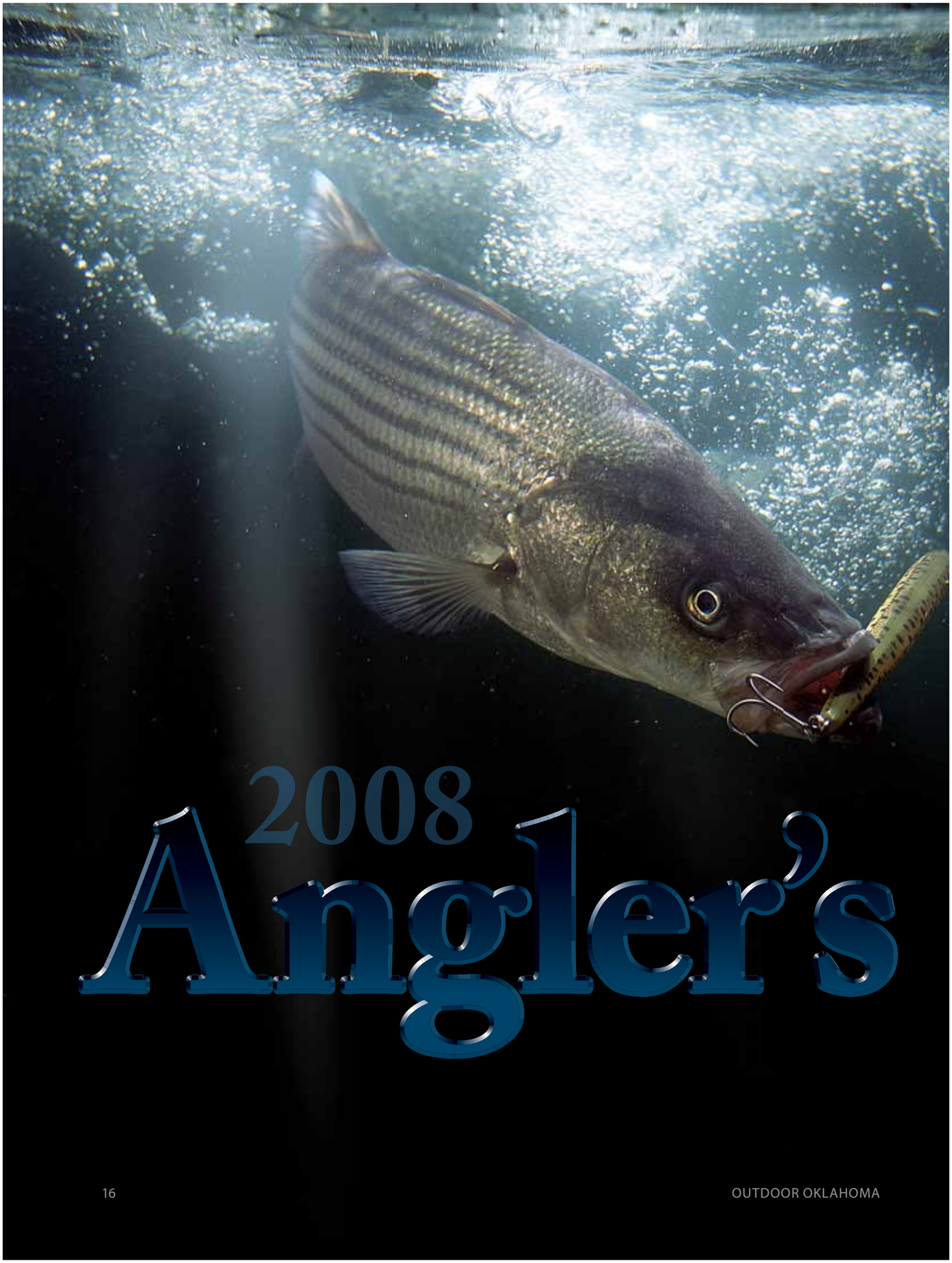

2008 Angler's

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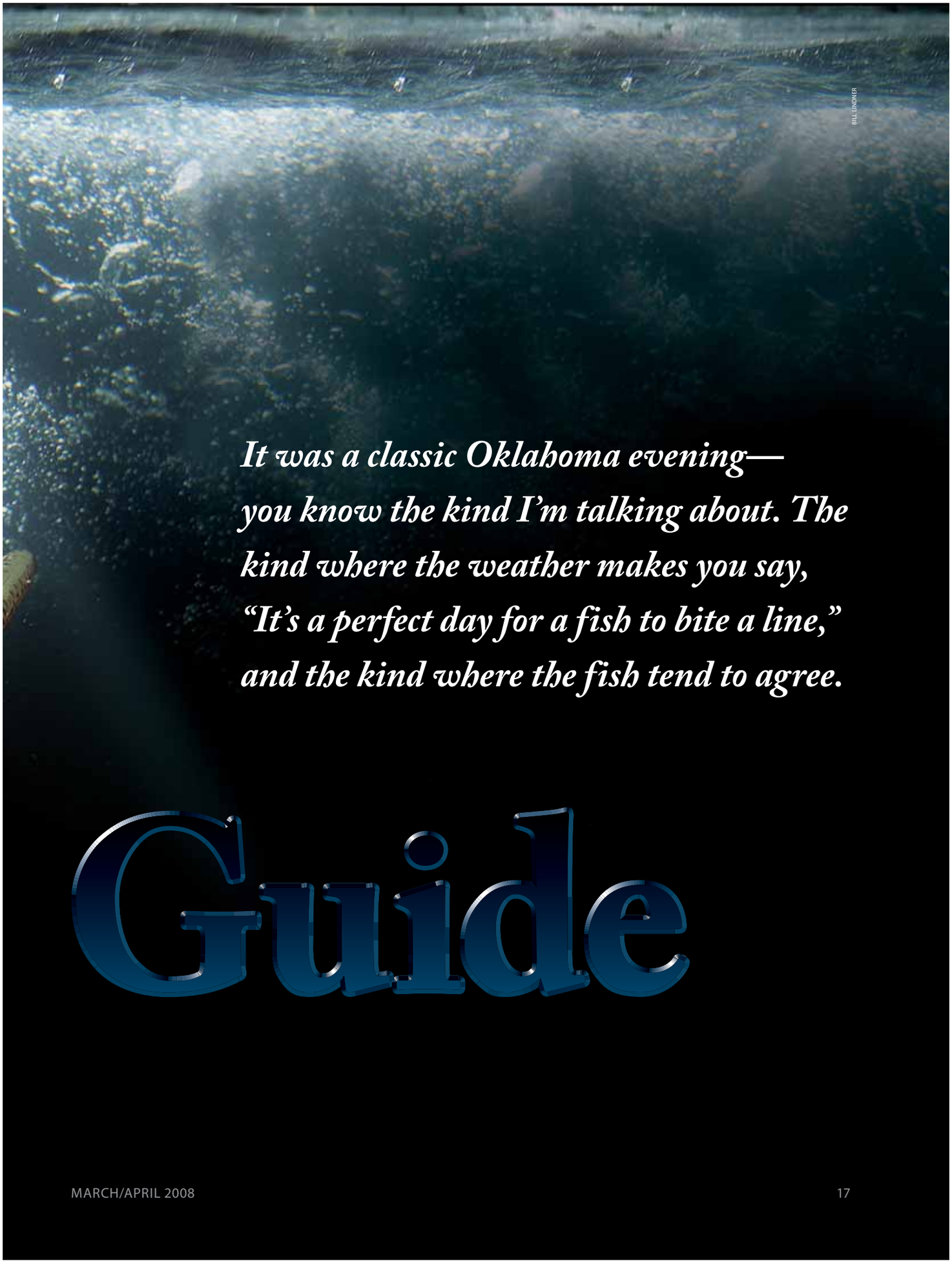

BILL LINDNER

It was a classic Oklahoma evening—you know the kind I'm talking about. The kind where the weather makes you say, "It's a perfect day for a fish to bite a line," and the kind where the fish tend to agree.

Guide

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RUSSELL GRAVES

It was a indeed a classic Oklahoma evening last spring, and I was reeling in crappie after crappie and bass after bass from my family's farm pond in Logan County. So many that I started turning crappie loose. In many ways, it was not unlike other great fishing trips at that pond from years gone by — fish biting left and right, turkeys gobbling nearby and plenty of spectacular spring scenery along the banks. But there was one thing about that evening that made it one of the most memorable fishing moments of my life. And that is simply the fact that I was fishing with my new bride.

We hadn't been married a year, and we hadn't done much fishing together up to that point, so it was with great pleasure that I helped her buy a fishing license and taught her how to catch fish on the very pond I had learned to fish on close to 20 years previous. I was loving every minute of it, especially when she landed the biggest catch of the night just as the sun was showing the last of its light.

Today my wife and I have a lot of fishing to look forward to in the years to come, but that trip will always be special to me. And why shouldn't it? I was able to share my outdoor heritage, and we discovered a new hobby we enjoy doing as a family. And that is what the outdoors and fishing are all about. It's a good thing we live in Oklahoma, where fishing is as good today as it ever has been, and usually better.

The variety of species available to anglers across the state is broad, and the sheer number of fish is astounding. Just flip through the pages in this year's annual Angler's Guide and you'll see there are more fishing opportunities in Oklahoma than any one angler could ever take advantage of, but that won't stop most of us from trying.

Whether you prefer a calm day of fishing in an urban pond, river angling or high-action and fast-paced trophy fishing on large lakes like Texoma or Eufaula, the information in the 2008 Angler's Guide is packed with all you need to know in order to enjoy your sport in Oklahoma. But remember to take someone with you, be it a family member or friend. Take it from me, you won't regret it.
—*Michael Bergin*

Summary of Species Stocked January Through December 2007

Public Waters	
Blue Catfish	308
Bluegill	177,015
Brown Trout	13,782
Certified Florida Largemouth Bass	319,678
Channel Catfish	480,724
Gizzard Shad	820
Grass Carp	243
Green Sunfish	65
Hybrid Grass Carp	45
Hybrid Striped Bass	1,220,432
Hybrid Sunfish	1,790
Northern Largemouth Bass	32,884
Paddlefish	3,057
Rainbow Trout	392,206
Reciprocal Hybrid Striped Bass	88,153
Saugeye	293,379
Smallmouth Bass	29,017
Striped Bass	554,043
Threadfin Shad	11,650
Walleye	8,446,828
White Bass	60
Total Stocked in Public Waters	**12,066,179**
Fry Stocked	8,870,000
Fingerlings Stocked	2,488,193
Subadults Stocked	272,153
Adults Stocked	1,630
Catchables Stocked	434,203
Private Farm Ponds	
Bluegill	694,030
Channel Catfish	157,774
Largemouth Bass	76,059
Total Stocked in Private Farm Ponds	**927,863**
Grand Total Stocked in 2007	**12,994,042**

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Sunfish

Hooks and sinkers, bobbers and worms. Add a fishing pole and almost any body of water in the state, and you have all you need to enjoy a day of fishing for Oklahoma's abundantly prosperous sunfish.

