

Fishing is big in Oklahoma, inspiring tournaments and undoubtedly many a campfire story. Anyone can enjoy it as a laid back activity or fast action sport.

2010 Anglers' Guide

Fishing: An Oklahoma Way of Life

LONG BEFORE THE BOOM in big reservoir construction, Oklahoma social life revolved around stockponds, river and stream banks and scattered small lakes that attracted family outings featuring cookouts, overnight camping and the culinary delights of eating the catch. Fishing was a break from summer heat, back-busting labor and an opportunity to sit in the shade and relax, with results that seemed straight out of heaven when served with iced tea and hushpuppies.

Back then fishing was as Okie as a quote from Will Rogers and the quarry was native and environmentally limited—spotted, largemouth and smallmouth bass; several species of the smaller sunfish; white bass; crappie; and the perennial favorite, catfish.

Economic changes revamped a lot of cultural patterns across this state, emphasizing urban over rural and relegating fishing more to a weekend excursion than part of everyday life. At the same time, the angling environment was changing as well. By the middle of the 20th Century most of Oklahoma's major rivers and streams were impounded for flood control, water supply, energy development or some combination of all the above. An added bonus was recreation, and Oklahoma's newly urbanized nine-to-five crowd swarmed to these newly formed lakes like, well, ducks to water.

By the latter part of the 20th Century Oklahoma could claim more shoreline than even that fabled land of lakes, Minnesota. However it was not all the sort of habitat that suited species evolved to live in the state's original rivers and streams.

Fortunately fisheries biologists with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation were becoming increasingly sophisticated as major alterations were occurring across the state's varied landscape. Newly created lake and stream habitat could be used by species that naturally existed in similar waters elsewhere. In time Oklahoma became home to prospering populations of striped bass, striped/white bass hybrids, reservoir strains of smallmouth bass, walleye, walleye/sauger hybrids, even brown and rainbow trout.

Managing Oklahoma's fishing waters became an intricate business requiring a number of dedicated professionals. Men and women with the Wildlife Department not only provided fish for grassroots pond stocking, but at the same time managed for the growing popularity of weekend bass tournaments while rearing and releasing new exotic favorites perfect for reservoirs.

In doing so the Department met the demands of a new type of angler, one with the disposable income to purchase boats and spend weekends in a motel, lodge or camper on their favorite lake. By the turn of the 21st Century more than three-quarters of a million fishermen were spending nearly 13 million days on Oklahoma ponds, lakes, rivers and streams. And, according to the American Sportfishing Association, these anglers were adding nearly a billion dollars to Oklahoma's economy in the process.

Obviously that's a lot of fish, fishing and fishermen. Many regional sporting goods outlets are quick to point out that weekend bass tournaments alone play an important role in keeping their economic bottom line a profitable one, just as small rural towns like Broken Bow, Oklahoma, have received a huge economic boost from the overall tourist business generated by the highly successful trout fishing program on the Mountain Fork River below Broken Bow Reservoir, one that's drawing national attention and visitors from throughout the region.

Fishing in Oklahoma never was bad, not even when the state's original rivers and streams provided all the action. But now, with thousands of additional inundated acres, Okie angling has gone from good to better and now ranks among the best in the Midwestern States based on cost, opportunity and variety. And it's all available for a small fee in the form of a fishing license, 365 days a year.

So we offer you the 2010 Anglers' Guide in hopes that you will join the ranks of thousands of Oklahomans, both past and present, and make fishing a way of life for you and your family.

Summary of Species Stocked January Through December 2009

Public Waters	
Black Crappie	2,700
Bluegill	6,600
Brown Trout	13,005
Channel Catfish	389,636
Coppernose Bluegill	6,528
Florida Largemouth Bass	260,039
Grass Carp	75
Green Sunfish	200
Hybrid Striped Bass	1,172,704
Hybrid Sunfish	16,250
Northern Largemouth Bass	85,955
Paddlefish	43,081
Rainbow Trout	353,955
Reciprocal Hybrid Striped Bass	21,200
Redear Sunfish	110,332
Sauger	552,736
Smallmouth Bass	3,671
Striped Bass	28,200
Walleye	10,038,443
White Bass	64
Total Stocked in Public Waters	13,105,374
Fertilized Eggs Stocked	5,485
Fry Stocked	10,155,000
Fingerlings Stocked	2,196,799
Subadults Stocked	320,800
Adults Stocked	1,249
Catchables Stocked	426,041
Private Farm Ponds	
Bluegill	491,910
Channel Catfish	95,272
Largemouth Bass	88,454
Total Stocked in Private Farm Ponds	675,636
Grand Total Stocked in 2009	13,781,010



Sunfish

Sunfish—an Oklahoma angling staple. Even when nothing seems to be biting, a predatory sunfish is usually lurking.

MANY ANGLERS WET THEIR first line on the banks of a pond or other body of water and in quick order catch their first fish — a sunfish — using nothing more than a simple rod and reel set up with a bobber, sinker, hook and a worm.

Fishing doesn't get much simpler than that, and for some, it never gets more complicated, either. That's one of the many beauties of fishing. Sunfish are not difficult to catch, they bite often and they make great table fare.

In Oklahoma, sunfish are abundant and prosperous, making homes in ponds, lakes, creeks, streams, rivers and pretty much anywhere standing water can be found most of the year. And anglers in the know have discovered that a stringer full of sunfish is well worth the time and effort to catch and clean them, or simply watch as youngsters rely on the sunfish to learn the ins and outs of fishing.

Bluegill, redear and green sunfish can be caught all year long

by anglers, and luckily, it doesn't take much to figure out just how simple it is to fish for them.

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 knot-tying, hook baiting and line casting as well as reading the water to find the best places to find fish. Once these basic techniques are mastered, new anglers can then learn to fish for anything.

One of the best times to catch sunfish is during the spawning months of May and June because

the fish are especially aggressive and active. Hot spots during the spawning season include shallow shorelines where the fish have built shallow nests, often visible from the bank.

Weedbeds also make ideal habitat for really big bluegill and redear sunfish. To fish the weeds, try using small minnows throughout the spawning season. Later in the summer, slip-

Did You Know?

...that even though sunfish are smaller fish, they are voracious predators in their own right and can offer some of the most exciting non-stop fishing action, even when other fish aren't biting?

bobber rigs can be used to fish deeper waters. Excellent bait choices for year-round sunfish angling include worms, minnows, grasshoppers, crickets and other live bait or small jigs

Ultra-light gear and tackle or fly rods can enhance your sunfish angling experience as well as hone your skills for catching other species by the same method. Their abundance makes for plenty of action as well.

As is the case with most 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 and almost anywhere in Oklahoma. Good fishing can be found locally through the Wildlife Department's Close to Home Fishing program, or you can plan a road trip with the family to almost any fishing destination that sounds like fun to you and your family. Chances are, the sunfish will be waiting.

HYBRID SUNFISH STOCKING, 2009

Hybrid sunfish were stocked in Big 5 Fishing Clinic, Edmond Hafer Park Pond, Edmond Mitch Park Pond, El Reno City Lake, Lexington WMA, MAPS Wetland Pond Penn, MAPS Wetland Pond Walker N, MAPS Wetland Pond Walker S, Moore Little River Park-North, Moore Little River Park-South and Norman Griffin Park.

BLUEGILL STOCKING, 2009

Bluegill were stocked in Bonham Pond and El Reno City Lake.

COPPERNOSE BLUEGILL STOCKING 2009

Coppernose bluegill were stocked in Edwards Park Pond, El Reno City Lake, Moore Little River Park-South, Norman Griffin Park and OKC South Lake Park Pond East

Catching a Mess

Sunfish will bite worms, minnows, grasshoppers, small jigs and almost any other bait. Fish shallow waters and weedbeds during the late spring and early summer; In deep waters, use slip bobber rigs baited with live bait or small jigs. 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, such as the Wildlife Department's Close to Home Fishing Waters. 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 through the Close to Home program. In addition to state fishing license requirements, some municipalities require daily or annual city fishing permits. Check with local officials for details on cost and permit vendor locations. For a full listing of Close to Home waters, consult the current "Oklahoma Fishing Guide."

GREEN SUNFISH STOCKING, 2009

Green sunfish were stocked in Bonham Pond.

REDEAR SUNFISH STOCKING 2009

Redear Sunfish were stocked in Edwards Park Pond, El Reno City Lake, Moore Little River Park-South, Norman Griffin Park, OKC South Lake Park Pond East and Vincent.

Lake Record Fish Program to Recognize Oklahoma Anglers and Fish



SINCE FEB. 2008, OKLAHOMA anglers have been setting records in their success at, well...setting records. That's because the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation launched an effort to begin recognizing anglers who have caught fish that are records for the specific lakes from which they were caught.

The Wildlife Department's Lake Record Fish program was put in place to recognize big fish and the anglers who catch them, even if they aren't state records. A lake record fish deserves recognition as well.

There were 13 major lakes included in the program when the first lake record was set in Feb. 2008 with the landing of Allen Gifford's 14 lb., 8 oz. largemouth bass from Arbuckle Lake, but that number has since tripled. Thirteen popular species of fish are

eligible for record keeping as well.

Besides recognizing anglers, their big fish and even the state's lakes, the program also serves to generate even more interest in fishing statewide.

