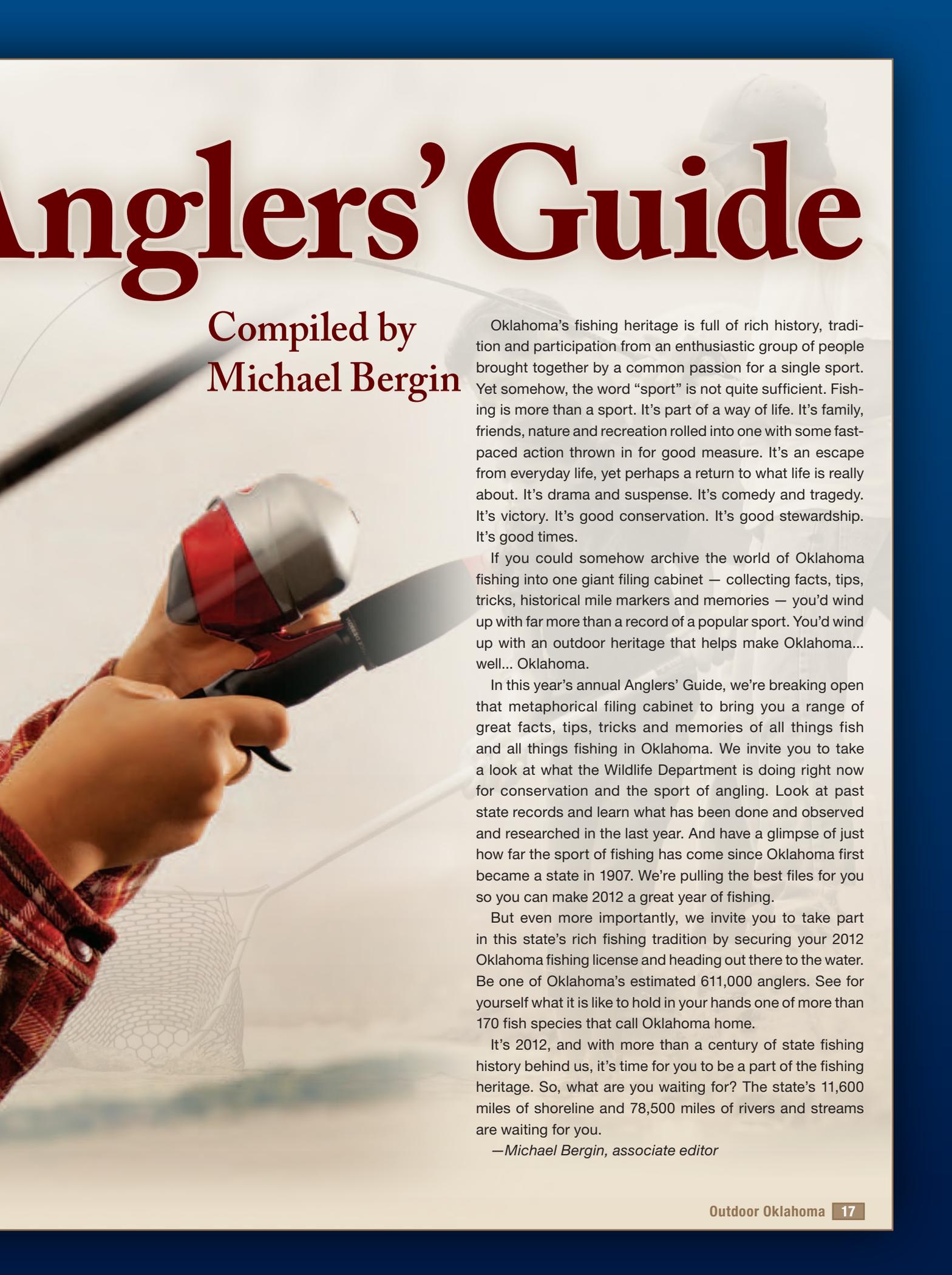


# 2012 A



A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a fishing lure. The person is wearing a red and black plaid shirt. The lure is black and red with a silver spinner. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with a fishing net and a body of water.

# Anglers' Guide

Compiled by  
Michael Bergin

Oklahoma's fishing heritage is full of rich history, tradition and participation from an enthusiastic group of people brought together by a common passion for a single sport. Yet somehow, the word "sport" is not quite sufficient. Fishing is more than a sport. It's part of a way of life. It's family, friends, nature and recreation rolled into one with some fast-paced action thrown in for good measure. It's an escape from everyday life, yet perhaps a return to what life is really about. It's drama and suspense. It's comedy and tragedy. It's victory. It's good conservation. It's good stewardship. It's good times.

If you could somehow archive the world of Oklahoma fishing into one giant filing cabinet — collecting facts, tips, tricks, historical mile markers and memories — you'd wind up with far more than a record of a popular sport. You'd wind up with an outdoor heritage that helps make Oklahoma... well... Oklahoma.

In this year's annual Anglers' Guide, we're breaking open that metaphorical filing cabinet to bring you a range of great facts, tips, tricks and memories of all things fish and all things fishing in Oklahoma. We invite you to take a look at what the Wildlife Department is doing right now for conservation and the sport of angling. Look at past state records and learn what has been done and observed and researched in the last year. And have a glimpse of just how far the sport of fishing has come since Oklahoma first became a state in 1907. We're pulling the best files for you so you can make 2012 a great year of fishing.

But even more importantly, we invite you to take part in this state's rich fishing tradition by securing your 2012 Oklahoma fishing license and heading out there to the water. Be one of Oklahoma's estimated 611,000 anglers. See for yourself what it is like to hold in your hands one of more than 170 fish species that call Oklahoma home.

It's 2012, and with more than a century of state fishing history behind us, it's time for you to be a part of the fishing heritage. So, what are you waiting for? The state's 11,600 miles of shoreline and 78,500 miles of rivers and streams are waiting for you.

—Michael Bergin, associate editor



***The bluegill is a time-honored sunfish in Oklahoma, celebrated for its wide distribution, great tasting meat and even its aggressive style when caught on a line. Though small, a sunfish is, pound-for-pound, a strong-fighting fish.***

**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.

# Fish Files: Sunfish

Whether it's a green, redear, hybrid, pumpkinseed or any other sunfish found in Oklahoma, few fish are more abundantly available in the state.

## Daily Limit

None in areas without special regulations

## Why You Want to Catch One

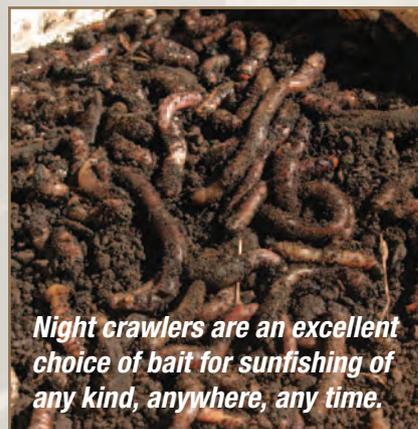
- They bite often and they bite on almost anything — worms, minnows, hotdogs; it doesn't matter.
- Kids armed with a rod, reel and box of worms can stay busy for hours, catching one sunfish after another or working on their angling skills like cast placement, baiting hooks, and taking fish off the hook over and over again.
- They are delicious table fare. Flaky, tender meat stands up well to pan and deep-frying or baking and broiling and is tasty served hot or cold. Excellent for a campground lunch or full course fish fry with family and friends.
- No daily state limits
- They are easy to catch, but if you master the art, you'll have a foundation to help you catch any other kind of sport fish.

## How It's Done

- Sunfish are especially active and aggressive during May and June, making this one of the best times of the year to catch them. Fish shorelines where they have built shallow nests, which can often be seen from the bank.
- Excellent bait choices for year-round sunfish angling include worms, minnows, grasshoppers, crickets and other live bait or small jigs. Weedbeds also make ideal habitat for really big bluegill and redear sunfish.
- Use small minnows throughout the spawning season, and slip-bobber rigs can be used to fish deeper waters as the summer progresses.
- 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.
- Find good fishing holes through the Wildlife Department's Close to Home Fishing program, Chances are, the sun-

fish will be waiting. Sunfish make homes 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 find the fish first.