Bluegill, redear and green sunfish can be caught all year long by anglers in the know.

Luckily, it doesn't take much to figure out just how simple it is to fish for sunfish, or just how tasty they can be on the dinner table when fried and served with coleslaw, potato salad, corn on the cob and fresh watermelon.

Additionally, youngsters often get "hooked" on the sport of angling just by casting a line into a creek, pond or lake full of sunfish. Teaching a child to fish using a pole rigged with a hook, sinker and bobber is rewarding and introduces them to the basic techniques of angling such as how to tie knots, bait a hook, cast a line or reel in a fish.

Catch spawning sunfish during the months of May and June by casting your line along shallow shorelines using worms, minnows, grasshoppers and other live bait 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.

Like other fish, peak activity for sunfish includes the early morning and late evening hours, but because sunfish are often active throughout the day, anglers can catch them anytime.

Don't let the simplicity of sunfish angling fool you, however. Even seasoned anglers have discovered that sunfish can be a pleasure to land using ultralight gear and tackle, and for their size, they can put up a fight against lightweight test line and a flimsy pole.

Anglers can catch sunfish almost anywhere in Oklahoma. You'll find abundant populations in any direction you travel. Hot destinations include lakes American Horse (Northwest), Pawhuska (Northeast) Holdenville (Southeast), and any one of several "Close to Home Fishing" locations in the metro area.

Hybrid Sunfish Stocking, 2007

Hybrid sunfish were stocked in Arcadia/ODWC N., Bass Pro Kids Event, Big 5 Fishing Clinic, Bonham Pond, Connors Drug Ranch, Edward Parks Pond, Houston Pond, Hugo Kids Pond, Mustang Creek Elementary, Willow Pond.

Bluegill Stocking, 2007

Bluegill were stocked in Alva City Hatfield Park, BFH Clinic Pond, Bittern, Carmen City, Lotus, Pintail, Red Slough WMA-Unit 21, Shattuck Centennial Pond.

Green Sunfish Stocking, 2007

Green sunfish were stocked in Edwards Park Pond.

JACK BISSELL

When the sun goes down, the most important thing is having fun. But most anglers also know a stringer full of sunfish will make for some outstanding eating once you get home.

Sunfish Angling at a Glance

What's for Dinner?

Sunfish will bite worms, minnows, grasshoppers, small jigs and almost any other bait.

How to Catch One

Fish shallow waters and weedbeds during the late spring and early summer; In deep waters, use small jigs or slip bobber rigs baited with live bait.

Destination Sunfish

You have a good chance of catching sunfish in any pond or creek that holds water year-round. That means you can catch them all over Oklahoma, including in urban and metro areas.

The Wildlife Department has made that search a little easier for some Oklahoma residents through the "Close to Home" fishing program. Under cooperative fisheries management agreements between Oklahoma municipalities and the Wildlife Department, there is a wide variety of fishing opportunities around the Oklahoma City metro. Be sure to consult the "2008 Oklahoma Fishing Guide" for a complete list of these areas. Tulsa anglers can log on to wildlifedepartment.com/tulsafishing.htm for a list of locations near their home where families can have a day of fishing fun.

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Trout

If you like something a little different than the norm now and then, you might want to give trout fishing a try this year. Be forewarned, however, that trying your hand at catching a trout "just for the fun of it" could lead to a serious new hobby.

Oklahoma has two introduced species of trout — rainbows and browns, with rainbow trout being far more abundant. Rainbow trout are native to the cold streams west of the Continental Divide but have been introduced here and elsewhere. The brown, or German brown trout, is originally from Europe.

Trout fishing locations in Oklahoma include both winter-only and year-round fisheries, and no matter which direction you go across the state, you'll likely be headed toward one of them. Opportunities exist from Lake Carl Etling in the far reaches of the Panhandle to the Lower Mountain Fork River in southeast Oklahoma. Lake Watonga offers a centralized location, while fisheries also can be found at Lake Pawhuska, the Lower Illinois River, Robber's Cave, the Blue River and Quartz Mountain.

The state's winter-only trout fisheries provide angling opportunities 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-sized rainbow trout and are wildly popular

GREG THOMAS / IMAGES ON THE WILDSIDE

Trout fisherman are sometimes as passionate about their gear as they are the fish, and a wide array of equipment can be found at fly shops located across the state.

Trout Angling at a Glance

What's for dinner?

A number of artificial fly variations work well for catching trout, as do live and prepared baits (where legal) such as salmon eggs, corn, Power Bait and small earthworms, minnows, spinners and jigs. Be sure to check the current "Oklahoma Fishing Guide" for trout regulations before fishing an area, as specific hook and bait regulations apply in certain areas.

How to catch one

We've found that the best success comes when you use four to six-pound test line and small hooks. Use these additional tips to improve you odds of success:

- Trout tend to seek out and congregate in calm waters. So when fishing in swift waters, cast your bait above exposed boulders and let it drift down through the calm water on the downstream side of the outcropping.
- Try adding tuna fish, sardine or salmon oil to dough baits to increase your odds for success, as most rainbow trout in Oklahoma are hatchery fish and are fed a pelleted diet that is high in fish oil before being released.
- Add cotton to your dough bait mixture to help keep it in place on the hook longer.

Destination trout

If you want to fish from the bank, think Lake Pawhuska, the latest addition to the list of Department winter trout fisheries. It has the most bank access and best water quality of any of the trout lakes. Trout season at Pawhuska runs Nov. 1 – March 31. To get to the 96-acre lake, located in Osage County, drive three miles west of Pawhuska on U.S. Hwy 60 to the county road, then one and three quarter miles south. Public use facilities include a boat ramp, fishing dock, parking area and restrooms—all handicap-accessible. Primitive campsites are available at the lake, as are camps with electrical hook-ups at nearby Lake Bluestem. To launch a boat, anglers must obtain a boating permit from the City of Pawhuska. For more information, call (918) 287-3040.

While Pawhuska is sure to be a good time for trout anglers, any of the other fisheries are sure to be winners as well. If heading to southeast Oklahoma is more up your alley, make sure to check out a few recently developed hotspots on the Lower Mountain Fork River.

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.

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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 "2008 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, 2007

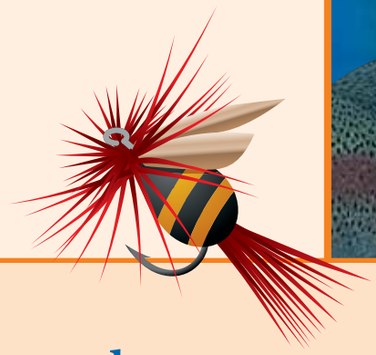
Brown trout were stocked in the Illinois River and Mountain Fork River.

ERIC ENGBRETSON

Rainbow Trout Stocking, 2007

Rainbow trout were stocked in Bath Lake, Black Fork Creek, Blue River, Clayton, Crystal Beach Lake, Dolese Park Pond, Enid Gov't. Springs, Etling, Falls Creek, Fourche Maline River, Gage City Lake, Guymon-Sunset, Hickory Creek, Illinois River, Mountain Fork River, Pawhuska, Pine Grove Pond, Quartz Mountain State Park, Senior Center Pond – Yukon, Turner Falls Park and Watonga.

Rainbow trout are quite popular for fly fisherman in Oklahoma. They aren't native to the state's waters, but they do well where stocked and provide outstanding fishing to resident and nonresident anglers alike.



Wildlife Department Fisheries Division Receives Prestigious Award

The American Fisheries Society recently honored the Wildlife Department's fisheries division with an "Outstanding Project of the Year Award" for its renovation of the Evening Hole and Lost Creek areas of the Lower Mountain Fork River.

The award was given based on sport fisheries development and management.

The Evening Hole was once a wide, shallow area that was susceptible to summer heat and provided few stream obstructions, such as logs and boulders, to serve as points of concentration for trout to wait in ambush for passing insects. After draining the water from the Evening Hole, heavy equipment was used to place tons of rock material into the streambed to help shape a narrower, swifter-flowing stream. Using extensive stream research and knowledge of trout habitat, Wildlife Department biologists and personnel carefully imbedded huge logs and rock material into the streambed. The end result was a faster-flowing stream with cooler water conditions and ideal habitat for trout. During renovations, a nearby 1,200 ft. long stretch of wooded area, now Lost Creek, was converted into a trout stream that empties into the Evening Hole. Ambitious trout stocking efforts since the completion of renovations have kept the area a hot spot destination for anglers from Oklahoma and elsewhere.

The "Outstanding Project of the Year" award is one of several Sport Fish Restoration project awards intended to recognize excellence in fisheries management, research and education as well as emphasize the success of the Sport Fish Restoration program..

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Managing for Success

Oklahoma's Black Bass Management Strategy

For many sportsmen, angling in Oklahoma is associated with only one thing — black bass.

Fishing for largemouth, smallmouth or spotted bass is one of the most time-honored activities in the state, and more than one angler can tell a story or two about bass fishing over the years.

Each of the three subspecies have varying requirements, and in order to provide the best angling opportunities in terms of quality and quantity, the Wildlife Department developed a Black Bass Management Plan. Known as one of the best black bass management strategies in the nation, the plan makes managing Oklahoma's vast variety of bass fishing waters that much more effective.

Some lakes are better suited to producing large numbers of bass, while others are managed to produce trophy bass. It sounds simple enough to say that when bass populations achieve their full potential, angling opportunities are improved. But doing that sometimes requires special efforts, and the Black Bass Management Plan assists Wildlife Department fisheries personnel in their effort to develop site-specific plans that will help improve bass fisheries in Oklahoma.