There also is a fisheries management benefit to the program in that it serves as an indicator of trophy fish production in lakes across the state.

Lakes currently included in the program are Altus-Lugert, Arbuckle, Broken Bow, Canton, Comanche, Dripping Springs, Eufaula, Foss, Ft. Cobb, Ft. Gibson, Ft. Supply, Grand, Hefner, Hugo, Kaw, Keystone, Konawa, Longmire, McGee Creek, Murray, Okemah, Oologah, Pine Creek, R.S. Kerr, Sardis, Skiatook, Sooner, Stanley Draper, Tenkiller, Texoma, Thunderbird, W.D. Mayo, Waurika, Webbers Falls, Wetumka, Wes Watkins and Wister.

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.

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 can access a user-friendly 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. To use the search feature, log on to wildlifedepartment.com.

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

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

Trout



Trout fishing in Oklahoma is often done with a fly rod and reel, a setup that allows anglers to mimic insect hatches that will entice trout to bite. But you don't have to use a fly rod. The key is light line and tackle, regardless of your choice of rod and reel.

PRISTINE STREAMS IN OKLAHOMA have been around for ages, and many of the states lakes are getting up there in age as well, but the voracious predators known as rainbow and brown trout that infest a few of them are relatively new residents to the state.

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. Rainbows are stocked approximately every two weeks at all eight of the state's trout areas during the designated trout seasons, and browns are stocked periodically in the Mountain Fork River below Broken Bow Lake and in the Illinois River below Lake Tenkiller.

If you've not fished one of Oklahoma's designated trout waters, you might want to try your hand at it this year. It's an action-filled hobby that will keep you catching fish and returning to the water time and time again.

Of Oklahoma's two introduced species of trout, the rainbow is far more abundant.

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.

The Wildlife Department operates two year-round trout fisheries — at the Lower Mountain Fork River (LMFR) and the Lower

Illinois River — but also provides wintertime fishing opportunities at Lake Pawhuska, Robbers Cave, Blue River, Lake Watonga 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 wintertime trout season with catchable-sized rainbow trout and are popular with anglers all over Oklahoma.

Anglers can also take advantage of the state's "Close to Home" trout fishery at Dolese Youth Park Pond during the months of January and February. Regulations at Dolese Youth Park Pond vary from other state trout regulations, so anglers should consult the current "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

Catching a Mess

Artificial fly variation 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.

We've found that the best success comes when you use four to six-pound test line and small hooks. 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.

For a more enticing bait, 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. You can add cotton to your dough bait mixture to help keep it in place on the hook longer.

If bank fishing is your game, Lake Pawhuska is your playing field. 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. The Blue River Public Fishing and Hunting Area or Lower Mountain Fork River, for example, are ideal for anglers looking for a genuine wilderness feel. Beautiful lodging or camping is available in both locations. For more on each of the state's trout fisheries, log on to wildlifedepartment.com or consult the current "Oklahoma Fishing Guide."

Did You Know?

...that once you catch a trout and place it on a stringer, you must keep it? In fact, the law in Oklahoma says that after placing one on a stringer or otherwise holding it in possession, letting it go is prohibited. Trout are sensitive fish and their likelihood of survival is greatly reduced once the stress of being kept is placed on them. Once you place a trout on a stringer, plan on enjoying a satisfying meal. Additionally, if you plan to let a trout go immediately upon catching it, then handle the fish with care. Try to avoid handling the fish with dry hands (dip them in the water first) to protect the fish's skin, gently remove the hook and carefully place the fish back in the water, allowing them to swim away on their own timing.

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, 2009

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

RAINBOW TROUT STOCKING, 2009

Rainbow trout were stocked in Black Fork Creek, Blue River, 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, Medicine Creek, Mountain Fork River, Pawhuska, Pine Grove Pond, Quartz Mountain State Park, Senior Center Pond – Yukon, Shattuck Centennial Pond, Tinker AFB Ponds and Watonga.

Equipment at Broken Bow Lake Helps Maintain Oklahoma's Coldwater Trout Fishery.

By Jena Donnell



Bubble plume diffusers tested in 2007 led to a more recent permanent installation that is expected to help maintain cool water temperatures for trout in the Lower Mountain Fork River.

OKLAHOMA ANGLERS HAVE BEEN enjoying trout fishing for over 45 years now — ever since the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation officially began its trout stocking program in 1964. In keeping with the tradition of providing anglers with the highest quality fishing possible, the Department recently completed permanent installation of a bubble plume diffuser to improve trout conditions in one of the states' premier trout fishing locations, the Lower Mountain Fork River (LMFR). The device is used to help biologists achieve a crucial element of good trout habitat — cool water temperatures.

In the case of the Lower Mountain Fork River, water to the trout stream is supplied by Broken Bow Lake, which can become much warmer at its surface during the summer months. Because the intake structures at Broken Bow Dam are located above the lake's layer of cool water, the water discharged into LMFR is too warm for optimal trout survival. As a result, angler success can drastically decrease.

Placed on the bottom of the lake near the dam, the diffusers act as a remedy. By releasing bubbles that rise to the surface, the diffuser creates an upwelling of cold water from the depths of the lake. As a result, the water near the intake structures is cooled, mak-

ing for colder water released into the river for trout. Cold water is important to trout for a number of reasons. For one, they are cold blooded and cannot regulate their own body temperatures. So water must remain within certain temperature ranges to help control the temperature of their bodies. In fact, some research has shown that in order to establish self-sustaining populations, water temperatures cannot exceed 55°F. Additionally, cold water is oxygen-rich water, and trout require more oxygen than do other fish that thrive in Oklahoma. As fish "breathe" they absorb oxygen from the water as it flows over the gill capillaries. The amount they take in is measured in parts per million. While most of our native fishes (largemouth bass, crappie, and bluegill sunfish) can survive with oxygen levels of only 3-5 parts per million (these fish absorb 3-5 molecules of free oxygen for every million molecules of water), trout need approximately 6-7 parts per million to remain healthy.

While the Trout Stocking Program has been an official part of the Department's management practices since 1964, biologists have actually been stocking the non-native rainbow trout in the Illinois River below Tenkiller Lake since 1958. Over the course of the next 30 years, the program expanded to include Lake Carl Etling, Lower Mountain Fork River, Lake Watonga, and the North Fork of the Red River in Quartz Mountain State Park. The program not only increased geographically, but also biologically; 1988 marked the first year brown trout were introduced to Oklahoma when

they were stocked in the Lower Mountain Fork River. Currently, fisheries biologists stock eight trout areas; with Blue River, Robbers Cave and Lake Pawhuska being added to the list by 1997.

Aside from cool, oxygen-rich water temperatures, several factors are considered before stocking takes place. For example, biologists need to ensure enough quality habitat is available for the introduced fish. They can rehabilitate stream channels by altering channel shape, stream flow, sediment transport and of course water temperature to make an area more suitable for various species of fish. For example, in 2006 the Department completed a large restoration project at the Evening Hole on the LMFR, creating an additional 2,000 feet of fishable trout stream.

The Department tested three diffusers in 2007 and determined this would be an inexpensive option for reducing outflow temperatures and, based on past research, are confident the installation of the bubble plume diffuser will be a successful management practice that not only benefits the trout population, but ultimately increases angler satisfaction. Even so, Wildlife Department biologists don't expect to use this technology at the state's other trout areas. According to Fisheries Chief Barry Bolton, all other areas can access cold enough water to support the trout population without the help of the diffuser.

For more information about the eight trout areas including general trout regulations, and several trout fishing tips, consult the current "Oklahoma Fishing Guide." Additional information about our state's fishing opportunities; along with the complete trout stocking schedule can be found online at wildlifedepartment.com.

—Jena Donnell is an information and education technician for the Wildlife Department.

Showcasing Oklahoma



When Lake Vincent in northwest Oklahoma was originally constructed in 1961, old car bodies were submerged to provide fish habitat. As part of the lake's renovation in 2009, Wildlife Department personnel fastened cedar trees to the cars to continue to make them attractive habitat for fish.



Some might think that the presence of water means the presence of fish, but like wildlife, fish require cover to protect them from predators while also concealing them from their own prey. With Lake Vincent drained for initial renovations, cedar trees could be strategically placed on the lake bed for habitat that not only can attract fish, but also help concentrate them for anglers.

IN THE LAST ISSUE of Outdoor Oklahoma, we told you about Fisheries Chief Barry Bolton's challenge to turn Oklahoma Department lakes into a line-up of attractive fishing showcases for the state's anglers. Wildlife Department personnel took on that challenge and recently completed its first renovation at Lake Vincent.

Located in the Ellis County Public Hunting Area in the northwest part of the state, this 160-acre lake was originally constructed in 1961 and has been known for its sunfish, bass, catfish and crappie. In order to maintain this fishery, the Department has restocked the lake, enhanced the habitat, and increased angler access.

The first step in this process was to remove all unwanted fish from the lake by applying a pesticide, Rotenone, which is commonly used to control fish populations. Because the pesticide interferes with the cellular use of oxygen, this is an effective management practice that ensures only preferred species will be stocked in the lake. Once the drum, shad and grass carp were removed from Lake Vincent, biologists were able to restock the lake with various sunfish, channel catfish, and largemouth bass.

