the finer things, like those tiny, pointy teeth on a bass's lower lip.

I know some say to leave the bass in the water while removing the hook. However, it is vastly more satisfying when, just for a minute, you reach down and pick that big ol' bass out of the water. Immediately, there is a slight pain in the thumb that lets you know, if you did not already, that you pulled it off.

Then you feel its heft and see its dripping wet, glorious greens and blacks. Nothing else is lifted for the sheer pleasure of feeling heavy. While momentarily distracted by girth calculations, your thumb is a palette being sculpted, chiseled in a few uneasy seconds by many perforating little teeth.

The result is not unlike your thumb having a close encounter with an extremely fine cheese grater. You are left with a bristle of hundreds of partially detached skin pieces. For the next few days, each time you use that opposable appendage, each tiny flap of skin creates a tingly reminder of time much better spent. Simple, routine activities such as brushing teeth, lifting a cup of coffee or signing your name may trigger the sweet pang of bass thumb.

For the most part, this transitory scar usually goes unnoticed. Most people just don't go around examining other people's thumbs. However, if during the course of a successful fishing trip my thumb becomes a shredded mess, for the next couple of days I become like the "Fonz."

"Ayyy," I say with the classic "thumbs up" gesture to no one in particular.

My souvenir keeps me grinning while I am back in the office. Suddenly an abrasive character, I put my thumb out there for the world to see. This is when I want to be fingerprinted. This is the thumb I want to be remembered by.

I get no greater satisfaction from an injury from any other outdoor activity. There is nothing pleasant about ringing ears from skeet shooting, blisters from hiking, sunburn from swimming, scraped elbows from biking or rolled ankles from basketball. But bass thumb is different. It allows a type of "closure" in a brief, turbulent relationship.

A day of fishing will be over all too quickly. If I catch a bass, that "Man vs. Nature" battle may only last a couple of minutes. When it is over, I will slip the bass back in the water and watch the ripples subside, leaving me, hopefully, with one lasting impression. 

AND THAT'S A FACT

If you want to try bass fishing at a new location but have no idea where to start, you may want to check out the 2006 spring electrofishing data released by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.

There are several smaller lakes across Oklahoma

that cover less than 1,000 acres, but that doesn't mean they don't offer big-lake-caliber fishing. Okmulgee, for example, produced 149 bass per hour of electrofishing during this year's surveys. That's the highest number of bass produced from any reservoir in the 2006 survey, making it a worthy destination for any Sooner angler.

In bigger lakes, Konawa led in numbers of fish produced per hour of electrofishing. With 132 bass per hour produced, Konawa ranks number one for the eighth year in a row in reservoirs over 1,000 acres. With that kind of survey information available, anglers don't have to guess why it's such a great bass lake. But they also don't have to take the Department's word for it. They can make their way to Seminole County and see for themselves. 

2006 Spring Electrofishing Bass Survey Results

Lake	Bass Abundance (# per Hour)	Bass Size (# over 14" per hour)	Heaviest Fish (pounds)
*American Horse	132.7	10.0	2.2
*Boomer	102.7	38.0	5.6
Broken Bow	42.5	8.0	5.1
Carl Blackwell	52.9	6.0	5.3
*Carlton	107.0	10.0	6.9
*Cedar	96.8	28.0	2.6
*Chandler	53.3	49.3	6.0
*Chelsea City	41.3	2.7	2.7
*Coon Creek	148.0	10.0	6.3
*Crooked Branch	26.0	6.0	3.8
Draper	25.1	4.2	5.0
*Durant	36.0	12.0	7.0
*Elmer	118.7	26.0	5.7
Fort Gibson	114.0	32.9	6.4
Hefner	31.3	10.9	5.7
Heyburn	24.3	5.3	3.6
Hugo	24.8	0.8	3.6
Konawa	131.6	48.4	6.4
McGee Creek	85.6	27.3	5.8
*Okmulgee	149.3	21.7	9.4
*Pauls Valley	20.7	2.7	3.1
Sardis	45.8	14.7	8.8
Skiatook	59.5	8.5	3.2
Sooner	100.9	18.6	5.8
*Sportsmans	56.7	18.7	7.9
Tenkiller	69.1	34.7	4.4
Texoma	61.0	10.0	8.3
Thunderbird	41.6	20.0	7.3
*Vincent	18.7	2.0	3.3
*Watonga	48.0	20.0	10.1
*Wayne Wallace	75.3	9.3	7.4
Wes Watkins	16.4	11.8	5.9
*Wewoka	18.0	10.0	3.9
Yahola	6.0	2.7	5.1

* Denotes lakes less than 1000 acres



JACK BISSELL

Get mobile: Navigating your favorite pond in a tube offers a different approach to fishing and may just get you a little closer to the action.

