

# 2011



*Oklahoma's Lower Illinois River is home to a year-round trout fishing destination that provides anglers with just one of many fishing opportunities statewide.*

# ANGLERS' GUIDE

## Maybe when it comes to fishing,

your preferred method includes no more than a cane pole and a can of worms. Or maybe you are a simple angler, but still prefer to use a few tricks like lures and a combination of reels and actions to fit your trip. And still, maybe you prefer specialized methods like fly fishing, or pursuing specific fish species such as black bass, catfish or paddlefish. Regardless, as an Oklahoman, you are in the right place for fishing.

Here in Oklahoma, there's more than a million surface acres of water. You'll find both large and small lakes, ponds, rivers and creeks teeming with fish. Not only so, but much of these waters are easily accessed by the public. Once you get on the water, your choice of fish species is broad. From rainbow trout and coppernose bluegill to black bass and walleye, the opportunities are numerous.

The pages that follow offer an "Anglers' Guide" to the some of the most popular fish among anglers today, detailing how and where to catch them, and much more.

With so many fish and so many places to find them, the hardest part about being an angler in Oklahoma is finding time to catch them all. Here at Outdoor Oklahoma and the Wildlife Department, we'll do all that we can to make fishing enjoyable, accessible and successful, and we hope you'll participate with us in continuing our state's long-standing angling tradition.

—Michael Bergin, associate editor

### Summary of Species Stocked January through December 2010

#### Public Waters

Bluegill	48,733
Brown Trout	5,255
Channel Catfish	278,082
Coppernose Bluegill	150
Florida Largemouth Bass	895,017
Gambusia	500
Grass Carp	34
Hybrid Striped Bass	996,002
Hybrid Sunfish	109,150
Northern Largemouth Bass	49,997
Paddlefish	19,039
Rainbow Trout	359,606
Sauger	368,000
Saugeye	521,165
Threadfin Shad	65,347
Walleye	12,285,502
White Bass	60
White Crappie	144

#### Total Stocked in Public Waters 16,001,783

Fry Stocked	12,180,000
Fingerlings Stocked	3,167,949
Sub-adults Stocked	172,060
Adults Stocked	66,376
Catchables Stocked	408,554

#### Private Farm Ponds

Bluegill	252,540
Channel Catfish	48,151
Largemouth Bass	94,397

#### Total Stocked in Private Farm Ponds 395,088

#### Grand Total Stocked in 2010 16,396,871

# SUNFISH

KEITH BUTTON



*Amplly available, easy to catch, varied in species and delicious to eat, the sunfish makes an exciting addition to the range of fish that can be caught right here in Oklahoma.*

throughout the spawning season. Later in the summer, slip-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.

**W**hen it comes to sunfish — be it greens, redears, hybrids, pumpkinseeds or any other found in Oklahoma — Oklahoma has them in abundance. That combined with their tendency to “take the bait” makes them an excellent choice for fishing with youngsters and new anglers. Sunfish are fun to reel in and make absolutely outstanding summer table fare when served up fried with hush puppies, barbecued baked beans, coleslaw and ice-cold lemonade. Put plainly, these colorful Oklahoma residents represent fishing at its simplest...and finest.

If you learn the basics of catching a sunfish, you effectively build a foundation to help you learn to catch any other species of fish, from hard-fighting predators like black bass to line-jerking, heavy catfish.

## **Hybrid Sunfish Stocking, 2010**

Hybrid sunfish were stocked in Alva City Hatfield Park, Arcadia ODWC N, Big 5 Fishing Clinic, Crystal Beach Lake, Crystal Lake, Edmond Hafer Park Pond, Edmond Mitch Park Pond, Edwards Park Pond, Guthrie Highland Park, Moore Little River Park-North, Moore Little River Park-South, OKC South Lake Park Pond West, Route 66 Park Pond A, Senior Citizen Pond – Yukon, Welch Park, Wildhorse Park, and Zoo Lake.

## **Bluegill Stocking, 2010**

Bluegill were stocked in the Blue River, Dolese Park Pond, Etling, OKC South Lake Park Pond, and the Oklahoma River May Basin.

## **Coppernose bluegill Stocking 2010**

Coppernose bluegill were stocked in Crystal Beach Lake.

## **The Approach**

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

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. Chances are, the sunfish will be waiting. Sunfish are found in ponds, lakes, creeks, streams, and rivers. They can be caught any time of day by anglers of all skill levels, but peak activity includes the early mornings and late evening hours. Some of the most popular bait for catching sunfish include nightcrawlers, crickets and grasshoppers, but even diced pieces of franks, canned corn and a range of artificial lures work well, also. The key is to look for prime locations along banks and in and around underwater structure where fish can find cover.

### **Making it Happen:**

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. Teach them to do all of these things themselves, but designate plenty of time during a new angler's first few fishing trips to make sure they understand what they are learning and why it's important to successful fishing and to conservation. Try any local municipal ponds, large lakes or nearby streams for sunfish, and you'll likely find them.

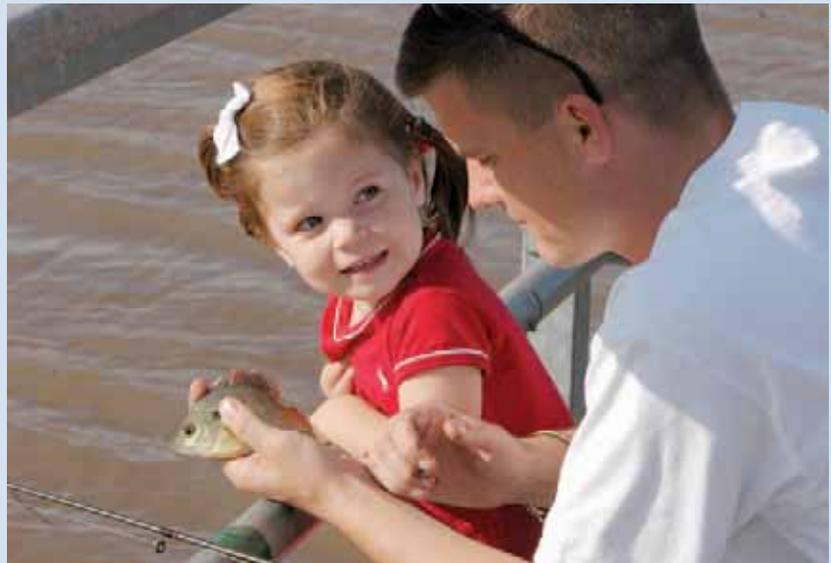
**FAQ: Someone told me to stock hybrid bluegill in my pond. I would like to have bigger sunfish. What can the Department tell me about this?**

Hybrid bluegill, available from several of the state's commercial fish producers, do have the potential for producing larger sunfish. However, it is strongly recommended that hybrid sunfish not be the only prey species when stocked with largemouth bass. Hybrid sunfish produce a higher proportion of males when spawning, ultimately limiting the food supply to bass. If your pond already has an established bluegill population, stock the hybrid bluegill at a rate of about 30-50 per surface acre to produce a supplemental supply of potentially larger sunfish. You don't want to over-stock a pond with any kind of sunfish. If it's a new pond with bass, stock straight bluegill and consider a hybrid bluegill introduction after several years. Remember that no fish will grow to a quality size if there is not enough food or favorable habitat present, regardless of its hybrid advantage.

**FAQ: What do I do if I think I've caught a state record fish?**

The current "Oklahoma Fishing Guide" can tell you what the current record fish of each species weighs, and the guide provides the procedure for certifying a state record fish.