In addition to restocking the lake, the Department has continued to increase fish habitat. When Lake Vincent was originally constructed, several car bodies were submerged in order

Lakes: Lake Vincent

to provide feeding and spawning areas for the fish as well as to supply cover. When the lake was initially drained for the renovation project, these cars were pulled from the water, and over 400 Eastern red cedar trees were fastened to the cars and pushed back into the lake. Other trees were simply placed close to the shoreline to potentially increase the number of fish available near the water's edge. While the cedar trees now provide habitat for fish, their removal from the surrounding land allows favorable vegetation to grow, in turn helping wildlife.

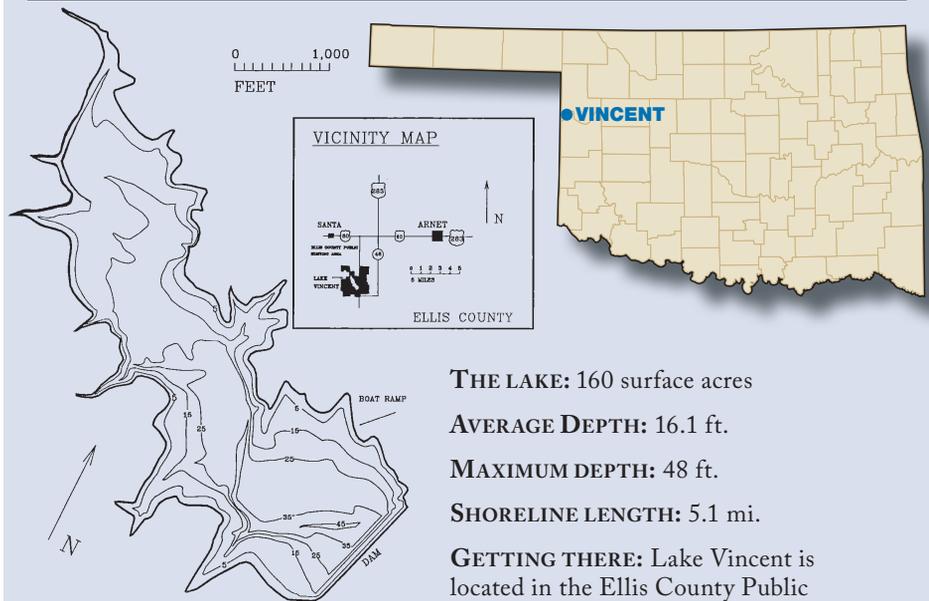
The final step in the renovation process was to improve angler access by constructing a new boat ramp on the north side of the lake. Additionally, anglers can now use one of the new 4.5 fishing berms to access the deeper portions of the lake. The Department's own lake maintenance crew used the dirt from the original shoreline to build the berms, which effectively increased the depth of water at the shore.

For more information about Lake Vincent, contact Byron State Fish Hatchery at (580) 474-2663, or log onto www.wildlifedepartment.com, and click on "Fishing". Check your 2009 Fishing Guide for Lake Vincent's Special Area Regulations.

See upcoming issues to learn about the completed renovations to other Department owned lakes.

—Jena Donnell is an information and education technician for the Wildlife Department.

Lake Vincent at a Glance



THE LAKE: 160 surface acres

AVERAGE DEPTH: 16.1 ft.

MAXIMUM DEPTH: 48 ft.

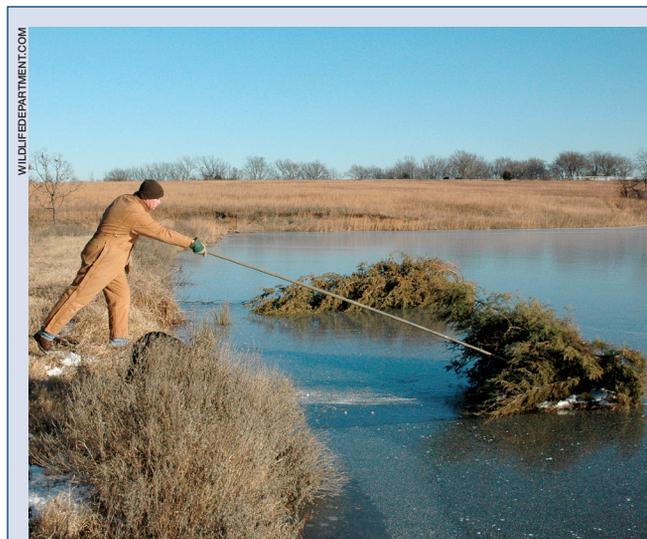
SHORELINE LENGTH: 5.1 mi.

GETTING THERE: Lake Vincent is located in the Ellis County Public Hunting Area in Ellis Co., 13 miles southwest of Arnett.

FACILITIES: The lake has boat ramp access and picnic areas. Fishing and picnic supplies can be obtained in nearby Arnett.

FISHING: Lake Vincent offers fishing for several species such as sunfish, largemouth bass, saugeye, channel catfish and blue catfish.

LAKE VINCENT IS ONE of 15 Wildlife Department-owned lakes managed for sustained fishing and wildlife viewing opportunities. As part of a challenge issued by Barry Bolton, fisheries chief for the Wildlife Department, lakes like Vincent and others are receiving renovations that include creating fish habitat, restocking with desirable fish species and improving access for anglers.



Why do I see so many people sinking cedar trees in ponds and lakes? Aren't trees good for the environment?

Invasive red cedar trees spread fast and, for the amount of nutrients and space they take up, they offer very little in the way of benefits to wildlife. They compete with native grasses and don't offer habitat benefits that wildlife can't find in noninvasive native trees. So one of the best places for cedar trees, if not treated with prescribed fire, is in the bottom of a farm pond or lake where fish will use them as cover. There, they will not only provide habitat, but will give anglers an idea of where to fish while benefiting land-dwelling wildlife.

Pictured is Seminole County property owner John McCreight pushing a chopped cedar tree out onto the frozen surface of the water during frozen conditions during July of 2010. The tree is wired to a concrete block and was pushed out onto the ice with a 12-ft. pole. As soon as the ice melted, McCreight reports that the trees sunk right where they had been placed on the ice, ready for spring and summertime fishing. Hands on habitat work like this is what makes Oklahoma such a great place to be an outdoorsman.

Bass

Oklahoma's Black Bass Management Strategy - Helping Make Anglers Look Good Every Day of the Year

OKLAHOMANS ARE KNOWN FOR being good at a lot of things — athletics, music, art, and of course, bass fishing.

While the right mix of skills and luck are needed to consistently catch trophy black bass time and time again, there is also a significant amount of effort that goes into that equation on the part of fisheries biologists who work to provide the best angling opportunities in terms of quality and quantity.

Each of the three subspecies of black bass — largemouth, smallmouth and spotted bass — have varying requirements, and in order to provide the best angling, 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.

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 determine 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. As you might suspect, some lakes are better suited to producing large numbers of bass, while others are managed to produce trophy bass.

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 offer anglers somewhat of an inside look at the lakes surveyed.

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, it's up to anglers to ensure harvest regulations have a positive effect fisheries by accepting and following them.

SMALLMOUTH BASS STOCKING, 2009

Smallmouth bass were stocked in Canton, Murray and Shell Creek

FLORIDA LARGEMOUTH BASS STOCKING, 2009

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

NORTHERN LARGEMOUTH BASS STOCKING, 2009

Northern largemouth bass were stocked in Bell Cow, Carter, Dolese Park Pond, Eagle Lake, Kickapoo Fishing Derby Pond, Magnolia Park, MAPS Wetland Pond Walker N, MAPS Wetland Pond Walker S, McAdams Pond Tishomingo NFH, Reeve's Ravine Tishomingo NFH, Slippery Falls Boy Scout Ranch, Vincent and Watonga.

Catching a Mess

Once you choose a place to fish, the methods and theories for catching black bass vary greatly, but the main thing to remember is that you are trying to trigger the predatory instincts of black bass. They're diet can include a variety of other fish, crayfish, insects, frogs, lizards and even worms and other food sources, so a wide variety of baits and lures can work, and no matter what time of year it is, you can have something in your tackle box that a bass will be willing to take.

A tackle box is best when it is filled with a variety of offerings, from jigs and spinners to surface lures, rattletraps, rubber worms, tails, deep divers, crankbaits and others.

Shady or weedy areas along banks and shorelines and flats off channels and shelves are good places to find black bass in lakes and ponds. In rivers, streams and creeks, target the riffles, pools and shallows found above rapids. Try casting upstream and allow your bait to drift into your honey-holes. Try a variety of baits and approaches, until you find what works. No sense in changing things up after that, unless you just feel like experimenting. Generally, work lures faster in warm water and slower in cold water.

Oklahoma offers over 1100 square miles of lakes and ponds and 11,600 miles of shoreline, and a good percentage of those waters are teeming with black bass just waiting for you and your next day off. So, when is that going to be?

Did You Know?

...that there is no length limit or daily limit for spotted bass? Their populations are overabundant and slow-growing in most lakes, which takes a toll on forage that could be better utilized by more desirable predators. Exempting spotted bass from length limits and increasing the daily limit is meant to encourage the harvest of more spotted bass while reducing competition among other predators, such as largemouth and smallmouth bass and walleye and saugeye. For legal identification purposes, a spotted bass is any black bass, except for smallmouth, having a rough tongue patch.