WALLEYE AND SAUGEYE



Walleye were first stocked in 1950 at lakes Tenkiller and Canton, while Saugeye were added to Oklahoma's waters more recently. Not only did both species offer a new fish for anglers to catch, but they also make excellent tablefare and are a helpful biological control for stunted crappie populations.

Walleye and saugeye are mottled golden brown in color and have sensitive eyes that help them spot food in turbid water and at night. They can usually be found near the bottom and also near deep underwater structures like drop-offs, humps and points.

Usually in March and April, walleyes move onto rocky shorelines to spawn, making this the best time to catch big fish. They prefer to spawn on riprap along dams and bridges on big lakes. One of the best ways to catch them is on jigs tipped with large red worms.

After spawning, they move to deeper water in main-lake areas, and anglers catch them by trolling deep-diving crankbaits along shoreline drop-offs. Tailwater fishing can also be productive, especially during periods of heavy flow.

Saugeye often bite the best in the winter and early spring, from mid-January through March. Long, shallow, windy points are prime saugeye

2006 Walleye: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 20 Inches or Over	Rating
Broken Bow	1.9	0	Below Average
Canton	7.0	8	Above Average
Stanley Draper	5.5	50	Above Average
Foss	0.3	0	Average
Fort Supply	5.8	5	Above Average
Kaw	4.0	12	Average
Sardis	6.8	78	Above Average
Skiatook	6.0	50	Above Average
Tenkiller	3.9	100	Above Average
Yahola	2.3	0	Average

2006 Saugeye: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 20 Inches or Over	Rating
Bluestem	3.6	22	Average
Sooner	5.1	80	Above Average

2006 Saugeye: Fall Night Electrofishing

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 20 Inches or Over	Rating
Boomer	4.7	67	Above Average
Fairfax	1.7	0	Below Average
Holdenville	2.1	0	Above Average
McMurtry	2.0	0	Above Average
Thunderbird	8.5	32	Above Average

hangouts, and anglers in the know often draw strikes using minnow-type jerkbaits or jig combos.

Walleye Stocking, 2006

Walleye were stocked in Canton, Foss, Ft. Supply, Hefner Lake, Kaw, Oologah, Spavinaw Lake and Yahola.

Saugeye Stocking, 2006

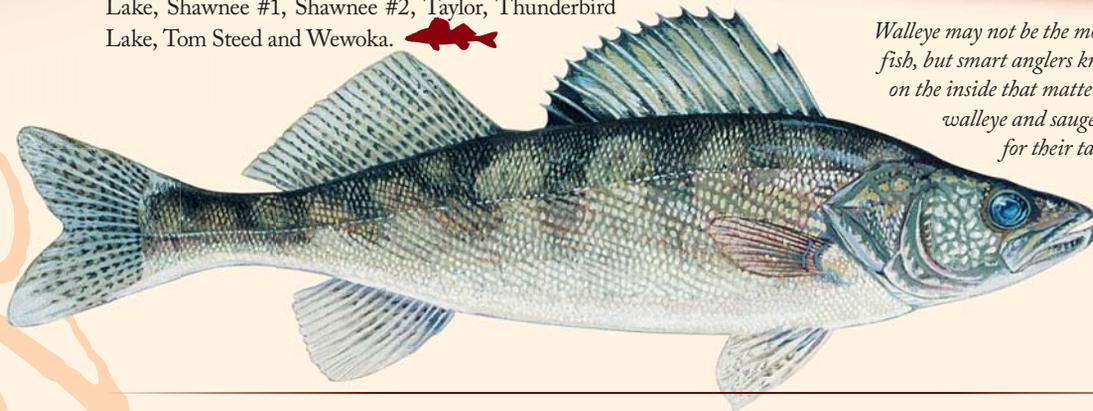
Saugeye were stocked in Altus City, Bluestem/Atoka, Bluestem/Osage, Boomer, Burtschi, Carl Blackwell, Clinton City, Duncan Lake, El Reno City, Elk City, Ellsworth, Ft. Cobb, Great Salt Plains, Guthrie City, Hall, Healdton City Lake, Holdenville City, Humphreys, Jean Neustadt, Lawtonka, Liberty Lake, McMurtry, Pauls Valley, Pawnee City, Ponca City, Ponca City Lake, Rocky Lake, Shawnee #1, Shawnee #2, Taylor, Thunderbird Lake, Tom Steed and Wewoka.