Although fisheries biologists use a variety of information to deter-

2007 Spring Electrofishing Bass Survey Results

Lake	Bass Abundance (# per Hour)	Bass Size (# over 14" per hour)	Heaviest Fish (pounds)
American Horse*	223.3	14.7	10.3
Arbuckle	130.4	57.3	10.5
Bellcow*	20.9	16	8.8
Bluestem*	30.7	11	4.6
Cedar*	123	70	8.3
Chimney Rock*	87	18.3	5.2
Claremore City*	47.3	11.3	6.6
Clayton*	43.3	20.7	3.5
Comanche*	40.7	28.7	5.7
Crooked Branch*	29.3	12	8
Crowder*	62	29.3	7.9
Draper	6.2	2	4
Durant*	55.3	33.3	9
Elmer Thomas*	88.5	32.5	7.9
Elmer*	83.3	36	6.3
Greenleaf*	81.7	36.3	7.3
Hall*	52.8	16	7.5
Haskell*	93.3	1.3	2.7
Hudson	105.5	41.2	7.8
Konawa	185.3	69.1	8.7
Liberty*	14	5.3	5.6
Longmire*	57.5	42.5	9.3
Onapa	72.7	17.3	10
Pine Creek	82.4	15.1	5.1
Purcell*	11.3	8	3.1
Schooler*	86.4	7.2	6.1
Shell Creek*	42	11.3	4
Stigler*	80	1	1.2
Sulphur Veterans*	116.7	17.3	4
Taylor*	32.7	20	4.2
Thunderbird	8.3	5.3	7.8
Vian*	181.3	13.3	5.7
Watonga*	34.7	13.3	9.7
Weleetka*	52	14	6.5
Westville*	132	34	4
Wetumka*	166.7	22	6.4

**Denotes lakes less than 1000 acres*

Need a honey-hole?

When you look at the 2007 Spring Electrofishing Bass Survey Results table on this page, it might appear at first as if it's only a collection of confusing numbers. But if you study the data a little closer, you might just gain an upper hand in finding a new bass fishing honey hole.

The information is released every year by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and provides the number of bass surveyed per hour and the number of bass over 14 inches per hour. In addition, the data provides a list of the heaviest fish surveyed at each lake.

Many of the lakes surveyed are smaller — less than 1,000 acres — but their size is no indication of the number of fish they hold for anglers to catch. Lakes like American Horse near Geary, which produced 223 bass per hour of electrofishing during this year's surveys, are not massive bodies of water to look at, but you won't find another lake, small or large, that produced as many bass for the survey. Okmulgee produced more bass than any other reservoir in last year's survey, and it, too, is under 1,000 acres. Vian followed behind American Horse this year for smaller lakes, with about 181 bass surveyed per hour of electrofishing.

Konawa Lake produced the most bass for lakes larger than 1,000 acres this year, with 185 fish surveyed per hour. But that is no surprise considering this is the ninth year in a row that it has held the highest ranking. Another high scoring larger lake was Arbuckle, which also produced the heaviest fish in the survey at 10.5 pounds.

No matter where you decide to fish and regardless of the efforts you put into planning an angling getaway, there are going to be factors that can affect your luck on the water. But when you have access to this kind of survey data, you can combine it with your angling skills and possibly increase your success.

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mine management recommendations, some of the most important data comes from springtime electrofishing surveys. These surveys provide a wealth of information, such as 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 the Number of Bass Per Hour and Number of Bass Over 14 Inches Per Hour.

Biologists use them to rate each lake in terms of quantity and quality and to develop management schemes, but they also provide an extra special benefit to anglers—insight for making informed decisions on where to go fishing.

It takes management of both fish harvest and fish habitat to accomplish the goals of the Black Bass Management Plan. By regulating harvest through the use of slot length limits, minimum size limits and modified bag limits, the Department helps create the highest quality of fishing possible. However, the success that harvest regulations have on fisheries is dependent upon anglers making conscious decisions to accept and respect them.

Smallmouth Bass Stocking, 2007

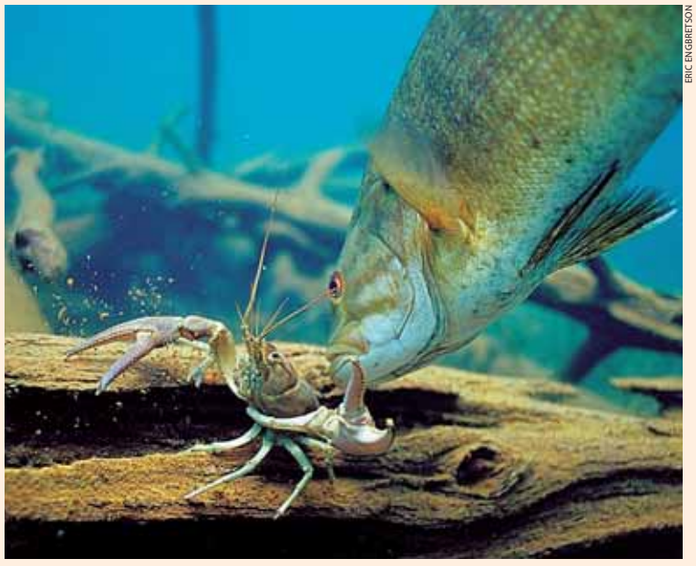
Smallmouth bass were stocked in Chimney Rock, Hefner Lake, Hominy, Pawhuska, Ponca City Lake and Sportsman Lake.

Florida Largemouth Bass Stocking, 2007

Florida largemouth bass were stocked in McGee Creek, Mountain Lake and Sardis Lake.

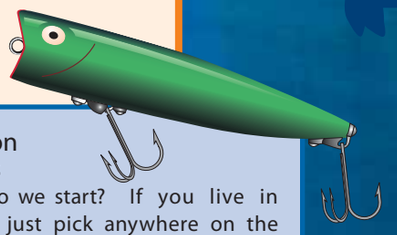
Northern Largemouth Bass Stocking, 2007

Northern largemouth bass were stocked in Bell Cow, Carmen City, Chimney Rock, Crosslin Park Pond, Durant Lake, Edwards Park Pond, Etling, Fort Sill Ponds, Lone Chimney, Magnolia Park, MAPS Wetland Pond Penn and Wes Watkins.



ERIC ENGBRETSON

Smallmouth bass occur naturally in many eastern Oklahoma streams in the Ozark and Ouachita mountains, and fishable populations can also be found in Grand, Tenkiller, Murray, Eufaula, Texoma and Broken Bow lakes.



Bass Angling at a Glance

What's for dinner?

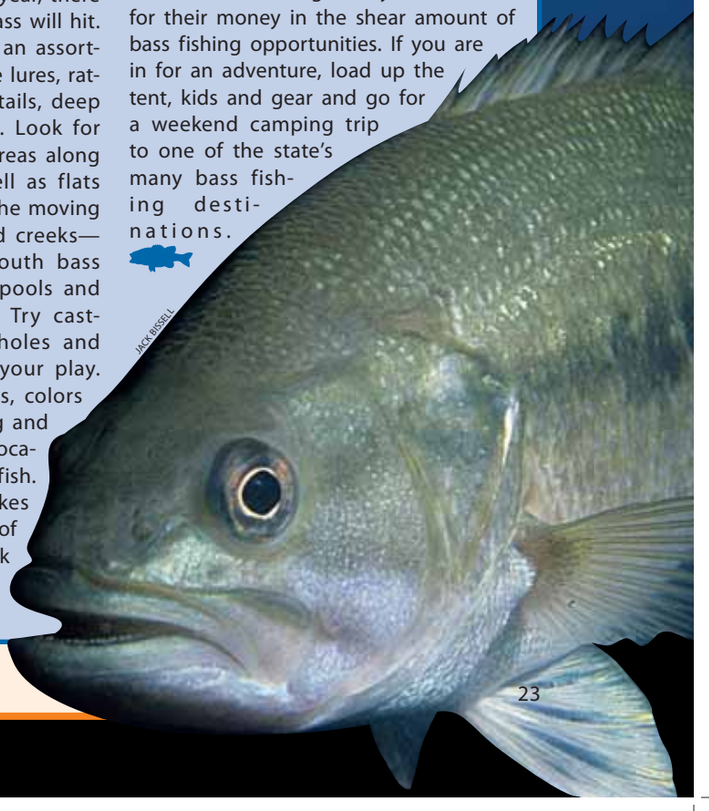
Black bass are intense predators. They're diet can include a variety of other fish, crayfish, insects, frogs, lizards and more.

How to catch one

Depending on the time of year, there is always something that a bass will hit. Keep your tackle box full of an assortment of jigs, spinners, surface lures, rattletraps, rubber worms and tails, deep divers, crankbaits and more. Look for cover and shady or weedy areas along banks and shorelines as well as flats off channels and shelves. In the moving waters of rivers, streams and creeks—such as those that smallmouth bass call home—fish the riffles, pools and the shallows above rapids. Try casting upstream from honey-holes and allow some drifting to aid your play. Be persistent, vary your lures, colors and baits, keep them moving and don't spend too long in one location unless you are catching fish. Experts claim technique makes the difference in 90 percent of bass catches. Generally, work lures faster in warm water and slower in cold water.

Destination Black Bass

Where do we start? If you live in Oklahoma, just pick anywhere on the map and you're likely to find a bass angling hot spot within just a short drive. From large reservoirs and farm ponds to rivers, streams and creeks, Oklahoma is a black bass angler's paradise. With miles and miles of shoreline, most of which are lined with black bass, Oklahoma's waters will give any others a run for their money in the shear amount of bass fishing opportunities. If you are in for an adventure, load up the tent, kids and gear and go for a weekend camping trip to one of the state's many bass fishing destinations.



JACK BISSELL

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More Than Just Wetting a Line

By Ben Davis

Picture yourself patiently waiting by the water, fishing pole expectantly in hand. Suddenly, the line jerks, the heart races and the contest is on!

Now imagine something entirely different: state hatchery employees laboring for several years to prepare popular game fish for breeding and stocking in the ponds, lakes and rivers where anglers love to fish. This behind-the-scenes process is not only one of the state's best-kept secrets, but it's also one that is about to experience some important upgrades.

Oklahoma's hatchery system has been in existence since the early days of statehood. Raising fish for statewide stocking is a vital part of Oklahoma angling. The hatcheries' staff over the years have proven to be hardworking, but they have also shown ingenuity and practicality in dealing with an increasingly aged hatchery system. But first let's take an inside look at the current hatchery system.

According to Steve Spade, hatchery system supervisor for the Wildlife Department, the hatchery system exists "to produce and stock healthy species of fish requested by our states' fish biologists."

"We supplement existing populations in bodies of water across Oklahoma as well as restore other populations," Spade said. "Sometimes, we'll introduce a brand new population."

The Florida Largemouth bass is a perfect example. The stocking process for these beauties begins years before anglers ever put bait on their hooks. The bass are raised to a size of eight to 10 inches in one of the state's four fish hatcheries — J.A. Manning, Durant, Byron, or Holdenville. Then hatchery staff perform liver biopsies on some of the fish, which isolates genes to certify that the fish crop are indeed pure Florida bass. The process of certifying bass can take up to a year. After certification, the second phase begins.