*Night crawlers are an excellent choice of bait for sunfishing of any kind, anywhere, any time.*

BERNARD DAVIS



### State Record Bluegill Sunfish

(Rod and Line Division at press time)

**Weight:** 2 lbs., 6 oz.

**Length:** 12 3/4"

**Girth:** 14 1/2"

**Where:** Kay Co. Pond

**When:** 5-8-87

**Angler:** Tom Shorter



### State Record Hybrid Sunfish

(Rod and Line Division at press time)

**Weight:** 1 lbs., 14 oz.

**Length:** 12 3/8"

**Girth:** 13 7/8"

**Where:** Bryan Co. Pond

**When:** 5-24-97

**Angler:** Hal Smith



Photo Unavailable

### State Record Green Sunfish

(Rod and Line Division at press time)

**Weight:** 2 lbs., 7 oz.

**Length:** 13"

**Girth:** 14 1/4"

**Where:** Pontotoc Co. Pond

**When:** 10-16-72

**Angler:** Eddie Shulanberger



### State Record Redear Sunfish

(Rod and Line Division at press time)

**Weight:** 2 lbs., 1 oz.

**Length:** 12 3/4"

**Girth:** 13"

**Where:** Logan Co. Pond

**When:** 11-15-73

**Angler:** Ruby Lee Farmer



*Fly fishing is a traditional way to catch trout, and a number of resources and shops are available in the state to help you choose the gear needed to give it a go. Even so, don't rule out your ultra-light rod and reel equipped with 4-6 lb. test line and baited with salmon eggs, corn, or artificial lures.*

*The wintery waters of the Blue River offer regular trout stockings from Nov. 1 through March 31 each year. The designated trout area spans more than six miles of river flowing through the Blue River Public Fishing and Hunting Area in Johnston County. You want to go there and try your hand at trout fishing? Just hop in the car and head four miles east of Tishomingo on Hwy 78 and six miles north. It's just one of several seasonal and year-round trout fisheries in Oklahoma.*



**State Record  
Rainbow Trout**

(Rod and Line Division at press time)

**Weight:** 10 lbs., 4 oz.  
**Length:** 27"  
**Girth:** 16"  
**Where:** Lower Illinois River  
**When:** 7-3-66  
**Angler:** Billy Payne



**State Record  
Brown Trout**

**Weight:** 17 lbs., 4.6 oz.  
**Length:** 32 3/4"  
**Girth:** 20"  
**Where:** Lower Mountain Fork River  
**When:** 4-10-05  
**Angler:** Jason Archie

# Fish Files: Trout

In Oklahoma, you can catch rainbow trout and brown trout. Neither are native to Oklahoma — rainbows are native to the cold streams west of the Continental Divide, and brown trout are native to Europe. However, they have been successfully introduced to Oklahoma waters, effectively creating a fishing opportunity that at one time didn't exist in the state. Rainbows are most common. Native or not, the memories these fish are creating for anglers every year are real, meaningful, and lifelong.

## Daily Limit

The daily limit is generally six rainbow trout and six brown trout, but exceptions apply in certain waters. Consult pages 28-31 of the current “Oklahoma Fishing Guide” for complete details.

## Why You Want to Catch One Things to Remember

- Trout fishing 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 — 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.
- Up-to-date trout stocking schedules are posted on the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's website at [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com), so you always know when to go.

## How it's Done

- You can catch trout with a fly rod or with traditional equipment. Artificial flies work well, and so 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.

- Use four to six-pound test line and small hooks.
- When fishing in swift waters such as in streams, cast your bait above exposed boulders and let it drift down through the calm water on the downstream side.

- Once you catch a trout and place it on a stringer, you must keep it. The law in Oklahoma says that after placing a trout on a stringer or otherwise holding it in possession, letting it go is prohibited. This is because trout are sensitive to stress, and being released after being placed on a stringer or kept reduces their chance of survival significantly. Once you place a trout on a stringer, plan on enjoying a satisfying meal. Additionally, handle any trout you catch and release with care. Dip your hands in the water before handling them to protect their skin, carefully remove hooks and gently put them back in the water.
- In most cases you can be successful fishing from the bank or when wading, so you don't have to worry about accessing a boat.
- Taking someone along to learn is easy, and with some practice and trial and error, newcomers catch on quickly.
- Except in year-round fisheries at the Lower Mountain Fork River and Lower Illinois River, trout season opens Nov. 1 at trout fishing

areas across the state, and the fish are often stocked into or through March. Consult the current “Oklahoma Fishing Guide” for specifics.

## Trout in the City

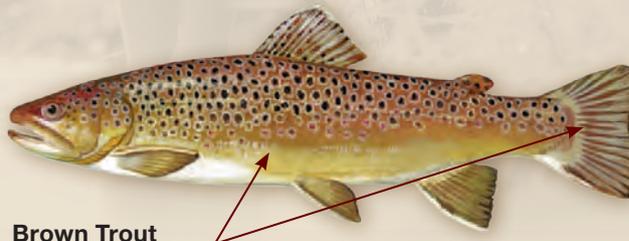
Oklahoma City metro anglers can take advantage of the “Close to Home” trout fishery at Dolese Youth Park Pond during the months of January and February. Regulations at Dolese Youth Park Pond vary from other state trout regulations, so anglers should consult the “Oklahoma Fishing Guide” before fishing for trout at Dolese. 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 thanks to a generous donation from BancFirst.

Oklahoma's two trout species can be easily identified. First look at the side of the fish. A rainbow will be iridescent, but the brown trout will have orange and red spots. The rainbow will also have black spots on its tail and a white belly. In comparison, the brown will have few or no black spots on its tail and a cream belly.



**Rainbow Trout**

Black spots on tail, iridescence on sides



**Brown Trout**

Few or no black spots on tail, orange & red spots on side

# Weird Fish of Oklahoma

Most fishermen are aware that our state is home to one of the most diverse and productive fisheries in the nation, but few anglers can name more than a small fraction of the 180 or so fish species swimming in Oklahoma waters. Some of these species are small and relatively ordinary looking, while others have strange body shapes, bizarre appendages or dazzling coloration.

Anglers who hook one of these memorable fish can keep it. Wildlife Department biologists are collecting data on the distribution of these species and would appreciate a call or e-mail whenever a "weird fish" is caught. Here's a brief introduction to some of the lesser known fish species occasionally caught by Oklahoma anglers. Perhaps you will hook one this year!



## Blue Sucker

The blue sucker is an elegantly-streamlined fish, well-suited for life in moving water. It can be identified by its long sloping forehead, a long, sail-shaped dorsal fin and "bumpy" lips. In Oklahoma the blue suckers' range is restricted to the Grand and Red Rivers. Catches are rare, but are most likely to occur in the lower Red River, particularly near its confluence with the Blue and Kiamichi Rivers.

**Fish Fact:** Huge schools of blue suckers once roamed our nation's rivers, but their numbers have declined throughout their range. In Oklahoma they are listed as a species of special concern and all catches should be reported to the nearest fisheries office.



## Shovelnose Sturgeon

Shovelnose sturgeon are among our most ancient and primitive fishes. Like sharks, sturgeon lack bones and their skeletal system consists entirely of cartilage. Shovelnose sturgeon are well-adapted for life in turbid moving water and can be identified by their spade-shaped heads, bony scutes along the body and a row of four barbels in front of their mouths. Once fairly common and widespread, they are now rarely encountered in the Arkansas and Red Rivers and their tailwaters. The shovelnose sturgeon is occasionally caught by rod and reel fishermen and on trot lines.

**Fish Fact:** Reaching only about four pounds, shovelnose can live up to 30 years, but don't reach maturity until five- to seven-years-old. In Oklahoma they are listed as a species of special concern and all catches should be reported to the nearest fisheries office.



## Bowfin

Bowfin have a long, thick, eel-like appearance with a rounded tail and a long undulating dorsal (often folded down) that reaches nearly to its tail. The head is blunt and snake-like, with two small appendages (called nares) on its upper jaw near its nostrils. Bowfin have very strong jaws lined with sharp teeth and should be handled with caution. Bowfin are found in swampy areas with heavy vegetation. Bowfin are aggressive feeders and readily hit lures. In Oklahoma they mainly occur in southern portions of Choctaw and McCurtain counties.