Black bass are a trophy angler's dream, with tenacity and quick-to-strike antics that make them exciting for any angler.



Using Science to Plan Your Fishing Getaway

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 shown in the 2009 Spring Electrofishing Bass Survey Results on this page is released every year by the Wildlife Department and provides the number of bass surveyed per hour and the number of bass over 14 inches per hour at a number of lakes surveyed across the state. In addition, the data provides a list of the heaviest fish surveyed at each lake.

As the name suggests, electrofishing surveys use electric current to "stun" fish in a specific area of a lake, causing them to surface long enough for biologists to collect biological data. A short time later, the fish recover from the shock and swim on their way.

During the spring of 2009, electrofishing survey results from the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation showed that even small lakes under 1,000 acres produced high numbers of bass during the survey. In fact, American Horse Lake in

northwest Oklahoma produced the highest numbers of bass at 168 surveyed per hour. Therefore, the size of a lake — even if it's only 1,000 acres or less — is no indication of the number of fish it contains for anglers to catch.

Though factors like inclement weather or prolonged high water levels can prevent biologists from surveying some lakes from year to year, the data collected provides useful information for biologists and for anglers planning their next getaway.

There is always some degree of luck involved when you go fishing, and other factors like weather, time of day and so on can impact your angling success as well. But even so, having access to data such as that in the Spring Electrofishing Bass Survey could help put you that much closer to a day full of angling bliss.

THROUGHOUT THE ANGLERS' GUIDE, there are a series of survey results that lend insight into the research being conducted by biologists to ensure quality angling. A variety of survey methods are used such as electrofishing, trapping, and netting.

Biologists employ different methods of data collection depending on the species they are studying as well as the time of year. For example, springtime electrofishing is especially effective for surveying black bass, as bass spend more time in shallow water during the spring than at other times of the year and are therefore more susceptible to electric shock. During the summer, bass may be too deep in the water for electrofishing to effectively survey large numbers of fish. Saugeye are more vulnerable to electrofishing in the fall, and other species, such as crappie, can be captured and surveyed through methods such as trapnetting. Crappie tend to perceive the nets as underwater structure and are likely to concentrate in such areas, making them easier to catch and survey.



2009 Spring Electrofishing Bass Survey Results

Lake	Bass Abundance (# per Hour)	Bass Size (# over 14" per hour)	Heaviest Fish (pounds)
American Horse*	168.0	35.0	4.0
Arbuckle	123.6	52.7	10.7
Arcadia	18.9	14.0	9.3
Bell Cow	23.6	12.2	9.8
Bixhoma*	105.3	38.0	9.0
Bristow*	44.7	9.3	6.2
Broken Bow	30.2	5.8	5.6
Burtschi*	97.0	7.0	6.5
Cedar*	81.3	39.3	6.6
Chimney Rock*	45.0	23.0	6.0
Crooked Branch*	42.0	10.0	5.3
Dahlgren*	36.0	8.0	4.9
Dripping Springs	110.4	33.6	7.7
El Reno*	19.3	14.7	5.4
Elmer*	75.0	24.0	7.0
Fort Cobb	45.8	26.8	9.6
Guthrie*	18.4	4.0	5.6
Holdenville*	103.7	12.3	8.6
Jap Beaver*	65.0	42.0	7.6
Konawa	155.8	70.0	7.6
Nanih Waiya*	46.7	14.0	5.5
Ozzie Cobb*	32.7	7.3	7.2
Pine Creek	78.7	18.0	7.1
Ponca*	40.0	13.3	5.5
Raymond Gary*	46.7	14.0	6.0
Skiatook	46.7	6.7	3.6
Stillwell City*	80.0	8.0	3.0
Stroud*	14.0	1.7	7.8
Watonga*	27.2	12.8	7.6
Wes Watkins	14.2	12.2	6.9
Wister	10.2	0.9	3.2

* Denotes lakes less than 1,000 acres

Sport Fish Restoration Program: Anglers Pay the Way

THE SPORT FISH RESTORATION program is a tremendous example of a true partnership between private industries, state governments, the federal government and the anglers and boaters. The manufacturers of rods, reels fishing tackle and fish finders pay an excise tax at first sale. Additionally, gasoline fuels are taxed and a portion of those dollars from motorboats and small engines are dedicated to the Sport Fish Restoration Program. The federal government collects these taxes and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service administers and disburses these funds to the state fish and wildlife agencies. Anglers and boaters ultimately pay these taxes through the purchase of products. It is these same people who benefit

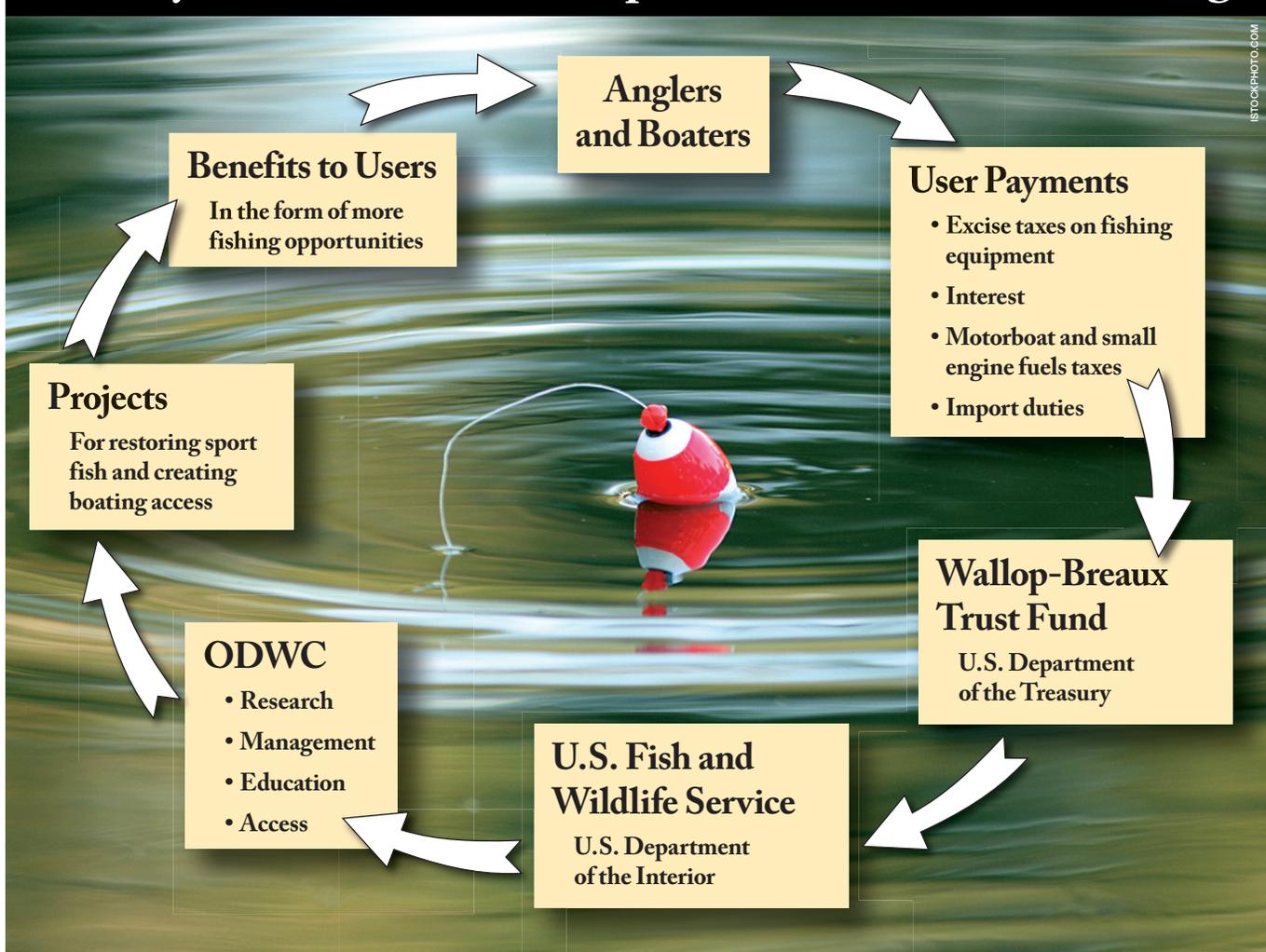


from these funds as the states must spend the money on sport fish habitat restoration/development, population management, user access and facilities and education.

The funds are used by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation in a variety of ways, including:

- Constructing of fish hatcheries, research labs and user facilities
- Operating and maintaining fishing lakes and access areas for optimum use by the public
- Constructing of boating access facilities such as boat ramps, docks, parking lots, restrooms and fish cleaning stations
- Surveying and managing fish populations
- Training volunteer instructors and educating young anglers in aquatic resources, angling techniques and ethics afield
- Purchasing fish and wildlife lands and waters
- Developing lakes, streams, wetlands and other fish habitat

The Cycle of Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Funding



Did You Know?

...that a single female walleye will produce some 25,000 to 50,000 eggs per pound of body weight? That means the current state record walleye, for example, could produce between 600,000 and 700,000 eggs!

Walleye aren't hailed for their good looks, but what they lack in good looks they make up for with culinary appeal. Because of the peculiar light-gathering structure of their eyes, walleye seek deep water during the day to avoid the bright sun, feeding mostly at night.