Oklahoma's hatcheries have hundreds of culture ponds. These shallow ponds are constantly used, drained, cleaned and prepared for more. After certification, Florida bass are placed in a clean pond where even the water is filtered to ensure the species stays pure. Early in the spring, they will spawn. After the fry (young fish) have grown large enough to be handled, between 75,000 and 125,000 are netted and removed from the pond and placed in a second clean pond.

About a month later, once the fish have grown to an inch-and-a-half in size, they are harvested again. The staff split the fry into smaller groups of about 10,000 to 15,000 and place them in a third clean pond. Another month later, the bass have grown to three inches and are finally ready to be stocked in Oklahoma's lakes and waterways.

BEN DAVIS

One challenge faced by the state's fisheries is accumulating silt in culture ponds (shown above in a drained pond), but the Wildlife Department is working with outside fisheries specialists groups to address these issues and ensure a continued legacy of angling success in Oklahoma.

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BEN DAVIS

One of the upper reservoir ponds at the Department's Byron Fish Hatchery. The reservoirs were built on higher ground to utilize gravity to move water through the hatchery system.

At each step of the process, raising these fish requires time, money and effort from the Department's hatcheries.

"We certify the Florida largemouth bass that we raise in-house," said John Davenport, manager of the Holdenville hatchery. "[That process] requires a lot of man-hours."

So why is an aging hatchery system an issue worth addressing?

The age factor can't be dismissed or ignored. Since all of the state's hatcheries were built before 1935, each is wearing down from time and use. Recognizing this, the Department's fisheries division has joined forces with a hatchery improvement group called HDR/Fish Pro to evaluate each hatchery and provide recommendations for future growth and renovation.

The goal?

Nothing less than making what is old new again.

It is no small undertaking. The J.A. Manning State Hatchery was constructed in 1913, a mere six years after statehood, and began production in 1915. Durant State Hatchery was built in 1916-17, and Byron State Hatchery joined the team in 1929. The "baby" of the hatchery system, Holdenville, was built in 1934 (to put that in perspective for you, that's the same year that the Flash Gordon comic strip began and Alcatraz became a federal prison). While the hatcheries have proven trustworthy sources of fish production over the years, even the newest hatchery turns 74 this year. This reality provides HDR/Fish Pro a true challenge — to bring the hatcheries into the 21st Century.

The Byron Fish Hatchery provides a perfect example of the endeavor. Close to the Kansas border, Byron is the smallest of the hatcheries. But due to clean well water, it is also the only indoor facility. Spade serves as the hatchery's manager in addition to his duties as hatchery system supervisor.

At Byron, two upper water storage reservoirs overlook the lower-lying culture ponds. Gravity is used to draw water into the ponds when needed. After the water has made its way through the hatchery system, it is pumped back into the upper reservoirs.

"Water is a priceless commodity up here in Northwest Oklahoma," Spade said.

The system is an example of the improvised solutions that have been needed around hatcheries for many years.

"Our recirculation system wasn't part of the original system," Spade said. "We designed it ourselves. Most of our problems are solved that way, because the hatcheries have not had a long-range upgrade plan…ever. We've just made upgrades as we needed them."

Spade hopes the HDR/Fish Pro project can change that.

"The Fish Pro findings provide a basis for developing a long-range plan," he said. "I hope our plan will allow us to raise money and maintain facilities over the long haul — a 20 to 30 year period."

Over the years, all the hatcheries have undergone upgrades, renovations and expansions. But Spade and others believe there comes a point when a long-range plan is needed to consistently maintain and improve fish production.

Several of the ponds suffer from silt that has accumulated over time.

"Here at Byron, our last renovation was 20 years ago," he said. "Some of our ponds are starting to silt in and we have leaks in our pipe system."

The long-range plan will address these problems, but it also aims to improve efficiency.

Spade said Oklahoma's hatcheries do an outstanding job, but as an optimist, is certain there is always room for improvement. And that is why Spade thinks partnering with HDR/Fish Pro a good move.

"Fish Pro has already worked with 10 other states on similar projects, and they are experts in their field," he said. "Our work with them involves bringing them in to evaluate our hatchery system and look at ways to improve or repair facilities and also improve the procedures of raising fish."

The project is almost 90 percent complete, and Spade is confident the final report will prepare Oklahoma's hatcheries for continued success and accomplishment.

"I believe we can get all the fish hatcheries up-to-date again," he said.

With a long-range hatchery upgrade plan in place, Oklahoma's hatchery system will enter the state's second 100 years with renewed vision and expanded opportunities.

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Walleye & Saugeye

A mottled golden brown in color, walleye and saugeye may not be the prettiest fish to look at, but their fanciers don't let appearances fool them. Not only do both fish offer great angling, but they also are known for their tasty meat. Additionally, they provide a helpful biological control for stunted crappie populations.

Walleye were first stocked in 1950 at lakes Tenkiller and Canton, while Saugeye were added to Oklahoma's waters more recently. Both species are usually found near the bottom and also near deep underwater structures like drop-offs and points. They have sensitive eyes that help them spot food in turbid water and at night.

The best time to catch big walleyes is usually in March and April, when they move onto rocky shorelines to spawn. They prefer to spawn on riprap along dams and bridges on big lakes. Try catching them on jigs tipped with large red worms.

After spawning, they move to deeper water in main-lake areas, and a great way to catch them is by trolling deep-diving crankbaits along shoreline drop-offs. Additionally, during periods of heavy water flow, tailwater fishing can be productive.

The time to reel in saugeye is often best from mid-Janauary through March. Long, shallow, windy points are prime saugeye angling hotspots, and anglers often draw strikes using minnow-type jerkbaits or jig combos.

Walleye Stocking, 2007

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

Saugeye Stocking, 2007

Saugeye were stocked in Ellsworth, Ft. Cobb, Guthrie City, Jean Neustadt, Lawtonka, Liberty Lake, McMurtry, Pauls Valley and Thunderbird Lake.

2007 Walleye: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 20 Inches or Over	Rating
Canton	4.2	9	Above Average
Foss	2.6	0	Above Average
Fort Supply	5.5	13	Above Average
Hefner	4.4	22	Above Average
Kaw	1.9	0	Below Average
Overholser	5.7	100	Above Average
Waurika	2.9	50	Average
Webbers Falls	0.4	0	Below Average

2007 Walleye: Fall Night Electrofishing

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 20 Inches or Over	Rating
Hefner	7.5	33	Above Average

2007 Saugeye: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 20 Inches or Over	Rating
Foss	2.1	0	Below Average
Holdenville	2.2	0	Below Average
McMurtry	4.6	53	Above Average
Pine Creek	3.1	25	Average
Shawnee Twin #1	4.1	20	Average
Shawnee Twin #2	3.9	22	Average
Sooner	4.6	67	Above Average
Waurika	3.7	35	Average

2007 Saugeye: Fall Night Electrofishing

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 20 Inches or Over	Rating
Burtschi	1.7	0	Average
Clinton	2.6	0	Average
Duncan	4.4	7	Average
Elk City	4.6	10	Average
Humphreys	1.5	0	Below Average
Rocky	5.0	33	Average
Taylor	4.3	50	Below Average

Walleye

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Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, which is a good thing for walleye. Though not the most attractive fish in Oklahoma, walleye as well as saugeye anglers say they are fun to catch and delicious tablefare.

Walleye/ Saugeye Angling at a Glance

What's for dinner?

Try using jigs tipped with large red worms for walleye, and minnow-type jerkbaits or jig combos for saugeye.

How to catch one

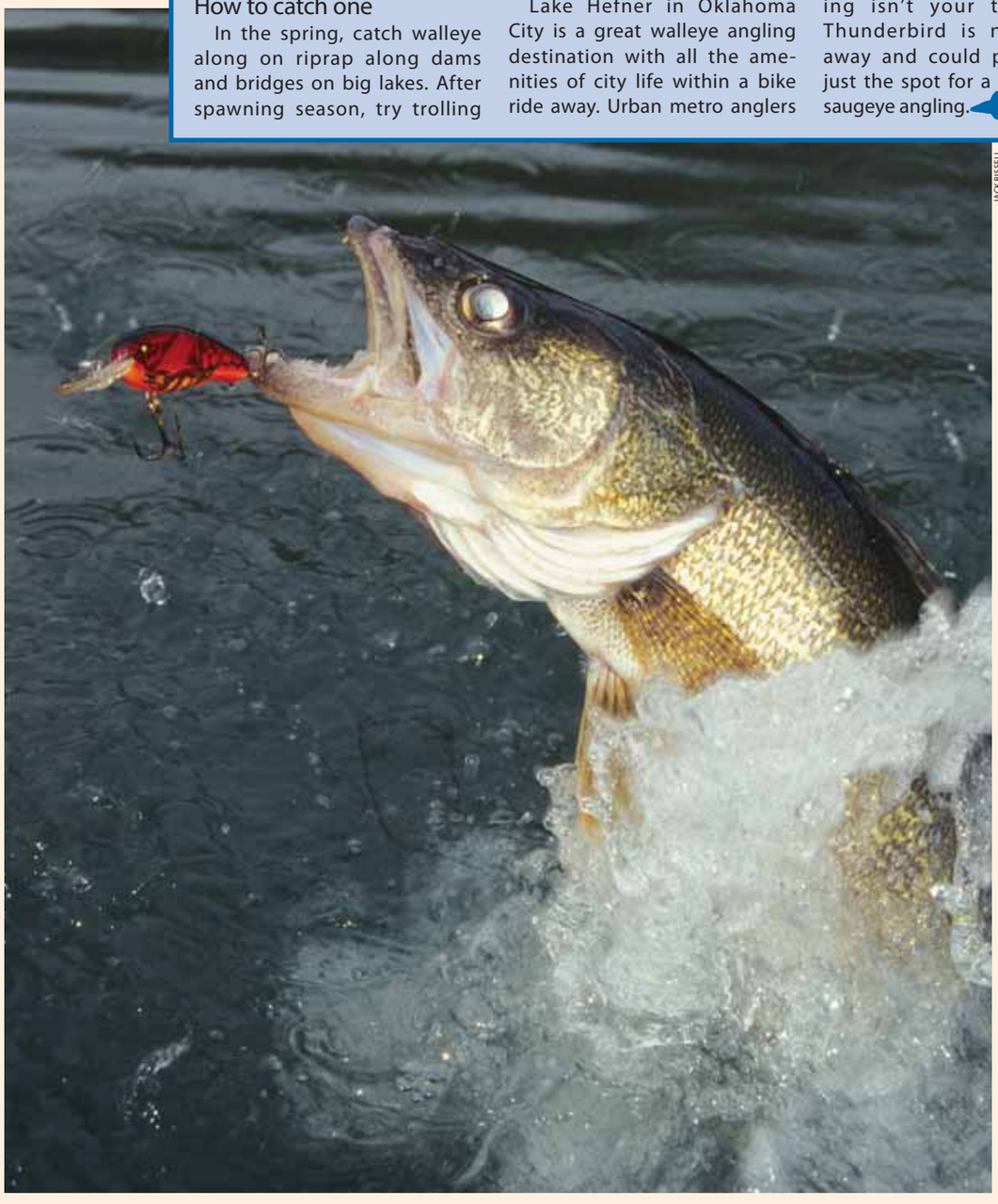
In the spring, catch walleye along on riprap along dams and bridges on big lakes. After spawning season, try trolling deep-diving crankbaits along shoreline drop-offs. Saugeye fishing techniques are easy to learn. A white chartreuse jig tipped with a worm and drifted across a rocky point is a good way to draw a strike from a saugeye. Early January to mid-February is a prime time for catching saugeye, but anglers still catch them throughout the year.