## **RESOURCES FOR YOU: CLOSE TO HOME FISHING**



*Waters included in the Wildlife Department's "Close to Home" fishing program make it easy for families to spend time fishing together in their city's backyard.*

"The city" isn't the first place most people think of when they want to go fishing, and often people in metro areas miss out on the opportunity to learn the long-celebrated tradition of angling. But the Wildlife Department is working to make metro fishing a reality statewide through its "Close to Home Fishing program. Under cooperative fisheries management agreements between Oklahoma municipalities and the Wildlife Department, the program has provided a wide variety of fishing opportunities around the Oklahoma City metro as well as locations in Choctaw, Del City, Edmond, Guthrie, Harrah, Jones, Lawton, Moore, Mustang, Norman and Yukon. As a result, parents can spend a day or even just an hour after work with their kids at local fisheries stocked with a variety of fish. Rather than working through busy planners and schedules to find a free weekend to go fishing, families in metro areas can head to their city's own backyard for all the fishing they want.

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."

# TROUT



KEITH SUTTON

*Aptly named, the rainbow trout is striking in appearance. The rainbow trout, though not native to Oklahoma, is stocked seasonally in designated state waters as well as year-round in both the Lower Illinois and Lower Mountain Fork Rivers. For more information, consult the current "Oklahoma Fishing Guide."*

**R**ainbow trout are native to the cold streams west of the Continental Divide but have been introduced successfully in Oklahoma and in other locations. The brown trout is originally from Europe. But even though the trout may not be native to the state, the memories the fish is creating for Oklahoma anglers are authentic and exciting. Of Oklahoma's two introduced species of trout, the rainbow is far more abundant.

If you've not fished one of Oklahoma's designated trout waters, you're missing out on a true fishing treasure that combines scenery, tradition and technique into one activity. It's an action-filled hobby that will keep you catching fish and returning to the water time and time again.

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. The state's winter-only trout fisheries provide angling opportunities in areas where warm water temperatures are not suitable for trout during the summer. Wintertime fishing opportunities exist at Lake Pawhuska, Robbers Cave, Blue River, Lake Watonga and Quartz Mountain.

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 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](http://wildlifedepartment.com).

## **Brown Trout Stocking, 2010**

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

## **Rainbow Trout Stocking, 2010**

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, Guymon-Sunset, Hickory Creek, Illinois River, Medicine Creek, Mountain



BILL LINDNER PHOTOGRAPHY

Fork River, Pawhuska, Pine Grove Pond, Quartz Mountain State Park, Tinker AFB Ponds, Watonga, Willow Pond and Yukon Robertson Pond.

### The Approach:

Artificial fly variations work well for catching trout, as do live and prepared baits (where legal) such as small earthworms, minnows, salmon eggs, corn, Power Bait, 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.

Though trout reproduce naturally in some year-round Oklahoma trout waters such as the Lower Mountain Fork River, the majority come from hatcheries where they are fed a pellet-based diet high in fish oil. As a result, adding tuna fish, sardines or salmon oil to dough baits may create a more enticing attraction on your hook.

Once you catch a trout and place it on a stringer, 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. This is because 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.

### Making it Happen:

Fly fishing or using ultra-light equipment to reel in a trout are both rewarding and teachable. Trout fishing often takes place from the bank or while wading, and therefore, a boat is not necessary. Taking someone along to learn is easy, and with some practice and trial and error, newcomers can be catching trout in no time.

To bring a wilderness feel to your trout fishing trip, try stream fishing such as that provided at the Blue River Public Fishing and Hunting Area or Lower Illinois and Lower Mountain Fork rivers, where scenic lodging and camping is available nearby.

For lake fishing with good bank access, try Lake Pawhuska. 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.

### FAQ: Why is “culling” not allowed for trout?

These species stress easily and will die after being held in a livewell or on a stringer. Once you keep one of these species you cannot release it.

### FAQ: How can I get up-to-date fishing reports?

The Wildlife Department provides a free fishing report along with a free news release each week. To subscribe to receive both, log on to [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com). Your local newspaper may also reprint the fishing report.

### RESOURCES FOR YOU:

## SEASONAL & YEAR-ROUND TROUT STOCKING



WILDLIFEDPARTMENT.COM

*Trout are released in the Lower Mountain Fork River in southeast Oklahoma.*

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. Wildlife Department biologists work regularly not only to provide fish for trout anglers to catch, but also to enhance and create habitat for fish.

The Oklahoma streams management program is charged with enhancing angling, water quality and fish habitat in streams using applied management practices. The rapidly evolving program was created in 1998 with minimal resources and the hiring of one biologist. Today, a crew works together on improving Oklahoma’s streams.

Projects benefiting sportsmen and fish as a result of the streams program include enhanced fisheries at Beaver’s Bend State Park — where access to the Lower Mountain Fork River is plentiful and the trout fishing is outstanding — and the Lower Illinois River, among others.

# BASS



BILL LINDNER PHOTOGRAPHY

*Black bass include largemouth, spotted and smallmouth bass (pictured). Though they do not grow as big as other black bass, smallmouth bass are still voracious fighters.*

## **FAQ: What is the best largemouth bass lake in northwestern Oklahoma?**

Lake Watonga's largemouth bass population has bloomed since trout were first stocked in 1987. Five to eight pound largemouth bass are common during spring surveys. Fish brush piles with weedless lures.

result from a range of information, but some of the most important data comes from springtime electrofishing surveys.

Springtime electrofishing is especially effective for surveying black bass, as these fish spend more time in shallow water during the spring than at other times of the year and are therefore more susceptible to electric shock. The shock simply stuns the fish long enough for biologists to collect them and gather data before releasing back to the water.

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.

## **Northern Largemouth Bass Stocking, 2010**

Northern largemouth bass were stocked in Bluestem/Atoka, Chimney Rock, Dolese Park Pond, Hefner Lake, Kickapoo Fishing Derby Pond, Lost Lake Tishomingo NWR, Magnolia Park, Muel Lake Tishomingo NWR, OKC South Lake Park Pond West, Oklahoma River may Basin, Purcell City, Reeve's Ravine Tishomingo NWR, Slippery Falls Boy Scout Ranch and Vincent.

## **Management Strategy Keeps Black Bass Fishing Success on Course**

Casting and presentation skills, weather, luck and simply being out on the water instead of on the couch all play a role in the success of a bass angler.

While the right mix of all of these factors plus other 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.

Known as one of the best black bass management strategies in the nation, Oklahoma's Black Bass Management Plan was developed to provide the best angling possible in view of the varying requirements of Oklahoma's black bass species – largemouth, smallmouth and spotted bass.

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.

Management recommendations

## Florida Largemouth Bass Stocking, 2010

Florida largemouth bass were stocked in Arbuckle, Ellsworth, Murray, Sardis and Texoma/Marshall.

### The Approach:

Methods and theories for catching black bass vary as greatly as how to make the best skillet of cornbread or chocolate chip cookies. There are simply numerous methods, and many of them work well. The important thing is 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 it can be good to have a wide variety of baits and lures. Jigs, spinners, surface lures, rattletraps, rubber worms, tails, deep divers, crankbaits and others are all possibilities.

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. Generally, work lures faster in warm water and slower in cold water.

### Making it Happen:

It doesn't matter what you have in your tackle box if you don't go fishing. That's why the most important step in catching a mess of black bass is to take the chance to go when it presents itself. Load up the whole family or just take along a good dog to sit beside you while you look for bass on a nice evening this year.

Almost any lake you choose will hold black bass, and eastern Oklahoma streams make for excellent smallmouth bass fishing. As far as spotted bass, find them and fill as many stringers as you can because 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.