**Fish Fact:** Bowfin are sometimes called living fossils and are the sole survivors of a family of fish dating to the Jurassic period. They literally outlived the dinosaurs and are capable of gulping air and burrowing in the mud to survive brief periods of drought. They feed mainly on fish and crayfish.

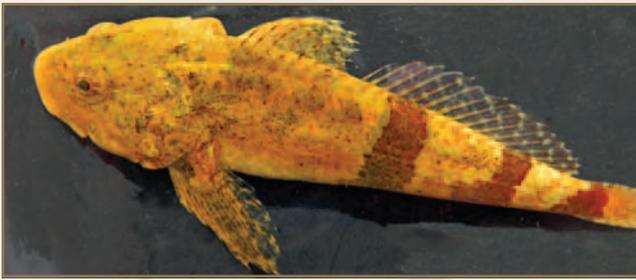


## Mooneye & Goldeye

Mooneye (above) and Goldeye (inset) are both attractive, bright, silvery fish which at first glance resemble shad, but lack a black spot behind their gill flap and have a much wider gape with their mouth situated at the end of their snout. Both species have well-defined teeth on their tongues and jaws. The two species closely resemble each other, but mooneye have a much smaller range in Oklahoma and are encountered less frequently. Both species readily take small jigs and spinners and are often caught in the spring and early summer.

**Fish Fact:** Goldeye and mooneye belong to the Genus *Hiodon* meaning "toothed tongue." The mooneye prefers clearer water and in Oklahoma is restricted to the Little and Mountain Fork Rivers of McCurtain County.

BRANDON BROWN



### Banded Sculpin

The banded sculpin is a small fish with a big mouth and an even bigger attitude. Although they seldom exceed five inches in length, banded sculpin readily eat any prey that will fit in their oversized mouths. They are sometimes caught by bottom fishermen. Banded sculpins are found in cool clear Ozark streams of northeast Oklahoma.

**Fish Fact:** Although banded sculpins appear very hardy, they are actually one of our most fragile fish species and can only live in cool Ozark streams with high water quality. They are sometimes seen with green or gold eyes due to retractable lenses that act like sunglasses to shield their eyes from UV light.

JOSH BAILEY / OWFB



### Rock Bass

Rock bass are an Ozark stream species with an appearance similar to other sunfish, but with a large bass-like mouth, cheeks without visible barring and a black gill flap without an orange border. Rock bass are often found in dense cover and are especially fond of rootwads and undercut banks. They readily strike artificial lures, but seldom venture far from cover. Rock bass are also called goggle eye and shadow bass.

**Fish Fact:** Rock bass can readily change their color and pattern to match surrounding backgrounds. They are also intolerant of turbidity and poor water quality, and require cool clear water to survive.

NATE TESSLER



### Logperch

Logperch are one of Oklahoma's most widespread, but little-known fish species. They live primarily in streams but have adapted well to reservoir life and can be found in many lakes throughout the state. Logperch are a very active fish, and live and forage among small rocks and cobble. They often use their noses to flip surprisingly large stones while looking for insects and larvae and are occasionally caught on hook and line.

**Fish Fact:** Logperch are true perch and the largest of Oklahoma's 29 darter species. Most Oklahoma species commonly referred to as "perch" are actually sunfish and in the same family as largemouth bass. Disjunct populations are found in the Wichita Mountains and Fort Cobb area of southwest Oklahoma.

JIM NEGUS



### Skipjack Herring

Skipjack herring are fairly large (up to 18 inches) members of the herring family with large mouths and toothed jaws and tongues. They can be distinguished from mooneye and gold-eye by their longer and more-slender body shapes, a protruding lower jaw and sharp saw-tooth-like scales along the keel of the belly. Skipjacks have a clear protective eyelid that covers the front and backs of their eyes. Skipjacks are found in the eastern portions of the Red and Arkansas river systems and are most common below dams where they are sometimes caught on artificial lures such as jigs and small spinners.

**Fish Fact:** Skipjack herring get their name from their tendency to jump when caught on hook and line. In some states they serve as the sole host for endangered mussel species.

### Types of Aquatic Nuisance Species Fish

The fish shown in this section may be weird, but they are native Oklahoma fish that belong here. Others, however, are weird and don't belong, such as the white perch and Asian carp like the bighead and silver carp. Species like these are not native to Oklahoma and they compete with those that are native for food and habitat. White Perch were accidentally introduced into Kansas, and have moved downstream into Kaw, Keystone and Sooner reservoirs. Bighead Carp are found in the Neosho and Grand Rivers, Grand Lake, the Red River, and both species have inhabited the Kiamichi River below Hugo Reservoir.





For detailed statewide stocking reports as well as results from 2011 gillnetting, trapnetting and electrofishing surveys, use your smart phone to scan this code and link right up! If you don't have a smartphone, just log on to <http://www.wildlifedepartment.com/fishing/surveys.htm>.

*When it comes to black bass in Oklahoma, the largemouth is usually the most prevalent, and they're the biggest. All of them, however, have a tell-tale strike when they hit a lure, and all of them invoke excitement and long-held fond memories.*



**State Record Spotted Bass**

(Rod and Line Division at press time)

**Weight:** 8 lbs., 2 oz.  
**Length:** 23 1/2"  
**Girth:** 17 1/2"  
**Where:** Pittsburg Co. Pond  
**When:** 6-27-58  
**Angler:** O.J. Stone



**State Record Largemouth Bass**

(Rod and Line Division at press time)

**Weight:** 14 lbs., 11 oz.  
**Length:** 28"  
**Girth:** 22 3/4"  
**Where:** Broken Bow  
**When:** 3-14-99  
**Angler:** William Cross



**State Record Smallmouth Bass**

(Rod and Line Division at press time)

**Weight:** 8 lbs., 3 oz.  
**Length:** 23 1/2"  
**Girth:** 19"  
**Where:** Eufaula Lake  
**When:** 3-4-06  
**Angler:** Steve McLarty

# Fish Files: Black Bass

Oklahoma is home to largemouth, smallmouth and spotted bass — all of which are considered black bass.

## Daily Limit

The daily limit is six largemouth and/or smallmouth with no size limit unless special regulations apply to the area. There is no limit on spotted bass. Consult the “Oklahoma Fishing Guide” for special regulations.

## Why You Want to Catch One

- Plain and simple, the black bass is iconic when it comes to Oklahoma fishing, and you’ve just not experienced the fullness of Oklahoma’s angling opportunities until you’ve landed one.
- They hit baits and lures with intense aggression and, pound for pound, they just might fight as hard as any fish in the state’s waters.
- The opportunities to catch them are all around you, in lakes, rivers, mountain streams and secluded farm ponds.

## How It’s Done

- There are numerous methods, and many of them work well. The important thing is to trigger the predatory instincts of black bass.

- It’s 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, as the black bass diet includes a variety of fish, crayfish, insects, frogs, lizards and even worms and other food sources.

- 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.

## Things to Remember

- It doesn’t matter what you have in the tackle box if you don’t make time to 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.
- Largemouth bass can be found in most any lake in the state. Often big

lakes have nice smallmouth fishing as well, but perhaps the surest bet for smallmouths is an eastern Oklahoma stream. 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.

## Management Strategy Keeps Black Bass Fishing Success on Course

While an angler has to be out there fishing with the right bait on the right day in the right kind of weather and at the right time of year, there is also a

“Black bass” is a general term referring to largemouth, spotted and smallmouth bass and their hybrids. The three species are similar, but can be easily identified. Since water clarity can affect the color of a fish, color is not a reliable way to tell the basses apart.

An easy way to tell these species apart is by the relationship of the eye and the mouth hinge. On a spotted bass, the mouth hinge lines up vertically with the back edge of the eye; on a smallmouth bass, the mouth hinge vertically lines up with the front edge of the eye; and on a largemouth bass, the mouth hinge vertically lines up well behind the back edge of the eye.



**Smallmouth Bass**  
Mouth hinge in front of eye



**Largemouth Bass**  
Mouth hinge well behind eye



**Spotted Bass**  
Mouth hinge even with back edge of eye

significant amount of effort that goes into the production of quality fish on the part of fisheries biologists who work to provide the best angling opportunities possible in the state's waters.

For starters, a great way to improve bass fishing opportunities is to help the state's bass populations achieve their best potential, which at times requires special effort.

Enter the Black Bass Management Plan, which assists Wildlife Department fisheries personnel in their effort to develop site-specific plans that will help improve bass fisheries in Oklahoma.