Destination walleye

Lake Hefner in Oklahoma City is a great walleye angling destination with all the amenities of city life within a bike ride away. Urban metro anglers can fish all day and be home in time for dinner, and out-of-towners have no shortage of places nearby to find gasoline, food and other entertainment. Numerous hotels are within a drive away as well, as are other big lakes, like Overholser, and local "Close to Home" fishing hotspots like Dolese Youth Park Pond and others.

Destination saugeye

If Lake Hefner walleye fishing isn't your thing, Lake Thunderbird is not too far away and could prove to be just the spot for a good day of saugeye angling.



JACK BISSELL

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Lake Record Fish Program to Recognize Oklahoma Anglers and Fish

Anglers who reel in a monster fish from select Oklahoma lakes could find themselves going in the record books, even if their fish is not a state record.

February 1 marked the kick-off of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's Lake Record Fish Program, which recognizes anglers who catch a fish that qualifies as a record setter for the reservoir in which it was caught. Thirteen major lakes and 13 species of popular Oklahoma fish are being included initially.

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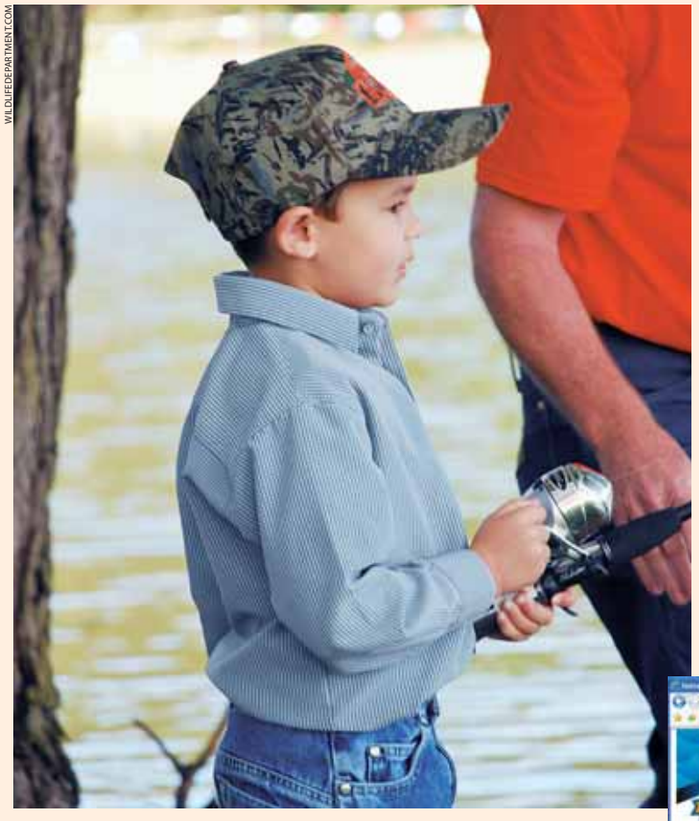

Anglers across Oklahoma have a chance to get in the record books with the new Lake Record Fish Program.

The new program is one of the most exciting things to come along in the fisheries division of the Wildlife Department in quite some time. Not only is it a great way to recognize anglers, big fish and even the lakes that produce them, but it's an outstanding way to generate even more interest in fishing statewide.

Though the program was established as a way to serve anglers and recognize significant fish, there is a fisheries management benefit to the program as well in that it will serve as an indicator of trophy fish production in state lakes.

The program has room to grow, but lakes initially enrolled in the lake records program are all over 500 acres and include Arbuckle, Broken Bow, Canton, Eufaula, Ft. Cobb, Grand, Kaw, Keystone, Sardis, Skiatook, Tenkiller, Texoma and Thunderbird.

Anglers who catch a potential record from a participating lake should contact designated business locations around the lake that are enrolled as lake record keepers, or vendors. The lake record keeper may then enter the fish into an automated database via the Internet.

Once it has been determined that an angler has landed a record fish, the media is notified and the public will be able to view information about the catch on the Wildlife Department's Web site at wildlifedepartment.com.

Anyone interested will be able to use an easily-operated search feature through the Wildlife Department's Web site to view all kinds of interesting record fish information, ranging from the size of record fish caught to what kind of bait or rod and reel was used to catch them.

All past and current state record fish are registered in the Lake Record Fish Program as records for their respective lakes.

Species eligible for spots in the lake records book include blue, channel and flathead catfish and largemouth, smallmouth and spotted bass in addition to crappie, paddlefish, striped bass, striped bass hybrids, sunfish (combined) walleye/saugeye and white bass. Minimum weights are set for each species included to avoid a rush of potential yet easily broken records early in the program's inception.

For more information about the new Lake Record Fish Program or for contact information for lake record keepers, log on to wildlifedepartment.com.

The Wildlife Department's Web site at wildlifedepartment.com contains an extensive search engine that lets you see all kinds of record information about fish caught across the state.

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White Bass

If the word "exodus" comes to mind when you think of fishing, you are probably a white bass angler. In late march and April, "sandies" migrate into upper-lake tributaries, often in very large numbers; so large that anglers who go fishing on just the right day may wear out their arms reeling in fish after fish.

White bass, also called sand bass, are aggressive feeders and are found in many larger lakes. Their annual migration draws anglers to the banks of tributaries and feeder creeks at most major reservoirs. Jigs, spinners and minnows are top bait choices during these river runs.

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

Found in lakes and rivers throughout the state, White bass are among 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) lakes.

White Bass Angling at a Glance

What's for dinner?

Jigs, spinners and minnows are top bait choices in the spring. As summer arrives, add topwater plugs to the mix.

How to catch one

Be ready to hit the water on a day or two's notice in the springtime. When water rises after a rain combined with temperatures in the lower 50s, get ready for some white bass action.

Destination White Bass

An angler in the know can watch the Wildlife Department's weekly fishing reports for the first signs of sand bass runs in the warmer, southern half of Oklahoma, particularly at the upper Mountain Fork above Broken Bow Lake, then follow the action north across the state as temperatures warm.

Hot locations can include any waters that hold white bass statewide. Watch the weekly fishing report for the hottest destinations in the spring.

White Bass Stocking, 2007

White bass were stocked in Bonham Pond and Great Salt Plains.

White bass are famed for their annual spawning runs, during which anglers can often catch fish until their arms are worn out.

2007 White Bass: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 12 Inches or Over	Rating
Arbuckle	1.5	51	Excellent
Arcadia	2.0	3	Above Average
Canton	2.5	20	Average
Chimney Rock	0.6	0	Below Average
Foss	1.9	42	Above Average
Fort Supply	2.0	33	Above Average
Grand Lake	2.1	68	Excellent
Greenleaf	0.7	0	Below Average
Hefner	0.8	29	Average
Holdenville	1.5	83	Above Average
Hugo	2.2	1	Average
Kaw	2.7	16	Above Average
Okmulgee	1.6	29	Average
Overholser	3.2	9	Above Average
Pine Creek	2.7	92	Excellent
Shawnee Twin #1	1.6	45	Excellent
Shawnee Twin #2	1.9	51	Excellent
Shell Creek	2.3	50	Above Average
Sooner	1.0	27	Above Average
Waurika	1.0	29	Average
Weleetka	1.6	50	Above Average
Webbers Falls	1.3	33	Average

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Striped Bass and Striped Bass Hybrids

They have been called line-strippers, gear burners and tack-lebusters, but no matter what word you use to refer to striped bass and striped bass hybrids, all will agree on one thing. They are formidable fighters. Not only so, but they offer anglers some of the most exciting and readily available fishing action in the Oklahoma.

Known for their outstanding fighting abilities, striped bass are long-lived and fast growing. 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.

Striped bass are available in several state waters, and when you cross this true bass Atlantic Ocean native with the Oklahoma native white bass in hatchery laboratories, you get another favorite sport fish—the striped bass hybrid. Long, sleek and slender, they feed in schools and often travel long distances following shad, their main staple.

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

For good lake fishing, try live shad, topwater plugs, slabs, spoons and jigs as your choice of bait. Fishing for hybrids and stripers can also be good below dams. Anglers often use surf fishing tackle to cast heavy lures and line for long distances. Fishing is best during periods of heavy flow.

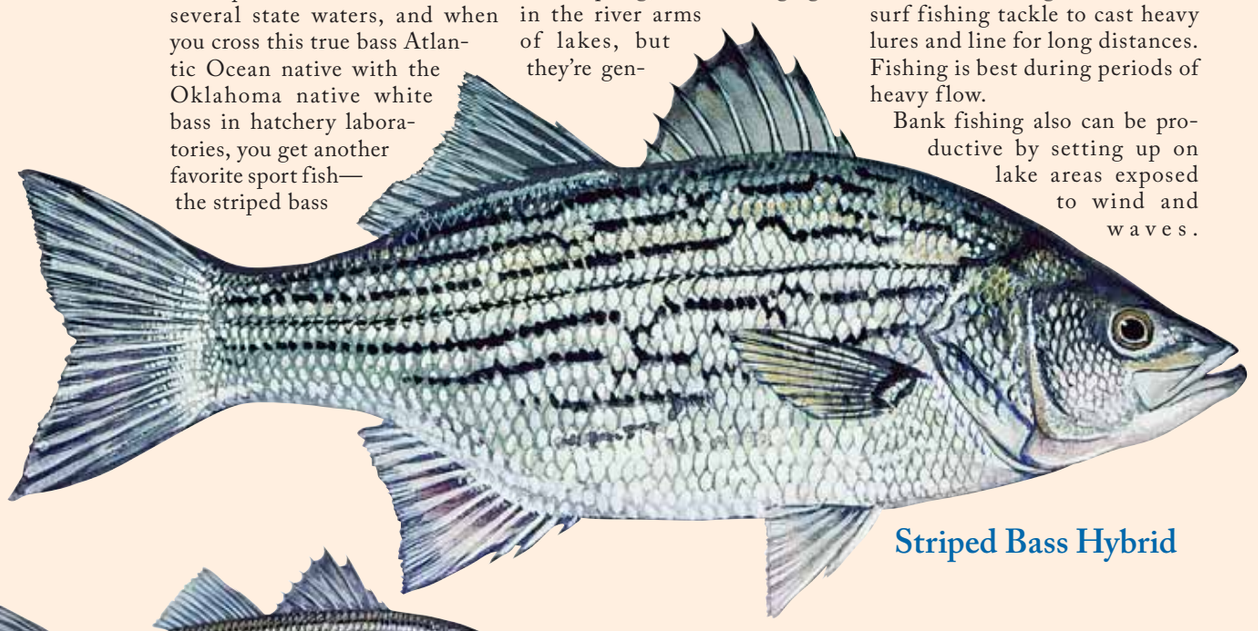
Bank fishing also can be productive by setting up on lake areas exposed to wind and waves.