## 2010 Spring Electrofishing Survey Results

Lake (Region)	Bass Abundance (# per Hour)	Bass Size (# over 14" per Hour)	Heaviest Fish (Pounds)
American Horse*	118	17.3	9
Arcadia	23.1	11.6	9.6
Bartlesville*	30.7	4	2.8
Birch	36.3	8.7	4.9
Bixhoma*	125.3	58.7	5.9
Carl Blackwell	34.7	7.3	4.7
Cedar*	80	44	13.2
Clayton*	76	16	4.8
Comanche*	59.5	13.5	7.3
Coon Creek*	145.3	6.7	7.3
Crooked Branch*	41.3	9.3	8.7
Dripping Springs	130.9	24.2	7
Durant	52.7	26	7.9
Elk City*	43.4	12	5
Ellsworth	26.7	8	4.6
Eufaula	86	24.1	6.9
Fort Gibson	59.5	33.9	5
Grand	70.7	38.2	4.9
Heyburn	19.7	3.7	7.7
Hudson	45.5	26	6.5
Hugo	57.2	9	4.7
Konawa	185.8	106.7	9.3
Lindsay*	35	5	6.5
Longmire*	10.2	9.1	8.5
Mountain Lake*	95	35	7.9
Pawnee*	66	28	7.8
Shidler*	162.4	25.6	6.3
Sooner	65.1	38.7	7.3
Tenkiller	85.5	43.2	5.6
Texoma	66.2	38.8	5.6
Watonga*	34.7	12.7	9.7
Webbers Falls	29.5	13.7	4.7
Wes Watkins	19.6	9.6	7.2
Wiley Post*	2.7	1.3	2.1

\* Denotes lakes less than 1000 acres

## USING SCIENCE TO PLAN YOUR FISHING GETAWAY

The information shown in the 2010 Spring Electrofishing Bass Survey Results on this page is released every year by the Wildlife Department. It 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.

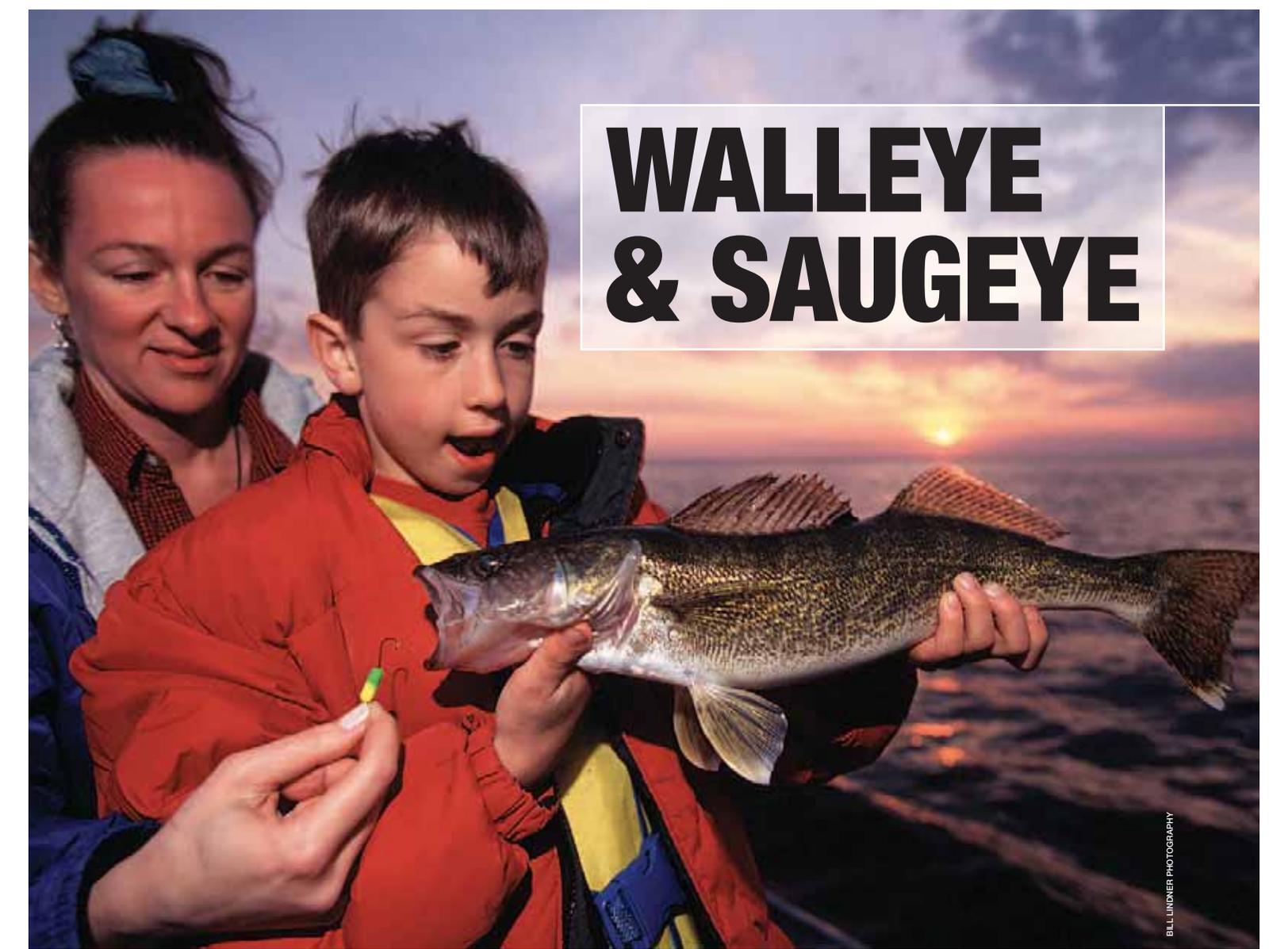
As the name suggests, electrofishing surveys use electric current to "stun" fish in a specific area of a lake, causing them to surface long enough for biologists to collect biological data. A short time later, the fish recover from the shock and swim on their way.

During the spring of 2010, 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, most the lakes producing the highest numbers of bass per hour are under 1,000 acres. Northcentral Oklahoma's Shidler Lake is under 1,000 acres and it produced 162.4 bass per hour, the second highest in the entire survey. This should tell us that even small lakes can produce quality fishing for anglers.

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.

Luck, weather, time of day and other factors can indeed affect your luck as an angler, but 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.



# WALLEYE & SAUGEYE

BILL LINDNER PHOTOGRAPHY

*Though not known for stunning good looks, walleye are an important part of the fishing heritage in Oklahoma.*

**W**alleye have been raised in Oklahoma hatcheries and stocked in most major reservoirs throughout the state since the 1950s. When fisheries biologists cross a female walleye with a male sauger, the result is a saugeye, which are equally important 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. Together, the walleye and saugeye provide significant benefits to Oklahoma anglers. Both species offer great angling in their own right and make delicious filets for the dinner table, despite their not-so-glamorous appearance. Plus, both walleye and saugeye feed on stunted crappie populations and thus improve crappie fishing in state waters. 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.

### **Walleye Stocking, 2010**

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

### **Saugeye Stocking, 2010**

Saugeye were stocked in Bluestem/Osage, Boomer, Carl Blackwell, Ellsworth, Ft. Cobb, Holdenville City, Lawtonka, Lone Chimney, McMurtry, Ponca City Lake, Thunderbird Lake, Tom Steed and Waurika.

## Sauger Stocking, 2010

Sauger were stocked in Robert S. Kerr.

### The Approach:

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. And while early January to mid-February is a great time for saugeye fishing, anglers can and do catch them throughout the year.

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. Long, shallow, windy points are prime saugeye angling hotspots.

### Making it Happen:

Great places to catch these tasty fish include lakes in the western half of the state, such as Foss, Ft. Cobb or Canton, 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. Pick a time between January and March to try your hand at walleye or saugeye fishing, and make it happen with family or friends.

### 2010 Walleye: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 20 Inches or Over	Rating
Canton	5.1	9	Average
Foss	4.5	21	Average
Fort Supply	4.4	6	Above Average

### 2010 Saugeye: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 20 Inches or Over	Rating
Bluestem	3.1	33	Above Average
Fort Cobb	5.2	50	Above Average
Healdton	3.2	6	Average
Jean Neustadt	5.7	46	Above Average

### 2010 Saugeye Fall Night Electrofishing

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 20 Inches or Over	Rating
Carl Blackwell	3	10	Average
Boomer	0.5	0	Below Average
Burtschi	1.2	0	Average
Ellsworth	1.9	0	Above Average
Lone Chimney	0.1	0	Above Average
McMurtry	0.9	0	Above Average
Ponca City	1.3	0	Below Average
Thunderbird	0	9	Average

## RESOURCES FOR YOU:

# LAKE RECORD FISH PROGRAM

As part of the Wildlife Department's lake record fish program, anglers who catch a fish that might be a record for the lake in which it was caught can have the fish officially weighed and, if they've in fact landed a record, the angler can get their fish recognized and their names in the books for all to see.



