

RussellGraves

# 2009 Angler's Guide

The ever-celebrated bobber, "cork," is a staple for every angler and a icon for the sport of fishing. Teach a kid to catch sunfish using a simple bobber and hook baited with worms, and you may just have an angler "hooked" for life.

**F**ishing has pretty much always been a part of my life. Growing up, I can remember reeling in everything from sunfish and catfish to crappie and black bass and never giving a second thought as to how the fish ended up in my angling hotspots. I didn't think about terms such as "management," "gillnetting surveys," "stocking," "electrofishing," and so on. As a youngster, I just fished. Give me a pole, bobber, sinker, hook and a box of worms, and I'd figure out the rest. Fishing was simply about having a good time.

But little did I know just how much time and effort was invested by others in order for me to have such memories of fishing just for the fun of it. I didn't know anything about the research, surveys and stocking efforts by the Wildlife Department. I didn't know money spent on fishing licenses and certain angling gear went back into the resource and was, over time, contributing to my future in the sport of fishing. I also didn't realize the significance of the investment that people like my dad and granddad were making in my future by taking me fishing.

I was just a kid that liked to fish. And I hope that you, too, had such experiences in your youth. But even more important now is the opportunity to give today's youngsters and newcomers the opportunity to just be kids that like to fish. As they learn to appreciate the sport, they also will learn what you and I have learned — that it takes effort, careful planning, sound management and participation from both anglers and the Wildlife Department to make angling the great sport that it is in our state.

Use the pages that follow as a guide to help you make a youngster's day. Take someone fishing and show them the ins and outs of catching fish in your favorite spot. Share the memory so that one day, they too will be conservationists with a well-rounded view of the big picture — the big picture that reminds us that fishing is about experiences, creating memories and, well, just having a good time, while at the same time making wise use of our well-conserved natural resources.

With that, we give you the "2009 Annual Angler's Guide."

—Michael Bergin, associate editor

Unless otherwise noted, species-specific artists renderings are provided by Duane Rave/USFWS.

### Summary of Species Stocked January Through December 2008

Public Waters	
Bluegill	125,228
Brown Trout	18,484
Certified Florida Largemouth Bass	125,087
Channel Catfish	553,121
Gambusia	43
Grass Carp	190
Green Sunfish	320
Hybrid Striped Bass	964,490
Hybrid Sunfish	49,090
Longear Sunfish	65
Northern Largemouth Bass	95,324
Orange Spotted Sunfish	419
Paddlefish	8,856
Rainbow Trout	367,062
Reciprocal Hybrid Striped Bass	318,033
Redear Sunfish	72
Saugeye	820,203
Striped Bass	847,005
Walleye	10,393,961
White Bass	31
<b>Total Stocked in Public Waters</b>	<b>14,687,084</b>
Fry Stocked	10,928,000
Fingerlings Stocked	3,097,600
Subadults Stocked	222,744
Adults Stocked	1,069
Catchables Stocked	407,672
Private Farm Ponds	
Bluegill	472,365
Channel Catfish	90,863
Largemouth Bass	143,941
<b>Total Stocked in Private Farm Ponds</b>	<b>707,169</b>
<b>Grand Total Stocked in 2008</b>	<b>15,394,253</b>



Russell Graves

*Sunfish angling is an easy way to enjoy any method of fishing, such as flyfishing from a tube or even just standing on the bank with a spincast line baited with worms.*



# Sunfish

Catching sunfish is one the simplest types of fishing Oklahoma offers. There's no telling how many sunfish have been reeled in from Oklahoma's waters. But the good thing is they are fun to catch and great to eat.

Youngsters often learn the sport of angling just by casting a line into a creek, pond or lake full of sunfish because basic angling techniques can be honed and mastered in this way. A pole set up with a bobber, sinker and baited hook is all that is

needed to catch bluegill, redear and green sunfish all year long, but that's all it takes to discover the lifelong hobby of fishing.

Spawning sunfish are usually caught during May and June by casting a line along shallow shorelines. Worms, minnows, grasshoppers and other live bait or small jigs are always a sure bet.

Weedbeds are also ideal habitat for really big bluegill and redear sunfish. Small minnows during the spawning season work well in the weeds, but slip-bobber rigs can be used later in the year to fish deeper waters.

The early morning and late evenings are great times to fish for sunfish, because this marks the peak activity for these fish. Sunfish are often active throughout the day, though, so don't rule out other times of the day.

Anglers can catch sunfish almost anywhere in Oklahoma. You'll find abundant populations in any direction you travel. Close to Home Fishing locations offer great sunfish angling, as do most lakes, rivers, streams and creeks throughout the state.

## Hybrid Sunfish Stocking, 2008

Hybrid sunfish were stocked in Alva City Hatfield Park, Arcadia/ODWC N., Avard City, Bass Pro Kids Event, Big 5 Fishing Clinic, Dolese Park Pond, Edmond Hafer Park Pond, Edmond Mitch Park Pond, Edwards Parks Pond, Greenleaf Pond, Honor Heights Park, Lexington WMA, MAPS Wetland Pond Penn, MAPS Wetland Pond Walker N, MAPS Wetland Pond Walker S, Moore Little River Park N, Moore Little River Park S, Mustang Creek Elementary, OKC South Lake Park Pond West and Wildhorse Creek.

## Bluegill Stocking, 2008

Bluegill were stocked in Dolese Park Pond, OKC South Lake Park Pond West and Vincent.

## Green Sunfish Stocking, 2008

Green sunfish were stocked in Dolese Park Pond.

## Longear Sunfish Stocking 2008

Longear sunfish were stocked in Dolese Park Pond.

## Orange Spotted Sunfish Stocking 2008

Orange spotted sunfish were stocked in Dolese Park Pond.

## Redear Sunfish Stocking 2008

Redear sunfish were stocked in Dolese Park Pond.



Denver Bryan

# Destinations

## Where to Go and How to Catch One

If a creek or pond holds water, there's a good chance it offers some sunfish angling as well. Additionally, lakes, ponds and many city reservoirs offer good sunfish angling. You can catch sunfish in urban, metro and rural areas, so keep your eyes open near your home for fishing opportunities.

Some Oklahoma residents can speed up their search 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. The current "Oklahoma Fishing Guide" offers a complete list of these areas, and Tulsa anglers can log on to [wildlifedepartment.com/tulsafishing.htm](http://wildlifedepartment.com/tulsafishing.htm) for a list of locations near their home.

Sunfish will bite worms, minnows, grasshoppers, small jigs and almost any other bait. Shallow waters and weedbeds are good spots during the late spring and early summer. Later in the year, fish deeper waters using slip bobber rigs baited with live bait or small jigs.

*Though not as abundant in Oklahoma as the rainbow trout, brown trout have been introduced in Oklahoma's trout waters and lucky anglers might just reel one in.*

# Trout

**M**ore than one person have made their way to one of Oklahoma's designated trout areas for the first time just to see what it's all about, only to discover a new pastime.

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.

In Oklahoma, there are year-round trout fisheries at the Lower Mountain Fork River and at the Lower Illinois River. Winter-only fisheries exist at Lake Carl Etling, Lake Watonga, Lake Pawhuska, 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 throughout the season (from Nov. 1 to March 31) with catchable-sized rainbow trout.

Oklahoma also has a "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 "Oklahoma

Fishing Guide" before fishing for trout at Dolese. The Dolese Youth Park Pond trout season 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.

Stocking schedules are posted on the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's Web site at [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com). Trout are provided through generous donations from a local sponsor and BancFirst. BancFirst's donation is matched with Sport Fish Restoration dollars through the Wildlife Department to supply the trout for the popular local program.

## **Brown Trout Stocking, 2008**

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

## **Rainbow Trout Stocking, 2008**

Rainbow trout were stocked in Blue River, Dolese Park Pond, Etling, Fourche Maline River, Illinois River, Mountain Fork River, Pawhuska and Watonga.

# Destinations

## Where to Go and How to Catch One

Any one of the eight trout fisheries are sure to be winners, but because they are located across the state, you'll likely have one close to you. If you're near the Oklahoma City metro and only have a few hours, the Dolese Youth Park Pond is the place to go. Check out the current "Oklahoma Hunting Guide for season information. But if you've got some time to travel, you can then determine if you want to fish a lake or stream.

Lake Pawhuska is the Department's newest winter trout fishery and 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.

The Blue River Public Fishing and Hunting Area is another good bet, especially if you want to fish a stream. Bank and wading access is available throughout the area. Camping facilities are available at the Blue River Campground area, and special access is provided for handicapped persons confined to wheelchairs. For more information, call (580) 443-5728. For special regulations for the area, consult page 25 of the current "Oklahoma Fishing Guide."