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.

Management recommendations 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 information such as specific and overall numbers of fish, average fish size and abundance of forage. 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

## Tongue Patch

Another way to distinguish black bass is the presence or absence of a tongue patch. The majority of largemouth bass have no patch on their tongue, while smallmouth and spotted bass do have a tongue patch.



Most largemouth bass have no patch on the tongue.



Smallmouth and spotted bass display a patch on the tongue.

## 2011 Spring Electrofishing Bass Survey

Lake (Region)	Bass Abundance (# per Hour)	Bass Size (# over 14" per Hour)	Heaviest Fish (Pounds)
American Horse*	240	30	5.5
Arcadia	18.4	8.2	12.2
Chimney Rock*	57.5	29	5.3
Crystal Lake*	44.6	11.3	7.4
Dripping Springs	97.6	22.9	9
Elmer Thomas*	78	36	4.1
Fort Cobb	82.7	35	7.1
Fort Gibson	136.1	58.1	7
Greenleaf	154	47.5	5.9
Keystone	25	11.3	4.4
Konawa	266.2	128.7	8.1
Langston*	19	6	5
Lookout*	220	4	1.7
McGee Creek	35.7	12.3	5.7
Murray	25.7	6.3	6.2
New Spiro*	72	25	5.2
S Lake Park East*	136	15	5.5
S Lake Park West*	4.8	4.8	3.2
Schooler*	135	14	4.6
Skiatook	48.7	10.3	4
Sooner	90	60.4	6.7
Taft	131	25	5.8
Taylor*	65	12	5
Tom Steed	9.3	5.3	4.4
Vincent*	20.7	4.7	2.8
Watonga*	54	16.7	12.1
Waxhoma*	123	38	4.5
Wes Watkins	8.4	5.6	6.1

\*Denotes lakes less than 1,000 acres

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. Combine that with a commitment from anglers to follow the harvest limits and other regulations, and you've got a recipe for great things to happen for bass anglers when they are out on the water.

## Knowing the Facts Can Help You Become a Better Angler

The information shown in the 2011 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 2011, 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, some of the lakes producing the highest numbers of bass per hour are under 1,000 acres, suggesting that even small lakes can produce quality fishing for anglers.

Additionally, the results show the heaviest fish produced at each lake sampled. Fish weighing more than 12 lbs. were surveyed at both Arcadia and Watonga.

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.

### 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.

### I caught a bass with worms or something in the flesh and intestines. Is it safe to eat that fish?

Although some parasites of North American fish can be infectious, the vast majority will not affect humans even if eaten raw. All are killed by thorough cooking, pickling or freezing. There is no danger of eating an infected fish if they are properly prepared. Even though some anglers shudder at the thought, fish containing such parasites are still good table fare.

### 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.

### Should I stock Florida largemouth bass in my farm pond?

While Florida-strain largemouth bass have produced trophy/record fish in some reservoirs in southern Oklahoma, the results of stockings in farm ponds has not been encouraging. It's well known that Florida bass are much less temperature tolerant than the native strain. Since farm ponds are smaller and react quicker and longer to lower temperature changes, stocking a pond that is less than 30 surface acres with Florida bass is risky, at best. One cold winter could literally wipe out an entire bass population made up of the Florida strain. Stick with native largemouth when stocking farm ponds.

### 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.

### 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.



### Credit Where Credit is Due

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.



### State Record Walleye

(Rod and Line Division at press time)

**Weight:** 12 lbs., 13 oz.

**Length:** 30 3/8"

**Girth:** 19 1/2"

**Where:** Robert S. Kerr

**When:** 5-8-04

**Angler:** Kerry Karter



### State Record Saugeye

(Rod and Line Division at press time)

**Weight:** 10 lbs., 10 oz.

**Length:** 28 1/4"

**Girth:** 19"

**Where:** Fort Cobb Lake

**When:** 2-24-06

**Angler:** Curt Wilkerson

# Fish Files: Walleye & Saugeye

Walleye 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, another fish that can be stocked to create fishing opportunity. The first stocking of saugeye was at Lake Thunderbird in 1985.

## Daily Limit

Six combined with an 18-inch minimum in areas without special regulations

## Why You Want to Catch One

- Both species 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 feed on stunted crappie populations and thus improve crappie fishing in state waters.

## How Do You Tell the Difference?

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

## How it's Done

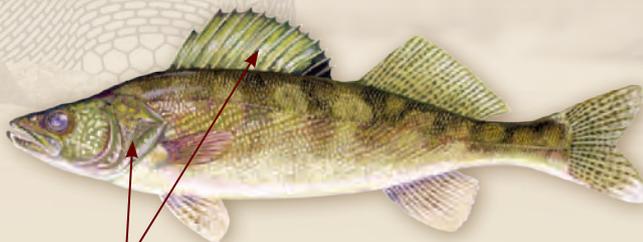
- Both walleye and saugeye are usually found near the bottom and also near deep underwater structures like drop-offs and points. They have sensitive eyes that help them spot food in turbid water and at night. One of the best times to catch big walleyes is usually in March and April when water temperatures reach 45-50 degrees. This is when they move onto rocky shorelines to spawn. They prefer to spawn on riprap along dams and bridges on big lakes.
- Try catching walleye on jigs tipped with large red worms. Walleye naturally prey on insects, larvae, nightcrawlers, crayfish, snails and small fish.
- After spawning, walleye move to deeper water in main-lake areas. At this time, trolling deep-diving crankbaits along shoreline drop-offs can be successful.

- When there are periods of heavy water flow, try tailwater fishing.
- When fishing for saugeye, seek out long, shallow, windy points.
- January to mid-February is a great time for saugeye fishing, you can catch them throughout the year.
- Lakes in the western portion of the state like Ft. Cobb, Foss and Canton lakes are good starting points. Oklahoma City anglers shouldn't overlook their own backyard, as Hefner Lake can offer productive fishing. At the same time, good walleye fishing can be had in other regions of the state as well.

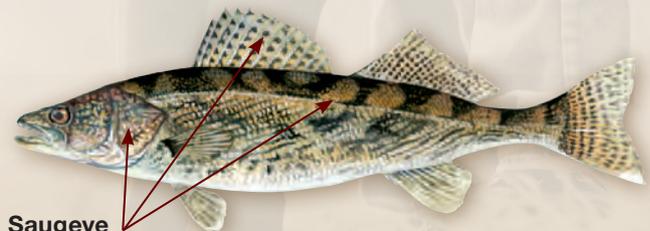
## Do I need a boat to fish Lake American Horse?

No, there is plenty of bank access around American Horse. Boat anglers will find the lake easy to fish also.

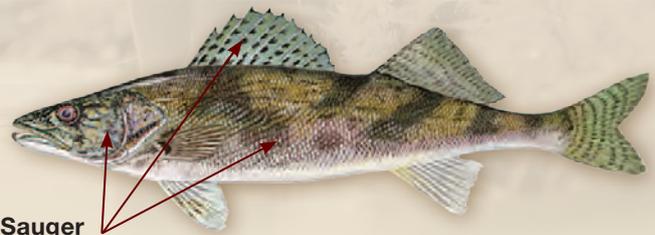
Oklahoma is fortunate to have these unique species of the perch family in many of its lakes. To identify them, first look at the spiny dorsal fin. The walleye will have no spots on this fin; the sauger will have distinct spots; and the hybrid of the two species, the saugeye, will have spots and bars in the webbing of its spiny dorsal fin. The color of the fish and the presence or absence of cheek scales may also help identify the difference.



**Walleye**  
No spots on spiny dorsal fin, few or no cheek scales



**Saugeye**  
Spiny dorsal fin with distinct spots and bars in webbing, body gold with distinct brown blotches, cheek covered with scales



**Sauger**  
Distinct spots on spiny dorsal fin, tan body with distinct brown blotches, cheek covered with scales

# The Strength of a Mussel

A look at Oklahoma's shelled aquatic dwellers and what they can tell us about the quality of their ecosystems.