The lake record fish program was initiated in 2008 to recognize big fish and the anglers who catch them, and it has grown from about a dozen lakes at its inception to more than 40 lakes today. So anglers all over the state can go fishing just for leisure, but they can also go with a sense of competitive drive in hopes of putting their name in a record book.

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 and participating lakes are set for each species and are detailed on the Wildlife Department's Web site at [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com).

In Oklahoma, everyone from teenage girls to pro anglers to country music stars have landed lake records, and you can, too.

## FAQ: Why does Oklahoma have protected slot limits?

Protected slot limits are special size regulations (usually for bass) that are placed on certain lakes or rivers to improve the fish population. Fish that measure within the protected slot limit must be released immediately, while fish that are either shorter or longer than the protected range may be kept. For example, on a lake with a 13 to 16 inch protected slot limit on bass, any bass between 13 and 16 inches must be released immediately. Anglers are encouraged to harvest fish below the protected slot range in order to achieve the desired management result.

# WHITE BASS



*The official state fish is in ample supply, and we'll tell you where to find them.*

## 2010 White Bass: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 12 Inches or Over	Rating
Bluestem	2.4	61	Excellent
Canton	2	39	Above Average
Dripping Springs	1.3	61	Excellent
Fort Cobb	2.5	11	Above Average
Fort Supply	2.3	74	Excellent
Hudson	2.4	54	Excellent
Keystone	2.3	45	Above Average
McAlester City Lake	1.7	100	Above Average
Oologah	2.5	28	Excellent
Skiatook	1.5	76	Excellent
Sooner	0.7	24	Average
Stroud	1.3	44	Above Average
Tenkiller	2.3	21	Above Average
Texoma	2.1	50	Above Average
Webbers Falls	1.9	54	Above Average
Yahola	1.4	50	Above Average

In the springtime, white bass embark on massive movements upstream as part of their annual spawning run, and if you time your fishing trip to the right river or stream just right, you can find yourself wading through a feeding frenzy of fish eager to take your offerings of jigs, spinners and minnows.

Some telltale signs that its time to go fishing for “sand bass” include blooming redbud trees, warming days and spring rains.

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.

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.

### The Approach

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 spawning run, have your gear in the corner of the garage and ready to go on a whim. Sometimes the fishing is good, and at other times it's outstanding. But one thing is for sure; at the first sign the fishing is good, you'll want to be ready to grab your gear and head for the creek bank.

### **Making it Happen**

Watch the weather. 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.

### **RESOURCES FOR YOU:**

## **WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT WEEKLY FISHING REPORT**

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.

Weekly fishing reports are available online every week at [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com) and through the Wildlife Department's free weekly news release. Signing up online is easy, and every week subscribers will receive a free e-mail that includes not only the weekly fishing report, but also a package of timely news stories for that week. Everything from reports on the best sand bass fishing to the latest state record fish and game, as well as information on current hunting seasons, regulation changes, important dates and more are covered through the free news release. Log on to [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com) to become a subscriber.

# **STATE FISH AT A GLANCE**

### **Oklahoma Distribution**

Although native to Oklahoma, white bass were not found in great numbers until large reservoirs were constructed. Now they are found statewide.

### **Description**

The striped bass hybrid, which is a cross between the white bass and the striped bass, has a slightly arched back and has two tongue patches. It also has some broken lines on each side. The white bass can be identified by the distinctive arched back just behind its head. It also has only one tongue patch. The striped bass is not arched at the back and has two distinct tongue patches. It is also identified by the dark, usually unbroken lines on each side.

### **Habitat**

These fish usually travel in large schools. Adults prefer open water over sandy shoals during the day and shallows at night.

### **Natural Food Sources**

Shad, minnows, crustaceans and insects.

### **Spawning**

White bass are very prolific. One female can produce up to one million eggs. Reproductive activities are triggered by

water temperatures of 50 to 55 degree F. Spawning is at random over weeds, debris and rocks. When tributary streams are available, this species prefers upstream migration for spawning. No parental care is provided to eggs or young.

### **Facts**

The white bass is Oklahoma's state fish. An estimated one and a half million pounds of white bass are harvested annually from Oklahoma waters by sport fishermen. Due to their short life span and high reproductive capacity, no creel limits are imposed on some lakes. Anglers learn to watch for circling and diving gulls and/or surface disturbances as sure signs of schooling shad. Where there are shad, white bass are usually nearby.



White Bass: arched back, lines usually unbroken



# EIGHT GREAT WHITE BASS RUNS YOU CAN'T MISS

Story and artwork by Daniel Griffith,  
Information and Education Specialist

**S**pringtime brings about many things, including some of the best fishing opportunities of the year for many fish species. The white bass in particular embarks on its annual spawning run up creeks and tributaries flowing into major reservoirs during the spring, and the fast and furious feeding frenzies that ensue can be one of the most notable fishing spectacles of the year. You need only arm yourself with an assortment of jigs and a good rod and reel, and wading and bank fishing are excellent approaches during this springtime spawning event.

This guide is a compilation of some of the best white bass fishing in Oklahoma. Lakes are listed according to regions — not according to which is best overall — and this list only represents some of the many great white bass fishing lakes here in Oklahoma. So choose a spot in your neck of the woods (or not), and don't miss out on an Oklahoma ritual

**Region: Southcentral**

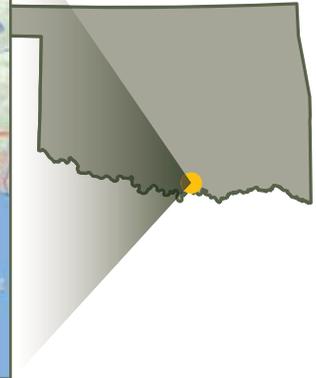
**Lake: Texoma**

**Corps of Engineers contact (903) 465-4990**

**Wildlife Department contact: Cliff Sager, biologist - (580) 920-5771**

Cliff Sager, southcentral region fisheries biologist for the Wildlife Department, says “Texoma white bass are often overlooked because of the great striped bass population.” Sager goes on to add that if the conditions are right, the spring spawning run is as good as anywhere else in the state.

Pennington Creek, which runs through the west side of Tishomingo, provides the best place to catch the white bass run during the spring.



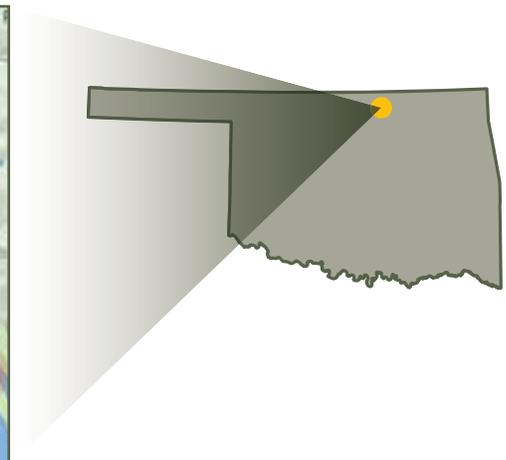
**Region: Northcentral**

**Lake: Kaw**

**Corps of Engineers contact (580) 762-5611**

**Wildlife Department contact: Tom Wolf, biologist - (580) 716-3131**

The spring hot spots fall north of the lake along the Arkansas River and northeast on Little Beaver Creek. If you happen to fill your limit of white bass, you might try going after some crappie or blue cats when you visit Kaw.