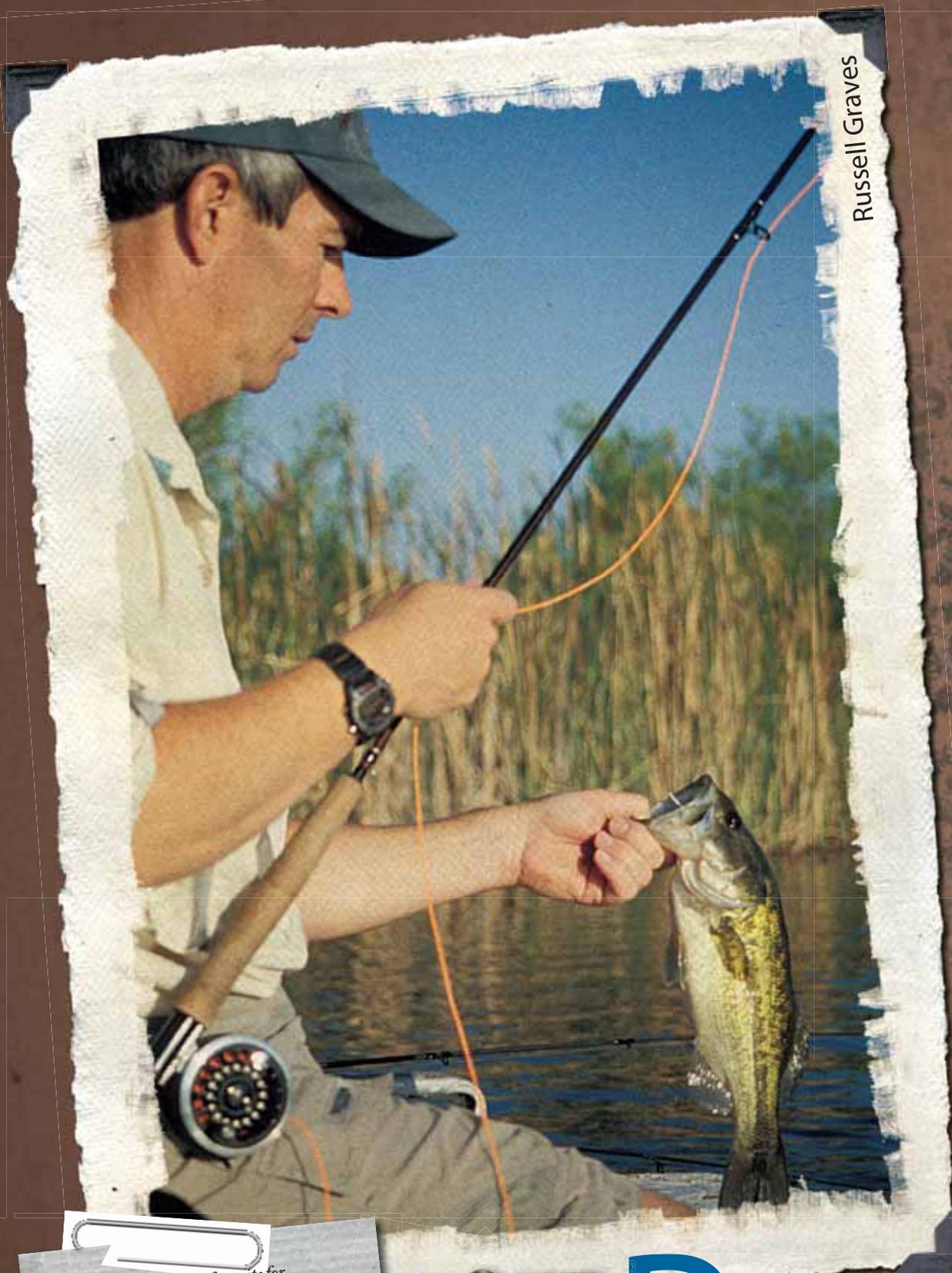
Beautiful lodging and camping also are available in southeast Oklahoma for anglers looking to give the Evening Hole or Lost Creek areas a try. These areas are part of the Lower Mountain Fork River year-round fishery. Beavers Bend State Park offers lodging and close access to other outdoor activities besides fishing. For more information about the park, log on to [beavers-bend.com](http://beavers-bend.com). For more information and regulations at the Lower Mountain Fork, consult page 28 of the current "Oklahoma Fishing Guide."

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, 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.

Four to six-pound test line and small hooks are recommended. Trout tend to seek out and congregate in calm waters. 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. Additionally, most rainbow trout in Oklahoma are raised in hatcheries and were fed a fish pellet diet high in fish oil before being stocked in state waters, so adding tuna fish, sardine or salmon oil to dough baits could increase your odds for success.



*Rainbow trout are stocked at state trout fisheries regularly throughout trout season. For up-to-date stocking schedules, log on to [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com).*



Russell Graves

Largemouth bass are a favorite for Oklahoma anglers. It's prowess as a predator makes it a challenging fish to catch and an exciting fish to hook.

# Bass



## Strategic Management that Works

Each of the three subspecies of black bass in Oklahoma have varying requirements for successful management. To offer the best bass fishing opportunities in terms of quality and quantity, the Wildlife Department developed its Black Bass Management Plan. It's a plan that makes managing Oklahoma's bass fishing waters more effective.

Some lakes are better at 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 a plan, on a site-by-site basis, that will help improve bass fisheries in Oklahoma.

Fisheries biologists use a variety of information to determine management recommendations, and some of the most important data comes from springtime electrofishing surveys. The surveys provide specific and overall numbers of fish, average fish size and abundance of forage in different lakes and other useful information.

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 can use this data to rate each lake in terms of quantity and quality and to develop plans for management. And anglers can use this data to improve the quality of their own fishing adventures.

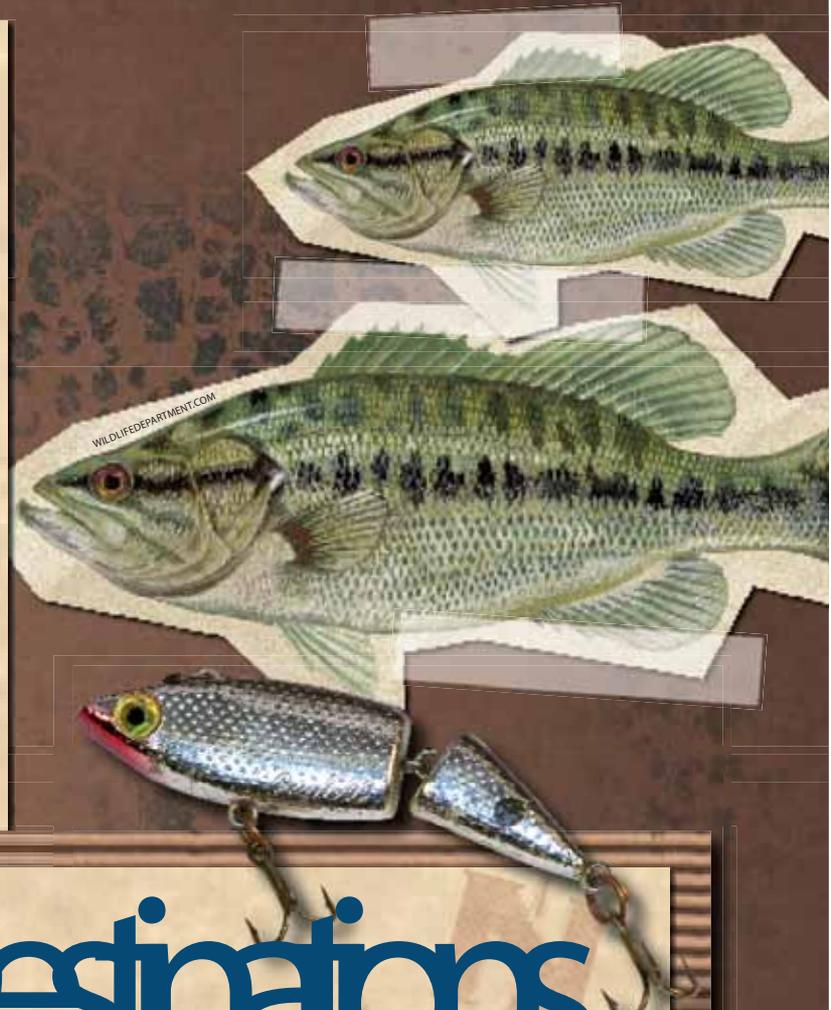
To make the Black Bass Management Plan work, both fish habitat and fish harvest must be managed properly. This is done through the regulations, such as slot limits, minimum size limits and modified bag limits. With these in place, the Wildlife Department helps provide the best fishing possible. However, the success that harvest regulations have on fisheries is dependent upon anglers making conscious decisions to accept and respect them.

### Florida Largemouth Bass Stocking, 2008

Florida largemouth bass were stocked in Cedar, Dripping Springs, G Horany, Holdenville City, Murray, Taft and Wayne Wallace.