Walleye & Saugeye

CANTON AND TENKILLER LAKES saw the introduction of the walleye as early as the 1950s, and since then walleye have been raised in Oklahoma hatcheries and stocked in most major reservoirs throughout the state. When fisheries biologists cross a female walleye with a male sauger, the result is a saugeye, which are equally important fish in Oklahoma. However, the saugeye wasn't stocked in Oklahoma's waters until several decades later — in 1985 — when the first stocking took place at Lake Thunderbird.

Since then, many state lakes have been stocked with saugeye — much to benefit of anglers. Both walleye and saugeye provide a helpful biological benefit to anglers by feeding on stunted crappie populations and thus improving crappie fishing in state waters. Aside from providing a control for crappie populations, both species also offer great angling in their own right and make delicious filets for the dinner table, despite their not-so-glamorous appearance.

Both walleye and saugeye 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. You can tell them apart by looking at the spiny dorsal fin on the fish. The walleye will have no spots on this fin, and the hybrid will have spots and bars in the webbing of the fin.

The best time to catch big walleyes is usually in March and April when water temperatures reach 45-50 degrees, which is when they move onto rocky shorelines to spawn. They prefer to spawn on riprap along dams and bridges on big lakes.

Catching a Mess

Walleye naturally prey on insects, larvae, nightcrawlers, crayfish, snails and small fish. 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-January through March. Long, shallow, windy points are prime saugeye angling hotspots, and anglers often draw strikes using minnow-type jerkbaits or jig combos. A white chartreuse jig tipped with a worm and drifted across a rocky point is good way to draw a strike from a saugeye. While early January to mid-February is a great time for saugeye fishing, anglers can and do catch them throughout the year.

Great places to catch these tasty fish include lakes in the western half of the state, such as Foss Lake or Ft. Cobb Lake, but they also can be caught from Lake Hefner, Thunderbird and many others. In fact the state record walleye was caught in 2004 from Robert S. Kerr Lake. The fish went 12 lbs., 13 oz. and was more than 30 inches in length.

2009 Walleye: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 20 Inches or Over	Rating
Broken Bow	3.6	10	Average
Canton	7.3	8	Above Average
Foss	5.7	24	Average
Fort Supply	4.1	5	Above Average
Hefner	8	46	Above Average
Sardis	7	27	Average
Tenkiller	2.5	0	Below Average

2009 Saugeye: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 20 Inches or Over	Rating
Atoka Bluestem	3.3	25	Above Average
McMurtry	4.8	60	Above Average
Pine Creek	2.9	10	Average
Tom Steed	6.8	74	Excellent
Thunderbird	5.6	24	Average
Waurika	6.7	91	Above Average

2009 Saugeye: Fall Night Electrofishing

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 20 Inches or Over	Rating
Duncan	1.3	0	Below Average
Elk City	2.9	50	Above Average
Lawtonka	3	8	Below Average
Rocky	5.5	32	Average
Shawnee Twin #2	2.6	1	Average
Shawnee Twin #1	3.2	9	Average
Taylor	1.4	0	Below Average
Wewoka	6.3	2	Average

WALLEYE STOCKING, 2009

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

SAUGEYE STOCKING, 2009

Saugeye were stocked in Altus City, Bluestem/Osage, Boomer, Burttschi, Carl Blackwell, Clinton City, Elk City, Ellsworth, Ft. Cobb, Great Salt Plains, Healdton City Lake, Humphreys, McMurtry, Pawnee City, Ponca City Lake, Rocky Lake, Shawnee Lakes # 1 & 2, Shell Creek, Taylor, Thunderbird Lake, Tom Steed and Wewoka.



Springtime is a classic time to catch white bass as the fish begin their annual spawning runs upstream in rivers and tributaries.

White Bass

COLORFUL REDBUD TREES, WARMER days, and spring rains tell us another cold winter is passing and the seasons are shifting once again as they so faithfully do every year, but these signs also hint at what else is taking place in an underwater world we can't see without pole in hand. This is when the state fish — the white bass, or “sand bass” or “sandie”—embark on their annual spring spawning run into upper-lake tributaries.

These aren't just small movements, either. In fact, sometimes they are better referred to as downright mass migrations, and anglers who find themselves fishing rivers and creeks at just the right time could very well exhaust themselves from the nonstop fishing action offered by these fish on a mission.

White 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.

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 STOCKING, 2009

White bass were stocked in Great Salt Plains.

Catching a Mess

While white bass can be caught any time of year, fishing is at its best in the spring, during the spawn. Jigs, spinners and minnows are excellent choices, but topwater plugs are good to have on hand as summer nears.

During the spring, it's good to have the fishing gear ready to grab and go on short notice. Sometimes the fishing is good, and at other times it's outstanding. Using the Wildlife Department's weekly fishing report is a good tool to use for monitoring the start of prime white bass fishing in the spring.

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.

Did You Know?

... when water rises after a rain combined with temperatures in the lower 50s, white bass angling action can peak quickly. Keep your gear prepped and ready to go this spring, and don't miss the annual spring spectacle known as the white bass run.

2009 White Bass: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 12 Inches or Over	Rating
Arcadia	2.7	18	Above Average
Birch	1	7	Average
Broken Bow	2.2	90	Above Average
Canton	2	51	Excellent
Copan	1.7	32	Above Average
Foss	0.6	57	Above Average
Fort Gibson	2.3	53	Above Average
Fort Supply	1.8	71	Excellent
Grand	2.2	21	Above Average
Hefner	1.6	59	Above Average
Hudson	2.6	29	Above Average
Kaw	2.7	50	Above Average
Keystone	3.2	27	Excellent
McMurtry	2.2	16	Above Average
Oologah	1.7	30	Above Average
Pine Creek	2.4	74	Excellent
Sardis	1.2	34	Excellent
Sooner	0.8	12	Above Average
Sportsman	3	88	Excellent
Texoma	2.2	40	Excellent
Tom Steed	2	57	Excellent
Tenkiller	3.3	52	Excellent
Thunderbird	2.2	29	Above Average
Waurika	2.1	26	Excellent

Striped Bass & Striped Bass Hybrids

STRIPED BASS AND STRIPED bass hybrids are notorious for being strong fighting fish when hooked on the end a line.

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. 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.

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 also can 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. 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.



KEITH BURTON

A striped bass (top) compared with a striped bass hybrid, which occurs when biologists cross the striped bass with the Oklahoma native white bass in hatchery laboratories.

Did You Know?

...that stripers are not native to Oklahoma waters, nor were they originally freshwater fish. They were originally Atlantic Ocean fish, but used freshwater streams to spawn. As a result, striped bass became landlocked in an artificial impoundment near the coast. They adapted so well to that environment that Oklahoma and other states began introducing them to their own waters. In Oklahoma, the striped bass has thrived in harmony with native species.

STRIPED BASS STOCKING, 2009

Striped bass were stocked in Sooner Lake.

HYBRID STRIPED BASS STOCKING, 2009

Hybrid striped bass were stocked in Arcadia, Birch, Canton, Carl Blackwell, Foss, Fort Cobb, Grand, Kaw, Oologah, Overholser, Ponca City Lake, Sahoma, Skiatook, Sooner, Watonga and Waurika.

RECIPROCAL HYBRID STRIPED BASS STOCKING, 2009

Reciprocal hybrid striped bass were stocked in Kaw Lake.

2009 Striped Bass: Gillnetting			
Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 28 Inches or Over	Rating
Keystone	7.5	0	Below Average
Sooner	2.1	0	Below Average
Texoma	13	2	Excellent

2009 Hybrid Striped Bass: Gillnetting			
Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 15 Inches or Over	Rating
Arcadia	4.1	50	Average
Birch	4.3	85	Excellent
Broken Bow	6.3	82	Above Average
Canton	5.3	76	Above Average
Foss	3.9	72	Excellent
Fort Gibson	1.9	32	Average
Hudson	2.7	25	Average
Kaw	4.4	57	Above Average
Oologah	3.9	37	Average
Sooner	2.4	64	Excellent
Tom Steed	5.8	49	Excellent
Waurika	7.4	87	Excellent

Live bait is a good choice for catching striper, but don't rule out other tackle, such as bucktail jigs.

Catching a Mess

The diet of a striper is made up mainly of threadfin and gizzard shad as well as some insects. 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. Fishing with artificial bait can work as well.

Perhaps the favorite destination for striper anglers is Lake Texoma with its many guide services and good fishing. Texoma forms part of the border between Oklahoma and Texas on the Red River. Other options include Keystone, Foss, Tenkiller, Canton, Great Salt Plains, Grand and Kaw Lakes as well as the Arkansas River Navigation System.

JOIN THE FIGHT

SPORTSMEN VS. AQUATIC NUISANCE SPECIES

By BEN DAVIS

OKLAHOMA IS BEING INVADED.

Not by troops or spies, but by organisms that don't belong here – aquatic nuisance species (ANS.) They threaten our native waters and our native species, and have already made headway in the state. However, the ODWC has formulated a strategic plan to stop ANS from continuing their spread. The Department is ready for battle.

In combat, it is important to identify the “enemy combatants.” Aquatic nuisance species are invasive, non-native species that threaten the ecological integrity of aquatic ecosystems in Oklahoma, according to Curtis Tackett, ANS biologist for the Wildlife Department.