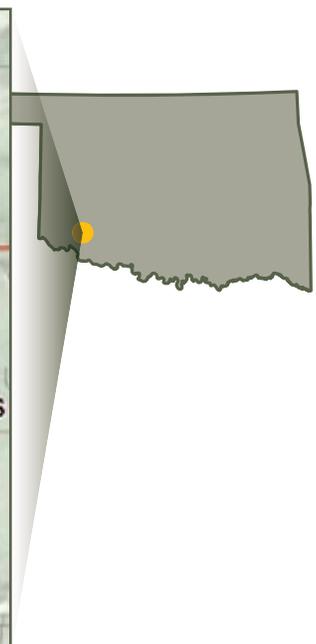
**Region: Southwest**

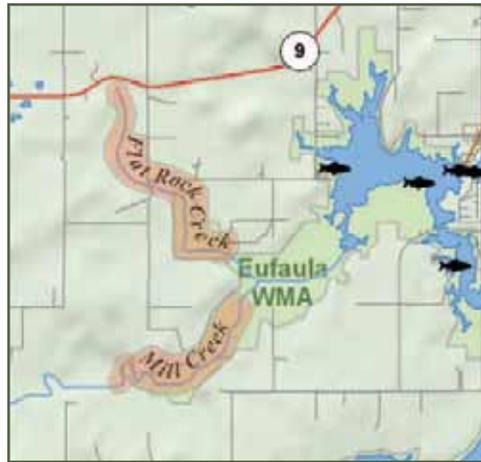
**Lake: Waurika**

**Corps of Engineers contact (580) 963-2111**

**Wildlife Department contact: Ryan Ryswyck, biologist - (580) 512-0204**

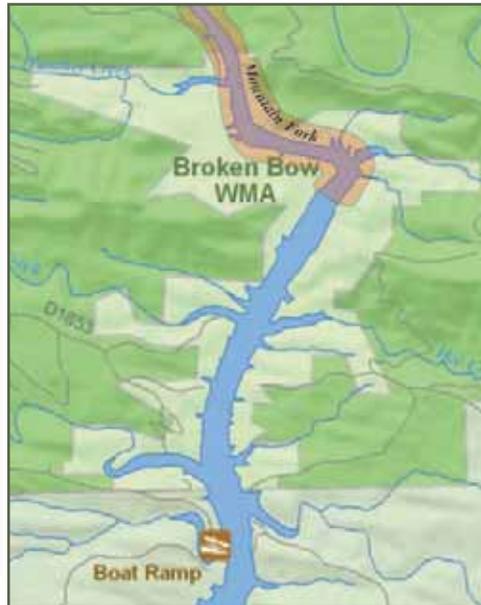
“While Beaver Creek offers a fair place to catch the run, it’s more common for anglers to target spawning white bass on the rip-rap along the east-west running dam,” said Larry Cofer, southwest region fisheries supervisor for the Wildlife Department. Cofer claims the success of the white bass in Waurika is all because of its shad production. The large abundance of shad creates a higher growth rate for white bass in Waurika, making a 2 lb. white bass not uncommon.





**Region: Central**  
**Lake: Eufaula**  
**Corps of Engineers contact (918) 484-5135**  
**Wildlife Department contact: Danny Bowen, biologist - (405) 380-7808**

Flat Rock and Mill Creek offer two great spots to catch white bass. Flat Rock has easy access right off the road at the bridge that crosses over it, while Mill Creek will require a little walking. Mill Creek runs through the Eufaula Wildlife Management Area, and anglers should work upstream and down depending on the flow to find white bass stacked up. Fishing surfacing schools in the central pool as well as in the North and South Canadian portions of the lake while trolling also offers great chances at white bass.



**Region: Southeast**  
**Lake: Broken Bow**  
**Corps of Engineers contact (580) 494-6374**  
**Wildlife Department biologist: Kyle James, biologist - (918) 686-3640**

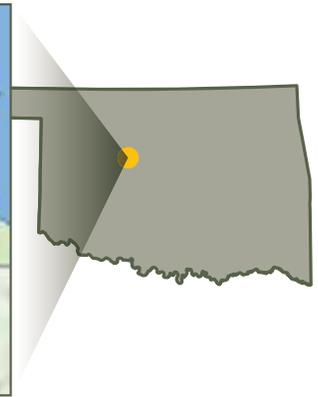
Biologist Kyle James claims that good habitat and an excellent supply of threadfin shad is what makes Broken Bow the prime spot to catch white bass in the southeast part of the state. White bass in the spring can be found north of the lake on the Mountain Fork, and bank access and camping are close by many of the popular places to catch a few sandies. Aside from great white bass fishing in the area, the area provides some spectacular scenery along the Mountain Fork River.



**“Thousands of people from all across the state and from other states have come to Tenkiller year after year to catch white bass during the spring,” says biologist Josh Johnston.**

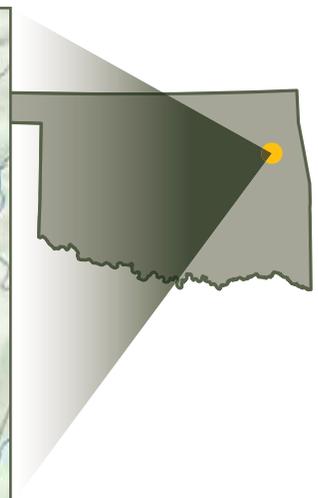
**Region: Northwest**  
**Lake: Canton**  
**Corps of Engineers contact (580) 886-2989**  
**Wildlife Department contact: Ty Harper, biologist - (580) 977-4248**

Known for its great walleye fishing, Canton Lake may not be the first lake to come to mind when the conversation turns to sand bass fishing. But actually, some argue that it is the best location to go for some white bass in northwest Oklahoma. The spring run is best along the North Canadian River coming into Canton and a couple miles upstream. During the summer, fishing along the dam on the southern end of the lake is a good way to land sand bass.



**Region: East Central**  
**Lake: Tenkiller**  
**Corps of Engineers contact (918) 487-5252**  
**Wildlife Department contact: Josh Johnston, technician - (918) 683-1031**

“Thousands of people from all across the state and from other states have come to Tenkiller year after year to catch white bass during the spring,” says biologist Josh Johnston. Although he has seen a decline in the numbers coming to fish Tenkiller over the years due to interest in other bodies of water, Johnston still feels the white bass fishery is as good if not better than it has been in the past. Horseshoe Bend north of the lake provides the prime location for catching the spring run at its peak. If you happen to show up a little early, Etta Bend just south of Horseshoe Bend is a great pre-staging area to hit.

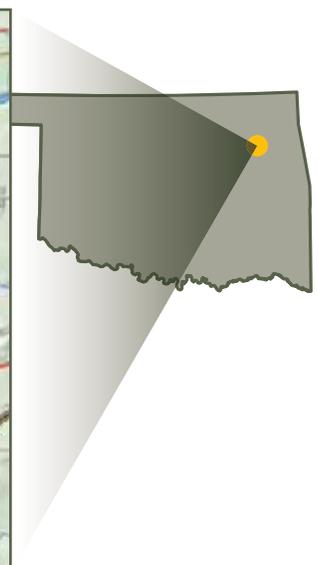
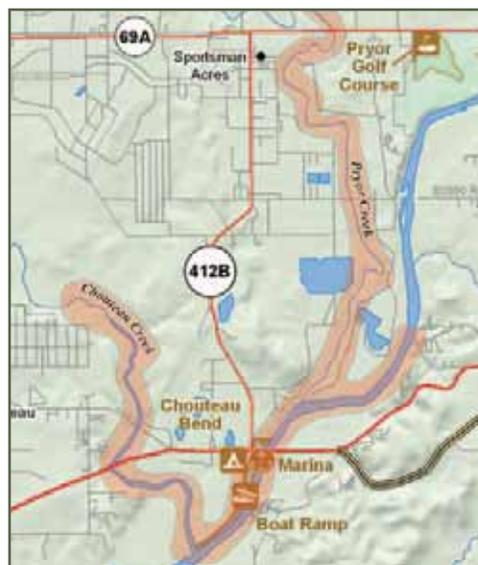


**Region: Northeast**  
**Lake: Ft. Gibson**  
**Corps of Engineers contact (918) 682-4314**  
**Wildlife Department contact: Brad Johnston, fisheries technician (918) 299-2334**

Fort Gibson in northeast Oklahoma provides some great bank access, along with boat access to springtime white bass fishing.