### Northern Largemouth Bass Stocking, 2008

Northern largemouth bass were stocked in Atoka Reservoir, Bluestem/Atoka, Chimney Rock, Dolese Park Pond, Route 66 Park Pond A, Route 66 Park Pond B, Route 66 Park Pond C, Tinker AFB Ponds and Wes Watkins.



# Destinations

## Where to Go and How to Catch One

First, choose your favorite type of water to fish—large lakes, small ponds, rivers or streams—and you can at least narrow your options for where to go fishing for black bass. There are many options in every category. The Wildlife Department also offers bass fishing opportunities at a number of smaller state lakes, such as American Horse Lake near Geary. For big bass, try lakes like Arbuckle or Broken Bow, where record and near-record fish have been caught. Last year, angler Allen Gifford of Davis, landed a 14 lb., 8 oz., largemouth bass he caught Feb. 27 out of Arbuckle Lake that had a girth of nearly 23 inches, was over 25 inches long and fell just over three ounces shy of the state record that was landed from Broken Bow Lake in 1999.

Black bass diets can include a variety of other fish, crayfish, insects, frogs, lizards and more. Depending on the time of year, there is always something that a bass will hit. Maintain an assortment of jigs, spinners, surface lures, rattletraps, rubber worms, 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.

## Spotted bass length and daily limits eliminated for Oklahoma anglers

Slot limits, daily harvest limits and “catch and release” angling have long been important elements of developing good black bass fisheries, but a new regulation change for 2009 encourages anglers to keep and eat as many spotted bass as they can.

The new regulation is highlighted in the “2009 Oklahoma Fishing Guide,” a free, full-color publication of the Wildlife Department. The guide is available now at fishing and hunting license dealers across the state.

According to biologists with the Department, spotted bass populations in most reservoirs are overabundant and slow growing, seldom providing quality bass fishing and using forage that could be better utilized by the more desirable predators such as largemouth and smallmouth bass, striped bass hybrids and walleye/saugeye. Exempting spotted bass from length limits and increasing the daily limit is intended to encourage more harvest of these fish as well as reduce competition for forage among other predators, improve overall fishing quality and remind anglers that harvest is a necessary component of a healthy fishery.

Keith Thomas, fisheries biologist for the Wildlife Department, said the regulation change is a good thing for anglers looking to fill their stringer.

“Here’s a great opportunity for folks to load up the ice chest and have a great shore lunch or fish fry,” Thomas said. “These fish school in large numbers, so once you locate them you’ll usually catch a good mess of them just like you would while crappie fishing.”

Thomas said spotted bass may not be as big as some largemouth bass, but the fact that the statewide limit has been lifted except in a few certain areas means you can harvest more of them for the dinner table.

“To locate them, fish off of rocky points with steep drop offs,” Thomas said. “Use crayfish, minnows, small curly-tail grubs and small deep diving crankbaits.”

Thomas said the nicknames and even the scientific name for the fish — *Micropterus punctulatus* — lend some insight into distinguishing spotted bass from other black bass.

“Spotted bass are also called ‘Kentucky bass,’ ‘spots’ and ‘diamond bass,’” he said. “The scientific name translates to ‘small-finned and dotted.’ You can look at the belly scales and most will have a dark green or black spot. Smallmouth bass and largemouth bass will have very few or no spots.”

For legal identification purposes, a spotted bass is any black bass, except for smallmouth, having a rough tongue patch.

Thomas’ advice to anglers is simple.

“Anglers, help improve fishing at your favorite lake and harvest some spotted bass,” Thomas said.

The “2009 Oklahoma Fishing Guide” details special regulation areas where the regulation change may not apply. It also outlines other new regulation changes for 2009. In addition, it includes a full listing of all fishing regulations for Oklahoma as well as a wide range of fishing-related articles and other helpful information such as contacts for Department lakes, “Close to Home” fishing locations, game warden phone numbers, license fees and fish identification tips.

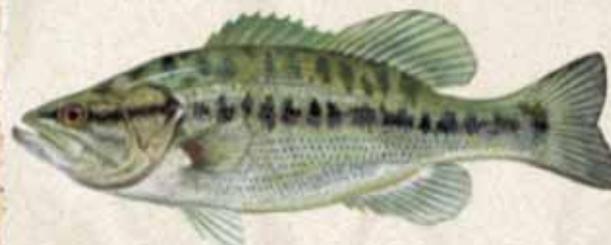
Anglers also can find the “2009 Oklahoma Fishing Guide” and buy fishing licenses online by logging on to [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com). The Web site provides a weekly fishing report where anglers can find out how some of the state’s most popular game



*Largemouth Bass*



*Smallmouth Bass*



*Spotted Bass*



*Largemouth  
Tongue*



*Smallmouth &  
Spotted Tongue*

*For legal identification purposes, a spotted bass is any black bass, except for smallmouth, having a rough tongue patch.*

fish are biting and what baits are working best at different fishing locations. Compiled by Wildlife Department personnel and independent reporters, the reports even include techniques and locations to increase angler success. The fishing report can be received weekly by e-mail, along with other wildlife news from the Department. To sign up for the free weekly e-mail, log on to [http://www.wildlifedepartment.com/wl\\_news.htm](http://www.wildlifedepartment.com/wl_news.htm).



Dave Maslowski

### 2008 Spring Electrofishing Bass Survey Results

Lake	Bass Abundance (# per Hour)	Bass Size (# over 14" per hour)	Heaviest Fish (pounds)
American Horse*	88.7	42.0	6.7
Arcadia	20.7	12.5	7.2
Ardmore City*	69.3	23.3	4.5
Cedar*	84.0	37.6	5.5
Chimney Rock*	71.0	19.7	5.6
Crooked Branch*	56.0	14.0	5.7
Dahlgren*	55.0	7.0	6.3
Draper	15.3	1.8	4.3
Elmer*	84.0	20.7	5.7
Elmore City*	100.0	5.3	1.6
Eufaula	88.1	14.9	5.6
Fuqua	46.4	12.4	6.0
Garrison Creek*	144.0	14.4	5.0
Grand	83.3	29.8	6.2
Hominy*	41.1	8.0	3.4
Jean Neustadt*	56.0	8.0	6.7
Lawtonka	75.4	22.5	10.0
Lone Chimney*	27.3	10.0	4.9
McMurtry	21.3	9.3	3.3
Muldrow City*	123.0	17.0	6.3
R.S. Kerr	30.3	11.7	4.3
Sallisaw*	123.3	4.0	6.0
Sardis	36.8	6.7	8.8
Sooner	82.4	47.3	7.8
Sportsman*	36.0	14.7	6.8
Taft	164.0	17.0	7.5
Thunderbird	16.2	9.3	9.0
Vanderwork*	64.7	36.0	7.8
Watonga*	33.3	16.0	8.4
Wes Watkins	40.9	15.3	5.8

\*Denotes lakes less than 1,000 acres

### Choosing a Bass Fishing Destination

The 2008 Spring Electrofishing Bass Survey Results table 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. So what does all this information mean to you? Well, it may be your source for finding your next favorite place to go bass fishing.

Many of the lakes surveyed are less than 1,000 acres, but their size is no indication of the number of fish they hold for anglers to catch. Lakes such as Garrison Creek, Elmore City, Sallisaw, Muldrow City and American Horse are small in size but produced some of the highest numbers in the survey. Larger lakes that produced high numbers in the survey include Taft, Eufaula and Grand.

Anything from weather to tackle can impact your success during a day of fishing, but the 2008 Spring Electrofishing Survey can provide you with a head start on planning a fishing trip that will fit your needs, whether you are looking for fast-paced, action-packed trip or a lazy, relaxing day with the family.

# Walleye & Saugeye

**W**alleye 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. They are mottled brown in color, and are well-liked on the dinner table.

March and April are prime walleye fishing months, as the fish tend to move onto rocky shorelines to spawn. 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, tail-water fishing can be productive.

The time to reel in saugeye is often best from mid-January 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, 2008

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

## Saugeye Stocking, 2008

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



*It's what's inside that counts. Though not hailed for their attractive looks, walleye are known to be tasty to eat and exciting to catch.*

### 2008 Walleye: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 20 Inches or Over	Rating
Altus Lugert	7.4	18	Above Average
Broken Bow	2.9	2	Average
Canton	3.7	8	Above Average
Stanley Draper	2.6	25	Average
Foss	3.9	7	Above Average
Fort Supply	2.8	4	Average
Kaw	6.2	67	Above Average
Murray	4.4	2	Average
Oologah	7.1	83	Above Average
Robert S. Kerr	7.2	60	Above Average
Skiaook	6.3	43	Average
Tenkiller	5.1	12	Average
Yahola	2.6	11	Average

### 2008 Saugeye: Fall Night Electrofishing

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 20 Inches or Over	Rating
Guthrie	0	3	Above Average
Holdenville	5.6	24	Average
Humphreys	3	3	Average
Liberty	0	2	Average
Pawnee	2.1	0	Below Average
Pauls Valley	0	39	Average
Shawnee Twin #1	2.3	4	Below Average
Shawnee Twin #2	0.4	0	Below Average
Taylor	0.5	0	Average
Thunderbird	0	2	Above Average
Wewoka	4.3	7	Average

# Destinations

## Where to Go and How to Catch One

Make a western Oklahoma getaway and try fishing for walleye in Lake Canton or Foss Lake. While there, try driving a loop of the Great Plains Trail of Oklahoma for some unique wildlife and landscape viewing opportunities. For more information about the Great Plains Trail, log on to [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com). If you want to fish close to the Oklahoma City metro, try Lake Hefner for walleye or Thunderbird for saugeye. Numerous walking and bike-riding trails as well as parks and restaurants are nearby as well, so the whole family can make a day of it.