“An ANS can be any organism that threatens our native waters, not just fish or plants,” Tackett said. “They are transported by man — usually boaters and anglers — to a new location, where they thrive and cause problems for native habitat or native aquatic species.”

According to Tackett, the primary dangers of ANS are the potential to disrupt the balance of our lakes.

“They can be harmful to native species and very unappealing for user groups like boaters and anglers,” Tackett said. “Some ANS can ruin your boat motor! In most cases, ANS cause irreparable damage to our natural species and environments.”

For example, the most widespread of the ANS species in Oklahoma is the zebra mussel. The little mussel is not much bigger than a thumbnail, but it causes enormous ecological and economic damage. The mussels filter out nutrients from the water, which depletes the food available

for other juvenile fish as well as for filter-feeders like the paddlefish.

Since they have few natural predators in Oklahoma waters, their populations can skyrocket. This is especially bad because zebra mussels attach to underwater structures, unlike our state's native mussels. One little non-native mussel might not be too bad, but imagine thousands encrusting rocks, docks, and any structure they can find. For waters that have water intake pipes for power plants, the zebra mussel fills the pipes to the point that no water can get through.

“The economic burden is big and growing,” said Tackett. “Since we are finding zebra mussels in new lakes, we know they are a threat to power plants, water intake pumps, and other such structures.”

The threat of ANS is real, but the Department has a strategy in place to protect our state's habitat and native species. Since most ANS are difficult to remove once they have become established in an environment, the most effective tool is prevention.

Tackett said the Wildlife Department's fisheries division has structured the ANS

program to combat the spread of these species, and that help from the public is one of the best strategies against ANS.

One tool the Department has used is posting signs right at boat ramps where boaters and anglers are entering state waters, encouraging them to clean and dry their boats and trailers. Signs have also been used to keep infestations small. The Wildlife Department was able to take quick action in the spring once an ANS was detected in the Lower Mountain Fork River.

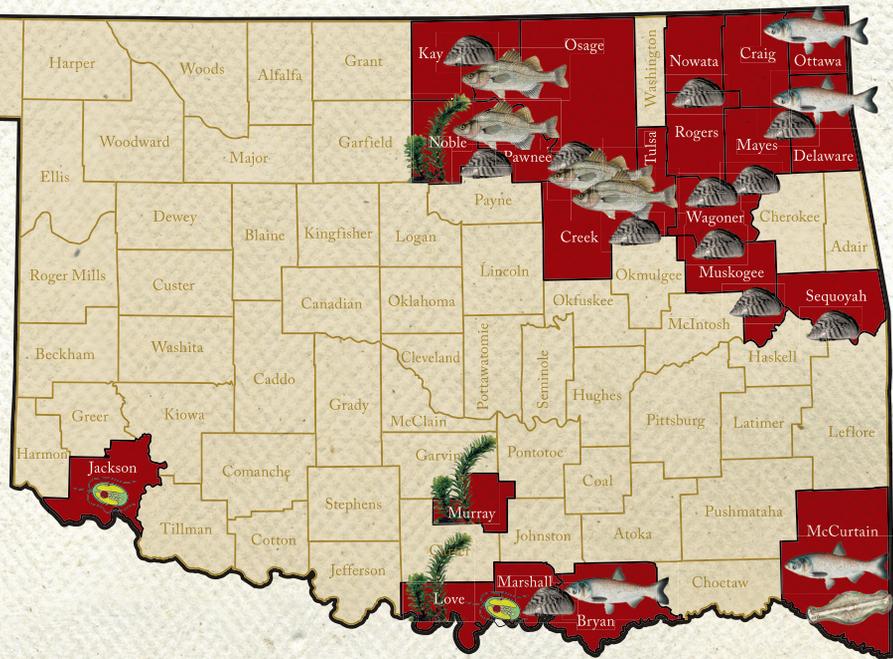
“Didymo [also called rock snot] was recently identified in the southeast region, but fortunately we have been able to hit that early before it became widespread,” Tackett said. “We now have signs warning anglers of the waters where it is present.”



ANS Biologist Curtis Tackett talks to a youth about the ANS fight in Oklahoma, at the Wildlife Expo.

STEPS TO PREVENT SPREAD OF ANS

- Before leaving the boat ramp, drain water out of the boat, bilge pump, live wells, engine cooling system – anywhere water may be. Also do a visual inspection and clean off mud, plant fragments, seeds, etc.
- Whether the lake has a known ANS species or not, take your boat and trailer through a car wash and clean it with hot, pressurized water at least 104° F.
- If you don't have a pressure wash, clean it at home with a bleach solution and hot, soapy water. Let it dry for four to six days so it is thoroughly dry.



REMEMBER: CHECK, DRAIN, CLEAN OR DRY!

TYPES OF ANS IN OKLAHOMA:



ZEBRA MUSSELS These are tiny, mussels no larger than a thumbnail that have striped patterning on the shell. Our native mussels in Oklahoma are free-floating. The zebra mussel, in contrast, attaches to structures and can form huge clusters where zebra mussels attach on top of each other. They are filter-feeders, so they compete with juvenile fish and paddlefish. They are found mostly in the northeast part of the state, in Lakes Texoma, Oologah, Hudson, and Keystone.



HYDRILLA This aquatic plant is rooted in the bottom of the lake and grows up, becoming visible once it “tops out” above waterline. It has a long stem with whorled leaves at the top. It is the most damaging aquatic weed in the U.S. It becomes densely established and outcompetes other plants, decreasing habitat for fish and other organisms. And it can damage a boat motor. It spreads very easily, because even just a fragment or seed

of the plant can grow into a full infestation. It grows frequently around boat ramps. It is in three lakes, Sooner, Arbuckle, and Murray, in the central part of the state.



WHITE PERCH This fish is native to the U.S. but not to Oklahoma. It looks like a white bass without stripes, about six to ten inches in length. It competes with sportfish for food, and preys on the eggs of juvenile fish. It is found in Lakes Sooner, Kaw and Keystone.



GOLDEN ALGA This alga is microscopic and harmless most of the time. However, it can explode in size and cause an algae bloom that releases a toxin that kills fish. The trigger or cause of the bloom is unknown, and O.U. is studying algae blooms at Lake Texoma in conjunction with the ODWC to locate the cause. When it is blooming, the water has a yellow tint. It is found in Lake Texoma and Altus City Lake.

Tackett enjoys the public interactions. “I like to get face to face with constituents, really communicate with them,” he said. “I tell them why we’ve got to have zero tolerance for ANS and how they can help.”

Tackett encourages all Oklahoma anglers and water users to take the simple, small steps that prevent the spread of ANS — checking, draining, and cleaning or drying their boats and trailers after being in the water. (see “Steps to Prevent Spread of ANS”). He also encourages anglers to help spread the news about ANS prevention to the public.

“Any time you encounter an angler or boater using Oklahoma waters, give them a brief heads-up on the dangers of ANS and how to prevent their spread,” he said.

If every angler visited with a fellow sportsman about the spread of ANS and how to stop it, the message would get out to many people and help protect native species by reducing their competition with ANS.

With Oklahoma anglers and boaters on board with the Wildlife Department’s efforts to stop the spread of ANS, the “enemy” doesn’t stand a chance.

— Ben Davis is an Information & Education Specialist for the Wildlife Department.

Catfish

THE STORY OF BOYS running up and down the creekbank — fishing pole in one hand and stringer of catfish in the other — could have taken place 100 years ago or just this morning. That's because catfish are a vital part of Oklahoma's rich natural history and a hit among anglers of yesteryear and today.

Oklahoma's waters are teeming with channel cats, blues and flatheads, and each of them offers something to anglers looking for their next heavy catch or simply their next fish fry.

Channel catfish bite just about anything anytime, and you can reel one in from just about any lake, pond or river in Oklahoma. They are omnivorous, feeding on a wide variety of organic matter, both dead and alive, and rarely grow over 50 lbs.

Blue catfish are another great choice for angler because they will bite throughout the winter, even when fishing for other species slows down. 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. Blue catfish can weight in excess of 100 lbs. and feed on fish, mussels, snails, insects and crayfish.

Though perhaps less attractive than the channel and blue catfish, the flathead is still a favorite among many anglers such as trotliners, jugliners, limbliners and noodlers. Noodlers can catch flatheads during May and June when the fish head for cover in shallow waters to build spawning nests.

Catfish 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. Small sunfish work well for trotlines, and live shad are a good option for rod and reel rigs.

Did You Know?

... that catfish feed primarily by taste and touch (with their whiskers) rather than by sight?