“Chouteau Creek at the highway 412 bridge and farther north where Pryor Creek crosses 69 A provide some great bank access for those unable to hit the water from a boat,” said Brad Johnston, northeast region fisheries technician for the Wildlife Department.

Johnston also added that Fort Gibson plays a role in the Oklahoma striped bass hybrid population, and that some of the male white bass brood stock is collected from the creeks and streams in the northern part of Ft Gibson.



# STRIPED BASS & STRIPED BASS HYBRIDS

BILL LINDNER PHOTOGRAPHY



*Stripers need little introduction as they are well-recognized among Oklahoma anglers as one of the state's hardest fighting, aggressive-on-the-line fish. Good populations exist in several lakes, such as Texoma, and populations of large stripers can be found in rivers such as the Lower Illinois River.*

**I**f you hook a striped bass or striped bass hybrid, regardless of size, get ready for a fight. They are simply aggressive fish that pull hard on a line.

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. They are available in several state waters and can reach weights of 40 pounds or more.

When you cross this true bass 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. As a sport fish, hybrids are probably best known for their

rapid growth and fighting ability. They can attain weights of six to seven pounds by three years of age and 18 to 20 pounds by eight to nine years of age.

### The Approach

Even though you should keep a range of lures like bucktail jigs, slabs and spoons on hand, consider making live bait your choice of attractant for these fish. The diet of a striper is made up mainly of threadfin and gizzard shad as well as some insects.

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.

### Making it Happen

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.

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.

### Hybrid Striped Bass Stocking, 2010

Hybrid striped bass were stocked in Altus Lugert, Arcadia, Birch, Canton, Carl Blackwell, Etling, Foss, Fort Cobb, Great Salt Plains, Hugo, Kaw, Oologah, Overholser, Ponca City Lake, Sahoma, Skiatook, Sooner, Tom Steed and Waurika.

2010 Striped Bass: Gillnetting			
Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 28 Inches or Over	Rating
Texoma	11	3	Excellent

2010 Hybrid Striped Bass: Gillnetting			
Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 15 Inches or Over	Rating
Canton	5.3	88	Above Average
Foss	4.3	76	Excellent
Fort Cobb	7.2	36	Excellent
Oologah	4.3	50	Above Average
Skiatook	6.2	62	Excellent
Sooner	2.5	56	Above Average

### FAQ: How can I find a fishing guide?

The Wildlife Department maintains a list of licensed fishing guides in Oklahoma. You can use this list to assist you in your search for guides when planning your next fishing trip. Find the list online at [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com)



Striped Bass Hybrid: back slightly arched, some broken lines State record: 23 lbs. 4 oz.



Striped Bass: back not arched State record: 47 lbs. 8 oz.

# CATFISH

COLIN BERG



*A young angler admires a channel catfish he caught.*

## **FAQ: How do I get fish for my farm pond?**

New and reclaimed ponds are eligible for stocking of fish from Wildlife Department hatcheries. A fish application form can be obtained from any Department hatchery office or biologist or the fish division office in Oklahoma City. You can also download an electronic copy of the application, fill it out, scan it and e-mail it as an attachment to the hatchery that provides fish for your county. For more information, log on to [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com). You can also call (405) 521-3721 for a list of commercial hatcheries. A list of aquaculture license holders can be found online <http://www.oda.state.ok.us/forms/ais/ais-aqua.pdf>.

**W**hether you are talking about channel cats, blues or flatheads, Oklahoma's waters are full of catfish. 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 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 also noodlers who fish with their hands 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.

## **Channel Catfish Stocking, 2009**

Channel catfish were stocked in 1st South Baptist Church, 33rd Street Pond, Adair State Park, Adams, Afton Votek, Altus City, American Horse, Arcadia Lake/Edmond N, Beaver State Park, Bethel Foundation Pond, Black Kettle, Blue River, Boiling Springs, Boney Ridge USFS, Bonham Pond, Boomer, Boswell State Park, Broken Arrow Fishing Derby, Buck Thomas, Burtschi, C-48 USFS, Cameron Pond, Carlton, Carmen City, Cedar, Chambers, Cherokee Nation, Choctaw Creek Park, Choctaw Park, Chouteau Bridge Pond, Clayton, Coon Creek, Crooked Branch, Crosslin Park Pond, 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, Edwards Park Pond, Enid Gov't. Springs, Enid Meadow Lake, Etling, Fletcher Pond, Ft. Cobb, Ft. Sill Ponds, Gentry Creek Pond, Geronimo, Greenleaf Lake, Greenleaf Pond, Grove Park Pond, Great Salt Plains, Guthrie Highland Park, Guthrie Mineral Wells, Guymon-Sunset, Hall, Helen, Heritage Park Pond, Honor Heights Park, Houston Pond, Hunter Park/Kiowa, Hunter Pool, James Collins WMA, Kickapoo Fishing Derby Pond, Kids Fish Out, Kids Lake, Kulli USFS, Lawtonka, Lazy E Arena, Lexington WMA, Liberty, Lone Chimney, Lost Lake Tishomingo NWR, Madill City, Maple Park, Marland Mansion, Martin Landing, McAlester AAP Ponds, Meeker City, Midway USFS, Moore Little River Park-North, Moore Little River Park-South, Muel Lake Tishomingo NWR, Muldrow City Ponds, Mustang Creek, Nanih Waiya, Natural Falls State Park, Norman Griffin Park, Northeast Office Bridge Pond, OKC South Lake Park Pond East, OKC South Lake Park Pond West, Oklahoma River May Basin, Okmulgee Kiddie # 1 & 2, Overholser, Ozzie Cobb, Park Lane, Pawnee Bill State Park, Pickens, Raymond Gary, Red Rock Canyon, Schooler, Seminole Nation, Seminole State College Pond, Senior Center Pond-Yukon, Shale Pit Pond, Shawnee # 1, Skipout, Soldier Creek, Spaulding Park, Sportsman, Spring Creek/Roger Mills, Standing Bear Pond, Stanley Draper, Sultan Park, Sutton Wilderness Pond, Teal Lake USFS, Tecumseh City, Temple City, Tenkiller State Park, Tinker AFB Ponds, Tucker Lake, Tulsa International Airport-North Pond, United Methodist Childrens Home, V A Pond, Vanderwork, Vian City, Vincent, Watonga, Wayne Wallace, Welsh Pond, Wetumka, Wheelock Academy Pond, Whitaker Park, Wildhorse Park, Willow Pond, Wintersmith Park, Woodward Ag. Exp. Lake and Yukon Mulvey's Pond.

## The Approach:

For channel catfish, try using worms, crayfish, prepared baits and cut shad. Try live bait for blue and flathead catfish. 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 bobber and baited hook, or even the popular limblines, juglines or trotlines.

## Making it Happen:

Local municipal lakes that are stocked with catfish make good choices for “on-a-whim” catfish angling, and even better might be a farm pond managed for angling. If neither are immediately available, consider a stream fishing vacation getaway, such as the Blue River Public Fishing and Hunting Area near Tishomingo. Camping, incredible waterfalls and excellent fishing are available on the area. For information and usage regulations, consult the current “Oklahoma Fishing Guide” or log on to [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com).

### RESOURCES FOR YOU:

## AQUATIC RESOURCE EDUCATION PROGRAM

Although sport fishing remains one of the most popular forms of recreation, some states are experiencing a decline in numbers of anglers. In many cases, aging anglers lost because of health problems or death are not being replaced by new, young anglers.

The Aquatic Resources Education Program (AREP) is the Department’s means to promote the sport of fishing and aquatic resource awareness as well as a way to give youth, regardless of family situation, an opportunity to learn about Oklahoma’s aquatic environments and how to fish.

Developed in 1988, the program’s objectives are to increase the understanding, appreciation, and awareness of Oklahoma’s aquatic resources; to facilitate the learning of angling skills, outdoor ethics, and sport fishing opportunities in the state; enhance urban fishing opportunities; develop adult fishing clinics or seminars; and provide information on specialized fishing techniques. These one-day events present information on such topics as fish identification, knot tying, fish cleaning and cooking, fishing tackle selection and use, water safety, outdoor ethics, water quality and more.