2007 Striped Bass: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 28 Inches or Over	Rating
Sooner	0.4	0	Below Average
Texoma	16	2	Average
Webbers Falls	5.3	0	Below Average

2007 Hybrid Striped Bass: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 15 Inches or Over	Rating
Canton	8.8	57	Excellent
Foss	4.9	100	Excellent
Grand Lake	1.1	0	Below Average
Kaw	9.0	46	Above Average
Overholser	3.5	18	Above Average
Sooner	2.6	46	Above Average
Waurika	4.7	63	Excellent



Striped Bass Hybrid

Striped Bass

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

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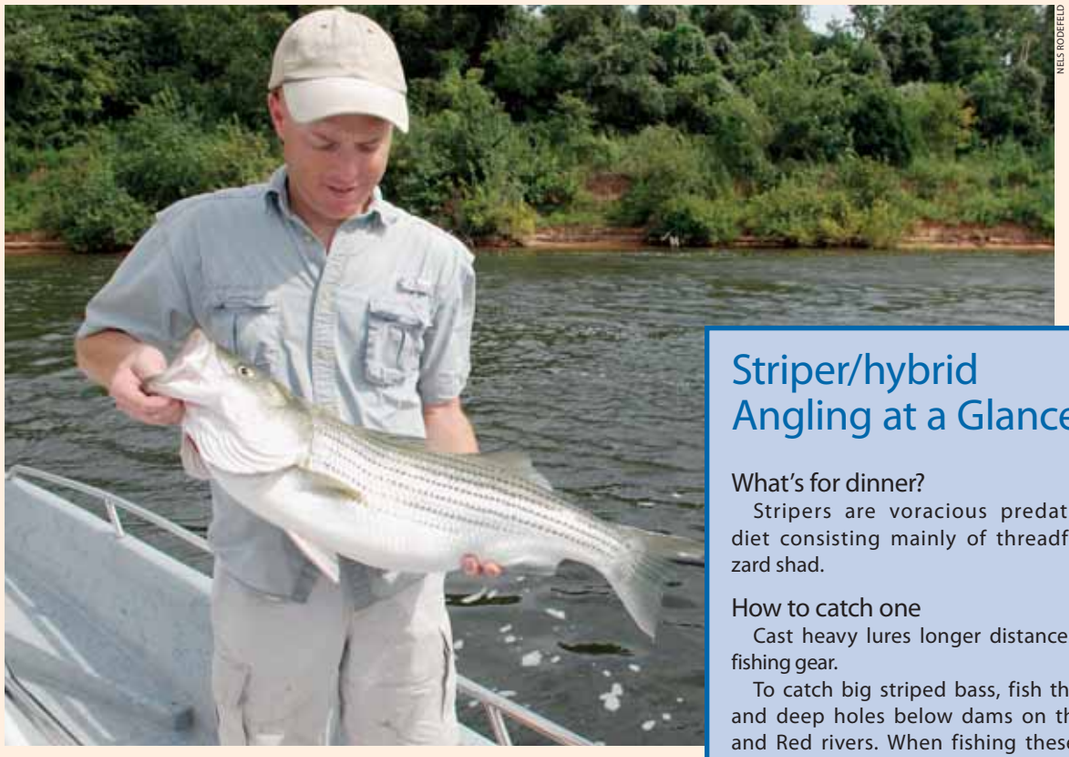


NELS RODDEFELD

Few fish bring to mind hard-fighting action like the striped bass.

Points and flats are the obvious choices. Food carried by wind currents attracts plenty of stripers, not to mention other favorite fish species as well.

Striped Bass Stocking, 2007

Striped bass were stocked in Canton, Foss, Kaw, Keystone and Sooner.

Hybrid Striped Bass Stocking, 2007

Hybrid striped bass were stocked in Altus Lugert, Birch, Canton, Carl Blackwell, Fort Cobb, Foss, Grand, Kaw, Konawa, Oklahoma River, Oologah, Overholser, Ponca City Lake, Skiatook, Sooner, Tom Steed and Waurika.

Reciprocal Hybrid Striped Bass Stocking, 2007

Reciprocal hybrid striped bass were stocked in Kaw, Oologah and Sahoma.

Striper/hybrid Angling at a Glance

What's for dinner?

Stripers are voracious predators with a diet consisting mainly of threadfin and gizzard shad.

How to catch one

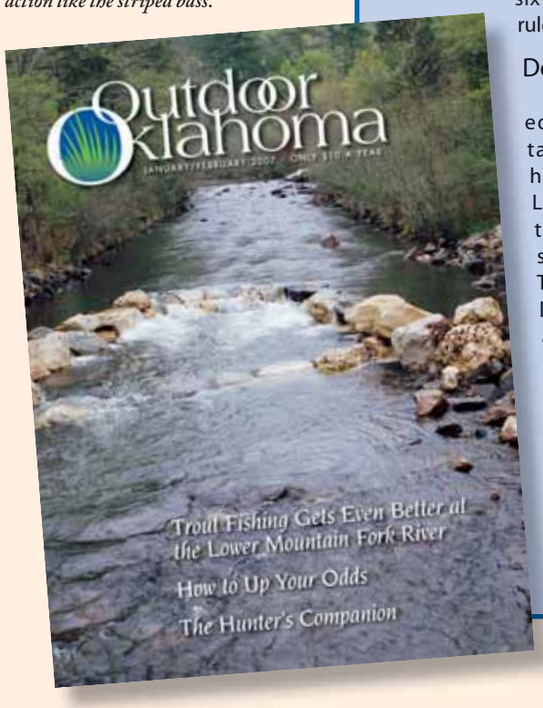
Cast heavy lures longer distances using surf fishing gear.

To catch big striped bass, fish 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. And don't rule out casting from the bank.

Destination trophy fish

It's been recommended before, but it's hard to talk striper fishing in Oklahoma without reference to Lake Texoma in south central Oklahoma. Forming a stretch of the Oklahoma-Texas border, the lake is located along the Red River and has earned it's place in the ranks of national trophy angling hotspots.

Texoma is home to over 100 guides equipped for both amateur and experienced anglers. Log on to sixoldgeezers.com for all the guide information you'll ever need.



Catch 'em all year long

For more on striper fishing at Lake Texoma, check out *Outdoor Oklahoma* field reporter Steve Burge's article "Texoma Stripers All Year Long" in the January/February 2007 issue.

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Catfish

There are plenty of other fast-hitting, hard-fighting, exciting fish to catch, but something about catfish makes them truly unique and just plain fun to catch, whether you're a nighttime bank fisherman or a thrill-seeking noodler.

Channel cats, blues and flatheads all live in Oklahoma's waters, and all of them are favorites of anglers looking for a good fighting fish on the end of their line.

Channel catfish bite just about anything anytime, and you can reel one in from just about any lake, pond or river in Oklahoma.

You can catch blue catfish throughout winter when fishing for other species slows down, as they tend to stay active even in the colder months. Rain and runoff entering waterways stimulates blues in the winter as much as in the spring and fall. During summer, however, big blues suspend over deep, cool water and feed primarily at night.

Noodlers, or anglers who fish with nothing but their bare hands, often favor flathead catfish, and during May and June, flatheads head for cover in shallow waters, where they make their spawning nests. Noodlers know this is an excellent time to score on a nice catfish.

Catfish are highly specialized predators, feeding primarily by taste and touch (with their whiskers). They grow 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.

2007 Channel Catfish: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 22 Inches or Over	Rating
Arbuckle	7.0	18	Above Average
Arcadia	5.0	2	Above Average
Canton	6.7	20	Above Average
Chimney Rock	0.3	0	Below Average
Foss	6.4	38	Above Average
Fort Supply	6.3	9	Average
Grand Lake	4.1	2	Above Average
Greenleaf	6.5	59	Above Average
Great Salt Plains	0.2	0	Below Average
Hefner	5.3	9	Average
Holdenville	3.3	0	Above Average
Hugo	1.5	0	Average
Kaw	6.4	24	Average
McMurtry	3.8	3	Above Average
Okmulgee	1.7	0	Average
Overholser	4.8	3	Above Average
Pine Creek	5.8	16	Above Average
Shawnee Twin #1	1.8	0	Average
Shawnee Twin #2	2.5	0	Average
Shell Creek	3.5	18	Average
Sooner	2.8	0	Average
Waurika	2.7	0	Average
Weleetka	8.9	22	Above Average
Wetumka	2.2	0	Above Average
Webbers Falls	5.6	4	Above Average