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 catch a saugeye. Early January to mid-February is a prime time for catching saugeye, but anglers still catch them throughout the year. In the spring, catch walleye along riprap or along dams and bridges on big lakes. After spawning season, try trolling deep-diving crankbaits along shoreline drop-offs.

### 2008 Saugeye: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 20 Inches or Over	Rating
Carl Blackwell	4.2	44	Average
Ellsworth	6.7	27	Above Average
Fort Cobb	2.4	0	Above Average
Great Salt Plains	1.1	0	Below Average
Ponca City	3.8	50	Above Average
Sooner	5	50	Average

# White Bass

**T**he white bass, also called the sand bass or the “sandy,” is Oklahoma’s official state fish. The aggressive feeders are found in many larger lakes, and their annual migration upstream in creeks and rivers is a highlight of many anglers’ fishing seasons.

The annual migration, or “sand bass run,” usually takes place in late march and April, and the fish swim upstream in very large numbers. On a good day, when the run is in full swing, anglers may be seen lining the banks of waterways catching fish after fish and posing little threat to the success of anglers around them. In other words, there are plenty of them to go around. Spinners and jigs are good artificial bait choices during the annual runs, and minnows are a good choice as well.

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.

## White Bass Stocking, 2008

White bass were stocked in Great Salt Plains and Sand Creek.

## 2008 White Bass: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 12 Inches or Over	Rating
Altus Lugert	1.6	33	Above Average
Broken Bow	2.9	98	Excellent
Canton	1.8	40	Above Average
Carl Blackwell	0.6	0	Below Average
Claremore City	0.4	0	Below Average
Copan	2.5	31	Excellent
Stanley Draper	1.7	65	Above Average
Ellsworth	1.7	36	Average
Foss	1.7	35	Above Average
Fort Cobb	1.3	20	Average
Fort Gibson	1.8	36	Above Average
Fort Supply	1.7	42	Excellent
Grand Lake	2.2	74	Excellent
Hominy	2	76	Excellent
Hugo	1.5	26	Above Average
Kaw	1.8	33	Above Average
Keystone	1.7	43	Average
Konawa	1.6	63	Excellent
Lone Chimney	0.2	0	Below Average
Murray	1.6	66	Excellent
Oologah	2.9	40	Excellent
Ponca City	0.9	19	Above Average
Robert S. Kerr	1.1	25	Average
Sahoma	0.8	0	Above Average
Skiatook	1.5	42	Excellent
Sooner	0.8	30	Above Average
Sportsman	2.7	84	Above Average
Tenkiller	2.7	17	Above Average
Texoma	2.5	48	Above Average
Wes Watkins	4.1	82	Excellent
Wister	2.9	25	Above Average
Yahola	1.8	69	Above Average

# Destinations

## Where to Go and How to Catch One

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. Watch the Wildlife Department’s weekly fishing report for early signs of springtime white bass activity.

During spring sandbass runs in creeks and tributaries off major lakes, good choices for bait include jigs, spinners and minnows. As summer arrives, add topwater plugs to the mix. Additionally, look for opportunities in the spring when water rises after a rain and temperatures reach the lower 50s.



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*With downtown Tulsa in the distance, biologists use telemetry in the Arkansas River to track striped bass implanted with transmitters (pictured above). The study was part of an important research project to learn about the movements of stripers. Biologists were able to determine how frequently and how far each fish moved. They found the stripers were active not only during the spawning season, but at other times as well. "We're seeing a lot of movement in the summertime," said Brent Gordon, northeast region fisheries supervisor for the Wildlife Department. "It's not unusual for them to move 15 miles in a day."*



# Striped Bass & Striped Bass Hybrids

One favorite part of fishing for many anglers is to have a big, strong, fighting fish on the end of the line, and striped bass and striped bass hybrids bring all three of these qualities to the table.

Known for their strength on the end of the line, striped bass are fast growing and reach trophy sizes. Live bait is often the best bet, but spoons, slabs or bucktail jigs, or even topwater plugs early in the morning are good choices as well.

An Atlantic Ocean native, striped bass were introduced to Oklahoma and are now available in several state waters. Believe it or not, biologists cross the non-native fish with the Oklahoma native white bass in hatchery laboratories, and the result is yet another sport fish for anglers to enjoy. Called the striped bass hybrid, they are long, sleek and slender. They feed in schools and often travel long distances following shad, their main staple.

## Striped Bass Stocking, 2008

Striped bass were stocked in Great Salt Plains, Keystone and Sooner.

## Hybrid Striped Bass Stocking, 2008

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

## Reciprocal Hybrid Striped Bass Stocking, 2008

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

# Striperson theMove

by Ryan Carini

After a long but great day on the river catching striped bass, the tired angler can finally enjoy the fruits of his work and fry up some fish alongside a pot of baked beans. A great ending for a great day. He pulls out the fillet knife and begins to clean the fish for a tasty meal. But what's this? A small, clear object with words on it is found in the body cavity of the fish as he makes his cut.

The fisherman has stumbled across a transmitter. Yes, that's right, a transmitter. Does that mean the striper has developed a taste for electronics? Hardly.

These fish were part of an important striped bass research project recently completed by the Wildlife Department's fisheries division. Multiple stripers were tracked from the spring of 2006 to late 2008 by Wildlife Department biologists using telemetry technology in an effort to learn more about the movements of

this prized trophy fish. Researching striper movement in the Arkansas River benefits fisheries efforts in a number of ways, considering the importance of the river to striper reproduction and to anglers as well as to hybrid striped bass production in Department hatcheries.

For the study, biologists caught stripers from the Arkansas River and placed transmitters in their abdominal cavities. The transmitters produce ultrasonic waves that "ping" off of five receivers strategically placed along the river. Biologists use this information to determine how frequently and how far each fish moves in the river.

"It was just time for us to learn as much as we could about this striper population," said Brent Gordon, northeast region fisheries supervisor for the Wildlife Department, who headed up the research project with assistance from Don Groom, southeast region fisheries supervisor for the Department.

A similar study on striper movement was conducted in the late 80s using radio telemetry. The Arkansas River has high salinity and lots of sand, however, which made it difficult for the radio technology to track the stripers (one fish was eventually caught in the Gulf of Mexico). In the latest study, however, the Wildlife Department used ultrasonic telemetry, which made it easier to track the fish.

"We found more in two months than they did in their whole study back in the 80s," Gordon said.

Half of the fish in the study were implanted with transmitters and released below Keystone Dam, and the other half were implanted and released downstream below Zink Dam. According to the study, the fish released below Zink Dam moved frequently, traveling over a 100-mile stretch of the river.

The eight fish below Keystone Dam, however, stayed within a much smaller stretch of river. About 10 to 15 miles below Keystone Dam is Zink Lake, located in Tulsa. The habitat Zink offers is not used heavily by stripers. As a result, the stripers stayed within the same 10 to 15 mile stretch of the river throughout the study.

One of the main reasons for conducting the research was to find out if low-water dams affect striper movement and consequently, if they hinder the hatching of striper eggs.

According to Gordon, "striped bass go up the river as far as they can and then release their eggs." The eggs float downstream until they hatch, but they need to stay buoyant for two to three days. If they hit a stagnant area before then, they will silt over and won't hatch. That's why it's important for the fish to have sufficient unobstructed movement upstream. The study found that even a five-inch ledge is hard for stripers to clear and that low-water dams can in fact greatly inhibit the movement of these fish. However, because so much rainfall occurred during the years that the study took place, it was not determined if the hatching of striper eggs would be adversely affected by the presence of low water dams.



Photocourtesy Ryan Parker

*Though it can be a lot of effort, river fishing for striped bass can be rewarding. These two nice river stripers were landed by Ryan Parker, Yukon, during the summer of 2008.*



wildlifedepartment.com

Another reason for the study is that, in recent years, the Keystone and Zink areas have become more important in providing Wildlife Department fish hatcheries with brood fish.