Take a Trip

Oklahoma City residents don't need to look any further than the north side of their own hometown for a place to fish for walleye. Lake Hefner was stocked in 2006 with thousands of walleye that are ready to bite. Plenty of nearby amenities provide gasoline, food and other entertainment. Lake Hefner is great for city-dwellers looking for a chance to get away for just a few hours on the weekend.

Anglers also can try walleye fishing at Foss Lake or saugeye fishing at Lake Thunderbird. Saugeye fishing techniques are easy to learn. A white chartreuse jig tipped with a worm and drifted across a rocky point is good way to draw a strike from a saugeye. Early January to mid-February is a prime time for catching saugeye, but anglers can and do catch them year-round.

Walleye may not be the most handsome fish, but smart anglers know it's what's on the inside that matters. Both walleye and saugeye are known for their tasty meat.



WHITE BASS

Springtime means white bass fishing in Oklahoma streams. White bass, often called sand bass, are aggressive feeders found in most larger reservoirs. In late March and April, sandies migrate into upper-lake tributaries, often in very large numbers.

This migration draws anglers in the know to the banks of tributaries and feeder creeks at most major lakes. Jigs, spinners and minnows are top bait choices during these river runs.

As spring turns to summer, white bass congregate in main-lake areas to chase schools of shad. Schools often can be located by watching for feeding gulls. Small topwater plugs, jigs and spinners are good choices.

Found in lakes and rivers throughout the state, white bass are among

2006 White Bass: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 12 Inches or Over	Rating
Bell Cow	2	40	Excellent
Bluestem	2	73	Excellent
Broken Bow	2.7	85	Excellent
Canton	1.7	37	Above Average
Chandler	0.6	0	Below Average
Chimney Rock	2.7	93	Excellent
Fort Supply	1.9	10	Average
Foss	1.4	33	Excellent
Kaw	3	10	Average
Konawa	1.9	73	Excellent
Mcgee Creek	2.8	62	Excellent
Sahoma	1.2	100	Above Average
Sardis	2.1	33	Excellent
Skiatook	1.5	35	Excellent
Sooner	0.8	46	Excellent
Stanley Draper	1.3	79	Above Average
Tenkiller	2.5	71	Excellent
Wister	2.9	18	Average
Yahola	2.2	82	Excellent

Oklahoma's most widely distributed game fish. Excellent populations exist at Broken Bow (southeast), Canton (northwest), Ellsworth and Ft. Cobb (southwest), Hefner (central), Keystone and Oologah (northeast).

White Bass Stocking, 2006

White bass were stocked in Great Salt Plains. 



White Bass



Striped Bass

Take a Trip

Rising waters after a rain and water temperatures in the low 50's are good signs for anglers fishing for white bass.

The spring spawning run of sand bass will begin first in the warmer southern half of the state. Southern Oklahoma anglers should do well at the upper Mountain Fork above Broken Bow Lake.

Stay up to date on the hottest fishing locations by following the Department's weekly fishing report at wildlifedepartment.com.



Hybrid Striped Bass

When the Oklahoma native white bass (top left) is crossed with the striped bass (bottom left), you've got a good recipe for a hard-fighting fish that thrives in Oklahoma's waters—the striped bass hybrid. Any of the three can leave your arms tired after a long day of fishing, but experienced anglers say it's worth it.

STRIPED BASS AND STRIPED BASS HYBRIDS

Notorious fighters, striped bass and hybrid striped bass offer anglers some of the most exciting fishing action in the state.

The striper is a true bass native to the Atlantic Ocean, and the hybrid striped bass, spawned in hatchery laboratories, is a cross between the striped bass and the Oklahoma native white bass. Long, sleek and slender, they feed in schools and often travel long distances following shad, their main staple.

In the spring, they congregate in the river arms of lakes, but they're generally found in the main lake areas during summer and winter. In most lakes, look for stripers and hybrids, which feed in schools, by locating flocks of feeding seagulls.