Most clinics include fishing at a nearby pond or lake. To date, thousands of clinics have been organized statewide. The overwhelming response to this program, with more than 1,600 participants at some clinics, indicates the need for continuation of AREP. Certified volunteer instructors conduct the clinics after attending a three-hour training workshop. These workshops, held at various locations throughout Oklahoma, are open to groups or individuals interested in volunteering to train and educate tomorrow’s anglers. These clinics provide an excellent means for bass clubs, civic organizations, church groups, and others who care about kids, fishing or conservation to give something back.

If you, your group, or school are interested in participating in this program or if you would like more information, please contact the Aquatic Education Coordinator, Damon Springer, at [dspringer@odwc.state.ok.us](mailto:dspringer@odwc.state.ok.us).

### 2010 Blue Catfish: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 26 Inches or Over	Rating
Fort Cobb	7.3	14	Average
Hudson	5.9	0	Above Average
Keystone	9.8	2	Average
McAlester City Lake	7.7	2	Average
Oologah	18	15	Above Average
Skiatook	5.2	0	Below Average
Sooner	15	31	Average
Texoma	22	10	Above Average
Wewoka	3.7	0	Below Average
Webbers Falls	7.8	1	Above Average

### 2010 Channel Catfish: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 22 Inches or Over	Rating
Bluestem	2.6	0	Below Average
Canton	6.7	24	Above Average
Carl Albert	4.9	16	Average
Cedar	1.2	0	Average
Church	12	11	Average
Davenport	4.9	32	Above Average
Dripping Springs	9.2	15	Average
Foss	8.5	33	Above Average
Fort Cobb	5.9	37	Above Average
Fort Supply	3.6	4	Average
Healdton	2.8	0	Below Average
Holdenville	5.5	3	Average
Hudson	4.3	7	Average
Jean Neustadt	6.5	7	Above Average
Keystone	3.6	0	Average
McAlester City Lake	1.3	0	Below Average
Oologah	8.7	9	Average
Skiatook	8	3	Average
Sooner	4.1	2	Average
Stroud	8.3	22	Above Average
Tenkiller	4.9	6	Average
Weleetka	2.9	0	Above Average
Wewoka	2.8	0	Average
Webbers Falls	4.2	6	Average
Yahola	4.2	11	Above Average

### 2010 Flathead Catfish: Gillnetting

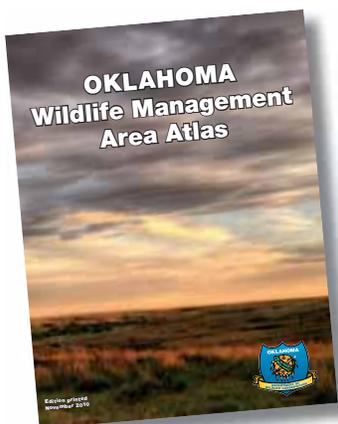
Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 20 Inches or Over	Rating
Canton	3.3	25	Average
Keystone	6.1	50	Above Average
Oologah	10	50	Above Average
Tenkiller	7.4	44	Average

# CRAPPIE

KEITH SUTTON



*With a daily limit 37, and more than ample supply of them in lakes across Oklahoma, the crappie is an Oklahoma angling staple.*



**W**idespread and popular, the crappie is an Oklahoma staple for anglers. They are fun to catch, and make a great spread on a summer picnic table. “Papermouths,” “slabs,” or whatever you prefer to call them, crappie have an uncanny ability to compete well against other predator fish and, as a result, can and should be harvested heavily. In Oklahoma, anglers can take home 37 crappie daily.

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, and a black crappie will have seven or eight bony spines. There is no difference in the way the two are caught.

## The Approach

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.

Crappie often can be found in standing timber and brushy cover in lakes. They hang out in the shallow ends of coves during the spring, when they

move into shallow water to spawn, and later on will move to deeper waters. Mid-March to mid-April is perhaps the easiest time to catch crappie and also when you have the best chances of catching big female “slab” 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.

## Making it Happen

If you like to fish and turkey hunt, try a combo trip. Pick a lake located near a Wildlife Management Area, and make a springtime getaway. Wildlife Management Areas are located all across the state, many near lakes that hold good populations of crappie. To see a listing of Wildlife Management Areas, log on to [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com). The Wildlife Department also offers a high quality, spiral-bound Wildlife Management Area Atlas for \$25 that features WMAs across the state. Public parking areas, campsites, roads and many other details are offered throughout the pages of the atlas. For the sportsmen, this atlas is a must.

## White Crappie Stocking, 2010

White crappie were stocked in the Oklahoma River May Basin.

### 2010 White Crappie: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 10 Inches or Over	Rating
Bluestem	1.3	5	Above Average
Canton	0.7	75	Above Average
Church	1.4	91	Above Average
Fort Cobb	1.5	90	Above Average
Fort Supply	1.7	87	Above Average
Healdton	2.1	39	Excellent
Holdenville	1.4	7	Above Average
Hudson	1.7	44	Average
Jean Neustadt	1.5	6	Average
Keystone	1.2	16	Above Average
McAlester City Lake	1.1	35	Excellent
Oologah	1.4	56	Excellent
Skiatook	1.3	37	Above Average
Stroud	0.5	2	Above Average
Tenkiller	1.2	60	Above Average
Wewoka	0.1	0	Average
Webbers Falls	1.7	20	Average
Yahola	0.8	75	Above Average

### 2010 White Crappie: Trapnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 10 Inches or Over	Rating
Bartlesville	1.4	25	Average
Bluestem	1.9	6	Average
Durant	1.3	49	Average
Ellsworth	0.8	15	Average
Grand Lake	2	37	Above Average
Greenleaf	1.2	27	Average
Hefner	1	12	Average
Hugo	1.9	62	Above Average
Longmire	1	11	Above Average
Pine Creek	1	33	Average
Ponca City	1.8	36	Above Average
Tenkiller	1.5	67	Above Average

### 2010 Black Crappie: Gillnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 10 Inches or Over	Rating
Fort Cobb	2.3	84	Above Average
Tenkiller	0.9	56	Above Average

### 2010 Black Crappie: Trapnetting

Lake	Big Fish (In Pounds)	Percent 10 Inches or Over	Rating
Bartlesville	0.4	0	Below Average
Durant	0.7	50	Average
Grand Lake	0.8	23	Average
Hugo	1.1	14	Average
Pine Creek	1.5	16	Average
Tenkiller	1.5	15	Average

#### FAQ: I have a bass pond but would like to fish for crappie too. Can I stock crappie in this pond?

Crappie are not usually recommended in bass ponds under 100 surface acres. A prolific spawner, crappie in small bodies of water will usually compete directly with bass for food and produce not only slow-growing crappie but slow-growing bass as well. They are also known to reduce small bass survival by preying directly on young bass. You may know of a pond with both good size bass and crappie, but these are rare.

#### FAQ: How can I locate an enclosed fishing dock?

Look in the current "Oklahoma Fishing Guide" for a list of enclosed fishing docks around the state.



Black Crappie: sporadic spotted pattern, seven or eight bony spines



White Crappie: uniform bands, Five or six bony spines on dorsal fin

# PADDLEFISH

NELS RODFELD



**P**addlefish are one of the most unique fish in the state. They eat microscopic zooplankton and have long “spoonbills” protruding from their snouts. Despite their tiny food source, spoonbills are huge fish, so much that a 30-pounder is nothing to talk about. While an angler may reel in enough paddlefish in one day to equal hundreds or even thousands of pounds, they can only keep one fish per day. And once you take one for keeps, you have to stop fishing for the day.

Paddlefish 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.

### The Approach

When it comes to paddlefish, leave the lures and live bait behind. Paddlefish are caught by snagging, a method of dragging a large treble hook through the water. The prime time to snag paddlefish is in the spring, when the fish swim upstream from reservoirs into rivers. These mass migrations result in concentrated numbers of paddlefish that can be caught more easily.