Oklahoma is home to two out of 11 self-sustaining striper populations in the United States — Keystone and Texoma — but the finding of golden alga has put a stop to the use of Texoma stripers for supplying hatcheries. Therefore, the Arkansas River is now the only place in Oklahoma that provides brood fish for producing hybrid striped bass — a cross between a striper and a white bass. And Gordon says that affects more than just Oklahoma anglers.

“Most people don’t realize that the hybrids we produce here are traded for other fish out of state, like walleye or saugeye,” Gordon said.

Stripers and hybrids also are important elements of managing Oklahoma’s fish population. Without some kind of restricting factor, certain fish — like shad — will become overgrown and “lock up,” meaning they reach a maximum size, often too big to be eaten by anything else. Hybrid stripers are also introduced to lakes that have an overabundance of crappie. As big predator fish, the striped bass and hybrid are an important component in limiting the size and number of such fish.

That’s why stripers were first introduced in Oklahoma. Originally an ocean fish, stripers came inland in freshwater rivers to spawn. In some places, however, dams were built while the fish were spawning, and as a result some stripers became trapped in freshwater areas. They did well in their new environment, and in the early 70s the Wildlife Department brought some to Keystone Lake to reduce an oversized shad population.

“They did very well,” Gordon said, “and they turned out to be a very nice sports fish.”

The Arkansas River also has less fishing pressure than Texoma Lake, and it provides a convenient angling opportunity in the city of Tulsa’s own backyards.

“We have a trophy striped bass fishery that runs right through the Tulsa corridor,” Gordon said. “No other city can say that.”

The Arkansas River is an increasingly important stretch of water for striped bass, not only because it provides a location for them to reproduce without interference, but also because it yields brood fish for hatcheries and offers a low-pressure, easy-access trophy angling opportunity to sportsmen. Its value to sportsmen cannot be understated, and it is research projects such as Gordon’s and others funded by the activities of anglers who buy licenses and sporting goods that enable the Wildlife Department to continue providing quality fishing and fish habitat in Oklahoma.

Although anglers may keep any fish with a transmitter they might catch, Gordon would like to be informed about the catch. There also is a reward for the return of the transmitter. According to Gordon, most fishing in the area takes place from the bank below Keystone, with some boating in the area, and bank and pier access can be found at Zink. Gordon suggests anglers watch generation times, as feeding frenzies often coincide with rising water. Live bait and topwater lures are good choices.

### 2008 Striped Bass: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 28 Inches or Over	Rating
Keystone	9.9	6	Below Average
Sooner	5.4	15	Average
Texoma	8.9	3	Above Average

### 2008 Hybrid Striped Bass: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 15 Inches or Over	Rating
Altus Lugert	4.2	33	Above Average
Broken Bow	5.9	25	Above Average
Canton	8.1	43	Excellent
Carl Blackwell	3.4	20	Average
Foss	6.7	56	Excellent
Fort Cobb	6.2	34	Excellent
Fort Gibson	1.7	0	Below Average
Grand Lake	8.3	73	Above Average
Hugo	1.9	0	Average
Kaw	6.1	33	Average
Konawa	5.3	33	Excellent
Oologah	8.1	15	Average
Ponca City	8.1	50	Above Average
Skiatook	4.8	69	Excellent
Sooner	3	67	Excellent

The striper is a popular sport fish that provides Oklahoma anglers with a fun and challenging experience, and the research by the Wildlife Department helps ensure this fish will continue to be available to enjoy.

Information about each fish tracked during this project, including other information about the research, is available at [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com).

**T**he striper research conducted on the Arkansas River was funded through the Sport Fish Restoration program’s grant no. F-50-R.

The Sport Fish Restoration program is a tremendous example of a true partnership between anglers, boaters, private industries and state and federal governments. Fishing tackle, boat trolling motors, and other fishing-related equipment are subject to special federal excise taxes that help fund conservation efforts around the country. Additionally, federal fuel taxes attributed to motorboats are directed towards conservation. The federal government collects these taxes from manufacturers, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service administers and disburses the funds to state fish and wildlife agencies like the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.

Anglers and boaters ultimately pay these taxes through the purchase of products. These same groups benefit from the funds, as states must spend the money on sport fish populations management, habitat restoration and development, populations management, user access and facilities and education.

The funds are used by the Wildlife Department for a wide range of important activities, including the purchase and maintenance of wildlife management areas, construction of fish hatcheries, research laboratories and user facilities, surveying and managing fish and wildlife populations, training volunteer instructors and educating young anglers.



# Catfish

**L**ong celebrated as a hard-fighting, great tasting fish that any angler can catch, the catfish is readily available in many waters across the state, from rivers to lakes and farm ponds.

Oklahoma's three most popular catfish are the channel catfish, blue catfish and flathead catfish, and the various ways to catch them make the catfish an exciting fish to pursue. Everything from noodling, or fishing with just your bare hands, to trotlines and rods and reels work well if you set yourself up for success using good methods and productive waters.

Channel catfish bite just about anything anytime, whether you're using crawfish or worms or any other type of live or artificial bait.

Blue catfish may bite throughout winter, as they tend to stay active even in the colder months. Rain and runoff entering waterways stimulate 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.

Flathead catfish, which are popular for noodlers, head for cover in shallow waters during May and June, where they make their spawning nests.

Catfish are predators, feeding primarily by taste and touch (with their whiskers). Rising water levels paired with warm weather heightens catfish activity. Channels, blues and flatheads are all easy to find in the state's lakes, ponds and rivers, and they can be caught by any angler regardless of their fishing experience.

## Channel Catfish Stocking, 2008

Channel catfish were stocked in 33rd Street Pond, Adair State Park, Adams, Altus City, Alva City Hatfield Park, American Horse, Avarad City, Beaver State Park, Black Kettle, Blue River, Boiling Springs, Boney Ridge USFS, Bonham Pond, Boswell State Park, Bristow City Lake, Burtschi, Burtschi WMA Pond, C-48 USFS, Cameron Pond, Carlton, Carmen City, Carriage Hills, Carter, Cedar, Chambers, Cherokee Nation, Cherokee WMA, Choctaw Park, Chouteau Bridge Pond, Clayton, Clearview City, Connor Drug Ranch, Coon Creek, 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, East Gore Apartments Pond, East Lake, Edmond Hafer Park Pond, Edmond Mitch Park Pond, Edwards Park Pond, Elmer, Enid Gov't. Springs, Enid Meadow Lake, Fletcher Pond, Ft. Cobb, Ft. Gibson WMA, Ft. Sill, G Horany, Gentry Creek Pond, Geronimo, Great Plains Vo-Tech, Great Salt Plains, Greenleaf Pond, Guymon-Sunset, Hall, Heavener City Park Pond, Helen, Heritage Park Pond, Holdenville City, Honor Heights Park, Houston

Pond, Hugo COE Pond, Hunter Park/Kiowa, Hunter Park/Tulsa, Hunter Pool USFS, James Collins WMA, Kids Fish Out, Kids Lake, Kulli USFS, Lafortune Park, Larry Lake, Lawtonka, Leake Park Pond, Lexington WMA, Liberty, Little River, Madill City #2, Make A Wish Pond, Maple Park, MAPS Wetland Pond Penn, MAPS Wetland Pond Walker N, MAPS Wetland Pond Walker S, MAPS Wetland Pond Western, Marland Mansion, Martin Landing, McArthur School Pond, Metcalf, Midway USFS, Minor Twins, Minshall Park Pond, Moore Little River Park North, Moore Little River Park South, MS-6, Muldrow City Ponds, Murray, Mustang Creek Elementary, N.E. Tech Center, Nanih Waiya, Nat'l. Wild Turkey Federation Jakes Pond, Nichols Park, OKC South Lake Park Pond East, OKC South Lake Park Pond West, Okemah City, Okmulgee, Okmulgee Kiddie # 1, Okmulgee Kiddie # 2, Owen Park, Ozzie Cobb, Park Lane, Pawnee Bill State Park, Ponca City Lake Pond, Porum, Raymond Gary, Route 66 Park Pond A, Route 66 Park Pond B, Route 66 Park Pond C, Schooler, Seminole State College Pond, Senior Center Pond-Yukon, Shale Pit Pond, Shannon Springs, Shawnee # 1, Shawnee # 2, Shawnee Clinic Pond, Skiatook Pond, Skipout, Skyline Pond, Soldier Creek, Spaulding Park, Spring Creek/Roger Mills, Standing Bear Pond, Stanley Draper, State Vet Hospital, Stigler Golf Course, Sultan Park, Sutton Wilderness Area, Teal Lake USFS, Temple City, Tenkiller State Park, The Gardens, Tinker AFB Ponds, Tom Steed, Tucker Lake, United Methodist Childrens Home, Vian City, Vincent, Watonga, Wayne Wallace, Weleetka, Welsh Pond, Wetumka, Whitaker Park, Wildhorse Park, Will Rogers Boy Scout Camp, Willow Pond, Willow Springs, Wintersmith Park, Woodward Ag. Ex. Lake, Wyatt Acres Pond, Yukon Mulvey's Pond and Zoo Lake.