When fishing lakes, productive baits include live shad, topwater plugs, slabs, spoons and jigs. Fishing for hybrids and stripers can also be good below dams.

Take a Trip

Texoma Lake in south-central Oklahoma is a great all-around fishing destination, but it is most famous for one thing—striped bass.

Located on the Red River along the Oklahoma and Texas border, Lake Texoma has earned a reputation as being one of the top striper lakes in the nation. Known for their outstanding fighting abilities, striped bass are long-lived and fast growing. Stripers are voracious predators with a diet consisting mainly of threadfin and gizzard shad.

Live bait is often the best bet, but don't rule out spoons, slabs or bucktail jigs, or even topwater plugs early in the morning.

The waters of Texoma are home to over 100 guides that can take novice and experienced anglers alike out for a great day of fishing. Log on to sixoldgeezers.com for guide information or laketexoma.com to find the best restaurants, shopping, golf courses and other recreational activities in the area.

Anglers often use surf fishing tackle to cast heavy lures and line for long distances. Fishing is best during periods of heavy flow.

To catch big striped bass, try fishing the tailwaters and deep holes below dams on the Arkansas and Red rivers. When fishing these areas, the best approach is to drift live shad, preferably six inches or longer.

For bank fishing, anglers should set up on lake areas that are exposed to wind and waves. Points and flats are the obvious choices. Food carried by wind currents attracts plenty of stripers, not to mention bass and catfish.

2006 Striped Bass: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 28 Inches or Over	Rating
Sooner	6	0	Below Average

2006 Hybrid Striped Bass: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 15 Inches or Over	Rating
Canton	3.7	40	Above Average
Foss	3.7	79	Excellent
Kaw	9.7	66	Above Average
Konawa	5.3	85	Excellent
Skiatook	5.7	86	Above Average
Sooner	3.9	48	Above Average

Striped Bass Stocking, 2006

Striped bass were stocked in Great Salt Plains and Kaw.

Hybrid Striped Bass Stocking, 2006

Hybrid striped bass were stocked in Birch, Canton, Kaw, Oklahoma River, Overholser, Sooner and Waurika. 

Hybrids Stocked in the Oklahoma River Make the News

In December 2006, striped bass hybrids were stocked in the Oklahoma River for the first time.

As part of its "Close to Home" fishing program designed to increase urban fishing opportunities, the Wildlife Department stocked 175 hybrids measuring

4-6 inches in length.

Several Oklahoma media groups attended this first-time event, which was a cooperative effort with the Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation Department. —*Michael Bergin*



Above: Metro-area media representatives attended the event and enjoyed access to the Department's 33-foot habitat barge while photographing the stocking and interviewing biologists. Pictured is Gene Gilliland, senior fisheries biologist with the Wildlife Department, discussing the benefits of the stocking with the media.

Left: Bob Martin, fisheries biologist with the Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation Department, empties a net full of striped bass hybrid fingerlings into the Oklahoma River in December 2006. The stocking was the first of its kind on the Oklahoma River.

CATFISH

Channel cats, blues and flatheads each offer anglers something slightly different, but one thing they have in common is that they all live in Oklahoma waters, and all of them will take your line and give you a fight.

Channel catfish bite just about anything anytime. Bank fishing opportunities for channels abound, and you can reel one in from just about any lake, pond or river in Oklahoma.

Blue catfish remain active and catchable throughout the winter when fishing for other species slows down. Rain and runoff entering waterways stimulates blues in the cold months as much as in the spring and fall. During summer, however, big blues suspend over deep, cool water and feed primarily at night.

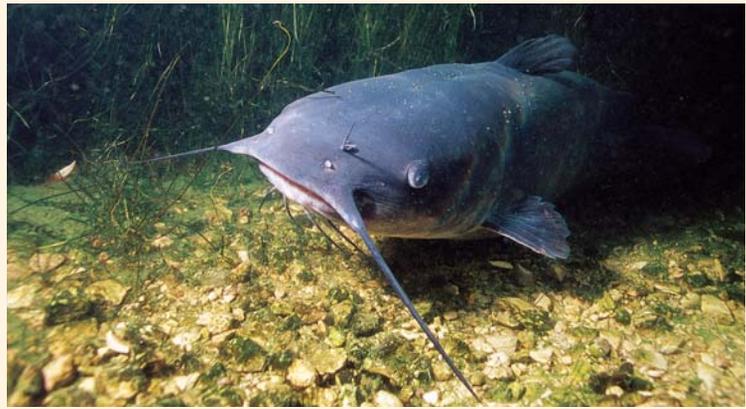
Flatheads are a popular species with noodlers, individuals who fish with nothing but their bare hands. May and June, when flatheads head for shallow-water cover to create and guard spawning nests, are prime noodling months.