Channel Catfish Stocking, 2007

Channel catfish were stocked in 33rd Street Pond, Adair State Park, Adams, Altus City, Alva City Hatfield Park, American Horse, Arcadia Lake, Bartlesville-Lowe, Beaver State Park, Bittern, Black Kettle, Blue River, Boiling Springs, Boney Ridge USFS, Bonham Pond, Boswell State Park, Burtschi, Burtschi WMA Pond, C-48 USFS, Cameron Pond, Camp Minetonka Christian, Carlton, Carmen City, Carriage Hills, Cedar, Chambers, Cherokee Nation, Cherokee WMA, Choctaw Creek Park, Choctaw Park, Clayton, Clearview City, Connors Drug Ranch, Coon Creek, Crescent Park Pond, Crooked Branch, Crosslin Park Pond, Crystal Beach Lake, Crystal Lake, Cushing H S Pond, Dahl Pond, Dahlgren, Dale Zachary, Deer Creek Pond, Dolese Park Pond, Eagle Lake, Eagle Ridge Pond, Eastside Park, Edmond Hafer Park Pond, Edmond Mitch Park Pond, Edwards Park Pond, El Reno City, Elk City Kids, Elmer, Enid Gov't. Springs, Enid Meadow Lake, Etling, Fletcher Pond, Ft. Cobb, Ft. Gibson WMA, Ft. Sill, G Horany, Garden Ridge, Gentry Creek Pond, Geronomo Kids, Great Plains Vo-Tech, Great Salt Plains, Greenleaf Pond, Grove Park Pond, Guymon-Sunset, Hall, Haskell City, Heavener City Park Pond, Helen, Heritage Park Pond, Holdenville City, Honor Heights Park, Houston Pond, Hugo COE Pond, Hugo Kids Pond, Hunter Park/Kiowa, Hunter Park/Tulsa, Hunter Pool, James Collins WMA, Jap Beaver, Keystone St. Kids, Kids Fish Out, Kids Lake North, Kulli USFS, Lafortune Park, Larry Lake, Lawtonka, Leake Park Pond, Lexington WMA, Liberty, Lotus, Maple Park, Marland Mansion, Martin Landing, McAlester AAP, Mekusukey Mission Pond, Metcalf, Miami School Pond, Midway USFS, Minor Twins, Minshall Park Pond, Moore HS Pond, Moore Little River Park North, MS-6, Muldrow City Ponds, Mustang Creek Elementary, Nanih Waiya, Natural Falls State Park, Nichols Park, Okemah City, Okmulgee, Okmulgee Kiddie #1, Okmulgee Kiddie #2, Osage, Owen Park, Ozzie Cobb, Park Lane, Pawhuska Country Club, Pintail, Ponca City Lake Pond, Porum, Purcell City, Raymond Gary, Rockwell, Route 66 Park Pond A, Route 66 Park Pond B, Route 66 Park Pond C, Sayre Kids Pond, Schooler, Senior Center Pond-Yukon, Shale Pit Pond, Shawnee #1, Shawnee #2, Shawnee Clinic Pond, Skipout, Skyline Pond, Soldier Creek, Spaulding, Spring Creek, Standing Bear Pond, Stanley Draper, State Vet Hospital, Stigler Golf Course, Sultan Park, Sutton Wilderness Area, Taft, Tahlihina Vet Pond, Teal Lake USFS,

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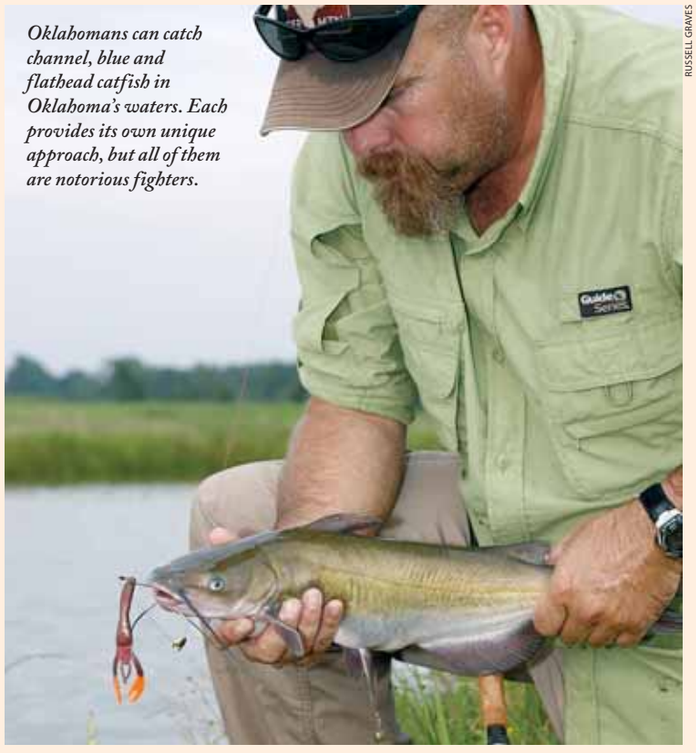

Oklahomans can catch channel, blue and flathead catfish in Oklahoma's waters. Each provides its own unique approach, but all of them are notorious fighters.

RUSSELL GRAVES

Temple City, Tenkiller State Park, Tom Steed, Tucker Lake, United Methodist Childrens Home, Vanderwork, Vian City, Vincent, Watonga, Wayne Wallace, Weleetka, Welsh Park, Wetumka, Wildhorse Park, Willow Pond, Wintersmith Park, Woodward Ag. Ex. Lake, Yukon Mulvey's Pond and Zoo Lake.

Blue Catfish Stocking 2007

Blue Catfish were stocked in Canton and Foss.

2007 Blue Catfish: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 26 Inches or Over	Rating
Arcadia	14	1	Average
Chimney Rock	1.6	0	Below Average
Grand Lake	6.4	4	Below Average
Hefner	12	0	Below Average
Holdenville	0.9	0	Below Average
Hugo	7.5	1	Above Average
Kaw	13	5	Above Average
Okmulgee	7.5	20	Average
Overholser	11	50	Above Average
Shawnee Twin #1	14	18	Average
Shawnee Twin #2	14	7	Below Average
Sooner	21	50	Above Average
Waurika	3.0	0	Above Average
Webbers Falls	12	1	Above Average

2007 Flathead Catfish: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 20 Inches or Over	Rating
Chimney Rock	7.9	100	Above Average
Greenleaf	11	75	Above Average
Kaw	5.0	50	Above Average
Pine Creek	7.5	60	Above Average
Waurika	10	75	Above Average
Webbers Falls	14	75	Above Average

Catfish Angling at a Glance

What's for dinner?

Worms, crayfish, prepared baits and cut shad work well for channel cats. Try live bait for blue and flathead catfish.

How to catch one

Many methods work for catfish, whether it's bank fishing with a bobber and baited hook, dropping a cane pole into a river near submerged logs or even baiting limblines, juglines and trotlines. Refer to the current "Oklahoma Fishing Guide" for regulations.

Destination catfish

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 opportunity to catch walleye, largemouth bass and crappie and striped bass hybrids.

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

ERIC ENGBRETSON

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Crappie

One great thing about crappie fishing is that anyone can learn to do it, from children to first-timers to even the most experienced anglers. They are easily found in waters all over the state, and for the most part, a rod and reel with a handful of small jigs will have you catching more crappie than you can eat.

There are two species of crappie in Oklahoma — white and black crappie. They look similar, but the white crappie is much more common and widely distributed. With a little knowledge, it's not hard to tell them apart. See Figure 1 for some dead giveaways when it comes to telling the difference between the two.

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, this is a prime time for catching crappie. But don't rule out wintertime angling, either.

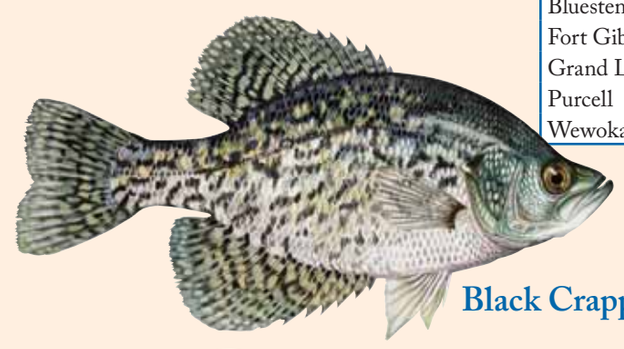
Since crappie usually spawn in or near woody cover, the best fishing will occur near timber.

2007 White Crappie: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 10 Inches or Over	Rating
Arbuckle	1.7	68	Above Average
Arcadia	1.7	7	Above Average
Canton	1.4	78	Above Average
Chimney Rock	0.8	25	Average
Foss	0.9	43	Average
Fort Supply	1.3	26	Excellent
Greenleaf	2.2	25	Excellent
Great Salt Plains	0.2	0	Below Average
Hefner	0.4	0	Average
Holdenville	1.7	1	Average
Hugo	2.2	30	Excellent
Kaw	1.6	10	Above Average
McMurtry	1.6	8	Above Average
Okmulgee	1.1	21	Average
Overholser	0.9	10	Average
Pine Creek	1.9	21	Above Average
Shawnee Twin #1	0.9	29	Average
Shawnee Twin #2	1.0	21	Average
Shell Creek	0.8	1	Average
Sooner	0.8	20	Average
Waurika	1.9	35	Above Average
Weleetka	0.3	0	Average
Wetumka	1.0	6	Average
Webbers Falls	1.9	50	Above Average

2007 White Crappie: Trapnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 10 Inches or Over	Rating
Bluestem	1.4	45	Average
Fort Gibson	2.0	30	Average
Grand Lake	1.5	20	Average
Purcell	2.4	1	Average
Wewoka	1.6	1	Average



Black Crappie

White Crappie

Figure 1. Crappie ID 101

Harvest limits are the same for both black and white crappie, but a well-educated angler takes the time to learn about his quarry. So how does one tell a black crappie from a white crappie? The most distinguishing characteristics include the patterning of the fish as well as the dorsal fin. The white crappie has distinct vertical bands of blue/gray spots and five or six spines in its dorsal fin, while the black crappie has a sporadic, indistinguishable pattern of black spots and seven or eight spines in its dorsal fin.