CHANNEL CATFISH STOCKING, 2009

Channel catfish were stocked in 33rd Street Pond, Adair State Park, Adams, Afton Vo-tech, Altus City, Alva City Hatfield Park, American Horse, Arcadia Lake, Beaver State Park, Big 5 Fishing Clinic, Black Kettle, Blue River, Boiling Springs, Boney Ridge USFS, Bonham Pond, Boswell State Park, Burtschi, C-48 USFS, Cameron Pond, Camp McFadden Pond, Carlton,

2009 Blue Catfish: Gilnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 26 Inches or Over	Rating
Arcadia	14	10	Average
Canton	1.4	0	Below Average
Copan	4.1	3	Average
Fort Gibson	4.8	0	Average
Grand	5.6	0	Average
Heyburn	3.8	0	Average
Hudson	5.7	3	Below Average
Kaw	16	3	Average
Keystone	11	9	Average
Oologah	13	10	Average
Sardis	7.4	6	Below Average
Sooner	9.4	17	Average
Texoma	3.4	0	Above Average
Tom Steed	8	15	Average
Waurika	4	0	Average

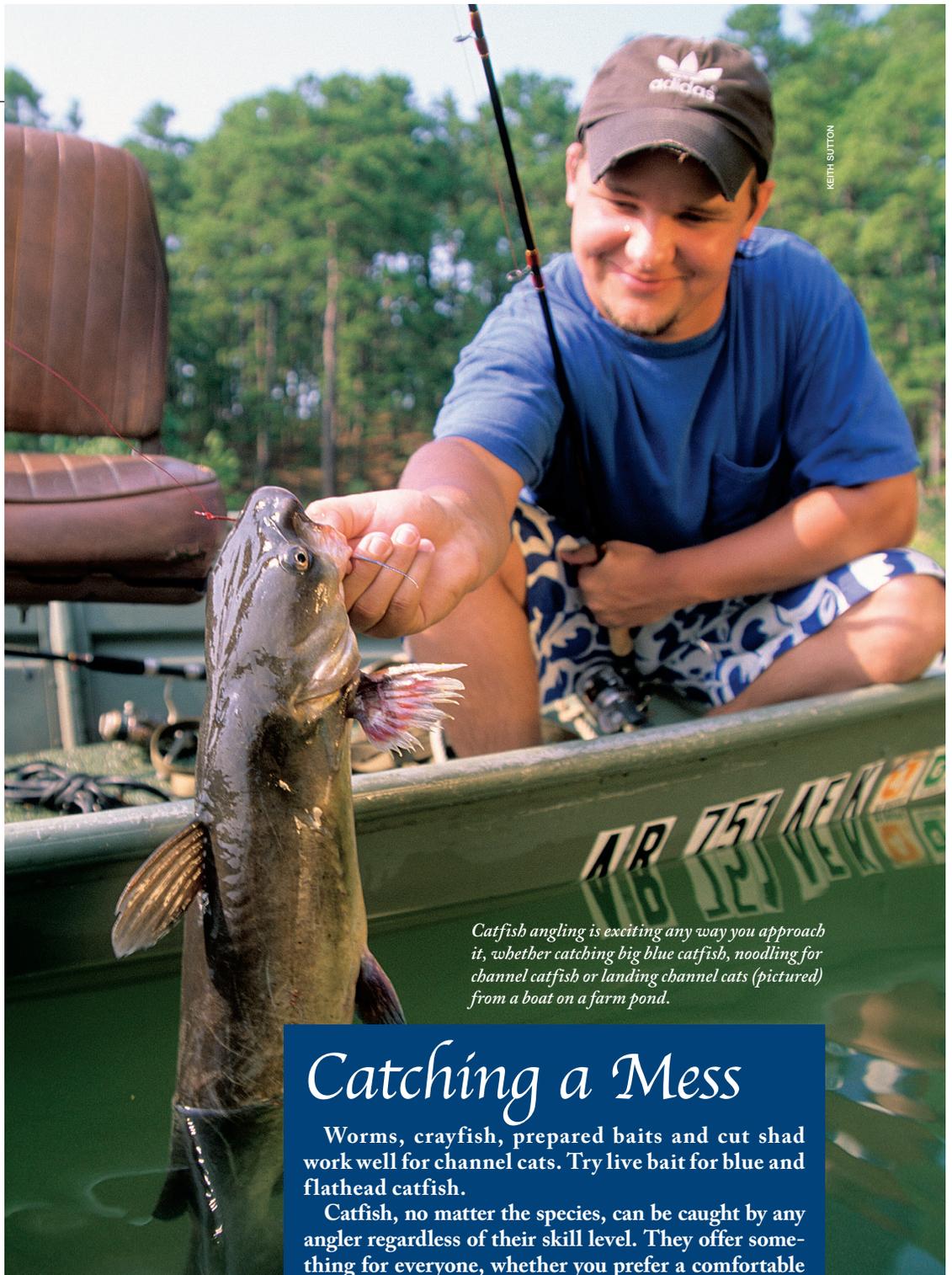
2009 Channel Catfish: Gilnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 22 Inches or Over	Rating
Arcadia	5.1	4	Above Average
Birch	3.3	1	Average
Canton	5	17	Above Average
Copan	0.8	0	Below Average
Foss	7.3	21	Above Average
Fort Gibson	3.3	0	Average
Fort Supply	6.6	7	Average
Grand Lake	9.9	9	Average
Hefner	8	22	Above Average
Heyburn	3.4	0	Average
Hudson	5.7	5	Average
Kaw	7.7	5	Below Average
Keystone	2.1	0	Average
McMurtry	3.3	2	Above Average
Oologah	2.7	0	Average
Pine Creek	4.7	33	Above Average
Sardis	3.8	1	Average
Sooner	4.3	2	Average
Texoma	6	4	Average
Tom Steed	6.3	27	Average
Tenkiller	4.5	6	Average
Thunderbird	5	4	Above Average
Waurika	3.3	0	Below Average
Wetumka	6	0	Average

2009 Flathead Catfish: Gilnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 20 Inches or Over	Rating
Fort Gibson	5.9	4	Average
Hudson	4.9	25	Average
Sooner	4.4	50	Above Average

Carmen City, Cedar, Chambers, Cherokee Nation, Cherokee WMA, Choctaw Creek Park, Choctaw Park, Chouteau Bridge Pond, Clayton, Clearview City, Coon Creek, Crooked Branch, Crystal Beach Lake, Cushing H S Pond, Cyril Park Pond, Dahlgren, Dale Zachary, Deer Creek Pond, Dolese Park Pond, Durant Hatchery Jake Day Pond, Eagle Lake, Eagle Ridge Pond, Edmond Hafer Park Pond, Edmond Mitch Park Pond, Edwards Park Pond, Ellis Co. WMA, Ellis Co. WMA Parker Pond, Elmer, Enid Gov't. Springs, Enid Meadow Lake, Fletcher Pond, Ft. Cobb, Ft. Sill, G Horany, Great Salt Plains, Gentry Creek Pond, Geronimo Kids, Greenleaf Pond, Guymon-Sunset, Hall, Heavener City Park Pond, Helen, Heritage Park Pond, Honor Heights Park, Houston Pond, Hugo COE Pond, Hunter Park/Kiowa, Hunter Park/Tulsa, Hunter Pool, James Collins WMA, Keystone St. Kids, Kids Fish Out, Kids Lake, Kulli USFS, Larry Lake, Lawtonka Vo-tech, Lawtonka, Leake Park Pond, Lexington WMA, Liberty, Madill City, Magnolia Park, Maple Park, MAPS Wetland Penn, MAPS Wetland Walker N, MAPS Wetland Walker S, Marland Mansion, Martin Landing, McAlester AAP, Meeker City, Metcalf, Midway USFS, Minshall Park Pond, Moore Little River Park-North, Moore Little River Park-S, MS-6, Muldrow City Ponds, Mustang Creek Elementary, Nanih Waiya, Natural Falls State Park, Norman Griffin Park, Okmulgee, Okmulgee Kiddie # 1 & 2, Owen Park, Ozzie Cobb, Park Lane, Pawhuska Country Club, Pawnee Bill State Park, Pickens, Raymond Gary, Red Rock Canyon, Schooler, Seminole State College Pond, Senior Center Pond-Yukon, Shawnee # 1 & 2, Shawnee Clinic Pond, Skiatook Pond, Skipout, Soldier Creek, Spaulding, Spring Creek, Standing Bear Pond, Stanley Draper, State Vet Hospital, 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, Vanderwork, Vann's Lake WMA, Vian City, Vincent, Watonga, Wayne Wallace, Weleetka, Welsh Park, Wetumka, Whitaker, Wildhorse Park, Will Rogers Boy Scout Camp, Willow Pond, Willow Springs, Wintersmith Park, Woodward Ag. Exp. Lake and Yukon Mulvey's Pond.



KEITH SUTTON

Catfish angling is exciting any way you approach it, whether catching big blue catfish, noodling for channel catfish or landing channel cats (pictured) from a boat on a farm pond.

Catching a Mess

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

Catfish, no matter the species, can be caught by any angler regardless of their skill level. They offer something for everyone, whether you prefer a comfortable lawn chair parked on the bank on a lazy summer day or a more active approach, such as pulling a huge flathead out of its hiding place with nothing but your bare hands.

Methods used by anglers include using a cane pole to drop a baited hook near submerged logs in a river, fishing from the bank or boat with a botter and baited hook, or even the popular limblines, juglines or trotlines.

If you have never fished at one of Oklahoma's Close to Home Fishing locations near urban locations, you might be missing out on an opportunity to catch some catfish of your own. Details and regulations for open Close to Home Fishing waters are available in the current "Oklahoma Fishing Guide." Of course, if you'd rather fish at a large lake or in a river, there are numerous of options as well.