Despite popular belief, catfish are not "bottom feeders," but highly specialized predators. They feed primarily by taste and touch (with their whiskers), and they are especially active when warm weather coincides with rising water levels. Many anglers use worms, crayfish, prepared baits and cut shad for channel cats, but blues and flatheads, especially the big ones, prefer live bait. Trotliners prefer four- to six-inch sunfish, but rod and reel enthusiasts often opt for live shad.

Though they offer different opportunities to different anglers, channels, blues and flatheads do share a few common traits. Not only are they all easy to find in the state's lakes, ponds and rivers, but they also taste great and can be caught by anglers of any skill level.

Channel Catfish Stocking, 2006

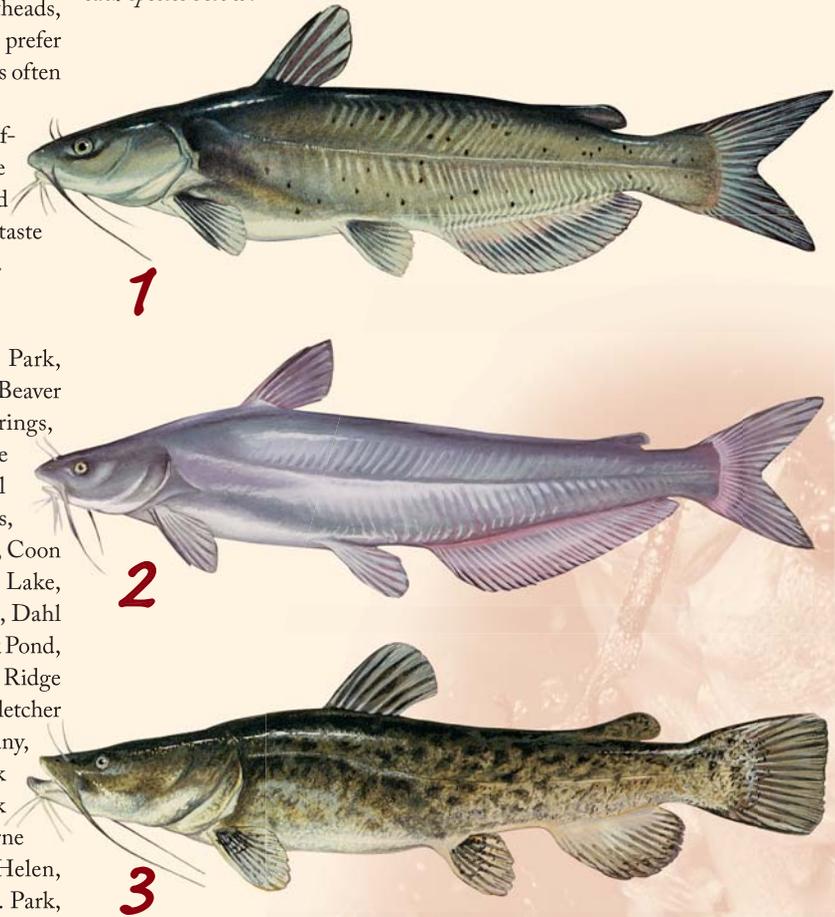
Channel catfish were stocked in Adair State Park, American Horse, Arcadia Lake, Bartlesville-Lowe, Beaver State Park, Black Kettle, Blue River, Boiling Springs, Boney Ridge USFS, Bonham Pond, Boswell State Park, Burtschi, C-48 USFS, Cameron Pond, Carl Albert, Carlton, Carriage Hills, Cedar, Chambers, Cherokee WMA, Choctaw Park, Church, Clayton, Coon Creek, Crescent, Crooked Branch, Crystal Beach Lake, Crystal Lake, Cushing H S Pond, Cyril Park Pond, Dahl Pond, Dale Zachary, Deer Creek Pond, Dolese Park Pond, Durant Hatchery Jake Day Pond, Eagle Lake, Eagle Ridge Pond, Eastside Park, Elk City Kids, Elmer, Etling, Fletcher Pond, Ft. Cobb, Ft. Gibson WMA, Ft. Sill, G Horany, Great Salt Plains, Garden Ridge, Gentry Creek Pond, Geronimo Kids, Greenleaf Pond, Grove Park Pond, Guymon-Sunset, Hafer Park, Hall, Hartshorne City, Haskell City, Heavener City Park Pond, Helen, Heritage Park Pond, Holdenville City, Honor Hgt. Park, Houston Pond, Hugo COE Pond, Hunter Park, Hunter Pool, James Collins WMA, Jap Beaver, Keystone, St Kids,