## Blue Catfish Stocking 2008

Blue Catfish were stocked in Lake Overholser.

# Destinations

## Where to Go and How to Catch One

Anglers can pick almost any large lake in Oklahoma and be confident with their choice. Several Close to Home Fishing waters hold catfish as well and often provide angling opportunities within a short drive of metro area anglers. Consult page 31 of the "2009 Oklahoma Fishing Guide" for descriptions of Close to Home Fishing locations.

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.



There's nothing quite like taking home a stringer full of catfish for a feast fit for royalty.

Bill Lindner

### 2008 Channel Catfish: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 22 Inches or Over	Rating
Altus Lugert	4.6	3	Above Average
Bixhoma	3.3	0	Below Average
Broken Bow	6.1	17	Average
Canton	7.8	26	Excellent
Carl Blackwell	3.7	2	Above Average
Claremore City	5.8	2	Above Average
Copan	1.7	0	Below Average
Stanley Draper	0.8	0	Average
Ellsworth	0.8	0	Below Average
Foss	6.1	17	Above Average
Fort Cobb	7.1	8	Above Average
Fort Gibson	6.4	4	Above Average
Fort Supply	2.1	0	Average
Grand Lake	5.2	1	Above Average
Great Salt Plains	1.7	0	Average
Heyburn	6.7	2	Above Average
Hominy	7.1	33	Average
Hugo	3.3	3	Average
Kaw	4	6	Below Average
Keystone	3.1	2	Average
Konawa	6	6	Above Average
Lone Chimney	0.9	0	Average
Meecker	1.5	0	Average
Murray	9.5	23	Average
Oologah	5.8	3	Above Average
Ponca City	7	16	Above Average
Prague	4.5	19	Above Average
Robert S. Kerr	4.5	4	Average
Sahoma	6.1	18	Above Average
Skiatook	3.8	3	Average
Sooner	3.9	2	Average
Sportsman	1.8	0	Average
Tecumseh	5.8	7	Average
Tenkiller	10	3	Above Average
Vian	2.7	0	Average
Wes Watkins	15	23	Above Average
Wister	6.4	7	Above Average
Yahola	32	9	Above Average

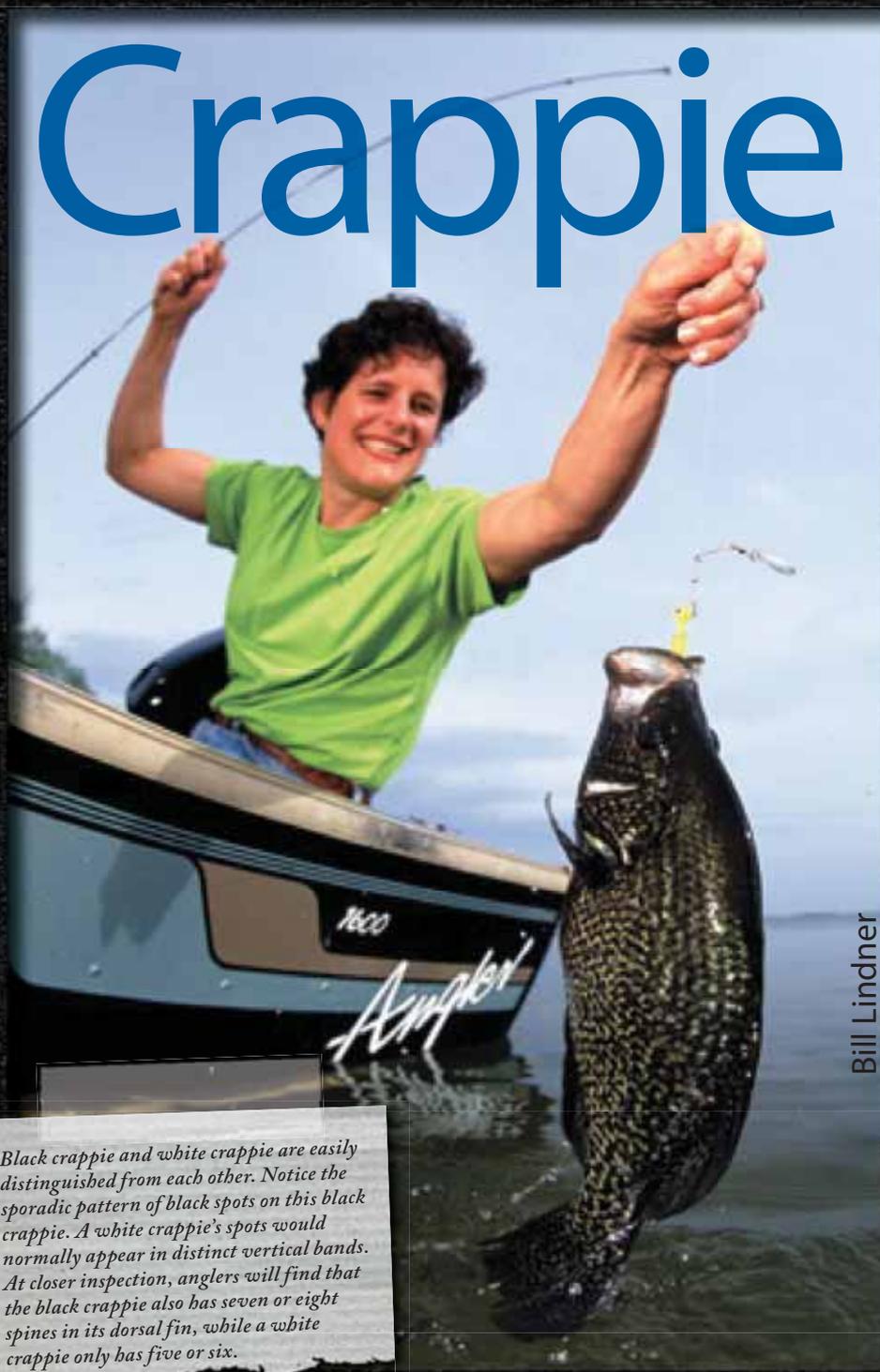
### 2008 Blue Catfish: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 26 Inches or Over	Rating
Copan	11	1	Above Average
Stanley Draper	7.2	1	Average
Ellsworth	6.4	1	Average
Fort Cobb	4.7	0	Average
Fort Gibson	11	7	Average
Grand Lake	7.4	4	Average
Heyburn	6.6	4	Average
Hugo	32	3	Above Average
Kaw	16	4	Average
Keystone	15	1	Above Average
Lone Chimney	7.1	4	Average
Meecker	5	0	Above Average
Oologah	17	3	Above Average
Robert S. Kerr	6.8	1	Above Average
Skiatook	2.9	0	Below Average
Sooner	11	27	Average
Texoma	50	31	Average
Wister	8.6	2	Above Average

### 2008 Flathead Catfish: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 20 Inches or Over	Rating
Broken Bow	5.3	50	Above Average
Fort Gibson	5.8	80	Above Average
Hugo	13	50	Above Average
Oologah	16	89	Above Average
Tenkiller	6.7	67	Above Average
Wes Watkins	12	100	Above Average

# Crappie



Bill Lindner

*Black crappie and white crappie are easily distinguished from each other. Notice the sporadic pattern of black spots on this black crappie. A white crappie's spots would normally appear in distinct vertical bands. At closer inspection, anglers will find that the black crappie also has seven or eight spines in its dorsal fin, while a white crappie only has five or six.*

### 2008 Black Crappie: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 10 Inches or Over	Rating
Bixhoma	0.7	20	Average
Broken Bow	1.7	60	Above Average
Fort Cobb	0.8	15	Average
Fort Gibson	1.8	22	Above Average
Hominy	0.4	0	Below Average
Hugo	1.1	15	Average
Lone Chimney	0.1	0	Below Average
Tenkiller	1.5	67	Above Average
Wes Watkins	0.2	0	Below Average

### 2008 Black Crappie: Trapnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 10 Inches or Over	Rating
Eufaula	1	1	Below Average
Grand Lake	1.3	7	Below Average

### 2008 White Crappie: Trapnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 10 Inches or Over	Rating
Ardmore City	1	40	Average
Scott King	1	6	Below Average
Eufaula	1.3	8	Average
Grand Lake	1.4	22	Average
Jean Neustadt	2.1	4	Average
Lawtonka	0.9	40	Average
Pauls Valley	1.9	7	Average