By Curtis Tackett, Aquatic Nuisance Species Biologist



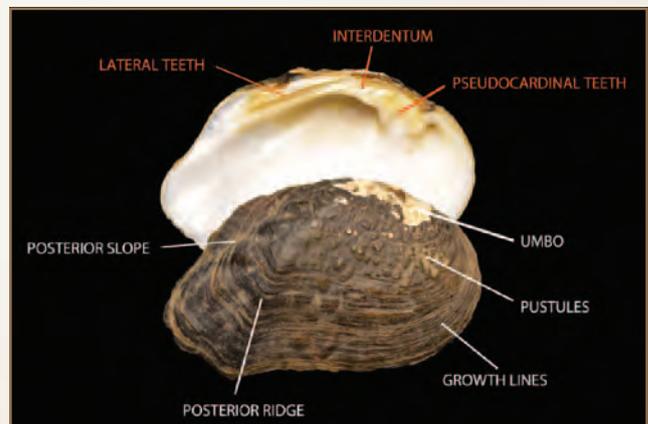
Jonathan West, southeast region fisheries technician for the Wildlife Department, displays a basket of washboard mussels collected during a recent study on the Poteau River.

**F**reshwater mussels spend their entire lives partially buried in the substrate of bodies of water. Sounds like a fairly boring life, but in fact freshwater mussels take on some of the largest challenges that life under water has to offer.

Although mussels usually go unnoticed until a shell washes up on the bank, they play a significant role in the balance of aquatic ecosystems. When you think of water, usually the animals that come to mind are fish, but mussels are one of the richest species groups of aquatic wildlife. Because of the unique biology of mussels and the important role that they play in the overall health of the underwater environment, conservation must be a priority. Mussels are considered to be “indicator species” — meaning that by studying the population status

and overall condition of these animals, biologists can gather information about the entire ecosystem in which they live. For instance, if stream flow or water quality are not adequate, then the mussel populations will most likely reflect that due to shifts in habitat occupancy or, unfortunately, a mussel die off. Just this past year, after a season of record heat and drought, a mussel die-off was confirmed at Jack Fork Creek after summer temperatures and lack of water releases from Sardis Dam resulted in flows of less than one cubic foot per second. While most fish were able to swim downstream to safety, widespread mussel mortality occurred. Among the species of mussels that were killed is the state and federally endangered Quachita rock pocketbook.

## Biology and Physiology



If you've ever stumbled upon a dried, empty mussel shell along a riverbank or the shore of a lake, you may have been tempted to call them “oysters” or even “clams.” Freshwater mussels are in fact called “mollusks” and are related to clams and oysters. The external part of a mussel consists of two shells connected by a hinge ligament. Freshwater mussels are filter feeders, meaning they “eat” by constantly pumping water through their bodies and filtering food sources that come through, such as organic matter and plankton. By this process of pumping water through an “incurrent siphon” and then out of an “excurrent siphon,” mussels are one of the few organisms that actually improve water quality by filtering out bacteria and algae.

Mussels use a foot to move about and orient themselves. This foot allows them to stabilize themselves and resist being washed away by moving water. Once oriented in an



*A stream in southeast Oklahoma showing a "riffle-run" habitat type for mussels.*

appropriate habitat type, mussels literally sit and eat. They are one of nature's few organisms that don't actually need to chase food. They are considered opportunistic feeders and can live basically anywhere that has the proper aquatic habitat and water quality.

The majority of a mussel's mass consists of its hard external shell. The shell's primary purpose is to protect them from predators such as fish, raccoons, and otters. Some mussels have unique names like "monkeyface," "wartyback" and "pigtoe," which usually refer to the size, shape, and color of the shell.



## Reproduction

Since mussels sit sedentary in the substrate, how do they find a mate? Mussel reproduction is unlike any other feat in nature. Some mussels depend on the water current as their larvae are free-floating, and others require a host species to reproduce. For the group of mussels known as Unionids, this complex process starts with the male releasing sperm to flow downstream for the female to draw it in through her incurrent siphon. Thousands of fertilized eggs develop into what are called "glochidia" within her gills. Once the glochidia mature, they are released onto a host species, usually a fish, where they will develop into a parasite within the host's tissue. Some female mussels will use a variety of lures to attract a host species close enough for deployment of the glochidia. Most mussels rely on a specific host species to carry out their life cycle. Some even require a certain species of fish as their host, such as the redear sunfish. The glochidia that are lucky enough to survive to this stage now begin to develop physical structures that prepare them for the real world. They start to develop gills, a foot and other internal structures. The still microscopic mussel has now become a juvenile and releases itself from the host species to settle on the stream bottom. If not picked off by predators, the juvenile mussel will grow into an adult and possibly live to be over 100 years old.



Two heelsplitter mussels collected during a mussel survey.



Freshwater mussel found in southeast Oklahoma.



Not all mussel found in Oklahoma are native. Pictured here are invasive zebra mussels that have invaded Oklahoma and pose threats to the state's aquatic habitats.

## Habitat

Mussels can occupy many different habitat types such as lakes, ponds, and rivers, but in Oklahoma the greatest diversity of species are found in the eastern streams. Stable stream channels are important for mussel habitat because most mussels prefer an environment that is consistent rather than one that has shifting sand or deep silt. Even though mussels help to improve water quality, they require good water quality to begin with. Mussels can be sensitive, and if the environment is polluted with contaminants they may not reside there. Some species are adapted to the dark, low flowing depths of a reservoir where others require clear moving streams. There is no doubt that mussel health directly reflects the quality of habitat in which they live.

## Commercial Use

The river drainages of the U.S. make up the largest diversity of freshwater mussels in the world, therefore mussel harvest and industry has been a large part of their past. Mussels have historically been very useful to people. Before the 1930's when plastics were developed, most buttons were made from mussel shells, sparking a high demand for mussel harvesting. Today, the market for freshwater mussels isn't in the button business, but rather, in the pearl industry. Mussels are harvested in large numbers in certain regions of our country and sold to Asian markets. Round beads are made from the shells and implanted as nuclei into oysters to make freshwater pearls. China is now the only country to commercially produce freshwater pearls, producing over a thousand tons each year. Currently there is one licensed mussel harvester in Oklahoma who harvests small numbers of mussels in southeast Oklahoma.

## Invasive Mussels

Freshwater mussels live a rough life impacted by disease, habitat degradation, water quality, pollution and low water flow events, but invasive species are also threatening native mussels in Oklahoma. The Asian clam (*Corbicula fluminea*) was introduced into North America in the late 1930s as a food source and has spread rapidly throughout the U.S., including Oklahoma. The Asian clam competes with native species for food and habitat and can be found in almost every lake, river and stream in Oklahoma.

Another group of mussels that have invaded Oklahoma are the infamous zebra mussels (*Dreissena polymorpha*). Zebra mussels were first introduced into this country during the 1980s by being transported in the ballast water of cargo ships. They began their infestation in the Great Lakes Region where they used the natural river systems as well as transported boats to spread throughout the Mississippi River Basin. Zebra mussels now infest several lakes and rivers in Oklahoma, but their spread can be limited by taking a few precautions. Adult zebra mussels can easily hitch a ride on the hull of a boat, and the microscopic juveniles can be transported in live wells or boat motor cooling systems. To prevent further spread or future infestations, boaters and anglers should wash their boats and equipment with hot water or allow it to dry thoroughly for several days before launching in a different body of water.



*Freshwater mussel found in southeast Oklahoma.*

## Conservation

Freshwater mussels are one of the most endangered groups of animals in North America. A status review of U.S. unionid mussels by the American Fisheries Society in 1993 found that 97 of the 292 species that occur here are considered endangered. Population declines are also occurring worldwide and a total of 35 species are thought to have gone extinct. In Oklahoma alone there are three mussel species listed as federally endangered. The winged mapleleaf (*Quadrula fragosa*), the scaleshell mussel (*Leptodea leptodon*), and the Quachita rock pocketbook (*Arkansia wheeleri*) unfortunately share this title. There are some critical factors, mostly related to human activity, that play into the conservation of freshwater mussels. These include water pollution, habitat alteration, invasive species, overharvest, stream flow, predation, etc. Now that wastewater discharges are regulated by state and federal agencies, the water pollution factor has been somewhat reduced in recent years. Habitat alteration and flow requirements seem to be the current leading issues with mussel conservation in Oklahoma, and research is currently being done to address these factors.