ERIC ENGBRETSON

Kids Lake North, Kulli USFS, Larry Lake, Laverne High School, Lawtonka, Leake Park, Liberty (City of Lawton), Magnolia Park, Maple Park, MAPS Eastern Basin, Oklahoma River, MAPS Western Basin, MAPS Wetland Pond Penn, MAPS Wetland Pond Walker N., MAPS Wetland Pond Walker S., MAPS Wetland Pond Western, Marland Mansion, Metcalf, Midway USFS, Minor Twins, Minshall Park Pond, Mitch Park Pond, Moore Kids, MS-6, Muldrow, Mulvey's Pond, Mustang Creek Elementary,

Would you be able to identify the catfish on your stringer? Each species has its own unique characteristics both in appearance and behavior. Can you identify each species below?



Answers: 1. channel catfish; 2. blue catfish; 3. flathead catfish

Nanah Waiya, Natural Falls State Park, New Spiro City, Nichols Park, Okemah City, Okmulgee, Okmulgee Kiddie # 1, Okmulgee Kiddie # 2, Owen Park, Ozzie Cobb, Park Lane, Pawhuska Country Club, Pittsburg City, Ponca City Lake Pond, Porum, Raymond Gary, Rockwell, Route 66 Park Pond A, Route 66 Park Pond B, Route 66 Park Pond C, Schooler, Senior Center Pond, Shale Pit Pond, Shawnee # 1, Shawnee # 2, Shawnee Clinic Pond, Skipout, Skyline, Soldier Creek, South Lake Park Pond East, Spaulding, Spring Creek, Stanley Draper, State Vet Hospital, State Vet Pond/Leflore, Stigler Golf Course, Sultan Park, Sutton Wilderness Area, Taft, Teal Lake USFS, Tenkiller State Park, The Gardens, Tishomingo NWR, Tom Steed, Tucker Lake, United Methodist Children's Home, Vann's Lake WMA, Vian City, Vincent, Ward, Watonga, Wayne Wallace, Welch Park, Weleetka, Wetumka, Wildhorse Park, Will Rogers Boy Scout Camp, Willow Pond, Willow Springs, Wintersmith Park, Woodward Ag. Ex. Lake and Zoo Lake. 

Take a Trip

At Waurika Lake, located just over 10 miles south of the city of Duncan, the blue cat population is maturing and producing bigger blue catfish each year. Rod and reel anglers drifting cut bait over likely blue cat hideouts, such as channels or drop offs, could be in for a big fight. The 10,600-acre reservoir is also home to healthy flathead and channel catfish populations.

Constructed by the U.S. Army Corp. of Engineers in 1977, the lake is nearly 11 miles long and encompasses over 80 miles of shoreline. Waurika also offers anglers the opportunity to catch walleye, largemouth bass, crappie and striped bass hybrids.

For more information on Waurika Lake, call (580) 963-2111.

2006 Blue Catfish: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 26 Inches or Over	Rating
Chimney Rock	14	7	Average
Stanley Draper	7.9	3	Average
Heyburn	3.4	0	Above Average
Kaw	21	6	Above Average
Sardis	4.8	0	Below Average
Skiatook	1.8	0	Below Average
Sooner	6.2	14	Average
Tenkiller	14	12	Average
Wister	5.0	1	Above Average