### 2008 White Crappie: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 10 Inches or Over	Rating
Altus Lugert	1.1	42	Average
Broken Bow	1.3	10	Average
Canton	0.9	11	Above Average
Carl Blackwell	1	10	Average
Claremore City	1.3	2	Above Average
Copan	2.1	26	Excellent
Stanley Draper	0.8	1	Above Average
Ellsworth	2.3	5	Average
Fort Cobb	1.2	21	Average
Fort Gibson	1.3	25	Above Average
Fort Supply	1.4	10	Above Average
Grand Lake	1.2	15	Above Average
Heyburn	1.3	31	Excellent
Hominy	0.9	18	Above Average
Hugo	1.9	25	Excellent
Kaw	2.1	25	Excellent
Keystone	1.1	5	Above Average
Lone Chimney	1.8	2	Average
Meeker	2.4	2	Average
Oologah	2.1	17	Above Average
Ponca City	1	10	Above Average
Prague	2.3	8	Above Average
Robert S. Kerr	1	15	Average
Sahoma	0.8	1	Above Average
Skiatook	1.4	40	Above Average
Sooner	1	45	Average
Sportsman	2	4	Above Average
Tecumseh	2.6	9	Average
Tenkiller	1.8	30	Average
Wes Watkins	2.3	6	Above Average
Wister	2.4	18	Above Average
Yahola	0.9	31	Above Average

# Destinations

## Where to Go and How to Catch One

Tucked away in western Oklahoma's Blaine Co. is Canton Lake, and anglers there know crappie fishing can be worthwhile. Camping, food and other amenities are available close by, and the area also offers other forms of recreation, such as hunting on the Canton Wildlife Management Area. Since crappie usually spawn in or near woody cover, cast in shallow waters near timber during the spring. Live minnows are a good choice for bait, as are worms and small jigs, jigs tipped with tiny plastic grubs or jigs tipped with live minnows.

There are two subspecies of crappie to catch in Oklahoma — white and black crappie. Both make for some outstanding tablefare and exciting fishing.

The spring is a great time to fish for crappie because they head for shallow waters to spawn. This usually takes place mid-March through mid-April. Tube fishing, bank fishing or boat fishing are all good choices this time of year, as long as you can access the shallow water with a small jig. Crappie fishing is good in the winter as well.

While white and black crappie look alike, there are some tips for distinguishing the two from each other. The white crappie is more common and widespread, and it has distinct vertical bands of blue/gray spots and five or six spines in its dorsal fin. The black crappie has a sporadic, indistinguishable pattern of black spots and seven or eight spines in its dorsal fin.

# Paddlefish

Oklahoma paddlefish anglers catch thousands of fish each year, and they are now contributing to science and funding their own sport through the paddlefish research and processing center.

In February 2008, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation opened the center at Twin Bridges State Park near Miami in far northeast Oklahoma. The center collected important biological data, processed paddlefish fillets for anglers and salvaged paddlefish eggs.

Over 4,000 fish were brought to the paddlefish research and processing center by anglers, where their fish were professionally cleaned and packaged.

Most importantly, the Wildlife Department was able to gather large quantities of useful data for managing paddlefish in Oklahoma. Certain types of biological data can only be collected once the fish is dead. Prior to the opening of the research and processing center, the Department had only collected information from 240 fish since the late 1970s. The research and processing center makes it possible to collect data from thousands of fish that are already being harvested by anglers. In just a few months, biologists found themselves years ahead of where they were in terms of researching and managing the species.

During 2008, the Wildlife Department was able to gather age and growth data on paddlefish and get an accurate picture

of the total harvest. Additionally, biologists recorded a day-by-day documentation of the annual paddlefish spawn for the first time. Information gathered during the spawning season can be compared with future spawning runs to better understand how these unique fish relate to their habitat.

Workers at the center salvaged eggs from female fish to sell as caviar. More than 8,000 lbs. of eggs were salvaged, and income derived from the program is being used to fund continued paddlefish research and improve angler access. Oklahoma paddlefish caviar was dispersed throughout Europe and Asia, and after the critical biological data was recorded from each fish, more than 45 tons of paddlefish carcasses were recycled into a natural source of heating oil.

The success of the paddlefish research and processing center has led the agency to design plans for building a permanent center in 2009 at Twin Bridges on the Neosho River, and the program will be expanded to include Fort Gibson Lake in 2010.

Paddlefish anglers are required 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 permit is annual, and the permit number can be

used on every paddlefish tagged during that period. Permits can be obtained online at [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com).

## Destinations

### Where to Go and How to Catch One

Naturally, we suggest potential paddlefish anglers try fishing the Neosho River during the spring spawning runs (approximately Feb. 15 – May 15) and participate in the research taking place at the paddlefish research and processing center. By doing so, anglers can help the Wildlife Department get the information needed for management while at the same time getting the meat from their own fish cleanly processed and packaged.

The center is open during prime paddlefish snagging months, and anglers can bring their catch to the center for cleaning and processing. Additionally, anglers such as those fishing at Miami's Riverview City Park also can call the paddlefish processing center to come pick up their paddlefish for processing. The paddlefish research center is seasonally staffed by employees trained in proper handling and processing of fish products.

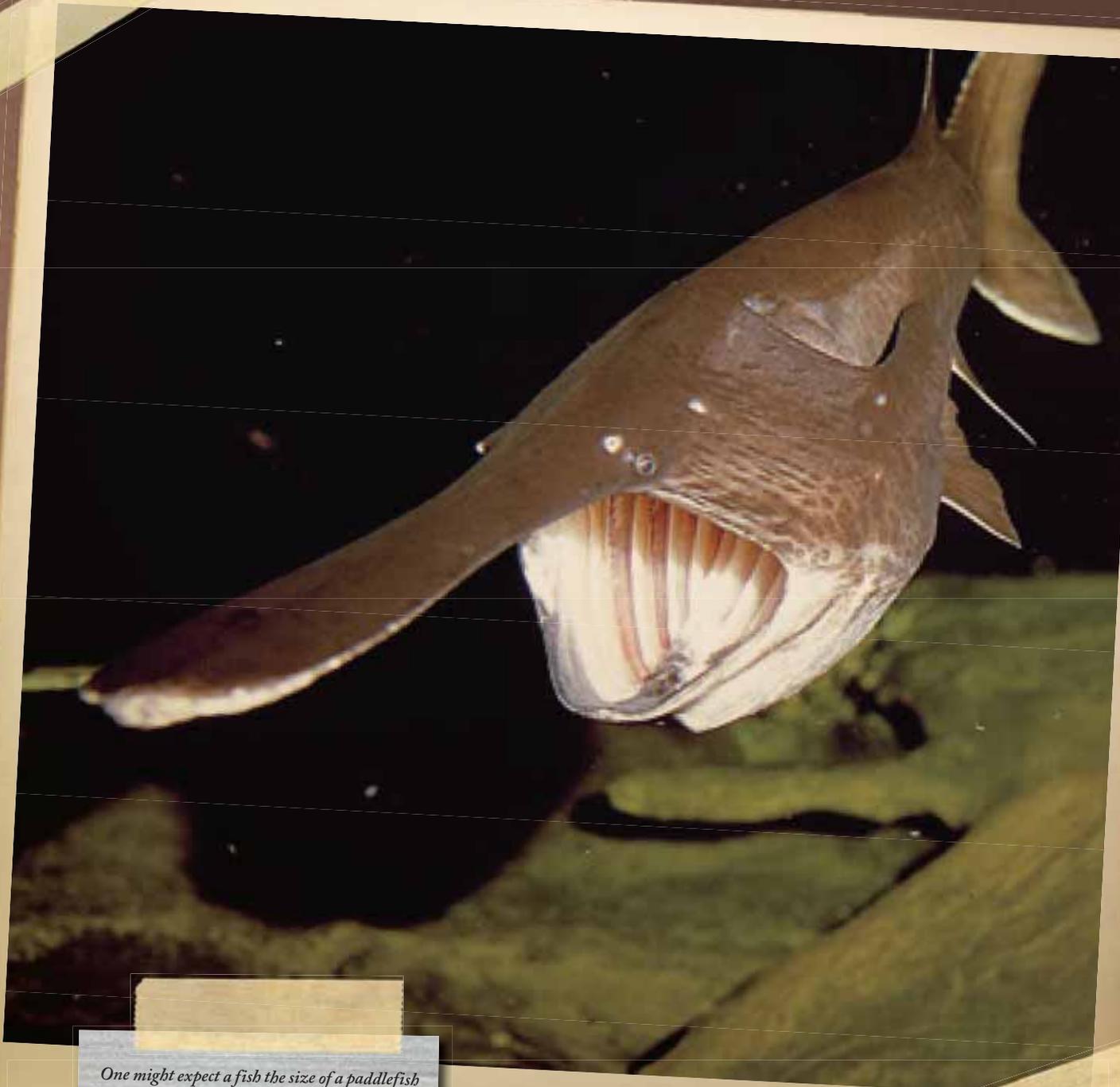
Paddlefish are caught mostly during their annual spring spawning runs by "snagging," in which a stout surf rod, heavy test line, and a large, barbless treble hook are used to hook the fish.