## Mussel Propagation

Because of declining populations of some species of freshwater mussels and the loss of critical habitat, some states including Oklahoma are propagating mussels for release into the wild. Reproductively active female mussels are collected from the wild and the viable glochidia are removed. The glochidia are grouped with the proper host species to allow parasitism. After the host is infested with the glochidia, they are monitored closely for juvenile mussel production. The mussels are then cultivated in a laboratory setting and prepared for release. This propagation

is as natural as you can get in a lab setting, and the released mussels simply supplement the sensitive populations. This conservation effort is used throughout North America, and for some species, it may be their only hope for survival.

## What the Wildlife Department is Doing About Mussels

The wildlife department is directly involved in many aspects of research, funding, and regulatory authority that benefit freshwater mussel populations throughout the state of Oklahoma. The Wildlife Department has been involved in research projects that assess the population status and habitat requirements of mussels. One in particular that was completed in 2011 was an inventory of freshwater mussel species on the Poteau River below Lake Wister. Wildlife Department staff identified live mussels as well as relic shells along different habitat types in the river.

The Department also has provided funding through the State Wildlife Grants Program for various freshwater mussel projects at Oklahoma Universities. The data from these professional research projects has helped state and federal agencies make conservation decisions regarding the harvest, propagation and other regulatory actions dealing with freshwater mussels.

The Wildlife Department also works closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel in Oklahoma on management programs for certain species of mussels. Additionally, the Wildlife Department's Aquatic Nuisance Species Program educates the public about the threats of the invasive zebra mussel. This program teaches boaters and anglers about the simple precautions that can be taken to ensure that zebra mussels are not being spread.

Freshwater mussels are some of the most diverse but yet threatened groups of aquatic wildlife in North America. The unique biological traits of mussels help biologists make informed decisions about managing aquatic ecosystems. Mussels also have a commercial importance in the pearl industry that helps to boost economies and secure jobs. Due to the extensive research community that surrounds these sensitive species, conservation of freshwater mussels is extremely significant to this nation as well as Oklahoma. 🌿



*A live mussel displaying some shell wear from the elements of the river environment.*



*During the spring, you can find white bass in streams and tributaries of large lakes, sometimes engaging in “feeding frenzies” that can keep you busy with rod and reel. A handful of assorted jigs will help you get the job done.*



**State Record White Bass**

(Rod and Line Division at press time)

**Weight:** 5 lbs., 4 oz.

**Length:** 21"

**Girth:** 15"

**Where:** Lake Eufaula

**When:** 10-26-84

**Angler:** Paul Grace

# Fish Files: White Bass

The white bass is Oklahoma's state fish, and though they may bite any time of year, the most celebrated and noteworthy time to catch them is during the spring, when they travel upstream in large numbers to spawn.

## Daily Limit

None in areas without special regulations.

## Why You Need to Catch One

- The possibility for mass feeding frenzies during the spring can make for almost non-stop action.
- Jigs, spinners, minnows — white bass will hit on any of them.
- They are readily available in lakes and rivers all over the state.
- The white bass is the state fish, so you just gotta!

## How it's Done

- 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 but, as mentioned, their annual migration draws anglers to the banks

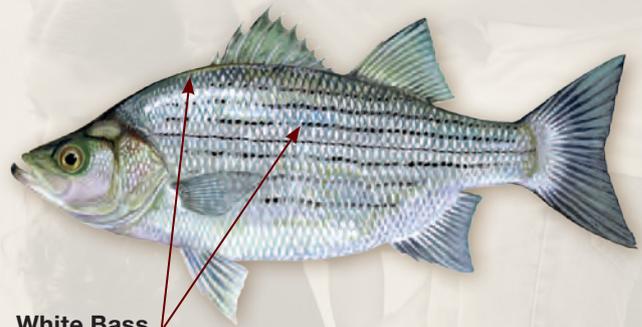
of tributaries and feeder creeks at most major reservoirs.

- Excellent populations exist at Broken Bow (southeast), Canton (northwest), Ellsworth and Ft. Cobb (southwest), Hefner (central), Keystone and Oologah (north-east) lakes.
- 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 fishing gear ready to go on a moment's notice. When the fishing gets good, you'll want to be ready to grab your gear and

head for the creek bank.

- When water rises after a rain combined with temperatures in the lower 50s, white bass angling action can peak quickly.

White bass, striped bass and striped bass hybrids offer great fishing opportunities around the state. The white bass can be identified by the distinctive arched back just behind its head. It also has only one tongue patch.



**White Bass**  
Arched back, faint lines that are usually unbroken



**Tongue Patch**  
One round or heart-shaped patch on tongue

## My pond is red and I want to clear it up. What can I do?

Having a red color to your pond is a common problem in central and western Oklahoma. It is caused by small particles of clay that remain suspended in the water. Because these particles have a magnetic-like "charge" to them, they bounce around and can stay suspended for literally hundreds of years before they settle.

The color in the water is not only unpleasing to the eye but reduces sunlight penetration in the water. This reduced energy transfer will ultimately slow down the growth of the pond's fish by inhibiting the bottom end of the food chain. Muddy water also makes it more difficult for sight feeding fish to prey. Suffice to say that muddy, red water is not preferable for optimum fish production.

So what can we do to clear up a red pond? Something needs to be added to the water that will take the "charge" of the clay particle and let it settle to the bottom. One way to do this is by adding hay. As the hay settles in the water, bacteria begin to decompose the hay, producing small, dilute amounts of acid that remove the charge from the clay particle and allow it to settle. Break up the bales and scatter the hay on the

surface at a rate of about 3-10 bales (200-300 lbs.) per acre. Because decomposing hay can cause oxygen depletion problems, limit the amount of hay applied in the heat of the summer. Continue to apply hay in 10-14 day intervals until the pond is clear. Do not make more than four hay applications per year.

A better solution to clearing a muddy pond is to add powdered gypsum. Like the hay, gypsum chemically removes the charge from the clay particle, but although more expensive than hay, tends to work much faster. Scatter the gypsum evenly over the surface at a rate of 500 lbs. per acre-foot of water. Your pond should clear in 1-4 weeks, but if not, apply 1/4 of the original amount of gypsum. You may need to apply smaller amounts annually to keep it clear. Remember that you are changing the water chemistry of the pond, so only use an amount absolutely necessary to clear your pond. You may want to wait until the spring rains are over before embarking on your pond clearing program. Also, gypsum bought in bulk from a quarry is much cheaper than buying it in bags.

*Striped bass are not native to Oklahoma or to freshwater lakes, but they thrive in both and provide great fishing.*



**State Record Striped Bass**

(Rod and Line Division at press time)

**Weight:** 47 lbs., 8 oz.

**Length:** 48"

**Girth:** 30"

**Where:** Lower Illinois River

**When:** 6-10-96

**Angler:** Louis Parker



**State Record Striped Bass Hybrid**

(Rod and Line Division at press time)

**Weight:** 23 lbs., 4 oz.

**Length:** 33 1/2"

**Girth:** 27"

**Where:** Altus-Lugert Lake

**When:** 4-01-97

**Angler:** Paul Hollister

# Fish Files: Striped Bass & Striped Bass Hybrid

“Stripers,” or striped bass, were originally Atlantic Ocean fish and therefore are not native to Oklahoma waters, nor were they originally freshwater fish. However, they did use freshwater streams for spawning. 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 fisheries biologists cross these fish with Oklahoma’s native white bass in hatchery labs, the result in the striped bass hybrid. These fish provide a unique angling opportunity for Oklahomans. They grow fast, reaching as much as six or even seven pounds by three years of age and 18-20 pounds by eight to nine years of age.

## Daily Limit

The daily limit for striped bass in areas without special regulation is 15, of which only five may be 20 inches or longer in length. Unless specified, there is no daily limit on striped bass hybrids.

## Why You Want to Catch One

- Big, strong, aggressive fish — this is the main thing you need to know. If that entices you, read on.

## How It’s Done

- As far as lures go, keep on hand plenty of bucktail jigs, slabs and spoons. However, live bait such as shad may be your best choice. The diet of a striper is made up mainly of threadfin and gizzard shad as well as some insects.
- Scan the air for flocks of feeding seagulls, as this can also give you a good indication of where you’ll find schools of feeding stripers.
- During the summer and winter, look in the main-lake areas. In the spring, head to the river arms of these lakes.

### Why is “culling” not allowed for stripers, hybrids and 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.

- 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.
- If you don’t have a boat, the bank can be a good option as well. Set 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 desirable fish.