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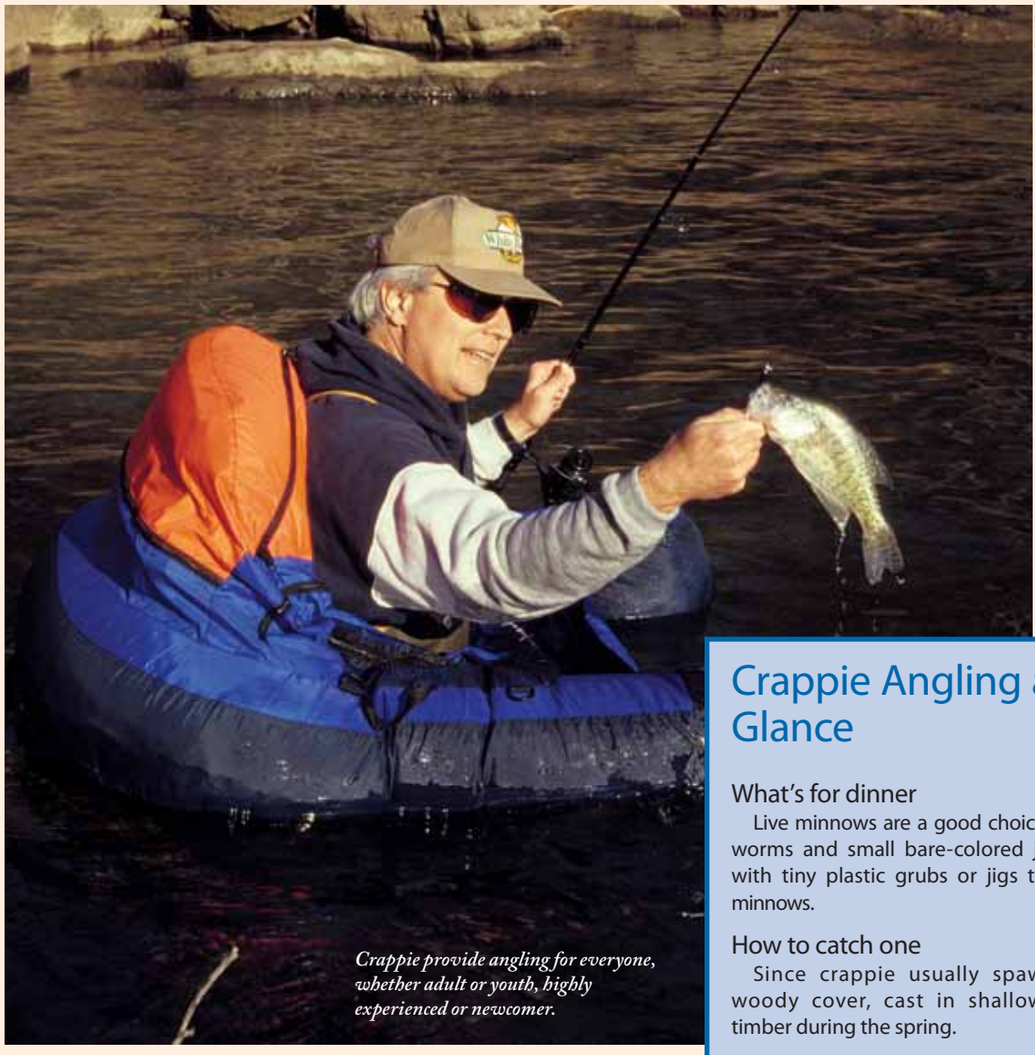

JACK RUSSELL

Crappie provide angling for everyone, whether adult or youth, highly experienced or newcomer.

2007 Black Crappie: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 10 Inches or Over	Rating
Arbuckle	1.2	71	Above Average
Chimney Rock	1.4	100	Above Average
Greenleaf	0.7	25	Average
Holdenville	0.3	0	Below Average
Kaw	0.1	0	Below Average
Shell Creek	0.1	0	Below Average
Waurika	0.0	0	Below Average
Webbers Falls	0.4	0	Below Average

2007 Black Crappie: Trapnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 10 Inches or Over	Rating
Fort Gibson	1.7	7	Below Average
Grand Lake	1.0	40	Average

Crappie Angling at a Glance

What's for dinner

Live minnows are a good choice for bait, as are worms and small bare-colored jigs, jigs tipped with tiny plastic grubs or jigs tipped with live minnows.

How to catch one

Since crappie usually spawn in or near woody cover, cast in shallow waters near timber during the spring.

Destination crappie

Crappie can be found in most every Oklahoma lake, but for good numbers of eating-size crappie, try McGee Creek Lake near Atoka. Pine-covered mountains and breathtaking scenery provide the setting for what could be the crappie fishing trip you've been looking for. The structure-rich area in the shallow waters of the lake's north end is a good place to start.

If Atoka is too far of a drive, head north toward Ponca City to fish Kaw Lake, well-known as a good year-round crappie angling haven. You'll find standing timber near Beaver Creek as well as riprap near the Kaw City and Washunga bridges that should be worth your time when crappie fishing.

Those in the central part of the state shouldn't rule out a quick trip to Arcadia or Canton lakes for crappie action, either. Travelers will find plenty of lodging, camping and amenities in both areas.

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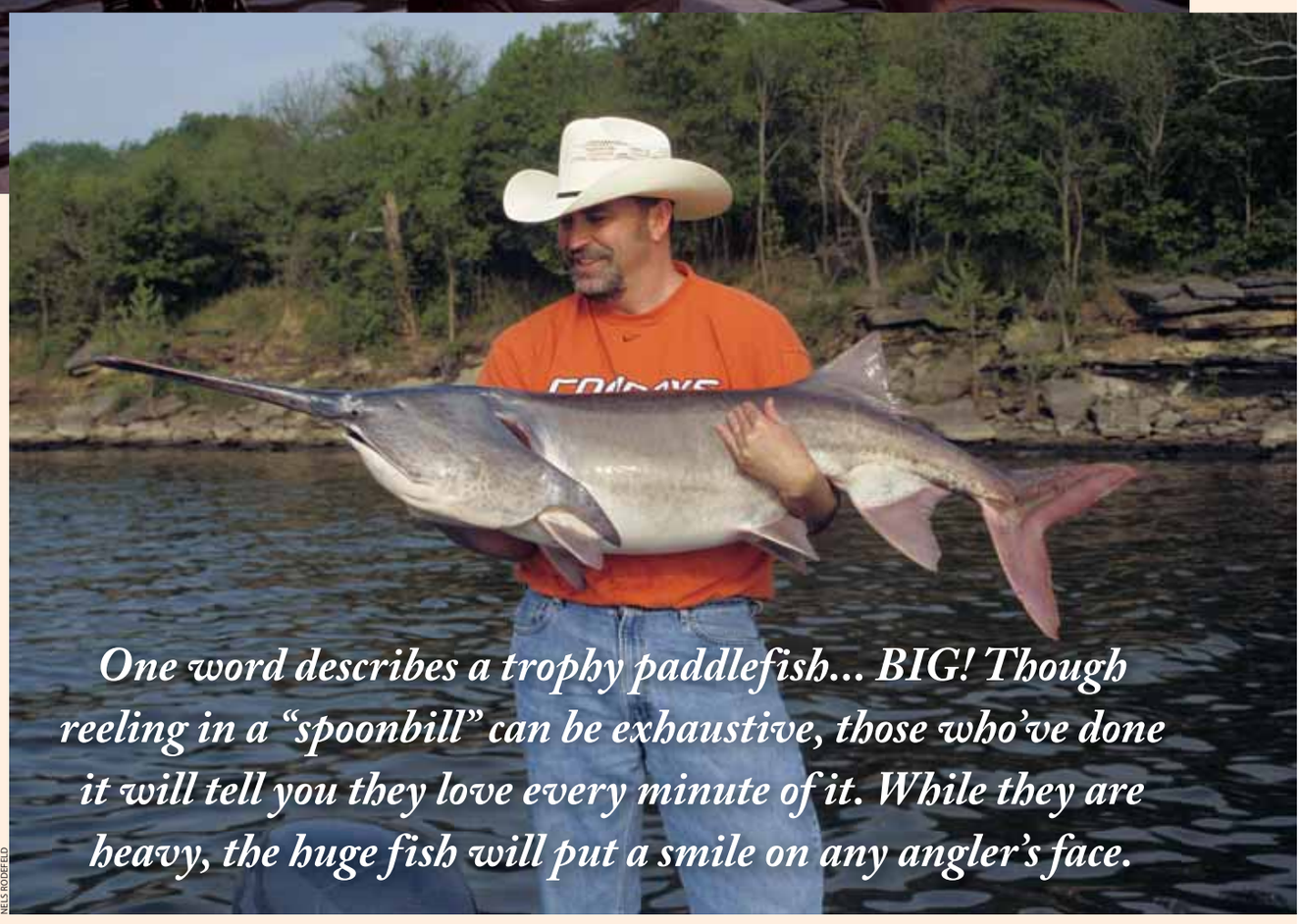
NELS RODDEFELD



One word describes a trophy paddlefish... BIG! Though reeling in a "spoonbill" can be exhaustive, those who've done it will tell you they love every minute of it. While they are heavy, the huge fish will put a smile on any angler's face.

NELS RODDEFELD

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Wildlife Department Creates Pilot Paddlefish Management Program

Paddlefish are one of the most unique fish in Oklahoma. They can live up to 30-35 years, but females take eight to 10 years to mature. That means it takes time to see management results.

Enter the Wildlife Department's new pilot paddlefish research program, which you read a little about in the January/February '08 issue of Outdoor Oklahoma.

The pilot program, established near the Twin Bridges area of the Neosho River, will play an important role in paddlefish management. The primary functions of the paddlefish research center will be collecting important data for the Department's paddlefish management plan, processing paddlefish meat for anglers and salvaging paddlefish eggs.

The Department's paddlefish management program has involved an extensive process of netting, weighing, measuring and marking paddlefish with metal tags on the front of the jaw before releasing them to be caught by anglers by way of snagging. Anglers who snag a tagged paddlefish are encouraged to report their catch to the Wildlife Department to not only help in the management of paddlefish in Oklahoma, but also to provide anglers with unique information about the individual fish they caught.

The center will be open during paddlefish snagging season, and anglers will be able to bring their catch to the center for cleaning and processing. They will take home meat from their own fish that has been safely cleaned and packaged.

The paddlefish research center will be seasonally staffed by employees trained in proper handling and processing of fish products, and other research centers may be set up at future locations. Wildlife Department personnel will be available to offer the latest paddlefishing information to anglers as well as to offer a pick-up service to anglers who have caught a paddlefish and want to send it to the research center.

The Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission also approved a rule change that will require anglers to obtain a free paddlefish permit before fishing for paddlefish in Oklahoma. Each angler that obtains the permit will be assigned a number that must be attached to all paddlefish that are caught and kept. The permit system will provide clearer information about paddlefish anglers and help better manage paddlefish populations.

The free permits will also make the paddlefish tagging process easier for anglers. Previously, anglers had to tag their paddlefish with personal information, including their first and last name, address and fishing license number. Now anglers are simply required to attach their paddlefish permit number to the fish. The permit is annual, and the permit number can be used on every paddlefish tagged during that period.

Paddlefish were around during the Jurassic Period, but Oklahoma anglers can still catch them all day long in several locations across Oklahoma. This year, paddlefish anglers will enjoy a new service designed just for them and the fish they catch through the Wildlife Department's Paddlefish Research Center.

BILL LINDNER

Paddlefish Angling at a Glance

What's for Dinner?

Paddlefish eat microscopic organisms called zooplankton.

How to Catch One

Catching a paddlefish is a little different than traditional angling, in which you use a lure and entice a fish to strike the bait. Paddlefish are caught using a method called "snagging," in which a stout surf rod, heavy test line, and a large, barbless treble hook are used to hook the monster fish during their annual spring spawning runs.

Destination Paddlefish

In addition to the Neosho River, top paddlefish angling locations include the Kaw Lake tailwaters, Ft. Gibson Lake and Oologah Lake.

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