Nels Rodefeld

*When you are dealing with paddlefish, it helps to be prepared for some heavy lifting.*

OutdoorOklahoma



Eric Engbretson

*One might expect a fish the size of a paddlefish to eat other large fish, but they actually eat microscopic organisms called zooplankton.*

## History of Paddlefish in Oklahoma

Oklahoma has some of the best paddlefish angling in the world. The first paddlefish study in Oklahoma was conducted on Ft. Gibson in 1959. The Grand River paddlefish populations has been studied since the 1970's. Paddlefish abundance and angler harvest have been estimated and these data along with information from other states have been used to develop current paddle-

fish management programs. Paddlefish were becoming increasingly popular in the 70's and 80's due to the high value of their eggs. The Department, in 1992, stopped the commercial harvest of paddlefish due to public outcry. However, paddlefish continued to be harvested and caviar sold on the black market. New regulations were introduced to help control the declining

population and to prosecute those who were illegally harvesting paddlefish.

Increased law enforcement activity and regulation changes have promoted the recovery of the Oklahoma paddlefish population to record levels. Oklahomans get to play a vital role in the management of our paddlefish resource by donating their legally caught fish to the Research & Processing Center.

Angler's Guide

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# Paddlefish Research & Processing Center FAQs

## ***What is the purpose of the Research & Processing Center (RPC)?***

The purpose of the center is to collect biological data that will help biologists manage this population of unique fish. When anglers bring in their fish biologists can learn about the age, gender, and reproductive success of paddlefish and use this information to make management recommendations to keep the population healthy. As a side benefit, anglers get their fish cleaned and biologists process a previously wasted resource (eggs) into caviar to generate funds to further paddlefish management and angler access.

## ***How old are these paddlefish?***

Most of these fish are approximately seven to 12 years of age. Males mature around age seven, while females mature around 10 years of age. The majority of the fish being caught are on their annual spawning run that occurs when they reach sexual maturity.

## ***Why can the ODWC sell the eggs and the individual anglers cannot?***

With few exceptions it is illegal to sell wildlife or wildlife parts. These laws protect wildlife from exploitation. By salvaging formerly-discarded paddlefish eggs, the ODWC can put the money from the sales right back to the fishery to benefit all anglers, not just a few individuals.



## ***Why do you take a piece of the jaw bone out?***

Paddlefish jaws are removed to determine the age of the fish. By cutting the jaw into thin slices we can look at it through a microscope and see growth rings similar to what you see on a tree.

## ***Why do some paddlefish have bands on their jaw?***

Biologist use a technique called 'tagging & releasing' to estimate populations numbers. The biologist net, tag, measure, and release the paddlefish. They then return and net

the same area. By plugging the numbers of total fish caught, and tagged fish caught they can estimate the total population.

## ***What do you do if you catch a banded paddlefish?***

Call the Department of Wildlife Conservation's Jenks office at (918) 299-2334 and notify them of your catch.

## ***How can you tell the difference in males and females?***

Tubercles are whitish goose bump like structures that can be found on paddlefish. These structures are more prominent in males than females. They can be found on the head all the way down the back to the dorsal fin on male fish.

## ***What do paddlefish eat?***

Paddlefish swim through the water with their mouths open scooping up microscopic zooplankton. Although mature fish do not have any teeth, juvenile paddlefish have small teeth which they use to grab hold of individual zooplankton.

## ***How many paddlefish do we have in Grand Lake?***

In the early 1990's ODWC staff estimated the population in Grand at around 25,000. In 2003 they estimated close to 65,000. This increase was due to increased management, improved regulations and increased law enforcement.

## ***Why are paddlefish measured from the front of the eye and not the tip of the paddle?***

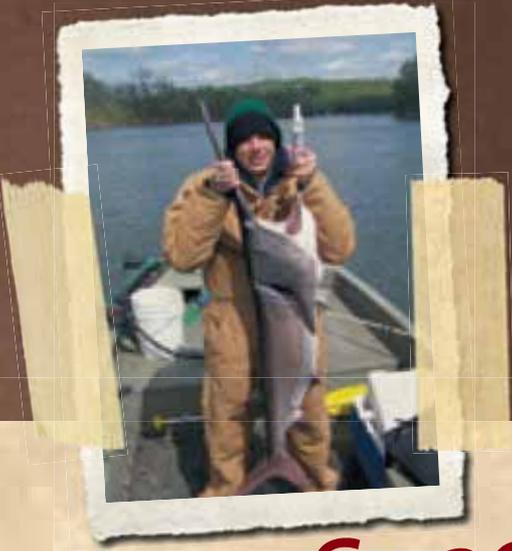
This is done for consistency purposes. Many paddlefish have their paddle damaged and in some cases completely torn off while going through dams. By measuring from the front of the eye we are able to still measure these fish accurately. This is the only fish species that is measured this way.



## Paddlefish Regulations

The daily limit is one (1) paddlefish per person, year-round, statewide. Once you keep a fish, you must stop paddlefish fishing (snagging) for the day. The following regulations apply to paddlefish harvest at all times.

- 1) Residents and nonresidents alike must obtain a free paddlefish permit before fishing for paddlefish. Paddlefish anglers can obtain their free permit online at [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com) or by contacting fishing license dealers or any Department of Wildlife Office in the state (See Fisheries Contacts, page 3). Each angler can receive one permit per year, and will use the same permit number to tag all paddlefish caught.
- 2) Residents or nonresidents may only have one paddlefish in their possession in the field. Nonresidents may not have more than four paddlefish in possession at any other time.
- 3) Catch and release of paddlefish by use of rod and reel, trotlines and throwlines is allowed, year-round. Paddlefish must be released immediately after being caught, unless kept for the daily limit. Anglers fishing trotlines or throwlines must release all paddlefish before leaving their lines (unless keeping one for a daily limit).
- 4) Paddlefish taken by bowfishing, gigs, spears and spear-guns cannot be released.
- 5) Paddlefish not immediately released are considered kept, and must be tagged immediately with the angler's paddlefish permit number. Under no circumstances can any paddlefish be caught, kept, then later released (no culling).
- 6) Each cleaned paddlefish and its parts (carcass, meat, or eggs) must also be tagged and kept separate from all other cleaned paddlefish or paddlefish parts. Each person must keep their own paddlefish distinctly separate from paddlefish taken by others.
- 7) Paddlefish and paddlefish parts must remain tagged until the person in possession of the paddlefish and/or parts reach their residence.
- 8) When snagging for paddlefish, anglers are allowed only one hook (one single hook or one treble hook) and all hooks must have the barbs removed or completely closed. Anglers must stop snagging when a daily limit of one fish is kept.
- 9) When landing a paddlefish, it is illegal to use "Gaff hooks" or any other techniques or devices that injure the fish, unless the angler is bowfishing.
- 10) No person can possess the eggs of more than one paddlefish that are still attached to the egg membrane. In addition, no person can possess more than three (3) pounds of either processed paddlefish eggs or fresh paddlefish eggs removed from the membrane. "Processed eggs" are any eggs taken from a paddlefish that have gone through a process which makes the eggs into the product caviar or into a caviar-like product.
- 11) No person can ship into or out of, transport into or out of, have in possession with the intent to so transport, or cause to be removed from this state raw unprocessed, processed, or frozen paddlefish eggs.
- 12) All paddlefish must have all viscera (internal organs) removed before leaving the state.



## How To Snag a Paddlefish

There are two ways to hook a paddlefish – manpower and boat power. The one thing you won't need is a lure of any kind. Paddlefish feed on microscopic plankton and will not bite a lure, instead they are caught by dragging a hook and a weight through the water until you snag a paddlefish.

Many anglers, especially when fishing the moving water of rivers, prefer to cast out and reel the hook back in. The key to this technique is to make long sweeps with your rod away from your hook and then reel the slack line up as you point your rod tip back towards your hook. Herky-jerky action will only make you tired and sore. The more time your hook is moving through the water, the better chance you have of hooking a fish.

Other anglers, especially early in the season in the upper end of lakes, find the most success by trolling. If you see a boat driving back and forth or in lazy circles early in the spring, there is a good chance they are dragging a line, hook and weight behind the boat. Anglers that use this method watch for their rod tip to thump, grab the rod and reel and then hang on for a fight.

If you are new to paddlefishing, don't be afraid to ask questions of your fellow anglers on the water or at the bait shop. Most anglers are more than happy to pass on a few tips.

### Paddlefish Tackle

Remember paddlefish are large so you have to think BIG when selecting your tackle. Below is a list of suggested tackle you should have in order to increase success.

- 10 to 12 ft. heavy action rod
- Large capacity reel
- 50 lb. test line
- 10/0 to 12/0 treble hook
- 5 oz. to 1 lb. of weight.  
(Depending on if you are trolling or bank fishing)