2006 Channel Catfish: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 22 Inches or Over	Rating
Bell Cow	6.7	5	Above Average
Bluestem	3.9	4	Average
Broken Bow	4.6	100	Above Average
Canton	9.6	38	Excellent
Chandler	8.9	33	Below Average
Chimney Rock	1.0	0	Below Average
Stanley Draper	0.5	0	Average
Foss	7.2	18	Above Average
Fort Supply	3.7	6	Average
Heyburn	0.8	0	Above Average
Kaw	8.0	5	Average
Konawa	7.2	8	Above Average
Sahoma	6.3	21	Above Average
Sardis	2.6	1	Average
Skiatook	2.9	0	Average
Sooner	2.5	0	Above Average
Taft	1.3	0	Below Average
Tenkiller	12	6	Above Average
Wister	5.2	18	Average
Yahola	2.8	0	Above Average

2006 Flathead Catfish: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 20 Inches or Over	Rating
Bluestem	3.8	100	Above Average
Broken Bow	11	50	Above Average
Canton	6.3	33	Average
Chimney Rock	5.7	80	Above Average
Stanley Draper	6.1	50	Above Average
Kaw	7.7	100	Above Average
McGee Creek	3.5	100	Above Average
Tenkiller	19	100	Above Average

CRAPPIE

Crappie are found in waters all across Oklahoma, and it doesn't take serious equipment to catch them. Just a rod and reel equipped with a small jig or minnow will do, and the end result can be a successful day's catch and maybe even a table full of delicious, flaky meat.

White and black crappie inhabit Oklahoma waters, but the white crappie is much more common and widely distributed. The two look slightly different, but both are challenging to catch.

During mid-March to mid-April, crappie move into shallow water to spawn. That's when they are easiest to catch, and also when you have the best chances of catching big female "slab" crappie. Whether you like to fish from a boat or tube or even from the bank, March through May is an ideal time to catch a stringer full of crappie.

Since crappie usually spawn in or near woody cover, the best fishing will occur near timber. Live minnows are probably the most dependable bait, but many anglers use bare colored jigs, jigs tipped with tiny plastic grubs, or jigs tipped with live minnows. 

2006 White Crappie: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 10 Inches or Over	Rating
Bell Cow	1.2	1	Average
Bluestem	1.8	1	Average
Canton	1.1	40	Above Average
Cedar	0.4	0	Below Average
Chandler	0.4	1	Average
Chimney Rock	1.4	67	Above Average
Foss	0.8	100	Above Average
Fort Supply	0.8	17	Above Average
Heyburn	1.2	7	Above Average
Kaw	1.8	10	Above Average
Konawa	1.2	100	Below Average
Mcgee Creek	0.8	60	Above Average
Sahoma	2	1	Above Average
Sardis	2.1	4	Above Average
Skiatook	0.9	45	Above Average
Sooner	0.7	50	Above Average
Stanley Draper	0.1	0	Below Average
Taft	0.5	29	Above Average
Tenkiller	2	60	Above Average
Wister	2	35	Above Average
Yahola	1.2	17	Above Average

2006 White Crappie: Trapnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 10 Inches or Over	Rating
Durant	1.2	90	Above Average
Fort Gibson	1.5	35	Average
Sulphur Veterans	0.7	80	Above Average
Tenkiller	1.4	40	Average
Widow Moore	1.2	35	Above Average
Cutoff Lake			

Take a Trip

Plan on visiting one of these places on your next crappie fishing adventure.

Kaw Lake, near Ponca City – Known for fast crappie action all year long, Kaw Lake has standing timber near the Beaver Creek arm where a sizable crappie can be hooked.

McGee Creek Lake, near Atoka – Anglers can find shallow water with plenty of structure in the north end of the lake. The beautiful pine-covered mountains are a bonus to the number of crappie that call the lake home.

Lake Eufaula, near Checotah – The lake has many sprawling coves along more than 600 miles of shoreline. Shallow coves with full exposure to the sun are good places to wet a line in the early spring.

Crappie

JACK BISSELL



Crappie have soft mouths and require finesse when reeling them in. Though this can offer a challenge, the great thing is that they can be caught with simple jigs.

2006 Black Crappie: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 10 Inches or Over	Rating
Bluestem	0.1	0	Below Average
Broken Bow	1.3	100	Average
Chandler	0.2	0	Average
Haskell	0.7	100	Average
Taft	1.1	57	Above Average
Tenkiller	1.4	12	Average

2006 Black Crappie: Trapnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 10 Inches or Over	Rating
Fort Gibson	1.6	70	Above Average
Sulphur Veterans	0.6	25	Average
Tenkiller	1.1	30	Average

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