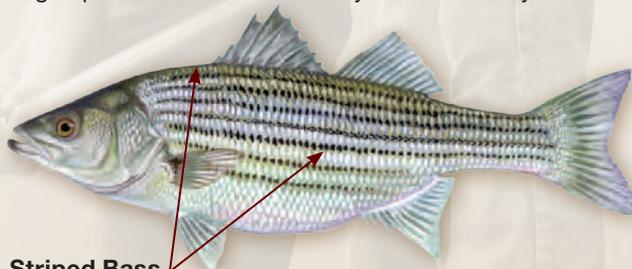
## Things to Remember

- Fish the tailwaters and deep holes below dams on the Arkansas and Red rivers if a big fish is what you have in mind. A good approach in these locations is to drift live shad, preferably six inches or longer. And don’t rule out casting from the bank.
- A well-known destination for striper fishing is Lake Texoma. There are a num-

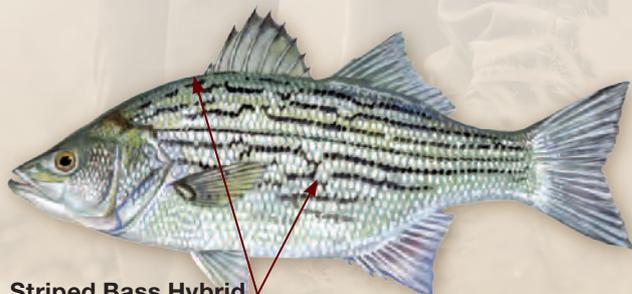
ber of guide services to choose from, and the fishing can be very good.

- If you fish Texoma, remember that the lake forms part of the border between Oklahoma and Texas on the Red River, so if you fish Texas portions of the lake, you’ll need to comply with Texas fishing regulations.

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. 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. The lines on a hybrid are usually broken.



**Striped Bass**  
Back not arched, strong and unbroken dark lines



**Striped Bass Hybrid**  
Back slightly arched, some broken lines



**Tongue Patch**  
Two long patches on tongue



*One of the great things about catfish angling is that adults and kids alike can enjoy catching sizable fish with relatively simple methods, and the result is not only angling excitement, but culinary bliss when you add the fried fillets to coleslaw, baked beans and watermelon during the heat of the summer.*



### State Record Blue Catfish

(Rod and Line Division at press time)

**Weight:** 98 lbs.

**Length:** 54 ½"

**Girth:** 39 ½"

**Where:** Lake Texoma

**When:** 11-11-04

**Angler:** Billy Nabors



### State Record Channel Catfish

(Rod and Line Division at press time)

**Weight:** 35 lbs., 15 oz.

**Length:** 39 ¼"

**Girth:** 26 ¼"

**Where:** Taft Lake

**When:** 9-11-05

**Angler:** Gary Doak, Jr.

# Fish Files: Catfish

In Oklahoma, anglers primarily target channel catfish, blue catfish and flathead catfish. While each of them differ at least a little in appearance from one another, they all are voracious fighters and fun to catch.

## Daily Limit

For areas without special regulations, the daily limit for channel and blue catfish is 15 combined per day, and only one blue catfish per day can be over 30 inches. The daily limit of flathead in areas without special regulations is 10, with a 20-inch minimum.

## Why You Want to Catch One

- 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.
- Flatheads make a good target for a range of fishing methods, such as trotlines, juglines, limblines, and as has been made more and more famous in recent years — noodling, or fishing with nothing but your bare hands.

## How It's Done

- For channel catfish, try using worms, crayfish, prepared baits and cut shad.
- Use live bait for blues and flatheads.
- Try using a cane pole to drop a baited hook near submerged logs in a river.
- Streams fishing at areas like the Blue River Public Fishing and Hunting Area

near Tishomingo offer catfish, along with camping, incredible waterfalls and excellent fishing for other species.

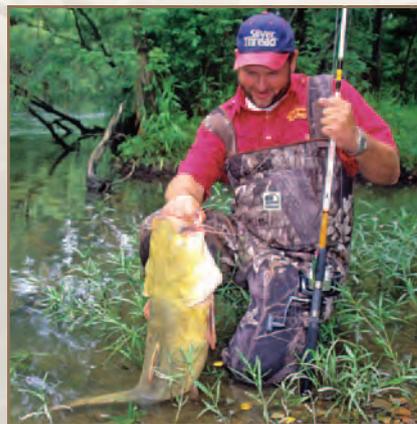
- Fishing from the bank or boat with a bobber and baited hook also can prove successful.
- Local municipal lakes that are stocked with catfish make good choices for catfish angling.
- Farm ponds managed for angling are often loaded with catfish.

## Things to Remember

- Rain and runoff entering waterways stimulates blue catfish in the winter as much as in the spring and fall.
- During summer, 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.
- Noodling for flatheads can work 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.

- Small sunfish work well for trotlines.
- Live shad are a good option for rod and reel rigs.



KEITH SUTTON

An angler admires a flathead catfish — one species that Oklahoma has in plenty.

Oklahoma's three most popular catfish species can be identified by either the shape of the anal fin or the shape of the tail. A channel catfish will have a curved anal fin, but the same fin on the blue catfish will be straight across the bottom. Both of these species have a forked tail. In contrast, a flathead catfish's tail will not be forked.



**Blue Catfish**  
Straight anal fin



**Channel Catfish**  
Curved anal fin



**Flathead Catfish**  
Tail not forked



MICHAEL BERGIN

## State Record Flathead Catfish

(Rod and Line Division at press time)

**Weight:** 78 lbs., 8 oz.

**Length:** 51"

**Girth:** 36 1/2"

**Where:** El Reno City Lake

**When:** 5-11-10

**Angler:** Richard Williams



*Notice the faint vertical bands of black spots on this white crappie. A black crappie would display darker, more sporadic spotting with no vertically banded pattern.*



*Tipping off a crappie jig with a minnow can create an enticing bait for crappie.*

**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.

**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.

# Fish Files: Crappie

Oklahoma is home to the black crappie and the white crappie subspecies. They look similar, but the seasoned angler should know how 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.

## Daily Limit:

37, unless special regulations apply to the area being fished. See the current "Oklahoma Fishing Guide" for details.

## Why You Want to Catch One

- Once you find one, you can often catch several in a row from the same spot.
- White and flaky, crappie meat is highly regarded as one of the best tasting fish in Oklahoma.
- Crappie compete well against other

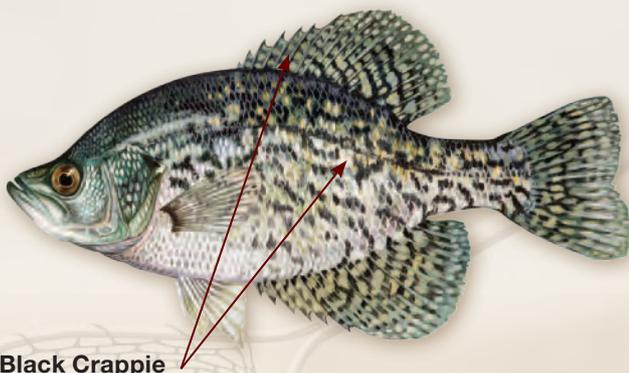
predator fish and, as a result, can and should be harvested heavily.

## How it's Done

- Crappie bite well on live minnows, worms, and small jigs.
- For an extra enticement, try tipping off your crappie jig with plastic grub or live minnow, or even a small piece of onion, which may serve as an attractant and draw a strike from a hungry crappie.
- Look for crappie in standing timber and brushy cover in lakes.

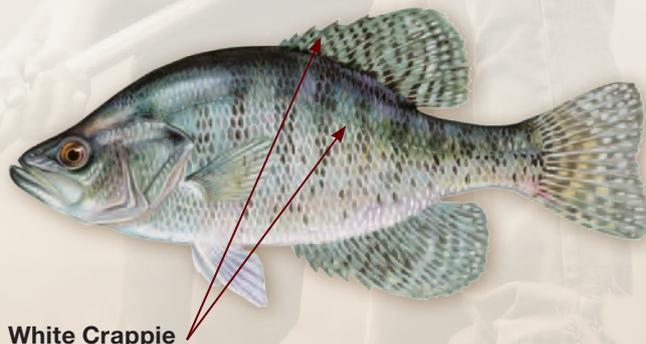
- Mid-March to mid-April is one of the best known times catch crappie, in part because there is a good chance of catching big female "slab" crappie when they are in shallow waters spawning. During the spring, fish in the shallow ends of coves.
- Later on in the year, fish deeper waters. Wintertime crappie fishing can be good because the fish form schools. If you've found one, there is a good chance you can catch another in the same spot.