### Making it Happen

Grand Lake, Lake Hudson and Fort Gibson are all part of the Grand River system that has provided Oklahoma and non-resident anglers with some of the best paddlefishing in the world. Be sure to read all the regulations regarding paddlefish angling in the current “Oklahoma Fishing Guide,” available free online at [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com) or in hard copy anywhere fishing licenses are sold.

The Neosho River in northeast Oklahoma is a prime location, and the Wildlife Department’s Paddlefish Research and Processing Center at near the Twin Bridges area will process your fish free of charge.



*Paddlefish are heavyweights in the world of Oklahoma fish, and the process of snagging, reeling and hoisting one into a boat can be an exhausting feat. But it's worth it.*

## RESOURCES FOR YOU:

# PADDLEFISH RESEARCH PROGRAM

The paddlefish research program is based out of a pilot location 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 knew very little about the annual harvest numbers of paddlefish. 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.

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 three 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.

Last year the Wildlife Department biologists determined from the research 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 contributed to a reduction in the paddlefish harvest last year while still offering significant opportunities for anglers.

The center is open during paddlefish snagging season — generally March 1 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.



# LESSONS FROM THE PADDLEFISH RESEARCH & PROCESSING CENTER

BY ANDREA CREWS, RESPONSIVE MANAGEMENT SENIOR BIOLOGIST

*Brent Gordon, northeast region fisheries supervisor for the Wildlife Department, collects a jaw bone from a paddlefish at the Wildlife Department's Paddlefish Research and Processing Center. The jawbone can provide age and biological information about the fish that ultimately can help biologists manage paddlefish populations.*

**P**addlefishing has been tremendous the last few years, there's no doubt. So with all those big fish and happy anglers, why are Monday and Friday now catch-and-release only? Why is the Spring River completely closed to paddlefishing?

Data collected from fish brought to the Paddlefish Research and Processing Center have provided biologists with the tools to scientifically manage the Grand Lake paddlefish population. It's a fisheries manager's dream come true.

Fish brought to the RPC are sexually mature. That may not be Earth-shattering news, since paddlefish are typically snagged during the spawning run. However, this confirmation also implies that immature paddlefish are not really impacted by the spring fishery. That's a good thing – more to breed later.

Most paddlefish harvested are 5 to 15 years old. The lower end of this bracket is not surprising because males don't reach sexual maturity until around age 5, and females a couple of years later. However, the upper end of the bracket raised eyebrows. In northern parts of the US where paddlefish have been extensively researched, the fish typically live longer. Older fish are generally larger and better breeders. With fewer older adult paddlefish in the Grand Lake population than suspected, managers need to ensure we have ample annual spawners.

The source of the fishery over the last few years is dependent on one strong age class: 1999. The figures speak for themselves. Although the reason for the strong recruitment in 1999 is unknown, it's suspected to be related to high water flow (lake discharge) that year.

Paddlefish recruitment varies widely from year to year, and the next few years after 1999 were poor. By the time the RPC opened its doors, fish from the year classes 2000 through 2003 should have been showing up. Some did, of course, but proportionally far fewer than the 1999 group. It's hard to know if the next

strong age class has occurred, because paddlefish are age four before being caught in population surveys. For the last two years, fisheries biologists tried different methods to capture age-0 paddlefish (new recruits of the year) to assess the 2008 and 2009 age classes, but failed. For now, the fishery is relying on the 1999 recruits and we're hoping they last until the next strong age class reaches maturity.

Grand Lake paddlefish are small. Historical records suggest the paddlefish brought to the RPC in 2008 and 2009 were half the size of fish harvested from the area in the past. The cause for this slow growth is uncertain, but could be influenced by food competition as a result of the strong 1999 age class, reservoir productivity, high natural mortality rates, or other environmental factors. Paddlefish growth slows after sexual maturity, so the 1999 fish are not expected to get much bigger.

Females and males are closer than expected in both age of sexual maturity and adult size. Since female paddlefish mature a few years after males, and since growth slows after maturity, female paddlefish are typically larger than males of the same age. In the northern U.S., female sexual maturity may lag 8 to 10 years behind the males. With all those extra years to grow, the females can be two or three times heavier. This huge gap leads anglers to favor females for harvest, putting pressure on the reproductive cycle. In Oklahoma, females mature 2-3 years later than males, which reduces the gap in size. In both 2008 and 2009, more males than females were brought to the RPC. Anglers do not appear to be putting undo harvest pressure on females.

RPC usage was spread over many anglers. Nearly 4,000 different anglers used the RPC, processing almost 7,400 fish. A few people brought in lots of fish (the high was 22), but on average, RPC users had two paddlefish processed during 2009. Some states have tried to limit paddlefish harvest by placing an annual bag limit per angler. Assuming that RPC usage is indicative of a typical paddlefish angler's catch for the year, the bag limit would have to be set at 2 or 3 fish per year in order to significantly reduce the harvest (potentially yielding 50% and 30% reductions, respectively).

The peak of paddlefishing season (a.k.a., the peak of the spawning run) varies with river discharge, but March and April will typically include the best fishing times. In 2008 and 2009, the peak usage of the RPC was the last week of March and first week of April. Some states have seasons on paddlefish that encompass the peak spawning but are closed for the rest of the year.

Saturday is the busiest day of the week at the RPC. Anglers also bring a lot of fish to the RPC on Sundays and Fridays. Assuming Saturday remained a harvest day, catch and release days on Friday or Sunday would do the best job of reducing paddlefish harvest. Given that more than half of Grand Lake paddlefish anglers are nonresidents presumably visiting on long weekends, a Monday harvest ban should prevent a shifting of Friday pressure to the next week.

Armed with these data, fisheries managers determined that a reduction in paddlefish harvest was necessary to lighten pressure on the magnificent 1999 age class, until another strong year of recruits reaches maturity. When might that be? Although the strength of recruitment in any given year is unknown until the fish are old enough to make

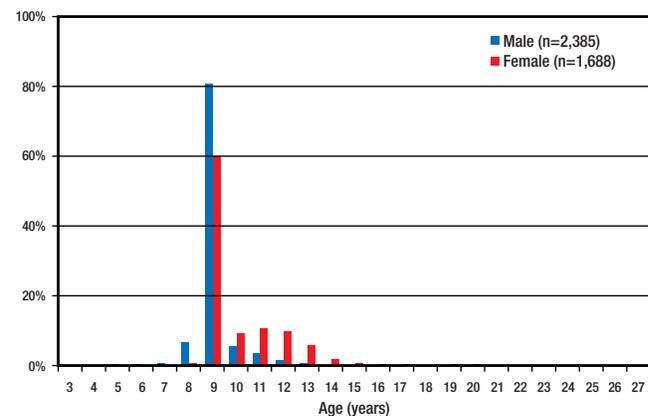
the spawning run and are caught by anglers, records indicate river flow didn't approach 1999 conditions until 2007. If that age class is indeed strong, those fish will begin to reach sexual maturity in 2012. Water flow was strong again in 2008 and 2009, so it is possible that several years of good recruitment have occurred. The trick is to spread out harvest pressure on the 1999 age class until the next peak in adult fish.

Many options were considered, including season dates on paddlefish and/or an annual bag limit. The solution that was believed to be the easiest for anglers to understand and to enforce, and still have potential for harvest reduction was the designation of catch-and-release days on Mondays and Fridays, coupled with the establishment of a paddlefish sanctuary on the Spring River. Managers will continue to rely on data collected from the RPC to help them understand paddlefish population dynamics and adjust fishing regulations accordingly.

Information in this article is based on Final Report for Sport Fish Restoration grant number F-50-R-16, Project 27: Stock Assessment of the Grand Lake Paddlefish Population. Extensive analysis of RPC data was conducted by Dr. Dennis Scarnecchia of the University of Idaho.

—Andrea Crews is a senior biologist for the Wildlife Department. Her work in responsive management explores many areas of the human dimensions aspects of managing and conserving fish and wildlife in Oklahoma.

## 2008 AGE DISTRIBUTION



## 2009 AGE DISTRIBUTION