Crappie

“Papermouths,” “slabs,” or whatever you prefer to call them, crappie are one of Oklahoma anglers’ favorites on the dinner table. Their white, flaky meat is delicious, and the supply of the fish is plentiful. That combined with the fact that they have an uncanny ability to compete well against other predators such as bass make crappie a fish that can — and actually should — be harvested heavily. In Oklahoma, anglers can take home 37 crappie daily.

Crappie are found in waters all over the state, and for 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 subspecies 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. White crappie are marked with distinct vertical bands of bluish-gray spots, while a black crappie has a sporadic pattern of black spots. Additionally, a white crappie will have five or six bony spines on its dorsal fin, whereas a black crappie’s dorsal fin will have seven or eight bony spines. There is no difference in the way the two are caught.

Did You Know?

...that crappie are generally said to be unsuitable for farm ponds? Crappie tend to overpopulate small bodies of water, out-competing and stunting the growth of other predators such as black bass.

2009 White Crappie: Gilnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 10 Inches or Over	Rating
Arcadia	1	28	Above Average
Birch	1.7	43	Above Average
Canton	0.9	5	Above Average
Cedar	0.8	40	Above Average
Copan	1.6	65	Excellent
Fort Gibson	1.7	51	Above Average
Fort Supply	1.2	71	Above Average
Grand Lake	1.1	4	Average
Great Salt Plains	0.3	3	Average
Hefner	0.4	7	Below Average
Heyburn	2	43	Excellent
Hudson	1.8	73	Above Average
Kaw	2	44	Above Average
Keystone	1.9	41	Above Average
McMurtry	0.8	7	Above Average
Oologah	1.4	41	Above Average
Pine Creek	1.5	33	Above Average
Sardis	1.5	44	Excellent
Sportsman	0.1	0	Below Average
Texoma	2.3	60	Above Average
Tom Steed	1.7	46	Above Average
Thunderbird	2	10	Average
Waurika	1.6	87	Excellent
Wetumka	0.9	7	Below Average

2009 Black Crappie: Gilnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 10 Inches or Over	Rating
Broken Bow	0.9	100	Above Average
Canton	0.8	50	Above Average
Fort Gibson	1.8	46	Above Average
Grand Lake	1.2	27	Average
Pine Creek	0.7	26	Above Average

2009 White Crappie: Trapnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 10 Inches or Over	Rating
Arbuckle	1.1	54	Above Average
Atoka Bluestem	2.1	20	Above Average
Atoka	1.7	51	Excellent
Birch	1.6	11	Average
Eufaula	1.6	8	Excellent
Greenleaf	1	32	Average
Holdenville	0.5	2	Average
McMurtry	1	2	Average
Tenkiller	0.9	61	Above Average
Thunderbird	1.7	5	Average
Wewoka	0.2	0	Below Average
Wister	2.1	19	Average

2009 Black Crappie: Trapnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 10 Inches or Over	Rating
Arbuckle	0.6	18	Average
Birch	0.3	0	Below Average
Eufaula	0.9	19	Average
Holdenville	0.2	0	Below Average
Tenkiller	0.5	0	Below Average
Thunderbird	0.3	0	Below Average
Wister	0.4	0	Below Average



KEITH BUTTON

Catching a Mess

Crappie are usually associated with standing timber and brushy cover in lakes. They hang out in the shallow ends of coves during the spring, and later on will move to deeper waters.

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. Wintertime crappie fishing can be good as well, because the fish form schools that make it easier to find other fish once the first one is landed.

Good bait choices include live minnows, worms, and small jigs. Try using a plastic grub or live minnow to tip off a jig for another approach for catching crappie. Additionally, some anglers even recommend tipping off your crappie jig with a small piece of onion, which may serve as an attractant and draw a strike from a hungry crappie.

White crappie (top) and black crappie (below) are easily distinguished by their color patterns. Notice the white crappie's uniform bands compared to the sporadic spotted pattern of the black crappie. Additionally, a white crappie will have five or six bony spines on its dorsal fin, whereas a black crappie's dorsal fin will have seven or eight bony spines. Regardless of their differences, white crappie and black crappie do have some important characteristics in common, like the delicious taste of their meat and the excitement they both provide to anglers.

Paddlefish

Photo Essay by Michael Bergin



The act of catching a paddlefish is better experienced than explained. The range of emotions the angler endures can span from curiosity to exhaustion to sheer elation, but one thing is certain — your first time out, you don't know what to expect. You sort of ease your way into it by casting your line, starting the retrieve, and simply waiting for whatever thrill you've heard so much about, but have yet to know...



Out of nowhere, curiosity turns to surprise as a strong force opposes you, and you aren't sure if you are hung up or have a fish on the line. One thing is for sure, you are hooked on something...



You wrestle down the panic, hear in the frantic urging of your friends to hold on tight, and you fight with all you've got to keep from letting go, or snapping a reel, or falling in the water. And suddenly you are elated as you accept the fact that you are one-on-one with a gigantic fish. No video game controller ever felt so alive in your hands, and instead of a cord connected to a television set, your attached by a thread to a massive spoonbill that isn't planning on making this easy on you. You are not absorbing artificial light. You are not reading an e-mail. You are not in rush hour traffic. You are not on a cell phone. You are outside in the cool spring air, and maybe even a light drizzling rain. You are breathing fresh air. You are living in the moment. You are fishing, and you are having a blast...

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

Enter the Wildlife Department's paddlefish research program.

The pilot program is based near the Twin Bridges area of the Neosho River, and it has already played a crucial role in paddlefish management.

Anglers bring their paddlefish to the center and have the meat processed for free in exchange for biological data and eggs from their fish.

Prior to establishing the Paddlefish Research and Processing Center, the Wildlife Department knew very little about the number of anglers fishing for paddlefish each year. The Department also

The following emergency rules were approved by the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission in 2009 and went into effect Jan. 1, 2010.

- Paddlefish anglers will be required to immediately release all paddlefish caught on Fridays and Mondays, statewide.
- When an angler keeps a paddlefish, they will be required to immediately record the date and time of harvest of all paddlefish on their paddlefish permit.
- All snagging will be closed on the Grand River from the Hwy 412 bridge upstream to the Markham Ferry (Lake Hudson) dam from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. year-round.
- The Spring River will be designated a paddlefish sanctuary and will be closed to paddlefish angling by all methods from the Hwy 60 bridge upstream to the Kansas state line.

These emergency rules were put into place after two years of collecting detailed data from paddlefish at the Wildlife Department's Paddlefish Research and Processing Center near the Twin Bridges area of the Neosho River. The rules are expected to help reduce the paddlefish harvest by as much as 30 percent while still offering ample fishing opportunities to paddlefish anglers.

knew very little about the annual harvest numbers of paddlefish, which is one of Oklahoma's largest fish. As a result, management of the fish proved challenging, and data collection was a difficult and slow process, as fish generally had to be killed by biologists in order for pertinent biological data to be collected.

By collecting important data from fish that were going to be harvested by anglers anyway, biologists have been able to collect information on thousands more fish than they would otherwise. Additionally, fish brought in by anglers are processed and packaged neatly so anglers can take their own fish home with them. The data is then used to help make important management decisions, and eggs collected from fish are sold worldwide as caviar. Proceeds from egg sales are used to fund the paddlefish program in Oklahoma, which includes management and projects to improve paddlefish angling opportunities, such as access to prime fishing waters. Since its inception, the Research and Processing Center has collected information from thousands of fish, far more than biologists could survey without anglers' help.



Surprise becomes alarm when you realize you do indeed have a fish, and you begin to question just what you have gotten yourself into...



No matter, because it's too late to go back, anyway. Whatever the prehistoric monster on the end of the line brings is now your lot to bear. So you do the only thing you know to do — reel like you never have before.



Finally, after an exhaustive retrieve, you lift your fish aboard (perhaps with the help of your fishing partner) and take in its size as you try to hoist it up for a better look. You are tired, but you begin to wonder why you don't make time for fishing more often...



You've made a memory to last a lifetime, and it becomes all the more clear why the outdoor tradition is so much more than a pastime. It's a way of enjoying the earth and its bountiful fish and wildlife resources. It's a do-it-yourself approach to finding a meal. It's a chance to get outside with friends and family. It's a way of life.

Already, the paddlefish program has provided improved fishing opportunities and access at Miami's Riverview City Park, helped supply the Wildlife Department with needed equipment, and provided research that has helped the Department modify its paddlefish angling regulations to benefit the slow-to-mature paddlefish.

Information collected at the research and processing center over the last two years indicates that the fishery has been supported primarily by the fish from the 1999 spawn. Since it generally takes close to a decade for a female paddlefish to mature and reproduce, the species can be sensitive to overharvest.

From the research, Wildlife Department biologists determined that a reduced harvest that still provides ample fishing opportunities for anglers would benefit the long-term health of the fishery. Emergency rules such as catch-and-release-only fishing on Mondays and Fridays and other measures were approved in 2009 and are expected to reduce the paddlefish harvest by as much as 30 percent while still

offering significant opportunities for anglers. For a full listing of the emergency rules approved by the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission, see the sidebar on this page.

The center is open during paddlefish snagging season—generally late February through early April — and is seasonally staffed by employees trained in proper handling and processing of fish products. Wildlife Department personnel are available on site to offer the latest paddlefishing information to anglers as well as to provide a pick-up service to anglers who have caught a paddlefish and want to send it to the research center.