Size and daily limits are the same for the small but tasty black and white crappie. Both types of crappie can appear very similar, so one way anglers can know the difference between the two species is to identify marking patterns or spots / bands on the side of the fish. A white crappie, the most abundant crappie in the state, will have distinct vertical bands of blue/gray spots, whereas a black crappie will have only a sporadic, unrecognizable pattern to its black spots. There is also a difference in the number of bony spines in the dorsal fin: white crappie will have 5 to 6, whereas, black crappie will have 7 to 8.



**Black Crappie**

No true pattern to black spots, 7-8 bony spines in dorsal fin



**White Crappie**

Distinct vertical bands of blue/gray spots, 5-6 bony spines in dorsal fin



### State Record Black Crappie

(Rod and Line Division at press time)

**Weight:** 4 lbs., 10 oz.

**Length:** 20 1/4"

**Girth:** 17 3/4"

**Where:** Ottawa Co. Pond

**When:** 6-16-74

**Angler:** Rollie Williams



### State Record White Crappie

(Rod and Line Division at press time)

**Weight:** 4 lbs., 15 oz.

**Length:** 19"

**Girth:** 16 1/4"

**Where:** Kingfisher Co. Pond

**When:** 5-4-91

**Angler:** Frank Robinson

# Fish Files: Paddlefish

This fish may eat microscopic organisms, but the fish itself is anything but microscopic. Easily reaching 50 lbs. or even much more, these fish are exciting to have on the hook. 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.

## Daily Limit

Paddlefish daily limits are one per day on Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday, statewide. You can catch as many fish as you would like on these days but you must stop snagging once you keep a fish. On Mondays and Fridays, fishing is open to catch-and-release only, statewide. Anglers cannot possess a paddlefish while in the field on Mondays or Fridays.

## Why You Want to Catch One

- Paddlefish are huge. That's really enough said, but we'll go ahead and tell you a few more interesting facts.
- Paddlefish angling is anything but traditional, since you use large surf rods, heavy line and big treble hooks to "snag" the fish, usually in rivers upstream from major reservoirs during the spring.
- Paddlefish are fascinating, living up to 30-35 years of age in Oklahoma and having been known to exist for thousands of years.
- If you happen to catch a state record, that means you'll have caught a fish that weighs in excess of 125 lbs. That would be something to write home about.

## How It's Done

- Leave the lures and live bait behind. Paddlefish are caught by snagging,

a method of dragging a large treble hook through the water.

- The ideal time to snag paddlefish is in the spring, when the fish swim upstream from reservoirs into rivers and concentrate in numbers that make it fairly easy to catch one.
- Be sure to read all the regulations regarding paddlefish angling on page 25 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.

## Things to Remember

- The paddlefish research program is based out of a location near the Twin Bridges area of the Neosho River, and it has already played a crucial role in paddlefish management. Anglers can bring their paddlefish to the center and have the meat processed for free in exchange for biological data and eggs from their fish.

Oklahoma has a thriving population of paddlefish, also known as spoonbills because of their long, rounded noses. Many paddlefish grow to weigh more than 50 lbs.



**Paddlefish**  
Distinctive rounded, protruding nose.



## State Record Paddlefish

(Rod and Line Division at press time)

**Weight:** 125 lbs., 7 oz.  
**Length:** 55"  
**Girth:** 41 1/4"  
**Where:** Arkansas River  
**When:** 4-10-11  
**Angler:** Aaron Stone

## It's the Law

### Check:

Inspect your boat, trailer and equipment for zebra mussels, mud, plant fragments, seeds, and any other organisms from the water. Remove them.

### Drain:

Drain water from your boat, motor, bilge, live wells, bait containers, coolers, and ballast.

### Clean or Dry:

Pressure wash the boat, trailer and equipment with hot water (140° F). If pressure wash is not available, allow the boat, trailer and equipment to dry thoroughly for at least five days before visiting a new water body.



# ODWC Fisheries Offices



**1. Byron State Fish Hatchery**  
 Rt. 1, Box 535, Byron, 73722-9528  
 (580) 474-2663, byronfsh@sctelcom.net  
 (2 mi. north and 1 mi. west of  
 Hwys. 38 & 11)  
 Hatchery Supervisor - Steve Spade  
 Northwest Region Supervisor -  
 John Stahl

**2. Ponca City Office**  
 417 S. Silverdale Lane, Ponca City,  
 74604-7315  
 (580) 762-2248, odwc@cableone.net  
 (Call for hours of operation, located on  
 the west end of Kaw dam)  
 North Central Region Supervisor -  
 Bill Wentroth

**3. Jenks Office**  
 300 Aquarium Drive, Jenks, 74037-9998  
 (918) 299-2334,  
 moneal02@sbcglobal.net  
 (Adjacent to the Oklahoma Aquarium)  
 Northeast Region Supervisor -  
 Brent Gordon

**4. Porter Office**  
 9097 N. 34th St. W., Porter, 74454-2743  
 (918) 683-1031, odwc@hughes.net  
 (1-1/2 mi. north of Muskogee Tnpk. on  
 Hwy. 69)  
 East Central Region Supervisor -  
 Jim Burroughs

**5. Woodward Office**  
 3014 Lakeview, Woodward, 73801  
 (580) 254-9173  
 (Call for hours of operation)

**6. Department Headquarters**  
 P.O. Box 53465, Oklahoma City, 73152  
 1801 N. Lincoln Blvd, Oklahoma City,  
 73105  
 (405) 521-3721, info@odwc.state.ok.us  
 (1 block south of State Capitol at the  
 corner of 18th & Lincoln Blvd.)  
 Fisheries Division Chief - Barry Bolton  
 Fisheries Division Assistant Chief -  
 Gene Gilliland

**7. Lawton Office & J.A. Manning State  
 Fish Hatchery**  
 19333 State Hwy. 49, Lawton,  
 73507-6015  
 (580) 529-2795, jamodwc@mptelco.com  
 (West of I-44 on Hwy. 49 in  
 Medicine Park)  
 Hatchery Manager - Tyler Wright  
 Southwest Region Supervisor -  
 Larry Cofer

**8. Lake Maintenance Office, Lake  
 Burtschi**  
 4055 State Hwy. 92, Cement,  
 73017-9223  
 (405) 224-2513. odwclm@swbell.net  
 (Call for hours of operation, located 10

mi. south of Chickasha)  
 Supervisor - Todd Waters

**9. Oklahoma Fishery**  
 Research Laboratory  
 500 E. Constellation, Norman,  
 73072-7900  
 (405) 325-7288,  
 sdensow@odwc.state.ok.us  
 Supervisor - Greg Summers

**10. Holdenville State Fish Hatchery**  
 3733 Hwy. 48, Holdenville, 74848-6009  
 (405) 379-5408, odwc@plainsnet.net  
 (Below Holdenville Dam)  
 Hatchery Manager - John Davenport  
 Fisheries Biologist- Danny Bowen

**11. Caddo Office & Durant  
 State Fish Hatchery**  
 2021 Caddo Hwy., Caddo, 74729-3807  
 (580) 924-4087; (580) 924-4085,  
 odwcdhf@simplynet.net  
 (6 mi. north of Durant on Old Caddo Hwy.)  
 Hatchery Manager - Gordon Schomer  
 South Central Region Supervisor -  
 Matt Mauck

**12. Higgins Office**  
 6733 SW Hwy 1, Wilburton, 74578-7634  
 (918) 297-0150, odwcse@hughes.net  
 (Call for hours of operation; located  
 near Higgins, on Hwy. 1)  
 Southeast Region Supervisor -  
 Don Groom



The high-quality, free Oklahoma Fishing Guide is available at license dealers statewide. It is offered to you by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation through its unique partnership with J.F. Griffin Publishing, LLC, and provides details on the state's fishing regulations. It's a must have.

Unless otherwise noted, office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Mon. through Fri.